

HIP-HOP HAS A HEART

He has a top-selling album and two Grammys. Now Houston-born rapper **Lecrae** dishes on his faith, music and marriage

BY CHRISTEN A. JOHNSON

PHOTOGRAPHY BY NINO MUÑOZ

Q Your music mixes God and a good time. Is it difficult merging worlds?

A Like Al Green, Aretha Franklin and others, I come from the church. Jesus changed my life and I need Him every day. That's part of me, like being from the South. Every day is not about the club, so you need somebody addressing pain as well as love. My music is soul therapy.

Q When did you fall in love with hip-hop?

A Growing up my cousins were hip-hop heads. They had me on The 2 Live Crew way before I knew what they were talking about. I saw myself in Tupac. He was honest, transparent and artistic.

Q How do you keep your marriage strong in the music industry?

A I make sacrifices so my wife knows she's first. On tour off days, I fly to Atlanta to spend time with her and our three kids. You don't stop dating after "I do." Nine years later, I still ask her on dates like I did in college. We like laughing and look at Instagram videos in bed.

Q What attracts you most to your wife?

A When she trusts me even if she doesn't agree with my decision. Physically, I appreciate that she keeps her hair and nails done. She does not wear a lot of makeup and I love her natural beauty.

Q You're performing at Essence Fest this month! Are you ready?

A This is huge for my life and career. My mother goes every year. I'm excited to contribute to Black music in this massive way—and to eat beignets.

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