

Rolling Stone

SPECIAL
REPORT
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2001

JENNIFER
LOPEZ
RULES!

THE
ORPHAN
WARS
THE BATTLE
OVER
ADOPTION
RIGHTS

TOOL
GUNS
N' ROSES
LIVE
SHAGGY





+ BY ANTHONY BOZZA + SHE HAS MADE THE WORLDS OF MOVIES AND MUSIC HER OWN, AND NOTHING WILL STAND IN HER WAY. THE DOWN-LOW ON J-LO

+ JENNIFER + THE CONQUEROR

THE RED CUBE IS RED, SMALL AND BOXY and hot. It is London's newest club, and it is also ear-shreddingly loud and stuffed to the gills with swilling Brits. Jennifer Lopez and her crew flow through the crowd, escorted by a man in a suit to a private room just off the dance floor. The walls of the room are black glass; there are zebra-print couches and a large screen airing looped bits of such Seventies classics as *The Exorcist*, *Butch Cassidy and the*

Sundance Kid and *Dirty Harry* spliced with subliminally fast flashes of girl-on-girl porn. It is soon turned off. There is sushi no one eats and a bar full of Cristal, booze and beer. Servers are taking orders, repeatedly crisscrossing the narrow room. Jennifer Lopez sits between her manager and her dancers, wearing a pink-and-white

halter with matching jeans, methodically surveying the scene.

Aside from a friend of a friend who sits with his head in his hands, the people in the room are Lopez's second family. She spends more time with these dancers, managers, stylists and publicists than with her folks back in the Bronx or even with her boyfriend, Sean "Puffy" Combs. "No matter where she's at," says producer Cory Rooney, Lopez's principal musical collaborator, "she's got her crew who rolls with her—and they party." Says Lopez, "I need them around me. We love each other, we work really hard, and we play really hard together." Not only that, "they're great at what they do." Champagne seems to be the drink of choice, but Jennifer Lopez sips naught. She doesn't smoke or do drugs, either. "Sometimes I'll have some champagne when somebody makes a toast," she says. "But I'll never finish it. I just never really got into drinking. And now I don't have the time. I don't have the three minutes it takes to smoke a cigarette."

Lopez does, however, dance, and the maitre d' is soon called in to remove the glass coffee table. Lopez hops from her couch perch and shrieks with glee as the DJ plays "Lady (Hear Me Tonight)" by Brit dance act Modjo. When she rises, the entire room rises, too. Lopez exudes a benevolent control over her surroundings; when she's not demanding that everyone do as she does, everyone just seems to want to.

The room grooves hard to Madonna's "Vogue" and Michael Jackson's "Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough," and when the DJ slips on a bit of Chic's "Good Times," Lopez, her dancers and her stylists re-create the Sugarhill Gang's "Rapper's Delight," continuing

on after the song is gone. Lopez shimmies around the room—so much so that she breaks a strap on her top, a situation speedily remedied by two stylists and a Band-Aid. The party gets looser as even the misanthrope gives it a go. He suddenly rises and begins break dancing, while Lopez and her dancers circle around him, a body-popping B-boy in an Oxford shirt.

Not long after, Jennifer Lopez bids her friends adieu and is escorted away by her bodyguard B.O.B. (sure, it spells Bob, but ask, and the Lopez crew will simply explain that it is pronounced B-O-B). The rest of her posse parties on, working up the hangovers that Lopez affectionately giggles at the next morning. Jennifer Lopez doesn't have time to waste on late nights. She may have two simultaneously successful careers in film and music, but she's far from done. And until she is, there isn't much she'll let get in the way.

JENNIFER LOPEZ IS THE HIGHEST-paid Latina in Hollywood history, commanding \$9 million a picture. Her debut album, *On the 6*, sold 8 million copies worldwide. *J.Lo*, her far-superior second effort, will make her more ubiquitous than that nearly nude Versace dress she wore to the Grammys. Her last movie, *The Cell*, made an impressive \$60 million, and she has two new movies: the just-released romantic comedy *The Wedding Planner*, and the upcoming supernatural thriller *Angel Eyes*, with three more scheduled to follow.

