

STYLE


THE SUNDAY TIMES

18 MARCH 2018

MEN'S FASHION ISSUE

STARRING
**JOHN
LEGEND**
SUPERDAD
HERO HUSBAND
A-LIST FEMINIST

DO YOU OWN A
**BADLY
DRESSED
MAN?**
WE CAN HELP

**GROOMING
CONFESSION**
I HAD A £7K
HAIR TRANSPLANT

**MIND THE
PROMOTION GAP**
HOW WORKING
WOMEN CAN
SUCCEED FASTER





Ten Grammys, an Oscar, a Tony, a smart supermodel wife — and a conscience. Singer John Legend is scooping awards in every category of life.
Scarlett Russell
meets him

Photographs **Doug English**
 Styling **William Graper**



THIS PAGE JUMPER, POA, MICHAEL KORS
OPPOSITE WHITE SHIRT, £130, PAUL SMITH. COTTON JACKET, £1,710, AND MATCHING TROUSERS, £950, MOSCHINO. TRAINERS, £545, CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN

At a villa nestled in the Hollywood Hills, so high up there's no phone signal, John Legend arrives for our cover shoot three hours early. He turned up before even the caterers did, only to be told by the pool guy to "come back in a few hours". The star's new assistant (second day on the job) gave Legend the wrong call time and, hours later, looks panicked. He needn't. We're told that Legend simply shrugged and headed back to his mansion a few minutes' drive away. No chauffeur, no diva strop, no angry phone calls, which epitomises why the Oscar, Tony and Grammy award-winning singer-songwriter and musician is the unequivocal nice guy of R&B. The Bono of urban music. Legend, 39, sings of equality, as well as the sugary ballads that paid for his mansion. He starred and performed in the hands-down most heart-warming film of 2017, *La La Land*. He campaigned for Barack Obama and speaks out for criminal reform. But most of all he loves staying home marinating chicken wings for his wife, Chrissy Teigen, and building pink furniture for their two-year-old daughter, Luna. The family are liberal America's sweethearts. Legend, or at least the Legend presented to the public, is as wholesome as they come.

"Did my publicist tell you to say that?" the singer chuckles. He chuckles a lot — slow, hearty chuckles. "I've definitely not always been scandal-free." Yeah, right. "I did all kinds of things that I'm not proud of. Nothing evil, nothing awful. I lied. I was selfish. But I've gotten better at life. Maturity is a lot to do with being with the

Style Interview

right person. Learning what the other person in your relationship likes and caring enough about what they like to try to make them happy. And when you raise kids together, you have to operate like a team and you want that team to be successful. I wasn't ready to do that when I was 25. But then I met Chrissy."

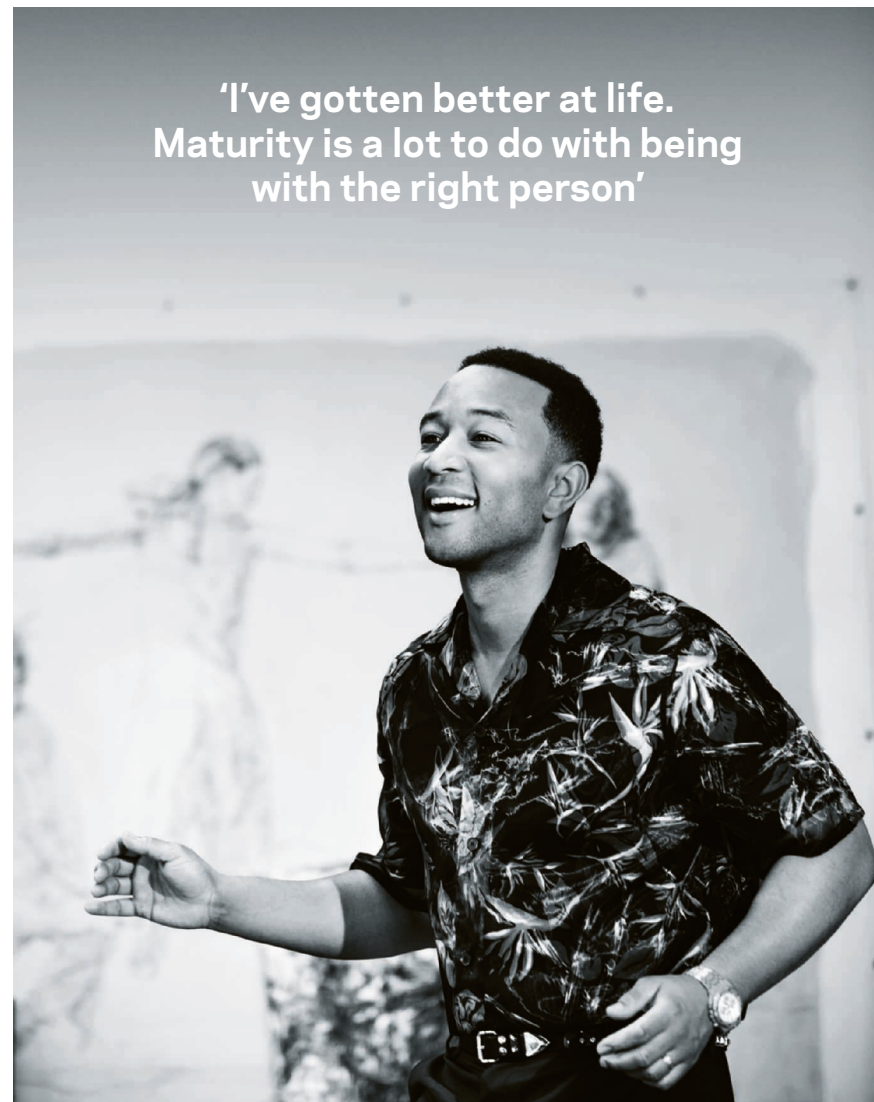
Clearly, Legend is besotted with his wife. They met when the former Sports Illustrated model starred in one of his music videos in 2007. Legend wrote his most commercially popular single, All of Me, for her in 2013, the year they married at Lake Como in front of Stevie Wonder and Kanye West.

