



## JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE BY REBECCA WALLWORK

POP'S BIGGEST PINUP SAID BYE BYE BYE TO THE PACK LIFE, AND HELLO TO HIMSELF AND RESPECT

Ever since unveiling his soloness at last year's MTV Video Music Awards, Justin Timberlake has been feeling the liberating rush of coming of age. He has shaken off the boy band shackles, weathered the public's thirst for details of his Britney breakup, and steered his solo debut, *Justified* (Jive), to *Billboard*'s dizziest heights. As one-fifth of the record-breaking 'N Sync he knows the place well, but after spending half his life in the spotlight (he started out as an 11-year-old contestant on *Star Search*),

Timberlake is finding that his defining moment comes as he enters his 22nd year—on terms entirely his own.

REBECCA WALLWORK: You worked with some great producers on this record—the Neptunes, Timbaland—but you co-wrote every track. I get the sense that you were the one in the studio waving the wand.

JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE: Yeah. To make an album, it takes both those personalities: somebody who's dictating what they definitely want and some-

body to be the coach, who can sit on the sidelines and say, "Yeah, I think that's it." But I don't want to cash in on the fact that I got to work with the hottest producers. I think that music is an experience, and people should experience it on their own. You know, if I had gotten so hyped up about the second Coldplay album, I probably wouldn't have liked it as much as I do.

RW: So it was a discovery for you?

JT: Yeah! And, man, *Parachutes*, the first one, knocked me off my feet too.



**RW:** Do you find it inspiring or daunting when you hear such good stuff from other people?

**JT:** Oh, it's completely inspiring. I'm a mutt as far as music is concerned, because I listen to everything. I think Jive should hire me as A&R.

**RW:** Now, if you become a huge solo star in your own right, can we expect to see a Justin Timberlake empire? Would you have your own sweats, or maybe a fragrance, like J.Lo?

**JT:** [laughs] I don't know. I think my style is kind of a cross between a skater hippie and an R&B singer. If there were something that I was going to endorse, it would probably be something like sneakers. Something that would be me.

**RW:** You could make porn, like Snoop.

**JT:** No, I don't think that would work! [both laugh] But thanks for the suggestion. I'll think about it!

**RW:** A lot of people say that Justin [Guarini] from *American Idol* is a dead ringer for you. Have you met him?

**JT:** No. But I met Kelly Clarkson the other day. I hope something incredible comes out of it for these kids, but I think there's something satanic about that show, as if they're herding them like cattle: "You will sing what we tell you to sing."