"I get my work ethic from my parents," she says, lounging the next day in London's swank Metropolitan Hotel. "I feel like I haven't even started yet. I'm

looking forward to the ninth album, the thirtieth movie. I want to write more songs, tour, find the right roles, have my own family. That's why I have so much energy. I know what lies ahead."

She'll need that energy. The actress-singer oversees every facet of her public face. "I'm a perfectionist," she says proudly. "I try to control everything as much as possible. That's as far as work goes—I'm the opposite in my personal life. I just go with the flow in that way. I want somebody else to take the reins." But that's her private life; she controls the career she's cultivated since her teens. She had always dreamed of singing, and once she'd made inroads in Hollywood, she went after the dream full force. Lopez had an offer for a record contract with another major label but ended up recording for Sony, after much wooing from chairman and CEO Tommy Mottola. "Tommy was watching *Selena* one night," says Rooney. "He called me and said, 'This girl is getting ready to be a superstar.' Tommy set up a meeting and laid out the red carpet. He called all of his crew—Babyface, Walter Afanasieff, Ric Wake, myself, Rodney Jerkins—basically all of his producers. We all sat in a waiting room and met with Jennifer one by one. He was letting her know that if she took the deal, basically we'd make you a star. At the end of the day, after we all met with her, she and I sat down in Tommy's conference room, and I played her a song, and she loved it so much Tommy said, 'That's it, go to the studio tomorrow.' Deal wasn't even done, but we started her first al-

bum the very next day."

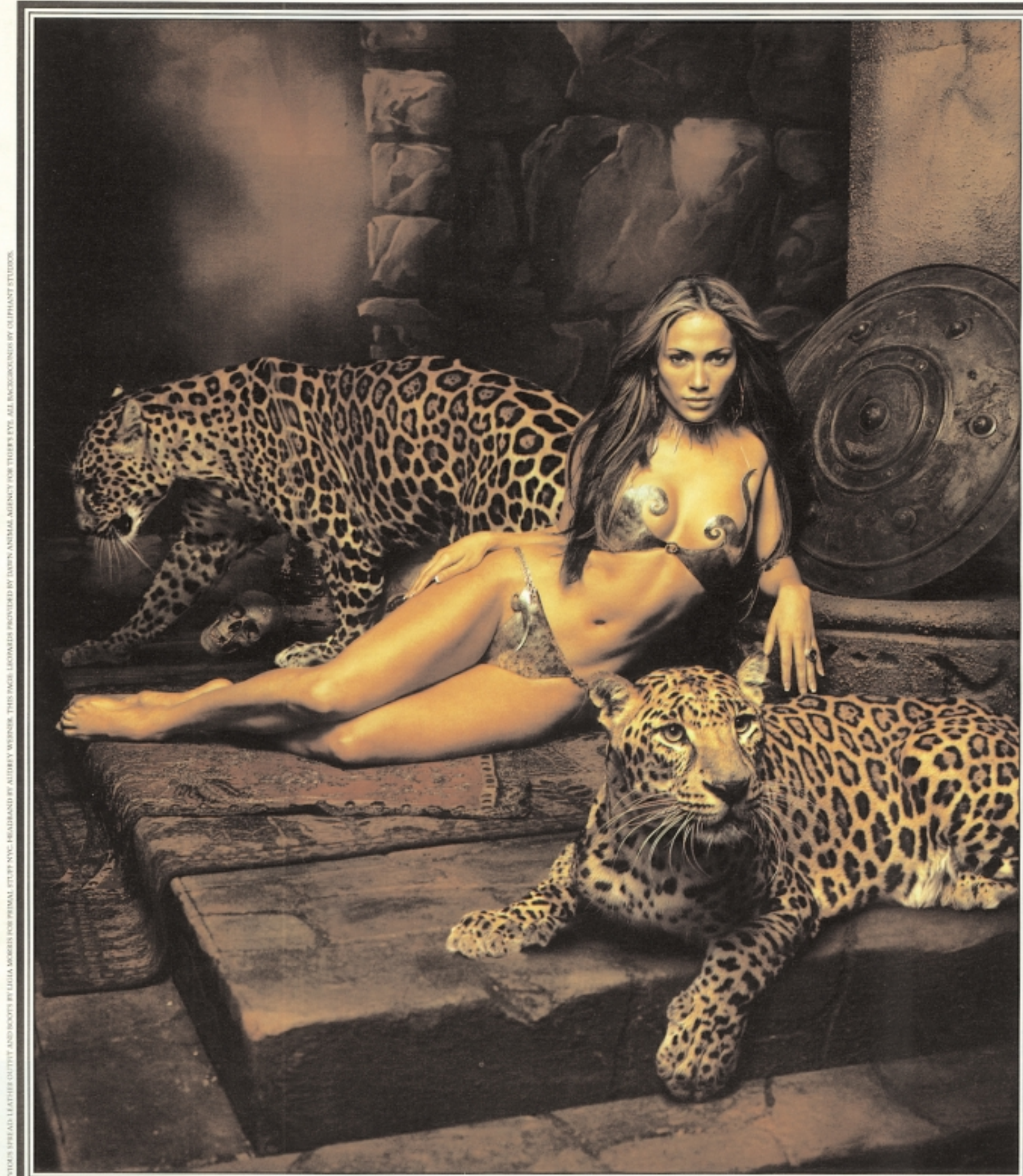
Lopez's manager, Benny Medina, who, ironically, is Puff Daddy's former manager, enters the room with mock-ups of Lopez's album artwork. She scrutinizes her likeness intently. "Benny? Can we move her over?" she asks in a sweet, decisive tone. "There's too much white here. Can we make her hair come over and cover that? They can do that, right? And the 'J.Lo' on the inside here should be bigger—and more interesting." Medina nods in agreement and leaves.

