

= Rock Steady (album) =

Rock Steady is the fifth studio album by American rock band No Doubt , released on December 11 , 2001 by Interscope Records . The band began writing the album with initial recording sessions in Los Angeles and San Francisco , then traveled to London and Jamaica to work with various performers , songwriters , and producers . Sly & Robbie , The Neptunes , and William Orbit were among the many artists the band collaborated with on the album .

As a result of these collaborations , Rock Steady touches on many musical styles , focusing on dub , synthpop , and dance styles more so than in the past . The band attempted to capture the vibe of Jamaican dancehall music , and experimented with writing songs without its standard instrumentation . Singer Gwen Stefani wrote her lyrics quickly in comparison to previous records , and dealt with topics ranging from partying to ruminations on her relationship with Gavin Rossdale .

Rock Steady received mostly positive reviews from music critics , and it was nominated for Best Pop Vocal Album at the 2003 Grammy Awards . The album was a commercial comeback for the band , surpassing sales of their previous offering , Return of Saturn , released in 2000 . Rock Steady spawned four singles , two of which won the Grammy Award for Best Pop Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocal . Rolling Stone ranked Rock Steady number 316 on its 2003 list of " The 500 Greatest Albums of All Time " .

= = Background and production = =

Every night on the tour to support their 2000 album Return of Saturn , No Doubt threw after @-@ show parties where people danced to Jamaican dancehall music . During a discussion over dinner in late 2000 , the band members decided they wanted to explore dancehall @-@ style rhythms for their next album . Drawing inspiration from artists such as Bounty Killer , Cutty Ranks , and Mr. Vegas , the band began work on the album in January 2001 by creating beats on Pro Tools at guitarist Tom Dumont 's apartment . The group often tried recreating beats from other song files on the computer , which resulted in modified versions of the original rhythms . They worked with producer Philip Steir at Toast Studios in San Francisco during this time , where the beginnings of " Hey Baby " emerged . When writing lyrics for previous albums , Stefani typically read works by Sylvia Plath that would make her depressed " or find different words that inspire me . " In contrast , for Rock Steady she wrote the lyrics quicker and on the spot to meet the goal of writing a song a day . Many of the demos recorded during these early sessions were used in the final tracks , rather than completely reworking the songs . The band saw this as a way to preserve the " initial spark " from when the songs were conceived .

The next month , Stefani left Los Angeles for London to visit boyfriend Gavin Rossdale , and the band traveled with her to finish recording " Detective " . There , they worked with Eurythmics member David A. Stewart and wrote the song " Underneath It All " in only ten minutes . In March , No Doubt traveled to Jamaica , staying at the Blue Lagoon in Port Antonio . The band " spent most of the time swimming and getting sunburned and drinking and smoking and recording a little music " , according to Dumont . The group would often have Red Stripe beers or rum and cokes with jerk food for breakfast ; on one occasion , Dumont passed out from heavy drinking while recording a track . They began work in the mid @-@ afternoon and worked into the night , with an after @-@ party following the session . The group collaborated with Sly & Robbie , who produced " Underneath It All " and " Hey Baby " and brought in dancehall toasters Lady Saw and Bounty Killer , and Steely & Cleve , who produced " Start the Fire " .

The band returned from Jamaica and resumed work in June 2001 , collaborating with producers Nellee Hooper and Timbaland . The Timbaland track , titled " It 's a Fight " , and a Dr. Dre @-@ produced song titled " Wicked Day " were excluded from the album because their hip hop sounds did not work well on the album . The band then worked with producer and former Cars frontman Ric Ocasek in late June . Stefani commented that No Doubt worked with so many people for the record because none were available for the time needed to make an LP , but that she would have liked to work with Ocasek longer . The band and its A & R manager Mark Williams chose collaborators

based on how well they thought the person would fit the personality of the song that No Doubt had written . In late August , the band returned to London for Mark " Spike " Stent to polish off the songs with audio mixing .

= = Music and lyrics = =

The band members often did not play their standard instruments when working on the songs for Rock Steady . As a result , the album 's instrumentation contains less guitar and bass guitar than the band 's previous work . Many of the album 's sounds come from electronic keyboard effects , which bassist Tony Kanal called " Devo @-@ y bleeps and Star Wars noises " . Dumont commented that many of the effects came from being unfamiliar with the equipment and " just twiddling knobs " . Dumont created an effect similar to that of an echo chamber by placing a microphone inside a metal garbage can with the can 's open end facing a drum kit . Richard B. Simon of MTV News asserted that the sound of Rock Steady was part of the decade nostalgia of the 1980s retro movement .

