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This year saw Jennifer Lopez star in a box-office blockbuster, front a sell-out concert tour, turn 50 and get engaged. Tiffany Bakker meets the woman of the moment



**I**t was at the dawn of the new millennium, February 2000, that a young Jennifer Lopez stepped onto the Grammys red carpet in an emerald-green Versace gown daringly slashed to the navel. According to fashion fable, the look sparked such a frenzy on the fledgling World Wide Web that Google Image Search was born.

Flash forward to now and the time warp is real: in September, Lopez (affectionately dubbed J.Lo) emerged at Milan Fashion Week in a reimagination of the iconic chiffon number, strutting down the runway with just as much sass as the first time around. Again, she broke the internet.

Trends have long worked in 20-year cycles and Lopez's renaissance pays testament to that – not that she ever went out of style. The past two decades have seen her sharpen her acting prowess (scoring rave reviews in 2019's female-headed stripper heist *Hustlers*), release new chart-topping music and head up a multimillion-dollar perfume empire, the most successful celebrity fragrance line in the world.

Her latest scent, Promise, a sensual floral woody blend, tells a particularly personal tale. In March, the star became engaged to baseball champion Alex Rodriguez (right) and, according to media reports, the wedding is slated for 2020 – if she can squeeze it in alongside her upcoming rom-com *Marry Me* (with Owen Wilson) and a hallowed gig headlining America's Super Bowl Halftime Show. Call it another J.Lo mega moment – or perhaps, the new status quo.

**marie claire:** Congratulations on your latest film, *Hustlers*. How was it getting into character and learning to pole dance for the role?

**Jennifer Lopez:** It was awful [laughs]. I do not recommend it. In your mind you think, "Yes! I'm going to learn how to pole dance, that sounds sexy! Wow! This is going to be fun!" And then the reality of that steel pipe against your bones and trying to hold on with your inner thighs ... it's not fun. But once you get a few moves down, you actually feel awesome. It's like, "I'm really doing this! I'm spinning ... I'm flying up here right now!" But it took a minute. And there was a lot of bruising. I kept asking my teacher, "Is this normal?"

But, overall, filming was such an empowering experience. It was a new kind of role for me, having to come out practically naked in front of a room full of crew and extras and dance. But putting myself out there physically, emotionally and psychologically was liberating.

**MC:** What was it like working with such a strong ensemble cast of women, including Constance Wu and Cardi B?

**JLO:** Being on an all-female set was a different, more powerful experience than any other movie I've worked on. There's so much diversity in front of and behind the camera, which set the stage for us to bring this incredible story to life.

**MC:** *Hustlers* is about women taking the power back. How important is it for women to take control of their lives?



“Everything I put out into the world has to be a promise. I promise to have boundaries in my relationship with my partner”

**J.LO:** As a woman, I think it's very important to be in control. Not everybody, of course, can be that lucky. I've always been really entrepreneurial. Ever since I was little, I felt like I would have my own career and have different kinds of things that I did. That was always my mindset – even as a kid – that I wouldn't just do one thing, I would do many things.

**MC:** It's been 20 years since you released your first album. What advice would you give now to Jennifer circa 1999?

**J.LO:** To stay focused and not take what others say about you personally. It's easy to get wrapped up in other people's perceptions of you, but you just have to keep going and prove them wrong.

**MC:** Speaking of 20-year anniversaries, we have to talk about your appearance at Milan Fashion Week in September, where you broke the internet, again!

**J.LO:** You know, thank you. I love Donatella [Versace]; we have a long relationship. Obviously it was the 20-year anniversary of the jungle-print dress that I wore to the Grammys [in 2000]. Donatella's been a good friend, we have an amazing bond and she's supported me so many times over my career, always dressing me, always creating looks for my shows. She called me up and said,

“We knew the Versace moment would be fun, but not that it would go viral. It was crazy”

“You know, it's 20 years...” I was like, “Are you kidding me?” She told me she wanted to do a whole collection inspired by that print and asked if I'd come out at the end of the show.

Again, we knew it would be a nice, fun moment, but we didn't know – just like the first time – that it would be this big thing. It was so ... viral [laughs]. It was crazy. But it was also fun because Donatella was so happy and the energy in the room was great.

**MC:** How does it feel to have had the first viral fashion moment in internet history?

**J.LO:** [Laughs] well, I don't think about it much, but it is super cool. Something to tell your kids who love computers and the internet and all that stuff.

**MC:** You looked amazing – how do you keep in shape?

**J.LO:** Consistency is the most important thing. There are so many days where I won't feel like going to the gym, but you will only see results if you are consistent. [My fiancé] Alex and I enjoy the time we spend together at the gym, so I recommend making it a habit with a friend or a significant other!

**MC:** You're renowned for your clean living ... Do you have a vice?

**J.LO:** Doesn't everyone? I have a sweet tooth that definitely gets the best of me.

**MC:** You launched Glow almost 20 years ago and now have the most successful celebrity fragrance line in the world. How does that feel?

**J.LO:** It's an amazing feeling because fragrance is so personal to me. Years before I came out with Glow, I would constantly experiment with scents, layering them in different ways with one for my skin and one for my clothes. I'm so happy to have created a line of fragrances people enjoy and use in their everyday life.

**MC:** What was the inspiration behind your new fragrance, Promise?

**J.LO:** A year or two ago I had lunch with [business magnate] Warren Buffett and he told me something that really resonated with me – he said that a brand is a promise. And now I feel like everything I put out into the world has to be a promise. When you do that, you're always challenging yourself to be better and better.

**MC:** So what promises do you keep to yourself?

**J.LO:** I promise to do my best, I promise to keep growing, and I promise to never give up – those are my main three.

**MC:** What promises do you make to Alex and your kids [11-year-old twins Max and Emme]?

**J.LO:** I make those same promises to them, but I want them to have their own promises that they make to themselves. Everybody needs to find what that is, right? I promise to have boundaries in my relationship with my partner. But, whatever it is, [your promises should be] those things that make you most happy or make you most at peace.

**MC:** You turned 50 in July. How did you approach that milestone?

**J.LO:** It's easy for people to get caught up in their age, but I looked at turning 50 as an opportunity. There's still so much for me to accomplish in my career and as a mum and I can't wait for the next phase of my life to play out.

**MC:** And how do you manage it all?

**J.LO:** My kids always come first. That might mean I'm on an aeroplane more than I otherwise would be, or flying through the night, but it's so important to be there and watch them grow up.

**MC:** What's the most important lesson you want to instil in Max and Emme?

**J.LO:** Hard work pays off. Find something that you love doing and are passionate about, and don't stop until you accomplish your goals. It's OK to make mistakes, but it's how you come back from them and grow that makes it all worth it in the end.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP J.Lo with Constance Wu in *Hustlers*; on the runway at this year's Milan Fashion Week; and in the original Versace dress in 2000.



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