

REVIEWS

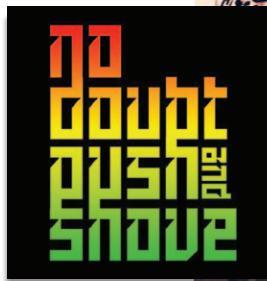
NO DOUBT

Push and Shove

[Interscope]

When Gwen Stefani sings, "Never, ever, ever gonna be the same," the opening line on "Sparkle," a standout track from No Doubt's first new album in 10 years, she's not kidding. With its brassy accents and fat-bottom, pop-reggae bounce, the tune recalls the 2002 hit "Underneath It All," itself a reminder of No Doubt's roots as the little SoCal ska band that could. But "Sparkle" is the exception that proves the rule. Alongside lead single "Settle Down" and the chassis-rattling title track, it's one of a scant few Jamaican-tinged songs skanking in a sea of club beats and stadium-rock choruses.

Things will never be the same, but they've been changing for a while. On its last album, 2001's *Rock Steady*, No Doubt was already incorporating elements of electronic dance music, and on her two subsequent solo records, Stefani took it several stiletto steps further, reinventing herself as a modern-day Madonna. Here, Gwen and the boys move deeper onto the dance floor, doing achy synth-pop and glossy Euro-throb without losing themselves in the process. What shines through on songs like "Looking Hot," "Undercover" and "Gravity"



BILLY

No Doubt

are their basic pop instincts, which remain very much intact. Another thing that hasn't changed is Gwen's guileless, confessional songwriting. When she's not hinting at trouble in paradise with hubby Gavin Rossdale, the father of her two children, she's treating her happiness like a hard-won victory. After a decade away—a lifetime in pop years—No Doubt might view this comeback album the same way. —Kenneth Partridge

'Gwen and the boys move deeper onto the dance floor. What shines through are their basic pop instincts.'