Stefani 's vocals range from innocent to seductive , sometimes transitioning from one to the other within a song . Her lyrics are based on her relationship with Rossdale , whom she married less than a year after the album 's release . Stefani is openhearted and unreserved as on Return of Saturn , but her approach becomes more immediate and instinctive . The lyrics are more youthful than those on Return of Saturn and detail partying and feelings of lust . An overarching theme on the album is Stefani 's impatience in the couple 's long @-@ distance relationship . She discusses wanting to see Rossdale on " Making Out " and " Waiting Room " , and she reveals her distrust in Rossdale on " In My Head " . On " Hey Baby " she gives an innocuous account of the debauchery between her bandmates and their groupies during parties , as she observes the party . The lyrics of " Underneath It All " question whether or not Rossdale is a good match for her , an issue resolved in the chorus , which was written based on a journal entry where Stefani wrote the line " You 're lovely underneath it all " about Rossdale .

= = Composition = =

Rock Steady maintains many of the styles present in No Doubt 's previous work , while introducing influences from the music of Jamaica . " Hey Baby " , " Underneath It All " and " Start the Fire " all feature dancehall and ragga , an electronic @-@ oriented subgenre , as well as guest toasters . The latter , written using backward string samples , also contains the band 's traditional ska and reggae sounds . Ocasek produced the New Wave @-@ influenced tracks " Don 't Let Me Down " and " Platinum Blonde Life " , the former of which was described as sounding " more like the Cars than the Cars " . " Platinum Blonde Life " was so strongly influenced by The Cars ' work that Kanal apologized to Ocasek , though Ocasek apologized back that he hadn 't seen the similarity . The synthpop ballad " Running " was composed on a Yamaha keyboard purchased for Kanal in the 1980s and drew inspiration from the Thompson Twins . Its simple keyboard riff drew comparisons to the work of Depeche Mode , Erasure , and Yazoo .

Because of the number of collaborations , the album touches on several other styles . " Waiting Room " , a song written and sung with Prince for Return of Saturn , evokes his R & B style over a drum and bass beat . " Hella Good " , an electro rock song co @-@ written with hip hop production duo The Neptunes , is inspired by the funk songs of the late 1970s such as Queen 's " Another One Bites the Dust " and the Commodores ' " Brick House " . William Orbit , best known for his work on Madonna 's electronica @-@ oriented Ray of Light , incorporates trance music in the production of " Making Out " . " Detective " , one of the five tracks produced by Hooper , takes slight influence from pop music . The album 's title track closes the album by tying together the many musical themes . It is a slow dub song , with acid house @-@ style bleeps and moans .

= = Critical reception = =

Rock Steady received generally positive reviews from music critics . At Metacritic , which assigns a

weighted mean rating out of 100 to reviews from mainstream critics , the album received an average score of 69 , based on 15 reviews , which indicates " generally favorable reviews " . Rolling Stone 's Rob Sheffield said it was " impressive to hear No Doubt summon the musical imagination to transcend the formula that used to imprison them " and ranked Rock Steady number 316 on its 2003 list of the 500 greatest albums of all time . Stephen Thomas Erlewine of AllMusic referred to the album as " a good , hooky , stylish mainstream pop record " . David Browne of Entertainment Weekly remarked that there was " something oddly flimsy " about No Doubt that prevented it from becoming a milestone in pop music , but that the band 's " party @-@ throwing skills improve with each new gathering . " Stylus Magazine commented that the band sounded like it had " growing pains " and was unsure of its place in mainstream rock , predicting that No Doubt would either become a singles band " or go all Radiohead on us and make an album of avant @-@ jazz @-@ electro @-@ acid @-@ funk @-@ polka . "

Many reviewers focused on the large number of styles that Rock Steady incorporates . PopMatters , noting that Rock Steady maintains the introspection of Return of Saturn without the latter 's " longing and wistfulness " , stated that " it is to No Doubt 's credit ... that they manage to keep the album together with little more than their collective personalities . " Blender , however , called it " an intermittently engaging but overall shapeless collection ... the product of happy @-@ go @-@ lucky musicians who once cavorted in bad track suits but now spend their days commuting between London , Jamaica and Los Angeles seeking the wisdom of expensive studio geeks . " Nevertheless , Blender included the album on its 2003 list of " 500 CDs You Must Own Before You Die ! " . The NME viewed the album 's " enormous waterfront of styles " positively , noting that it had many strong potential singles , but found that some of the " empty @-@ headed guitar pop " on the second half of the album spoiled the listening experience . Time stated that Rock Steady was able to integrate ska , pop , New Wave , and dancehall " without sounding contrived or chaotic " . It added that though the album lacked the energy and sales of No Doubt 's 1995 breakthrough album Tragic Kingdom , Rock Steady was " their greatest effort to date ... the sound of band dropping pretense to realize its potential . " Slant Magazine included Rock Steady on its list of 50 Essential Pop Albums , commenting that " not since Blondie ... has a rock act so effortlessly , irreverently , and fashionably skidded across so many different genre boundaries at one time . " LAUNCHcast said that " even with so many producers attempting to steer this bus along the superstar highway , they end up in a better @-@ than @-@ most parking lot " .

