



John Legend



John Legend

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| John Legend interviewed on the Red Carpet during the Toronto International Film Festival, 2008. | |
| Background information | |
| Birth name | John Roger Stephens |
| Born | December 28, 1978 Springfield, Ohio, U.S. |
| Genres | R&B, soul, neo soul, hip hop soul |
| Occupations | Singer-songwriter, actor |
| Instruments | Vocals, piano, keyboards |
| Years active | 2004–present |
| Labels | GOOD Music, Sony Music, Columbia |
| Associated acts | Kanye West, Andre 3000, Rick Ross, Lupe Fiasco, The Roots |
| Website | johnlegend.com ^[1] |

John Roger Stephens (born December 28, 1978), better known by his stage name **John Legend**, is an American singer-songwriter and actor. He has won nine Grammy Awards, and in 2007, Legend received the special Starlight Award from the Songwriters Hall of Fame.

Prior to the release of his debut album, Legend's career gained momentum through a series of successful collaborations with multiple established artists. Legend added his voice to those of other artists, assisting in them reaching chart-topper hits. He lent his voice to Magnetic Man's "Getting Nowhere," Kanye West's "All of the Lights", on Slum Village's "Selfish" and Dilated Peoples' "This Way". Other artists included Jay-Z's "Encore", and he sang backing vocals on Alicia Keys' 2003 song "You Don't Know My Name", the Kanye West remix of Britney Spears' "Me Against the Music", and Fort Minor's "High Road". Legend played piano on Lauryn Hill's "Everything Is Everything".

Early life

Legend was born John Roger Stephens on December 28, 1978, in Springfield, Ohio. He is one of four children of Phyllis, a seamstress, and Ronald Stephens, a factory worker and former National Guardsman. Throughout his childhood, Legend was homeschooled on and off by his mother. At age four, he began playing the piano and at age seven, he performed with his church choir. In 1987, when he was nine, his parents divorced. At the age of twelve, Legend attended North High School, from which he graduated four years later. Upon his salutatorian graduation, Legend was offered scholarships to Harvard University, Georgetown University and Morehouse College. He attended the University of Pennsylvania, where he studied English with an emphasis on African American literature.

While in college, he helmed Counterparts, a co-ed jazz and pop a cappella group as president and musical director. Legend's lead vocals on the group's recording of Joan Osborne's "One of Us" received critical acclaim landing the song on the track list of the 1998 *Best of Collegiate a Cappella* compilation CD. Legend was also a member of the prestigious senior societies Sphinx Senior Society and Onyx Senior Honor Society while an undergraduate at Penn. While in college, Legend was introduced to Lauryn Hill by a friend. Hill hired him to play piano on "Everything Is Everything", a song from her album, *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill*.

During this period, he began to hold a number of shows around Philadelphia, eventually expanding his audience base to New York, Boston, Atlanta, and Washington, D.C. He finished college in 1999, and thereafter began producing, writing, and recording his own music. He released two albums independently; his self-titled demo (2000) and *Live at Jimmy's Uptown* (2001), which he sold at his shows. After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania, Legend began working as a management consultant for the Boston Consulting Group. During this time, he began working on his demo and began sending his work to various record labels. In 2001, Devo Springsteen introduced Legend to then up-and-coming hip-hop artist Kanye West; Legend was hired to sing during the hooks of West's music. After signing to West's label, he chose his stage name from an idea that was given to him by poet J. Ivy, due to what he perceived "old-school sound". J. Ivy stated, "I heard your music and it reminds me of that music from the old school. You sound like one of the legends. As a matter of fact, that's what I'm going to call you from now on! I'm going to call you John Legend." After J. Ivy continued to call him by the new moniker "John Legend," others quickly caught on, including Kanye West, and the name stuck. Despite Legend's reluctance to change his stage name, he eventually announced his new artist name as John Legend.

Career

2004–2007: *Get Lifted* and *Once Again*

Legend released his debut album, *Get Lifted*, on GOOD Music in December 2004. It featured production by Kanye West, Dave Tozer, and will.i.am, and debuted at number 13 on the US *Billboard* 200, selling 116,000 copies in its first week. It went on to sell 540,300 copies in the United States and was certified gold by the RIAA. An international success, *Get Lifted* also reached number one of the Norwegian Albums Chart and peaked within the top ten in the Netherlands and Sweden, resulting into worldwide sales of 850,000 copies. Critically acclaimed, it won the 2006 Grammy Award for Best R&B Album, and earned Legend another two awards for Best New Artist and Best Male R&B Vocal Performance. Altogether, the album produced four singles, including debut single "Used to Love U," which entered the top 30 of the New Zealand and UK Singles Chart, and Grammy Award-winning "Ordinary People" which peaked at 24 on the *Billboard* Hot 100. John Legend also co-wrote Janet Jackson's "I Want You", which was certified Platinum and received a nomination for Best Female R&B Vocal Performance at the 47th Annual Grammy Awards.^[2]

A highly sought after collaborator, Legend was featured on several records the following years; he appeared on albums by Fort Minor, Sérgio Mendes, Jay-Z, Mary J. Blige, The Black Eyed Peas, Stephen Colbert, Rich Boy, MSTRKRFT, Chemistry, and Fergie, among others. Legend also tentatively worked with the late Michael Jackson on a future album for which he had written one song. In August 2006, Legend appeared in an episode of *Sesame*

Street. He performed a song entitled "It Feels Good When You Sing a Song", a duet with Hoots the Owl. He also performed during the pregame show of *Super Bowl XL* in Detroit and the halftime show at the *2006 NBA All-Star Game*.

