

The Lopez Effect

Before the days of platinum albums, best-selling perfumes, and big-budget movies, there was a girl who was told to lose weight and play by the rules. Good thing Jennifer Lopez didn't listen. By Brooke Hauser

She's not the most patient student," Marc Anthony was saying about his wife and painting protégée, Jennifer Lopez. One rainy afternoon in August, as Lopez rehearsed songs from her new album *Brave* in a Manhattan recording studio, he sat in a nearby room and mused over their recent art sessions together. Dressed in all black and layered silver chains, Anthony spoke affectionately of his sweetheart's penchant for painting seascapes, and her tendency to attack canvas with the same earnest intensity she brings to all of her endeavors.

"I'm like, 'Jen, the paint has to dry before you apply more, or else it's going to be one blob of gray,'" said the singer, his voice inflected with a slightly stronger New York Puerto Rican flavor than his wife's. "If you don't let it dry, you have brown at the end of the day."

Anthony's advice happens to be an apt metaphor for his wife's approach to living. Jennifer Lopez is not one to watch paint dry. Before a single image ever sets in, she is already onto the next. Her life so far has been one of bold strokes and restless reinvention, from Fly Girl to international superstar to ruler of her own fashion-and-fragrance empire worth an estimated \$255 million.

But in recent years, the woman whose

every relationship and wardrobe change was painstakingly documented has experienced the ultimate image makeover: At 38, Lopez is happily married. With stepkids (Anthony's three children from two previous relationships).

To the disappointment of tabloid editors, the star now spends her rare downtime cooking and watching movies at home—a 10,000-square-foot estate that they share in Long Island. She finds

and an armful of silver bracelets, her face untouched except for some mascara and a smear of peach lip gloss, she looks more like a grad student about to pull an all-nighter than a legendary diva.

Her no-nonsense attire is a reminder of why she's here in the first place: to work. And if hard work and a happy home life aren't interesting enough to sell tabloids, all the better, as far as she's concerned.

"I know how uncomfortable that

"I can do anything. Just get me in the room. Then I'll make it happen."

comfort in making Nuyorican staples like breaded chicken and yellow rice (*comida creolla*, Anthony calls it, "our food") and watching *Finding Nemo*. She has come a long way from Jenny from the Block. But if you're expecting Jenny from the Burbs, keep looking.

The woman who emerges today from Studio 4, where she's been belting out her new single, "Hold It, Don't Drop It," behind a covered window is just, well, Jennifer. Wearing loose-fitting blue jeans

life is, how destructive. That's why you see people crumble under the pressure," Lopez says, kicking her feet up on a swivel chair. "It's a tricky thing, the tabloids. I know that a lot of people read them, and they gauge who's hot and who's not by who is on the cover." Her voice going flat, she adds: "If that's what being hot is right now, I don't want to be that."

Lopez could vow never to touch a pink diamond again, but as many times as she might reinvent herself, it seems

PHOTOGRAPHED BY MICHAEL THOMPSON



**These pages: Hair, Ken Pavés;
makeup, Scott Barnes;
manicure, April Foreman.
Prop stylist: Bill Doig.
Fashion editor: Paul Cavaco.
Details, see Credits page.**

difficult for her to shake her prima donna reputation. The myth of J.Lo, she of the callipygian curves, is just too juicy. There is the broad-stroked story: Latina dancer from the Bronx makes it big in Hollywood, et cetera. Then there are the details of her ensuing divadom that are so vivid that even if they are unbelievable, surely they are unforgettable. (For instance, what to make of hearsay that La Lopez used to demand that her coffee be stirred counterclockwise?)

The new, coolheaded Jennifer seems to prefer talking about her future instead of her past, and has learned to diffuse speculation with comments that are frank if not exactly forthcoming: "I'm not going to sit here and say I never

made a mistake," she says. Likewise, she politely but firmly sidesteps questions about her exes, saying, "It's not something I care to discuss with the public, only because I think it's disrespectful to my husband. I wouldn't want him talking about all his ex-girlfriends."

For someone with so many handlers, Lopez is clearly a woman who can handle herself. As for her diva rep, there is one condition the star demands, unequivocally: respect. Not just for herself, but for those close to her. The constant media attention has been, at times, just as difficult for her family. "They hated it because they didn't know what to believe," says Lopez, who has a habit of speaking in the second person. "They feel like there were too many lies about you, and they know you really well. They feel like they constantly have to defend you. It's not good, you know?"

Instead, here is Lopez's story as she tells it. She was born on July 24, 1969, in the Castle Hill section of the Bronx to Puerto Rican immigrants Guadalupe and David Lopez, a teacher and a computer analyst who later divorced. Jennifer was "a good girl" who grew up with a support system that included her two sisters as well as ever-present aunts and grandmothers. "All the women I grew up with were very strong," Lopez says. "It occurred to me more as I got older how the women in our family ran the show."

Encouraged by her mother to be

self-sufficient, Lopez diversified her talent early on, taking flamenco and jazz dance classes at a neighborhood studio and, as a teenager, playing tennis and softball when she wasn't acting in school plays such as *Godspell*. After class, she worked at a bootleg perfume store

the script for a telenovela. A brief recap: Lopez wed and later divorced restaurateur Ojani Noa (whom she successfully sued for \$545,000 after he threatened to publish a tell-all book about her), coupled up and broke up with Puffy, got married again (this time to choreogra-

"I know how destructive [the tabloid] life is. That's why you see people crumble."

(located behind a tire shop) where the future face of Glow by JLo developed a nose for fragrance as well as business.

She pursued show business first, dropping out of Manhattan's Baruch College to hoof her way onto the FOX comedy show *In Living Color* as a Fly Girl dancer. Once she went to Hollywood, Lopez's leader-of-the-pack attitude really took effect. First order of business: fire the manager who told her to lose weight.

"He was an idiot," the size 6 Lopez recalls with a smirk. "Anybody who could be so stupid as to say, 'You have to fit into this mold or you can't make it,' is really shortsighted." (Her instincts proved right when the actress beat out 11,000 competitors to land the lead in 1997's *Selena*, about the beloved Tejano singer who was murdered in 1995.)

Every record deal, movie role, and product launch that Lopez has commandeered since then is a testament to a powerful sense of self infused, 100-proof, sheer will. "I was always like, 'I can do anything. Just get me in the room; do me a favor. Then I'll make it happen on my own,'" Lopez says. "It's not that you get every audition, but you make fans along the way."

Those fans have included some of Hollywood's best directors—Oliver Stone and Steven Soderbergh (who cast her in *U-Turn* and *Out of Sight*, respectively), to name two—as well as more than a few suitors. Her romantic history reads like

pher Cris Judd), got divorced again, and became immersed in one very long engagement to Ben Affleck.

But whether she was Puffy's ghetto-fab girlfriend or Affleck's refined leading lady, with each new man she seemed to transform into a completely new woman. For someone who has such a strong sense of self, it doesn't really jibe. Just don't try telling her that.

"I mean, duh! Aren't you different with different people? I'm different with different girlfriends," Lopez says, her face softening again. "Even the person I was ten years ago is not the person I am today. Everything I've learned and experienced has affected who I am."

"I wouldn't change anything," she adds, "because it was so fun. Even when things were hard, even if I'd be crying in the bathtub because I didn't get an audition, or a boyfriend was being mean to me, I had my presence of mind. Whatever it was, I always used to say"—in a whisper—"This is my life."

The J.Lo Effect *n* [see JENNIFER LOPEZ] 1: (*slang*) a technical analysis term referring to a rounding bottom in a stock's price pattern 2: (circa 2001) a fashion craze that promoted curvaceousness and redefined mainstream ideals of feminine beauty 3: a new standard of fame marked by self-branding and multidisciplinary ambitions (syn see ICONITIS) 4: a condition generally affecting males that is characterized by excessive

Cashmere sweater and headband by Michael Kors. Makeup colors: Eye Shadows in 9 and 11, Sheer Blush in 11, and Sheer Lipstick in 2 by Giorgio Armani. Details, see Credits page.



spending and hyperbolic tendencies.

There's just something about the five-foot-six Lopez that gets men gushing, and her third husband is no exception. Marc Anthony is a walking endorsement of all things Jennifer Lopez. Her name is even tattooed in cursive on his wrist. His appreciation of her is so all-encompassing, in fact, that simple words can't express it. For instance, Anthony was trying to describe the effect his wife has had on celebrity fashion labels—before Gwen Stefani's L.A.M.B. or Sarah Jessica Parker's Bitten, there was Lopez's sportswear collection, JLo—and branding in general.

"Well, they're sitting in the seat that she created," he says, leaning back and stroking his chin scruff. "You understand what I'm saying? She had to build the seat. She was one of those people who handcrafted this seat that you could sit on. And now everybody's just: 'Oh, you don't have a seat? Want to sit down?'"

He pauses before continuing: "That's the difference between being the source and the inheritor. She's had an immense contribution to modern culture and to what being an icon is—now they judge fame based on how you run your empire. I think the world is going to realize the importance of Jennifer Lopez."

Anthony might be exhibiting symptoms of the J.Lo Effect, but there is no denying that Lopez is one of the most influential moguls of her time. In 2004, a year before the launch of her clothing line Sweetface, *Fortune* magazine named her the richest female entertainer under 40. To date, she has made more than 20 films, recorded six albums, created seven fragrances, launched three fashion lines, and opened one restaurant (Madre's in Pasadena, California). While her creative endeavors haven't been as bulletproof as her business ventures, Lopez seems intent on getting the respect she feels she deserves as an artist. After adding "producer" to her list of credits a few years ago, she is on her way.

El Cantante, the first film under her Nuyorican Productions banner (which also produces her MTV reality show *DanceLife*), reminded skeptics that the

woman can act. Lopez received some glowing reviews for her heart-wrenching performance as Puchi, the brassy wife of salsa legend Héctor Lavoe, played by Anthony. "I liked playing Puchi—she said whatever she wanted to say," the star concedes. "I can't do that."

Currently, Lopez is collaborating—with writer-director Don Roos (*The Opposite*

“It’s not about control; it’s about doing things that you’re proud of.”

of Sex)—on a film called *Love and Other Impossible Pursuits*, about a woman who yearns to be a mother but fears her fate is to be a bad stepmother instead. A relatively new stepmother herself (at press time, there was yet another pregnancy rumor), Lopez hopes that the movie will inspire discussion about the effects of remarriage and the patchwork family the same way that *Kramer vs. Kramer* did for divorce.

"I just know that so many people are going to appreciate it," she says, brightening. "They are going to understand it; they are going to struggle with it. I love movies where the characters aren't perfect, because I don't think anybody's perfect." She rolls her eyes at herself. "Obviously, we all know that. But I believe people need to see that, you know what I mean?"

Absolutely. Whether she's singing "I'm Real" or talking about the rush she feels as an actress when bringing a "real person" like Puchi to life, Lopez's quest for authenticity has been the one constant in her career. You can choose to see her incarnations—Jenny from the Block, J.Lo, Jennifer, Jen, or Lola (Anthony's nickname for her)—as put-ons. Or, you can see them as earnest attempts to sort out who she is from what she was and who she still wants to be.

Over the years, Lopez has learned that she can't stop people from thinking what they will about her. She can't reverse her past mistakes or rewrite her bad reviews. But she can do what

she's always done: express herself. All of her selves. And then find satisfaction in knowing that "it's not about having control over everything; it's about doing things that you're proud of," she says, and shrugs. "You have to walk away and say, 'I did what I could.'"

If there is a secret to Lopez's success, it is that there is no secret. Ambition,

hard work, and a Hazmat ego have gotten her where she is today. And it is her can-do attitude that Lopez's fans seem to relate to even more than her lyrics or the roles that she has played.

"She gives Latin women a chance to be somebody," gushed Jennifer German, an 18-year-old Dominican dancer with scrunched blond curls. "Ever since I was a little girl, I've said, 'I want to be Jennifer Lopez.'"

On August 23rd, German was one of hundreds of fans who turned out to see Lopez give an unadvertised live concert at Roseland Ballroom in New York City, following a casting call she held the same day to find a dancer for her music video "Do It Well." Before the show, guys and girls of all ages and backgrounds took to the floor to do the Robot, the pimp walk, and pop and lock. Then, shortly before 11 P.M., Lopez went on. Wearing heavy stage makeup and knee-high black boots, she would perform a few songs from her new album before disappearing backstage and slipping through the paparazzi who screamed her name.

Soon enough, Lopez and Anthony would be untouchable behind the tinted windows of a glossy black SUV. But at least for an instant, she was onstage in the flesh, as real to her fans as she'll ever be. As a sea of cell phones lit up to take her picture, Lopez surveyed the crowd, and really seemed to mean it when, smiling into the microphone, she said: "It's good to be home." ♦



1997

▲WITH JACK NICHOLSON IN *BLOOD AND WINE* "This was in Miami. I love Miami. This was a crazy time. It was me first getting into doing movies, and it was exciting, but it was like, 'Oh, my God, what's happening?' I don't think anybody knew who I was."



1997

▲FROM *SELENA* "Selena was a big moment. It was a huge responsibility. It was great to be able to play her, and I'm just sorry that she's not still around."

▼WITH GEORGE CLOONEY IN *OUT OF SIGHT* "Steven Soderbergh was like, 'I want you to read with George.' I went to George's house, we read, and that was it."



1998



1999

▲AT THE WORLD RELEASE OF THE VIDEO "IF YOU HAD MY LOVE," NEW YORK CITY "This shirt was totally backless, just two strings in the back."

▼AT THE MTV VIDEO MUSIC AWARDS, NEW YORK CITY "Oh, my God! That's an outfit that people remember, and I only wore it once. It was a very ghetto-fabulous time."

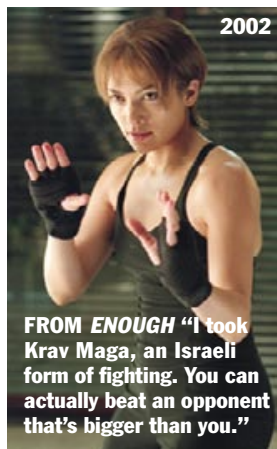


2000



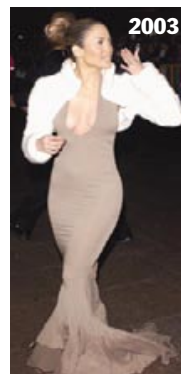
2001

▲AT THE VANITY FAIR OSCAR PARTY, LOS ANGELES "That was a Chanel dress. They actually had this in the museum [the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute exhibit on Chanel] for a while. I had to give it back to them, and then they sent it back to me."



2002

FROM *ENOUGH* "I took Krav Maga, an Israeli form of fighting. You can actually beat an opponent that's bigger than you."



2003

▲AT THE PREMIERE OF *MAID IN MANHATTAN*, LONDON "I love that dress. It had a big bow that hung in the back over the fur. Actually, I think there's some horsehair in that bun."



2003

▲AT THE PREMIERE OF *GIGLI*, LOS ANGELES "I loved this hair and makeup. The curls drove the hairdresser crazy that day, but we did it."



2006

WITH MARC ANTHONY AT THE ACADEMY AWARDS, HOLLYWOOD "Green is a good color for me. You wouldn't think that it would be, but I've had lucky moments in green."



2005

▲WITH DAVID BECKHAM AND BEYONCÉ AT THE PREMIERE OF THEIR PEPSI COMMERCIAL, MADRID "I was wearing a Sweetface dress that was straight off the runway."

▼WITH JANE FONDA IN *MONSTER-IN-LAW* "I loved working with Jane. She's a monster, in a great way. She's just such a strong powerhouse of a woman."



2005



2005

▲WITH ALEX RODRIGUEZ AND MARC ANTHONY AT A YANKEES GAME, NEW YORK CITY "My husband and my father are Mets fans, and my mother and my cousins on that side of the family are Yankees fans. It's a split camp. I'm neither."

▼AT THE NATIONAL PUERTO RICAN DAY PARADE, NEW YORK CITY "I don't go every year, but I do love it. I love feeling my community, you know what I mean?"



2007



2007

▲WITH MARC ANTHONY IN *EL CANTANTE* "Part of making the movie was showing people who Héctor [Lavoe] was. If you're a big Bob Dylan fan, and people don't get it, it's like, 'Listen to this!' You're introducing them to something that could change their lives."



2007

▲AT THE PREMIERE OF *EL CANTANTE*, NEW YORK CITY "It was such a great night. That's Marchesa. Isn't that a beautiful color? I just remember that dress had, like, seven thousand yards of material."



2006

▲AT THE MTV VIDEO MUSIC AWARDS, NEW YORK CITY "I don't know why I got criticized for this. It was so pimp! Somebody from MTV said, 'We're having everybody defend their outfits. Remember that silver scarf and the silver dress?' And I was like, 'Yeah?' 'Do you want to defend it?' I was like, 'No. For what?'"