"You want to hear some of the tracks Puff did on the album?" she asks rhetorically, a bright smile crossing her face. She puts on a song called "Walking on Sunshine," a techno/hip-hop romp that sounds like it's already been remixed for the clubs. She turns it up and sings to it, dancing her way to the stereo and back. "I wanted this album to be about the passion of relationships—all the highs and lows," she says, sitting down again. "Love is a seesaw thing. 'Sunshine' is the incredible high. It's about being in love and waiting to see how a night is going to turn out when you have a crush on somebody."

In conversation, Lopez speaks in intimate tones, often whispering, sometimes shouting, giggling or squealing when making a point. She'll morph from serene to bubbly quicker than popped champagne. She discusses her career with the pride of a mother, as if her little dream is all grown up. When talk turns to her personal life, Lopez's voice quickly drops, as if she hopes no one will hear. In person, she is far more beautiful than the screen or the camera can convey. She exudes a glow, seemingly from her almond skin, and her movements are deliberate and sensual. Not only is she smart enough to know the effect they have on anyone in sight, she knows how to use it.

Lopez cues up another track from her album called "That's Not Me." Puffy produced and co-wrote it. The midtempo R&B number is a what-have-you-done-for-me-lately relationship song, and Lopez sings along, drowning out the stereo. "That's about the time in a relationship where you say, 'I can't take this anymore,'" she says. "It's a woman's anthem, where you're saying, 'I love who you are, but you have to let me be who I am so we can survive.'" So Puffy co-wrote a song about a relationship going wrong? Hmmmm. "It isn't directly about anything in our relationship," Lopez says. "It's pretty equal. The song is more of a philosophy type of thing. But when he heard it, he was like, 'Wow, you're really singing on that

+ PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK SELIGER +



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record.' I was like, 'Yeah.' It's a good song. I really mean it."

There are two Jennifer Lopeses, and they're sitting side by side today: the A-list movie star who wears custom-made clothes and prefers life in L.A. to her native New York, and the fly girl who rode the Number 6 train, dreaming of being that very star. "She lives in L.A., but she lives a different lifestyle," says Cory Rooney. "Jennifer still comes to the Bronx and sleeps on her mother's couch. She can live a superstar life, but when we're in the studio, she orders Chinese from, like, the place next door. One day when we were doing this album, she left the studio and hopped in a taxi because she didn't want to wait for a car. I was so scared for her I sent my engineer to take the cab ride with her. She's got a little bit of thug in her; I always tell her that."

Lopez recorded *J.Lo* in about three months - a quarter of the time it took to record her debut. She worked with the same core group - co-executive producer Rooney, producer Ric Wake and Sony's Chris Apostle. There are tracks from the Swedish team of Anders Bagge and Arnthor Birgisson, and four tracks co-produced by Puffy. "She changed drastically, in a good way, from the last record," Rooney says. "Last album, she had to be convinced, even eighty percent through, that she could do it. On this one, she brought technique and control. She knew how important it was to take time on certain songs and rest herself. She had her thing together - you'd've thought she'd been doing it all her life."

For *J.Lo*, Lopez wrote four songs. She says this album is where she is now in life - a turning point. "Things I go through," she says, "things I see my friends go through: You get to a certain age and you start thinking about other things. You start to wonder what your life is going to be. Is this how it's going to be for the next ten years, or am I going to do something different? Am I going to settle down, or am I going to keep running wild for a while? A lot of that stuff is in there."

LOPEZ WAS BORN ON JULY 24th, 1970, in the Castle Hill section of the Bronx. Her father, David, worked nights as a computer technician, and her mother, Guadalupe, taught kindergarten. Lopez is the middle of three musical girls: Her elder sister, Leslie, is a housewife who can sing opera, and her younger, Lynda, is a DJ on New York's WKTU as well as a VH1 VJ and an entertainment correspondent for the morning-news show on New York's Channel 11. "Our par-

Associate editor ANTHONY BOZZA profiled Kate Hudson in *RS 851*.



I NEED LOTS OF LOVE, IS WHAT IT BREAKS DOWN TO. I'M A CREATURE OF LOVE - I WAS RAISED WITH A LOT OF IT."

ents had a strong work ethic - there wasn't really any other way," says Lynda. "They led by example. They would tell us we could never miss a day of work - and they didn't. They told us we had to go to church every week, which they did. They never had any downtime. I didn't realize people were any different until I was a teenager."

Jennifer's parents were born in the same town in Puerto Rico, came to America in their early childhood and eventually met in the Bronx. "My

twelve years of Catholic school, including Holy Family, an all-girls Catholic high school. "All three of my daughters have talent," David says. "Jennifer is the one with the drive to put it all together. She's in a tough world, but you've got to realize who the person is. She was always very competitive. She's had that drive since she was a baby." Jennifer was a good student and athlete, giving education her all the same way she now does entertainment. "I recall asking why she was going out for

David worked nights during most of his daughters' childhoods, but he had uninterrupted weekends with them. "Poor thing, he worked his ass off for us," Jennifer says. "We never needed anything, and no matter how much money we didn't have, we were always OK somehow. I'm a daddy's girl; he's the love of my life." The daughters spent their time with their mother watching Barbra Streisand musicals and singing. "My mom would play a lot of music," Jennifer says. "Mostly things from her childhood: doo-wop, the Shirelles, the Ronettes, the Supremes." On Sundays their mother would listen - monastically - to Casey Kasem count down the Top Forty. "I guess she didn't know about *Billboard*," Jennifer says. "After we got back from church, she'd tape Casey Kasem and write down all the songs in the countdown so she could go back and listen to the ones she liked. It'd be Sunday, and she'd be cleaning and singing. She has it all somewhere - tons of tapes and lists."

Lopez considers these memories her childhood; she considers everything after age sixteen a bit differently. "That was the start of the boyfriend years," she says. "It was all about the house and family until I was sixteen; then I fell in love, and it was all about sneaking away from the house and family." But with three young women to raise, her parents were very much on top of their girls' game.