= = Chart performance = =

Rock Steady sold approximately three million copies . NME reviewer Alex Needham compared the album 's revival of No Doubt 's popularity to the performance of Madonna 's 1998 album Ray of Light . The album debuted at number nine on the Billboard 200 , selling 254 @,@ 000 copies in its first week . Rock Steady was certified double platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) on October 11 , 2002 , and by July 2012 , it had sold 2 @,@ 842 @,@ 000 copies in the United States . At the 2003 Grammy Awards , the album was nominated for Best Pop Vocal Album but lost to Norah Jones ' Come Away with Me . The lead single " Hey Baby " and third single " Underneath It All " won the award for Best Pop Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocals at the 2003 and 2004 Grammy Awards , respectively .

The album did not perform as strongly outside the US . In September 2002 , Rock Steady was certified platinum in Canada , and in the United Kingdom , the album was certified gold by the British Phonographic Industry (BPI) on July 22 , 2013 . It peaked at number fifteen on the ARIA Albums Chart and spent nine non @-@ consecutive weeks in the top forty . The album was listed at number ninety @-@ seven on the 2002 Australian Recording Industry Association end @-@ of @-@ year chart , and was certified gold by the Australian Recording Industry Association (ARIA) .

= = Legacy and impact = =

Following the success of the regular edition , Rock Steady had two special edition re @-@ releases

in October 2002 , each of which had a bonus CD . The two @-@ song CD features acoustic live performances of " Underneath It All " and " Just a Girl " recorded at 1LIVE in Cologne , Germany in June 2002 as well as the music video for " Underneath It All " . The four @-@ song CD includes a remix of " Hey Baby " featuring Outkast and Killer Mike ; another remix by F.A.B.Z. ; Roger Sanchez 's remix of " Hella Good " , which won a Grammy Award for Best Remixed Recording , Non @-@ Classical in 2003 ; and a remix of Return of Saturn 's lead single " Ex @-@ Girlfriend " made by Philip Steir , who helped produce " Hey Baby " . The songs from the two @-@ song bonus disc were released in North American iTunes Stores , and those from the four @-@ song bonus disc were released in other countries . Rock Steady Live , a live DVD of No Doubt performing in 2002 in support of Rock Steady , was released in November 2003 .

Rock Steady produced the band 's most successful singles . " Hey Baby " preceded the album with an October 2001 release . It set a record for the band when it reached number five on the Billboard Hot 100 . The positive response to " Hey Baby " from radio stations and video channels prompted the band to push forward the release of Rock Steady from December 18 to December 11 . The next single , " Hella Good " , was released in April 2002 . It was somewhat less successful and peaked at number thirteen . It was followed by " Underneath It All " , which was released that August . The single is No Doubt 's most successful American single to date , peaking at number three on the Hot 100 , and like " Hey Baby " , it managed to top the Billboard Top 40 Mainstream chart . The fourth and final single was " Running " in April 2003 . Peaking at number sixty @-@ two , " Running " became No Doubt 's lowest position on the Hot 100 to date .

When singer @-@ songwriter Jewel released her fifth album 0304 in June 2003 , reinventing and sexualizing her public image , music critics identified Rock Steady and Ray of Light as influences on the album . Slant Magazine compared 0304 's retro tribute to new wave music with that on Rock Steady . Blender commented that Jewel had " brushed up on two sacred pop texts , the Manual of Madonna and the Gospel According to Gwen " . The magazine compared her use of a more restrained , throaty purr to Stefani 's vocals and noted 0304 's use of " jumpy bubblegum choruses and boop @-@ boop @-@ beeping keyboards " as descendants of No Doubt 's production .

= = Track listing = =

Enhanced content

" Hey Baby " video

Rock Steady screensaver

" The Making of Rock Steady " documentary

Notes

^ a signifies an additional producer

= = Personnel = =

Credits adapted from the liner notes of Rock Steady .

No Doubt

No Doubt ? production

Gwen Stefani ? vocals (all tracks) ; additional programming (tracks 4 , 13) ; album art concept

Tony Kanal ? bass , keyboards (all tracks) ; additional engineering (tracks 3 , 6 ? 9 , 11 , 13) ; programming (tracks 3 , 7 , 8 , 11) ; additional programming (tracks 4 , 6 , 9 , 13) ; saxophone (track 5)

Tom Dumont ? guitar , keyboards (all tracks) ; additional engineering (tracks 3 , 6 ? 9 , 11 , 13) ; programming (tracks 3 , 7 , 8 , 11) ; additional programming (tracks 4 , 6 , 9 , 13)

Adrian Young ? drums

Additional personnel

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =