

Interview with the Oscar and Grammy Winner John Legend

Written by Kam Williams

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Ohio-born [John Legend](#) is an award-winning, platinum-selling singer/songwriter. His work has garnered him ten Grammy Awards, an Oscar and a Golden Globe, among others. A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania where he studied English and African-American literature, John Legend participated in a wide range of musical activities while in college.

During that period, he was introduced to Lauryn Hill, who hired him to play piano on her track "Everything Is Everything." Shortly thereafter, he began to play shows around the Philadelphia area, eventually expanding his audience base to New York, Boston, Atlanta and Washington, D.C.

After college, he was introduced to an up-and-coming hip-hop artist named Kanye West. The latter quickly signed John Legend to his G.O.O.D. Music imprint and had him sing vocal hooks on some of his tunes.

Legend's career started gaining momentum through a series of similar collaborations with established artists. He added vocals to an impressive list of chart-topping hits including Kanye West's "All of the Lights," [Jay-Z](#)'s "Encore" and backup vocals on [Alicia Key](#)'s 2003 song, "You Don't Know My Name."

Legend's debut album, *Get Lifted*, was released to critical acclaim in December of 2004 by Columbia Records. The album landed multiple Grammys, including Best R&B Album, Best New Artist and Best Male R&B Vocal Performance. And earlier this year, John Legend won his first Academy Award for "Glory," a song he wrote and performed with

[Common](#)
for the film

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Throughout his career, Legend has worked to make a difference in the lives of others. In 2007, he launched the Show Me Campaign (ShowMeCampaign.org), an initiative that focuses on education as a key to breaking the cycle of poverty. In 2010, he performed "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" on the Hope for Haiti Now telethon show.

He's received the 2010 BET Humanitarian of the Year Award, the 2009 CARE Humanitarian Award for Global Change, the 2009 Bishop John T. Walker Distinguished Humanitarian Service Award from Africare, and the 2011 Harvard Foundation Artist of the Year Award. Furthermore, John Legend sits on the boards of The Education Equality Project, Teach for America, Stand for Children and the Harlem Village Academies.

In January 2008, John Legend sang in a video for Barack Obama, produced by Will.i.am called "Yes We Can". In 2010, he performed in *Dancing with the Stars*. In 2012, Legend was granted an Honorary Doctorate Degree from Howard University at the 144th Commencement Exercises.

This year, Legend co-signed a letter to the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon asking for a more humane drug policy, along with people such as Richard Branson, Jane Fonda and George Shultz.

Here, he shares his thoughts about playing his first, major movie role opposite Ryan Gosling and [Emma Stone](#) in *La La Land*, a picture which he also executive produced. And he talks about his philanthropic work and his new album, *Darkness and Light*, too.

The following interview is the first one posted in Canada.

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