"Our parents were strict," Lynda says. "We didn't go out a lot, and we didn't get to do a lot of things growing up. I mean, just being out in the neighborhood, doing what we wanted? That would never happen. There was some sneaking out, though. I was the baby, so by the time they got to me, they were tired. Jen had it so much worse than I did."

The boyfriend years lasted from sixteen to twenty-five, and the boyfriend's name was David Cruz. "Nicest guy," Lopez says. "My family didn't like him, though. I guess your family always thinks you can find someone better. They all like him now. I think they were just afraid I was going to get pregnant." The taboo romance had its ups and downs and its fair share of *West Side Story* moments. "I was always climbing out windows, jumping off roofs, and he was sneaking up," she says, laughing. "It was crazy. I had a pure first love, which is probably why I am the way I am. It was an unconditional kind of love. Then we just grew up and grew apart."

After high school, Lopez threw her-

self into dancing. She worked in a law office and spent her spare time taking dance classes. At night she'd dance at clubs, taking gigs her dance teacher landed for her. "My teacher was trying to get his choreography off the ground, and I'd get \$150 to do this little piece he'd put up," she recalls. "I lived at home until my mom and I came at odds about me doing this for a living. She was worried about me. I was eighteen, I worked in Manhattan and would then hang out at this dance studio and clubs. I really would just go into the club and go right out. I never drank, but she didn't know that. She worried about me getting mixed up with the wrong people."

Lopez got her own place and sporadic dance work - video shoots and club gigs. In 1990, she landed her first steady job, as a Fly Girl on Fox's Wayans Brothers-driven skit-comedy show *In Living Color*. "We thought her going downtown for work was pretty far," her father says. "I was worried about her getting into that kind of world."

"*Living Color* was nice because it was my first steady paycheck," she says, "but I was miserable living in L.A. I'm a total New York-Bronx girl, with the accent and the whole nine. I was hating it. It's a really lonely city when you're an East Coast person. But now I love L.A." Her first year on the show, she spent most of her money flying home every weekend. "It didn't get better until the second year," she says. "David and I got back together, and he moved to L.A., and that made it more bearable. He wound up staying out there for four years with me. I was stable at home, so I was able to excel and work. He was my stability - I didn't have to worry about anything else with him there."

WHEN PRESSED, LOPEZ WILL admit that while she doesn't do drugs, she does have a voracious addiction. "I need lots of love, is what it breaks down to!" she says. "I'm a creature of love - I was raised with a lot of it. It's funny: When you have somebody there, you don't think about it or worry because they're there for you. But when you don't - like when you're not in a relationship - you're all about who you're gonna meet. That's always a nice free time, but some people like that and some don't. I'm the type that needs family and love. I need love. I'm addicted to love, just like the song!"

With her boyfriend's support, Lopez's career began to take off. She got acting gigs in TV movies like *Nurses on the Line: The Crash of Flight 7* and in a short-lived series called *Hotel Malibu*. Then, in 1995, she won a spot dancing for Janet Jackson in the "That's the Way Love Goes" video and, soon after, landed her first lead film role. [Cont. on 86]



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: THE SISTERS LOPEZ (LESLIE, JENNIFER AND LYNDA, FROM LEFT); HUGGING HER THEN-HUSBAND, OJANI; WITH PUFFY COMBS AT A MIAMI HEAT GAME IN NOVEMBER.

mother's parents were Europeans who settled in Puerto Rico," David Lopez says. "My father died when I was very young, and my mother brought my sister and I to New York in the early Fifties, basically because of economics. We were seeking a better life." David's parents stressed assimilation, a lesson he handed down to his children. "You had to speak English," he says. "You had to try to get into the mainstream, you had to succeed. Basically, I gave the same message to my kids. Spanish was not something we spoke a lot of in the house. They got that from their grandmothers." Guadalupe and David divorced three years ago, only after they had fulfilled their parental obligations. "The kids were grown up, well into their adult years," he says. "There isn't anything we should have done different. We raised the kids. They know that if something doesn't work out for them, they can always come and have a bowl of rice and beans."