Our shoot takes place at a wonderfully kitsch villa in Beverly Hills, complete with a taxidermy tiger and leopard-print rugs, but we've chosen a more restrained spot for our interview: a pink patio table. Legend is, as you might expect, softly spoken and sharply dressed: white Balmain jeans and a torn Rick Owens T-shirt. His older brother, Ron Stephens, grooms his hair on the shoot. Family is "everything" to Legend, and the two always travel together. He's much buffer than I expected, preparation perhaps for his upcoming starring role in a US TV performance of the musical Jesus Christ Superstar. "I work out a lot," he says. "Skipping, lifting weights. I used to box, but it hurt my shoulders. Occasionally I'll go to Chrissy's dance class with her. They're targeted towards women, but I'll go for fun."

Legend, born John Stephens, was raised in Ohio by a factory-worker father and stay-at-home mum who were both part-time tailors. It was a religious home and, though Legend's own beliefs have softened, singing in the church choir and being surrounded by gospel music formed his passion for playing. He met Kanye West during the infancy of both their careers and they have collaborated ever since. Legend's debut album in 2004, Get Lifted, went double platinum in the US and won a Grammy, and he has since added another nine



From left John Legend and Chrissy Teigen with their daughter, Luna, and at the Grammys in January



'I've gotten better at life. Maturity is a lot to do with being with the right person'

Grammys and an Oscar to his awards shelf; the latter for his song Glory, the theme to Ava DuVernay's Selma. His fifth album, Darkness and Light, came out in 2016.

He and Teigen still hang out with "Kim and Kanye", in between date nights with Adam Levine and Behati Prinsloo and Teigen's playdates with the model Brooklyn Decker and their toddlers, but Legend balks at the idea of any glitterati gang. "We're acquaintances with a lot of famous people, but most of our close friends aren't famous." Wasn't that him high-fiving Jay-Z at the Grammys in January? Anyway. The couple are famous not only for their fabulous lifestyle and A-list circles, but for mastering the art of self-branding. Their Instagram-perfect life and 55m combined social-media followers are catnip to advertisers, from beer to coconut water, lining up to work with them. (They both appeared in an ad for Google during a coveted commercial break of the Oscars.) When we film the video for our cover shoot, Legend is careful not to let his phone be in the shot. "We're about to sign a deal with a rival brand," he says.

