

LIVING *La Vida Lopez*

HER TRIPLE-THREAT CAREER MAY HAVE LED HER TO WORLD DOMINATION, BUT JENNIFER LOPEZ TELLS *EMIRATES WOMAN* WHY MOTHERHOOD IS HER MOST IMPORTANT ROLE YET

Written by Aoife Stuart-Madge

There are women who have it all, then there's Jennifer Lopez. The 43-year-old singer-dancer-actress-fashion designer and one-woman global empire (her fragrance line alone has netted the star almost Dhs300 million over the last decade, and she also has endorsement deals with Gillette and L'Oréal) is one seriously busy woman. She's also a mum-of-two with four-year-old twins, Max and Emme, from her marriage to ex-husband Marc Anthony. She's currently juggling parenting duties with her mammoth Dance Again world tour, performing 55 shows, including a Dubai date on November 22, as well as planning a return to the big screen, starring opposite Jason Statham in upcoming action film *Parker*. It's no surprise that Lopez has just been crowned the world's most powerful celebrity by *Forbes* magazine.

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But contrary to her reputation as a diva, Lopez maintains that she is still the same girl who grew up in New York's tough Bronx borough. "I might seem a lot of different things to different people, but the truth is I've never changed," says Lopez. "Of course, I live in a bigger house than the one I was brought up in, but I still have the same values and traditions, and live pretty much the same as when I was growing up."

Those values include putting family first, so despite her punishing schedule, Lopez has refused to employ nannies to help look after her kids. Instead, her mum Guadalupe, cousin Tiana and her childhood best friend, Arlene, help with babysitting duties – and Max and Emme travel with Lopez whenever possible.

"My whole family's still there with me. We go everywhere together," she says. Adding, "I'm good at being a mum. Though I'm like most mums – we beat ourselves up, so we never feel like we're perfect."

She attributes her solid family upbringing for helping her overcome personal heartache and keeping her ego in check in the face of global stardom. "I've been able to keep my feet on the ground through all of this whole thing, this career, and my personal life and still come out being a whole person in a way."

When it comes to the twins, Lopez admits she does make mistakes – particularly when it comes to shielding them from the spotlight. Emme recently accompanied Lopez to the Chanel fashion show in Paris, an experience the singer has no intention of repeating. "I hadn't been to a fashion show for ages and I forgot people could rush you," says Lopez. "They were so close and I got so full of anxiety, thinking, 'What

am I doing here with my daughter?' But she was fine. I was the one freaking out. I don't think I'll do that again."

Despite these obstacles, Lopez is determined to raise her children with her traditional values. "I have to show my kids even more through example that hard work and being loving and giving really matters in being a good human being," she says.

To that end, Lopez has maintained a close relationship with the twins' father Marc Anthony (whose infidelity was reportedly behind their 2011 split). "The truth is there's love there and we were great friends first, and we have two babies," says Lopez. "The main goal is just not to mess them up, to really make them okay, and be sure that we are what we need to be to them first."

The exes recently teamed up for their reality show *Q'Viva! The Chosen*, touring 20 countries in Latin America in search of singing and dancing talent. "It's fun, because we know each other so well and we really work well together," says Lopez of working with her ex – though she does admit that there is also friction. "It has its moments...You're talking and you don't agree on something, and then you're like, 'Oh, be quiet!'"

Lopez talks pragmatically about the split – her third divorce (she was previously married to waiter Ojani Noa and backing dancer Cris Judd) – and insists it hasn't made her jaded. "I really wanted this family to work. That was my biggest dream, and I worked hard at it," she says. "We both did. Sometimes it doesn't work and that's sad. But I remain an eternal optimist about love. I believe in love... It's still my biggest dream."

True to form, she's found love since, ➤



in the arms of her backing dancer Casper Smart, her boyfriend of one year, who, at 25, is 18 years her junior. Although the star was recently forced to deny engagement rumours, she admits that her toy-boy relationship is "nice" and that "it works right now."

With Lopez looking better than ever – flaunting her famous curves in a series of revealing catsuits on stage – her sexiness appears effortless. But Lopez insists she has to work hard to feel good about herself. "Sometimes when I get home and I'm not feeling so great, I make myself go to the gym," she says. "Then I come home and take a shower, put on a great outfit, some make-up, tie my hair up, and I feel pepped up and great about myself. I think that for some reason, when you maintain yourself, people are really surprised. It's inspiring for women who have kids and take care of themselves to be sexy."

She does admit, however, there are days when she just doesn't care. "Whenever I have a day off, it's sweatpants, T-shirt off the shoulder, hair like up in a crazy little bun, no make-up, lots of moisturiser, like slather moisturiser on my face, so I can feel pampered or something. I don't know what that's about, but that's me."

Whatever it's about, it seems to be working: Lopez doesn't appear to have aged a day over the last decade. She certainly doesn't subscribe to the Hollywood notion that a woman's career declines after 40 – in fact, she's only getting started. "I seriously feel like the best days are ahead, and I like the idea of getting to do everything I did before but with more knowledge, experience, and street smarts," she says. "There's no way in the world that just because women turn the number 40, they're anything less than amazing. That's crazy. If anything, you're even more amazing!"

With brand Lopez's world domination,

it's easy to forget that before Jenny From The Block or J-Lo, she first shot to fame as Jennifer Lopez, actress, starring in *Out Of Sight* with George Clooney in 1998. And believing that motherhood has improved her skills as an actress, she can't wait to get back in front of the camera.

"You can't help but be more thoughtful and more aware after you have kids. I think they've made me feel things in a deeper way and that's enhanced my work," she says. "My job deals with feelings, emotions, and expressing them, so I think my kids have actually helped me be better at what I do. They've made me feel things in a deeper and more profound way than I ever did before."

She recently stepped down as a judge on *American Idol* so she could focus on her singing and acting. "I could do *Idol* for the rest of my life," she said at the time, "but that would be giving up a bunch of other things ... I have my movies and my music and my this and my that. It all kind of worked together for a while, but then it gets more complicated."

Though she does say that motherhood may restrict the career choices she makes in the future. "Being a mother does change you. For example, I wouldn't do a crazy love scene in a movie now," she admits.

A true workaholic, when she does get some downtime from her crazy busy schedule, she'll usually spend the time jotting ideas down. "I love a long bath. I love anything creative. I love decorating. I even love just flipping through magazines and vegging out for a while," she says. "But I'm also one of those people who loves to work, so I'll sing, dance, work on my next performance, or write to whomever it may be about a new idea. Those kinds of things fulfil my soul and keep the spark alive. Women have to do things that spark their souls so they feel young, vibrant, sexy, and full of life. You should never lose that part of yourself."

For details of Jennifer Lopez's Dubai concert, visit jlodubai.com ■

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