In October 2006, Legend's second album, *Once Again*, was released. Legend co-wrote and co-produced the bulk of the album, which saw him reteaming with West and will.i.am but also spawned production from Raphael Saadiq, Craig Street, Sa-Ra, Eric Hudson, Devo Springsteen, Dave Tozer and Avenue. Released to major commercial success, it reached number three on the *Billboard* 200 and debuted on top of the Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums chart. It was eventually certified platinum by the RIAA, and reached gold status in Italy, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. At the 2007 Grammy Awards ceremony, the song "Heaven" was awarded the Grammy Award for Best Male R&B Vocal Performance, while lead single "Save Room" received a nod in the Best Male Pop Vocal category. Legend won a second Grammy that year for "Family Affair," a collaboration with Sly & The Family Stone, Joss Stone and Van Hunt, for the former's *Different Strokes by Different Folks* album.

2008–2010: *Evolver* and *Wake Up!*

In January 2008, Legend sang in a video for Barack Obama, produced by will.i.am called "Yes We Can". The same year, Legend had a supporting, singing-only role in the 2008 movie *Soul Men*, where he plays the deceased lead singer of a fictitious soul group that includes Samuel L. Jackson and Bernie Mac. In October, he released his third studio album, *Evolver*. Speaking about the reasons for calling the album *Evolver*, he stated: "I think people sometimes come to expect certain things from certain artists. They expect you to kind of stay in the same place you were at when you started out. Whereas I feel I want my career to be defined by the fact that I'm NOT gonna stay in the same place, and that I'm always gonna try new things and experiment. So, as I think this album represents a manifestation of that, I came up with the title 'Evolver'." The album was preceded by dance pop-influenced uptempo single "Green Light" which featured rapper Andre 3000 of OutKast and became his highest-charting single since "Ordinary People"; it was also released for the Grammy Award for Best Rap/Sung Collaboration.



Legend returned to his hometown of Springfield, Ohio in 2008 to give a free benefit concert in support of Barack Obama

In 2009, Legend performed in *The People Speak*, a documentary feature film that uses dramatic and musical performances of the letters, diaries, and speeches of everyday Americans, based on historian Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*. Also in 2009, Legend and The Roots teamed up to record a collaborative album, *Wake Up!*, which was released on September 21, 2010. The first single released from the album was "Wake Up Everybody" featuring singer Melanie Fiona and rapper Common.^{[3][4]} In February 2011, Legend won three prizes at the 53rd Annual Grammy Music Awards. He was awarded Best R&B Song for "Shine", while he and The Roots won Grammy Awards for Best R&B Album and Best Traditional R&B Vocal Performance for "Hang On in There". In March 2011, Legend

and The Roots won two NAACP Image Awards – one for Outstanding Album (*Wake Up!*) and one for Outstanding Duo, Group or Collaboration.

2011–present: Tour, *Duets* and *Love in the Future*

On July 5, 2011, songwriter Anthony Stokes filed a copyright infringement lawsuit against John Legend in United States District Court, in the District of New Jersey, alleging that Legend's song "Maxine's Interlude" from his 2006 album *Once Again* derives from Stokes' demo "Where Are You Now". Stokes claimed he gave Legend a demo of the song in 2004 following a concert at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Legend denied the allegations, telling E! Online, "I never heard of his song until he sued me. I would never steal anyone's song. We will fight it in court and we will prevail." However, nearly 60,000 people took a TMZ.com poll that compared the two songs and

65% of voters believed that Legend's "Maxine's Interlude" is a rip-off of Stokes' "Where Are You Now". A year later, Legend confirmed that he settled the lawsuit with Stokes.

Also in 2011, Legend completed a 50-date tour as a guest for British soul band Sade. In the San Diego stop, Legend confirmed that he is working on his next studio album and played a new song called "Dreams". Later, via his official website, he revealed the official title of the album to be *Love in the Future*, and debuted part of a new track called "Caught Up". The album has been executive-produced by Legend himself, along with Kanye West and Dave Tozer - the same team who worked on Legend's previous albums *Get Lifted* and *Once Again*. Legend has stated that his intention for the record was "To make a modern soul album - to flip that classic feel into a modern context."^[5]

Legend was granted an Honorary Doctorate Degree from Howard University at the 144th Commencement Exercises on Saturday, May 12, 2012. Legend is currently a judge on the ABC music show *Duets* along with Kelly Clarkson, Jennifer Nettles and Robin Thicke. Legend's spot was originally for Lionel Richie but he had to leave the show due to a scheduling conflict. *Duets* debuted on Thursday, May 24, 2012 at 8/7c. He released his fourth studio album, *Love in the Future*, on September 3, 2013, debuting number 4 on the Billboard 200, selling 68,000 copies in its first week. The album has been nominated for Best R&B album at the upcoming 2014 Grammy Awards.^[6] Legend's third single of "Love In The Future" named, "All Of Me" became a big success peaking at #1 on the iTunes charts and #2 on Billboard. The song is a ballad that was dedicated to his wife that he recently married, and has been performed at the "56th Annual Grammy Awards".

