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CHAPTER 1

EARLY LIFE

WHO IS JOHN LEGEND?

John Legend is an R&B singer and songwriter. He was born on December 28, 1978. His parents named him John Roger Stephens. The star had humble beginnings. Springfield, Ohio, is where his family lived. In Springfield, many people were struggling to earn money. John's parents had to work hard to survive.



WHO IS MICHAEL BUBLÉ?

Three years before John, Michael Steven Bublé was born. His birthday is September 9, 1975. Like John, he grew up to become a famous singer and songwriter. But Michael's style is jazz rather than R&B. His family lived in Burnaby, British Columbia. The city is on the west coast of Canada, just outside of Vancouver. Jobs at sea are common there. Michael's father worked in the fishing industry.





Ronald Stephens

FAMILY AT HOME

John's parents are Ronald and Phyllis Stephens. Ronald worked in a factory that built farm equipment and trucks. He had served in the National Guard. Phyllis was a seamstress. She sewed clothes for a living. The couple had four children. Ronald Jr. was the oldest. John was born next. Then came a third boy, Vaughn. He also grew up to be a singer. Phyllis (Missy) was the baby and only girl.

AWAY AT SEA

Michael's father, Lewis, had a dangerous job. He was a salmon fisherman. Lewis often spent months away at sea. His wife, Amber, stayed home with their three children. Like John, Michael grew up with siblings at home. He is the oldest, with two younger sisters. Their names are Brandee and Crystal. Brandee became a children's book author. Crystal is an actress.



MUSICAL SIBLINGS

Musical talent seems to run in some families. Many famous singers have brothers or sisters who have also tried to make it in the music industry. One example is Beyoncé's sister Solange. She got her start as a backup dancer for her sister's group, Destiny's Child. Later, she released her own music. Other siblings have worked together to form family bands, such as the Jonas Brothers.



Solange Knowles

LIFE LESSONS



John's mother homeschooled him for some of elementary school. He also attended the public school in town. His parents didn't want him and his siblings to learn just school subjects. Life lessons were important too. The family had books "that were about what it means to be hardworking, determined, loving, patient . . . and how to succeed in the right way," John told *InStyle* magazine.

Springfield, Ohio





HELP FROM GRANDPARENTS

Michael's grandparents helped his mom raise the kids. Demetrio (Mitch) and Yolanda had emigrated from Italy. Michael was close to both of them. His grandmother taught him how to cook Italian food. He had a special bond with his grandfather. The singer explained to the *Sun*, "He was my best friend growing up." Jazz music was one interest they shared. Like John, Michael was learning about subjects that would help him as an adult.

GOSPEL AND HISTORY



One of John's main interests while growing up was gospel music. His whole family was involved in music at their church. "I was in choir rehearsals every week as a kid, and I took over the choir when I was older," he told *People* magazine.

John also loved history. He explained to the *Wall Street Journal*, "My parents used to take me to the library, and that's where I would read with pride about Martin Luther King and Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman." This interest has stayed with him throughout his life.

GOSPEL MUSIC

Gospel music got its start in Christian churches in the 19th century. It features strong vocals accompanied by a piano or an organ. Other instruments were added in some churches. African American singers played a large role in its development. Like many other artists, John began singing in church. Aretha Franklin, Beyoncé, and Usher all started out singing gospel music.

HOCKEY AND JAZZ

Growing up, Michael loved hockey. He played with his friends whenever possible. Secretly, he had a dream. It was to be a professional hockey player. Michael wanted to play for the National Hockey League (NHL) team in nearby Vancouver. “I went to every single Canucks home game as a kid,” he told NHL.com.

When not playing hockey, Michael was listening to music. Usually jazz was playing. Sometimes he would sing to himself when no one was around. His other secret dream was to become a performer.