**RW:** So even though 'N Sync got a similar start, you wouldn't recommend it?

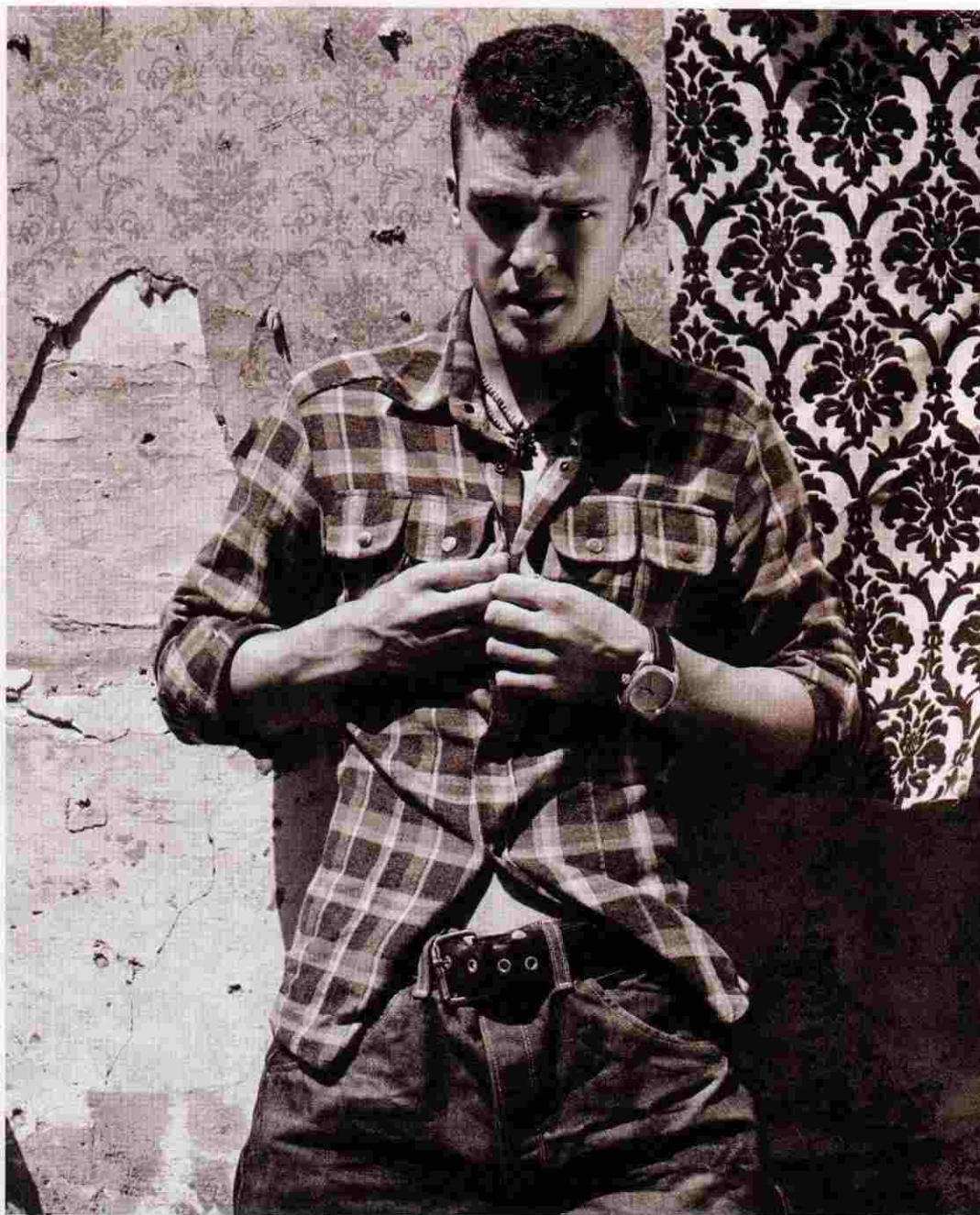
**JT:** Oh, hell no. *Hell* to the *no*. We went through all that bullshit with [boy band impresario] Lou Pearlman. We've been in that situation where you're just so happy to be doing what you love to do that you get taken advantage of.

**RW:** What do you think it was about 'N Sync—and yourself—that ensured you would still be around five years later?

**JT:** I just think that everything we did was genuine. When we first got into this, obviously I wasn't a songwriter. But I knew that I wanted to learn it. I didn't let anybody tell me that I couldn't. And now, I think I gave myself [on the record].

**RW:** What did you get out of it personally?

**JT:** Well, I was dealing with so many things in my personal life at the time. Making this was almost like therapy. You know, I have a little anxiety about doing this on my own, a little bit of a broken heart. Half of this album is autobi-



ographical and the other half is a fantasy.

**RW:** So was there any trepidation in putting something personal out there?

**JT:** No. When I'm in the studio, there are no boundaries. You know, when you're writing the song, it's about what goes from the first bar to the last. It's not about "Oh, am I going to hurt somebody's feelings?" Right there you've killed the whole thing that's special about writing.

**RW:** One last question. Everyone's still talking about the biggest couple in pop—

**JT:** —Who's that? Who's the biggest couple in pop? I have no idea who you're talking about.

**RW:** Nelly and Kelly Rowland, of course.

**JT:** [laughs] Oh! Okay. You can tell I've been

asked that question before, huh?

**RW:** Well, I was trying a new spin on it.

**JT:** Yeah, but if I say something to you about any of it, and you write it, then everyone is going to hold you to that. That's crazy. Gossip is called gossip because it's not always the truth.

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Rebecca Wallwork is *Interview's* Music Editor. In this story: Justin Timberlake wears a shirt by D&G. Jeans by LEVI'S RED. Fragrance by D&G MASCULINE. Styling: JASON FARRER/Management Artists. Grooming: STEEVE DAVIAULT/Link NY/L.A. For fashion and photo details see page 143. Photographer: TONY DURAN.