Philanthropy

In May 2007, Legend partnered with Tide laundry detergent to raise awareness about the need of families in St. Bernard Parish, (Slidell, LA) one of the most devastated areas hit by Hurricane Katrina; he spent a day folding laundry at the Tide "clean start" mobile laundromat and visited homes which Tide is helping to rebuild in that community. On July 7, 2007, Legend participated in the Live Earth concert in London, performing "Ordinary People". After reading Professor Jeffrey Sachs' book, *The End of Poverty*, Legend started his *Show Me Campaign* in 2007; with this campaign, Legend called on his fans to help him in his initiative for those who reside in Bossaso Village Wikipedia:WikiProject Countering systemic bias and non-profit organizations that the campaign partners with. Also in 2007, Legend was the spokesman for GQ Magazine's "Gentlemen's Fund", an initiative to raise support and awareness for five cornerstones essential to men: opportunity, health, education, environment, and justice.^[citation needed] In October 2007, Legend became involved Wikipedia>Please clarify with a project sponsored by The Gap, a retail clothing store chain in the United States. Through their "project red campaign" (also called "2 WEEKS"), The Gap's contribution to their global fund from the sale of each (2 WEEKS) t-shirt is equivalent to the average cost of 2 weeks of anti-retroviral medicine in Africa, which enables people living with HIV to lead healthy, normal lives.

In early 2008, he began touring with Alexis Ruffin, and Professor Jeff Sachs of Columbia University's Earth Institute to promote sustainable development as an achievable goal. Legend joined Sachs as a keynote speaker and performer at the inaugural Millennium Campus Conference. Legend then joined the Board of Advisors of the Millennium Campus Network (MCN), and has supported MCN programs through online support ^[7] and funding fellowships for MCN summer interns through the Show Me Campaign. In 2009, Legend gave AIDS Service Center NYC permission to remix his song "If You're Out There" to create a music video promoting HIV/AIDS awareness and testing.

On January 22, 2010, he performed "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" on the *Hope for Haiti Now* telethon show.^[8] On September 8, 2010, John Legend joined the national board of Teach For America.^[9] Legend also sits on the boards of The Education Equality Project, the Harlem Village Academies, and Stand for Children. He serves on the Harlem Village Academies' National Leadership Board. On September 9, 2010, he performed "Coming Home" on the Colbert Report as a tribute song for the end of combat operations in Iraq, and for the active troops and the veterans of the United States Armed Forces.^[10] In 2011, he contributed the track "Love I've Never Known" to the Red Hot Organization's most recent album "Red Hot+Rio 2." The album is a follow-up to the 1996 "Red Hot+Rio."

Proceeds from the album sales will be donated to raise awareness and money to fight AIDS/HIV and related health and social issues. On March 6, 2012, John Legend was appointed by the World Economic Forum to the Forum of Young Global Leaders. On June 1, 2013, Legend performed at Gucci's global concert event in London whose campaign, "Chime For Change", aims to raise awareness of women's issues in terms of education, health and justice. At a press conference before his performance, Legend identified himself as a feminist saying, "All men should be feminists. If men care about women's rights the world will be a better place."^[11]

Personal life

After seven years of dating, Legend became engaged to model Chrissy Teigen in December 2011. They married on September 14, 2013, in Como, Italy.

Discography

- *Get Lifted* (2004)
- *Once Again* (2006)
- *Evolver* (2008)
- *Love in the Future* (2013)

Collaborations

- *Wake Up!* (with The Roots) (2010)

Filmography

| Television | | | |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Year | Title | Role | Notes |
| 2006 | <i>Sesame Street</i> | Himself | |
| 2007 | <i>Curb Your Enthusiasm</i> | Himself/Performer | Season 6 finale, "The Bat Mitzvah" |
| | <i>Las Vegas</i> | Himself/Performer | Season 4 Episode 11, "Wagers of Sin" |
| 2008 | <i>A Colbert Christmas: The Greatest Gift of All</i> | Forest Ranger | <i>Christmas Special</i> |
| 2009 | <i>The People Speak</i> | Himself | Documentary |
| 2010 | <i>Dancing with the Stars</i> | Himself/Performer | |
| 2011 | <i>Royal Pains</i> | Himself/Performer | "Listen to the Music" |
| Film | | | |
| Year | Title | Role | Notes |
| 2008 | <i>Sesame Street: Elmo Loves You!</i> | Himself | |
| | <i>Soul Men</i> | Marcus Hooks | |

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External links

- Official website (<http://www.johnlegend.com/>)

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