Jennifer took singing and dancing lessons from age five and attended

track," her father says. "I thought she'd get outclassed, because she'd never done anything like that. If she starts something, all that happens is she gets better. She got to the point where she was competing with the big girls - she got called to Madison Square Garden for the Colgate Games."

"Her success doesn't surprise me," Lynda says. "She really was always one of those people who was great at everything - almost one of those people you hate. In sports, she was this amazing gymnast and shortstop, a great tennis player. Basically, anything she wants to do, she'll be as successful as you can at it. That's the kind of person she is."

Lopez learned music from her parents: David sang doo-wop, and Guadalupe was an avid fan of many genres. "We played all kinds of music," David says. "Musicals, salsa, merengue, rock & roll, doo-wop, you name it. Music permeated the house. The girls would put on shows in the living room, acting out scenes from *West Side Story* - Jennifer was always Anita, the fiery one."

lot, and we didn't get to do a lot of things growing up. I mean, just being out in the neighborhood, doing what we wanted? That would never happen. There was some sneaking out, though. I was the baby, so by the time they got to me, they were tired. Jen had it so much worse than I did."

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[Cont. from 50] in the drama *Mi Familia*. From there, Lopez's roles diversified: She did an action flick, *Money Train*, a family movie, *Jack*, and a thriller, *Blood and Wine*. Along the way, she worked with everyone from Francis Ford Coppola to Jack Nicholson. "I always made the choice to do different things," she says. "I took the other role, the one that in the long run would mean more, even if it wasn't the one that might have put more money in the bank. People thought I was crazy — as an actor, the goal at the beginning is just to start working. I just didn't want to get pigeonholed. A lot of the roles I was offered were this whole street thing with the accent, and I just couldn't go in on that." She stayed the course, even when it was hard. "There were definitely times when I was sitting by the phone, hoping that I got that spot on *NYPD Blue*," she says with a shy grin, "and not getting it. I'd say, 'Damn, I guess my rent's gonna be late again.'"

By 1997, Lopez was on the map, but her portrayal of the slain Mexican singer Selena made her a metropolis. The same year, she married Ojani Noa, a Miami model turned restaurateur. A year later, they were divorced. "It was nice — a love-at-first-sight situation," she says. "We got married. He was young, twenty-one, and I was twenty-five. It was premature, I guess. I don't think we had a fair shot as far as where we both were in life. It wasn't for a lack of love — that was genuine. Sometimes things just don't work out. But it did make me realize that love isn't the only thing that makes a marriage work — it's also about compromise, sacrifice and understanding."

Lopez has broken open Hollywood for Latina actresses with her work in such movies as the critically acclaimed *Out of Sight* and popcorn hits like *The Cell*, and she intends to use her influence to further the cause, starting with a biopic of 1930s Mexican artist Frida Kahlo in 2002. "That role will be the most challenging thing I'm sure I'll ever do," she says excitedly. "Frida was truly a tortured artist — she endured physical pain, and her husband, Diego Rivera, was a dog. He was a cheater, he slept with her sister. Frida had a limp and took painkillers. But while all that was going on, and before it, she was one of the most liberal women of her time. She was bisexual, and she and her husband were just ahead of their time — they were the rock stars of Mexican society in their day." Lopez's other pet project is a modern take on the opera *Carmen*. "It's in development, but it's coming together," she says. "I want to do it with flamenco dancing — it'll be hot."

FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS, DURING which time Jennifer Lopez went global, she has dated Sean "Puffy" Combs. "Two years," she says slowly. "It's a lot.