Being so prolific on social media is also an astute way of controlling what and how the public sees them, whether openly discussing their fertility struggles and use of IVF (the couple faced backlash when Teigen talked about choosing the sex of her baby — "I said it so casually because I'm just open. I'm around so many open-minded people and forgot it's controversial"), posting a picture of Legend caressing Teigen's belly to announce her first pregnancy, or sharing

GETTY



THIS PAGE JUMPER, £540, GIORGIO ARMANI. LEATHER JACKET, £2,150, VALENTINO. OPPOSITE PRINT SHIRT, £1,350, LOUIS VUITTON. TROUSERS, £55, TOPMAN. BELT, £475, PRADA. WATCH, JOHN'S OWN



THIS PAGE SHIRT, £520,
AND JACKET, £1,120, PRADA
OPPOSITE JUMPER, £540,
GIORGIO ARMANI

HAIR RON STEPHENS
MAKE-UP LOUISE MOON
USING MAC

STYLEPLAY >

Watch John Legend
share his family photos
at thesundaytimes.co.uk/styleplay

Style Interview

their political views. “It definitely allows us to self-publish and self-filter,” he says. “That control, when used wisely, is really cool.” Some topics are off-limits, though. “We don’t discuss every argument or every dark moment that we go through, because it’s not everyone’s business, but the way we represent ourselves is honest.” What do they argue about? “Both of us are stubborn,” is as close an answer as I get. “I’m just calmer in general. I’m more reserved and less demonstrative with my emotions. But she has brought out a boldness in me to not always say the safest thing.”

Teigen’s own Twitter feed is legendary. She pokes fun at herself, her husband and, most famously, the US president. She has described being blocked on Twitter by Trump as “euphoric”. Legend says she makes him “laugh every day”.

They are also aware that their views can be polarising. “When you are speaking out for the left, you always run the risk of alienating people. Sometimes people say hateful things on social media and I try to teach them. Maybe I’m crazy, but I think if we can have a reasonable dialogue, we can progress. Other times, I’m like, ‘F*** you’. Some people are just nasty and will never convert.” Legend shakes his head in despair. “Trump is incompetent, racist, narcissistic, impulsive and he’s a misogynist. The only silver lining is the backlash. People are more engaged. If everyone gets out and votes — and I really believe the enthusiasm is there now — then there will be massive change in the make-up of the legislature.”

We meet mid awards season, with the Time’s Up movement at its peak. Legend doesn’t hold back. “Sexism is a problem in every industry, but now people are learning there are consequences,” he says. “Harvey [Weinstein] knew he shouldn’t have been doing [what he was doing], he just thought he could get away with it. We all heard jokes like, ‘You’ve got to sleep with Harvey to get a part.’ I never knew if it was based on truth or rumour. I’m glad we know now.”

It’s hard not to wonder how long it will be before the Weinsteins of the music industry emerge. Kesha has already filed a civil law suit against the producer Dr Luke for gender-based hate crimes. (He denies the claims and has countersued.) “There will probably be more,” Legend says. “My manager, she’s told me stories about sexual harassment, dealing with record execs taking liberties, even when they are pretty powerful. Men who have power need to do a lot better than this.”

Of course Legend is a feminist. He has “evolved” from his selfish, younger ways and wants men to be educated about women’s issues by listening and empathising. “We witness casual sexism so much and don’t get outraged about it enough.

Saying ‘it’s harmless’ or ‘boys will be boys’ makes it worse.” He and Teigen are expecting their second child, a boy, in June. Is he worried about Luna growing up in a sexist world? “I want her to be healthy and confident and in control of her own decisions. I don’t want her ever to feel pressured to do anything she doesn’t want to. Hopefully she’ll meet and date guys who are respectful and emotionally intelligent. But she’s got plenty of time before that is a concern!” He and Teigen haven’t discussed who will give their kids the sex talk. “But I don’t want to be one of those parents who makes their kids feel like sex is evil. I just want them to know that there is a time and place for everything in their life. I want them to be educated before the actual experience.”

As for his and Teigen’s own sex life, well, what do you think? He smiles whenever her name is mentioned, and tells me “date nights” are regular and mandatory, to keep the flame alive. “Buy flowers every once in a while, let the person know that you’re still turned on by them,” he says. “I’m more attracted to Chrissy now than I was 10 years ago. It’s more than just physical now. We’re a team. It makes me feel more connected to her than ever.”

My time with Legend is up. He has a “quick rehearsal for an Elton John tribute”, followed by a dinner with a criminal-reform activist, before heading off to Sundance Film Festival to try to get distribution for a movie he has invested in. Between fitting in a gynaecologist appointment with Teigen. Just another day in a fabulous life. ■

Darkness and Light is out now



**‘I’m more attracted to Chrissy
than I was 10 years ago. It’s more
than just physical now’**