

John Legend: The 'La La Land' Interview

By Kam Williams
For The Skanner News

O hio-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 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. Kanye quickly signed John to his G.O.O.D. Music imprint and had him sing vocal hooks on some of his tunes.

John'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 in-



John Legend and Ryan Gosling in 'La La Land'

cluding Kanye's "All of the Lights," Jay-Z's "Encore" and backup vocals on Alicia Keys' 2003 song, "You Don't Know My Name."

John'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 won his first Academy Award for "Glory," a song he wrote and performed with Common for the film *Selma*.

Throughout his career, John 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.

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.

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.

KW: Let me start by

asking what made you decide to do this film with Damien [writer/director Damien Chazelle]?

JL: Well, it really started with meeting him as a filmmaker in my capacity as a producer, because my company, Get Lifted Film Company, has done a few movies and a couple of television shows now. We love meeting with up-and-coming directors who are doing great things. And, obviously, upon the success of "Whiplash," Damien was some-

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FILM REVIEW: '13th' Indicts Criminal Justice System as Vestige of Slavery



Ava DuVernay's '13th' investigates the criminal justice system

By Kam Williams
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Many felt that Ava DuVernay was snubbed when she wasn't nominated for an Oscar for directing "Selma." Furthermore, none of the picture's cast or crew members were nominated, despite the fact that it had been very well received by audiences and critics alike. But "Selma" apparently wasn't being singled out, as African Americans were entirely overlooked by the Academy for the second year in

a row.

Since then, the Academy has taken steps to make the Oscars more inclusive, starting with inviting more minorities to join its ranks. That bodes well for Ava in terms of her latest offering, "13th," a searing indictment of the criminal justice system as a shameful vestige of chattel slavery.

The documentary's title was inspired by the 13th Amendment to the Constitution which ended the institution of slavery "except as a pun-

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4222 NE 12th Ave (enter on Skidmore St.) • 6-8 pm

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Diverse and Empowered Employees of Portland
Billy Webb Elks Lodge, 6 N Tillamook • 5-7 pm

Dec 30: NIA Purpose
The REAL Program (Recovery, Empowerment, Achievement in Life)
Umoja Center, 4941 NE 17th Ave. • 6:30-8:30 pm

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PassinArt: A Theatre Company would like to extend our appreciation for your attendance and support of our 2015-2016 Season that included *Tommy J and Sally*; *Smoldering Fires* and our special holiday performances of *Black Nativity* by Langston Hughes.

PassinArt: A Theatre Company mission is to entertain, educate and inspire artists and theatergoers while highlighting issues facing our community; and celebrating our culture and history; please go to www.passinart.net.

Wishing you hope, peace and unity among your families, friends, and neighbors in the New Year.



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