He's said to me many times, 'I want a divorce.' I'll be away so much, or he'll be . . . he can't get away, whatever, but he'll say, 'So, where do I send the papers?' " Lopez affirms that all is well, but they have no plans to marry. And if you're wondering what they do when they're together: They're a lot like other folks, just with enormously fat bank rolls. "Puff loves to go out," she says. "He's been a going-out-to-clubs person all his life, doing his thing. I've always been a homebody. So we switch off what we do when we're together. I don't really like to talk about us, because I don't feel like it's anybody's business. It's a separate thing. He's an artist, I'm an artist, we have two separate careers." Sure, true, but he also happens to be your boyfriend. "There are some things you have to keep sacred and private," she says quietly, breaking eye contact, as she does whenever Puffy is brought up in a nonprofessional capacity. "In this business, your soul is so public and open and out there for everybody. There is no privacy. There really isn't. At the end of the day, you really have to fight to keep certain things sacred so that they survive. And sometimes they don't, and that's life, but you try."

The pair's union was besieged instantaneously by the tabloid press back in '98: the good girl and the bad boy, etc. They have survived in the face of the public, the pressure of two huge careers and one much-publicized arrest. The couple was detained in December 1999 for running eleven red lights following a shooting in a New York club, allegedly by Shyne, a rapper on Puffy's label. An unregistered pistol was found in Puffy's SUV when the pair was pulled over. Lopez endured a fourteen-hour stay in a police station, and Puffy's weapons charge was scheduled to go to trial just a week before the release of *J.Lo.* "It was an unfortunate situation," she says. "We were somewhere we shouldn't have been. It was a bad situation, and any bad situation that involves celebrities, people run with." There certainly were rumors, the worst being that Lopez demanded a nail file and cuticle cream from the police. "I don't even know where people get these things from!" she says, irate. "C'mon, you've known me for a day and you know me better than that. No, it's not true. Newspaper people see sales, and the people around see an opportunity, too. It's a nasty web. Let me tell you, there were some people up in there with some bad karma, but it wasn't us."

Lopez is not the type of celebrity who will refuse to answer a question. She is still that Bronx girl with good values whose parents taught her to show up for work every day. She's also quick and willful enough to handle anything. When a strange, shaggy Belgian journalist recently asked Lopez to kiss him at the outset of an interview, she quickly did. Then he asked her for a sound bite. "In Belgium, we say that [Cont. on 88]

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[Cont. from 86] your album is so good that it sucks your brains out," the guy said. "Can you say, 'My album is so good it sucks your brains out?'" he asked, holding his tape recorder closer. Lopez narrowed her eyes. "I don't think you say that in Belgium," she said wryly.

THE NEXT DAY, A BLACK MERCEDES limo that has been carting Jennifer Lopez around London slowly makes its way back to her hotel. Inside the car, she munches a chocolate-chip cookie and tries to sort out her future. "I've always been the reflective type," she says softly. "I was always told that I think too much. And I do. Someone will say something to me and I'm over there in the corner thinking about everything that person could have meant by it. Over and over, I'm breaking it down. I do the same with my life." At thirty, Lopez has everything — cash, international fame, creative control over two careers, and loving families at home and on the road. She also has a laundry list of unachieved goals. She plans to work, as she's been taught. She plans to be who she's always been. "I'm the same person," Lopez says, "just with fancier clothes. You have to make a conscious decision to be that way — and never forget it. One summer I worked in a bank, and I learned something: You are just two paychecks away from being that homeless person on the street. It's why I keep struggling and going. I feel like I need to." Soon enough, the limo arrives at the hotel. Lopez puts on her sunglasses and looks through the tinted window at a crowd of teens waiting for her autograph. She turns back, and though her eyes are obscured, the furrow between her brows is not. "You know, it's hard for me to talk about my personal life," she says, her voice a bit tremulous. "No matter what I say, it's never exactly what I wish I would have said. And even if you do get it right, people will still see what they want. It's too much to keep your hands all over. It's better to say nothing and let people think what they want while you just try to live your life." She looks back out the window, then down at her lap for a moment. "OK, baby, you take care," she says sincerely.

Jennifer Lopez exits fluidly, a whirl of white fur and pin-straight hair floating toward the first pen in the autograph line as the car door slams shut. ○

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