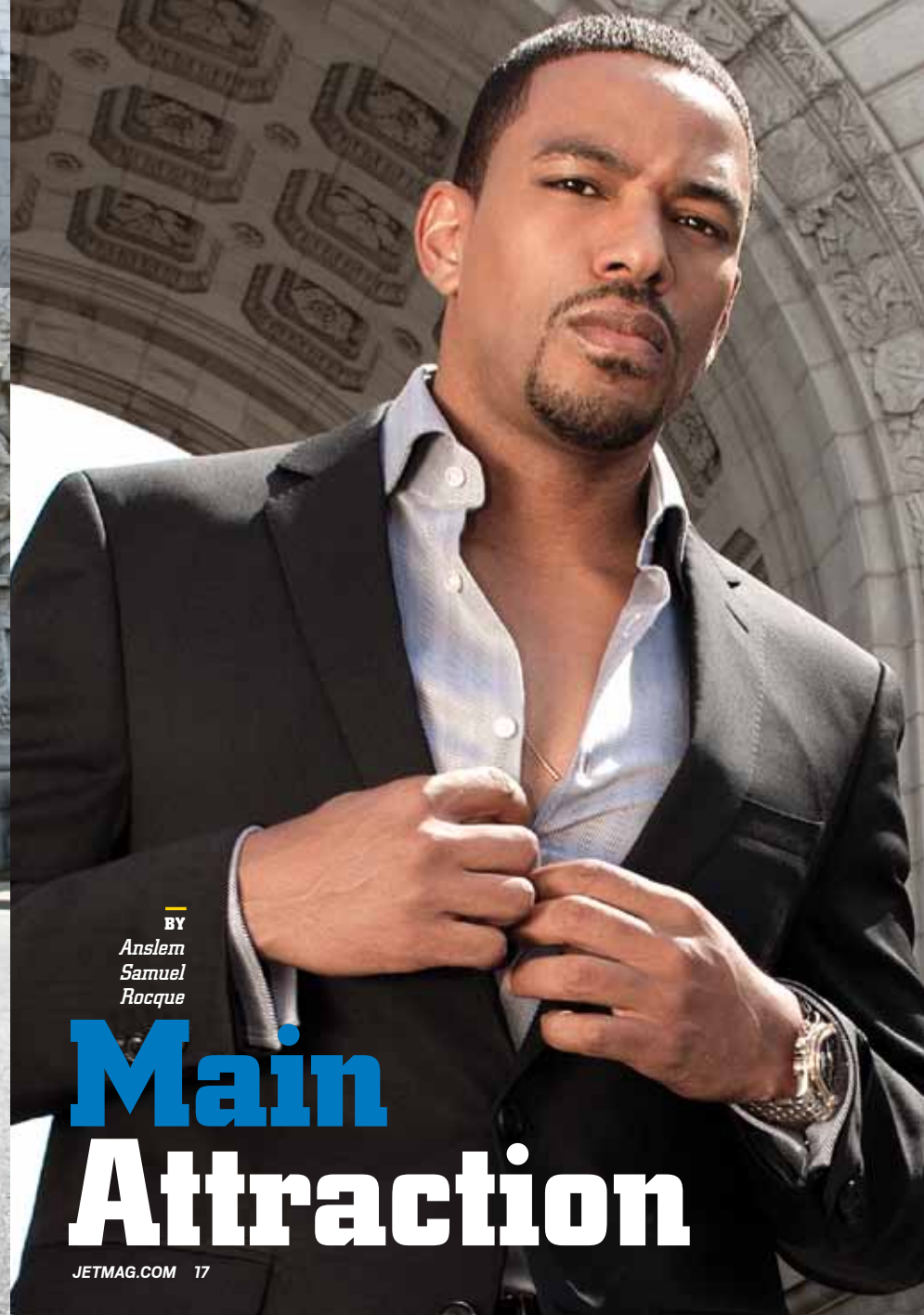
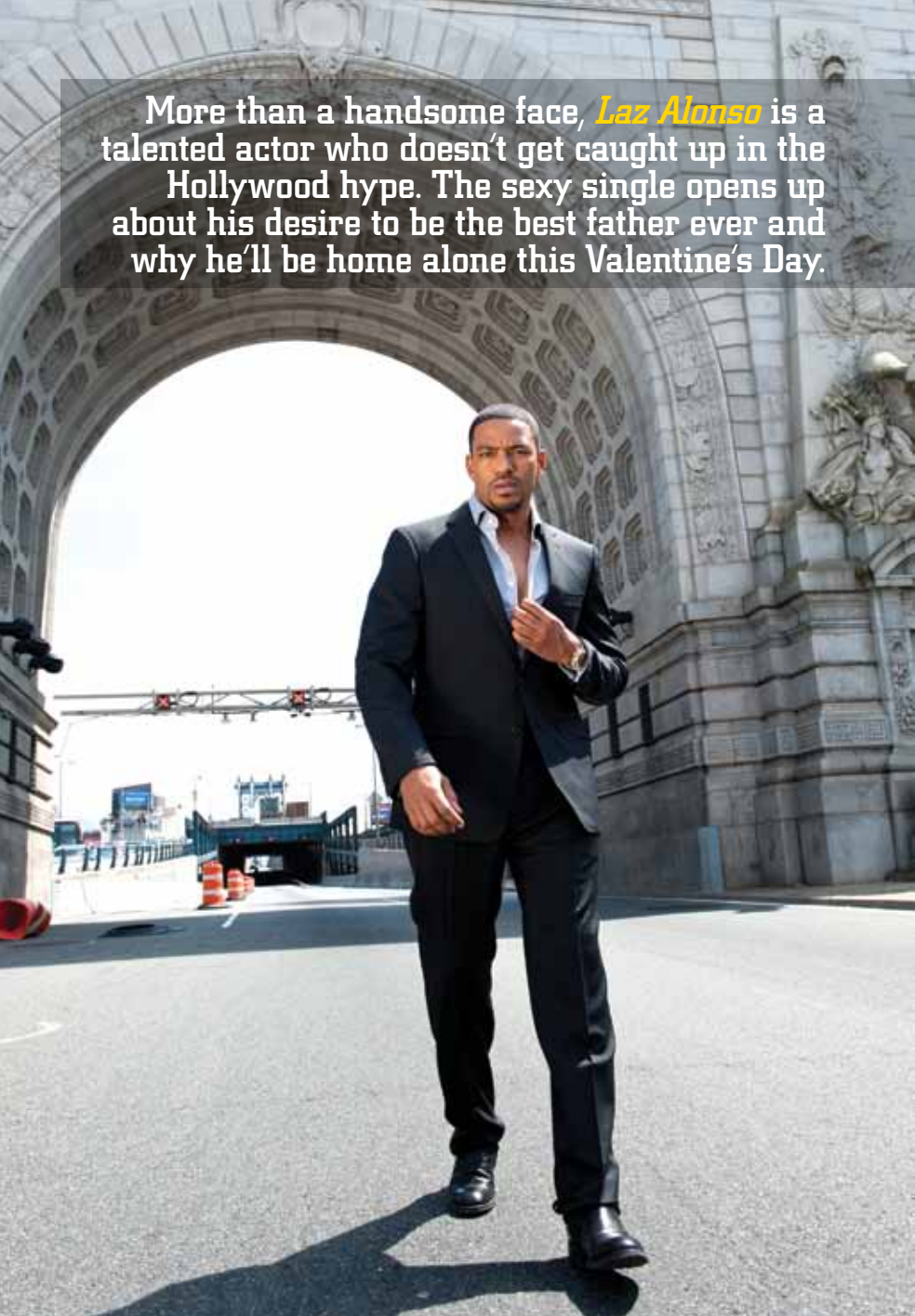


More than a handsome face, *Laz Alonso* is a talented actor who doesn't get caught up in the Hollywood hype. The sexy single opens up about his desire to be the best father ever and why he'll be home alone this Valentine's Day.



BY
*Anslem
Samuel
Rocque*

Main Attraction

TWO THINGS ARE CERTAIN.

First, by the end of this paragraph, Laz Alonso is going to be embarrassed. Secondly, his inner circle will get a kick out of it at his expense. “If you call me a heartthrob in the magazine, my friends are really going to go in on me for that,” the actor shares. But based on his strikingly good looks and muscular physique— which he maintains through boxing and extensive Korean martial arts training— it’s hard not to classify the 5’11” star as, well, a heartthrob.

Since the turn of the century, the Washington, DC native has built an impressive resume that includes high-profile appearances in everything from *Stomp the Yard* and *Jumping the Broom* to *Fast & Furious* and *Jarhead*. While his performances have caught the attention of Hollywood shot-callers like Spike Lee and Academy Award-winning

writer/director James Cameron, female fans are often more fascinated with the entertainer’s sex appeal.

“I don’t take it too seriously because looks fade,” says the eligible bachelor with Cuban roots. “We all are going to get older and that whole heartthrob label will go to someone else. So, you can’t get too caught up in that. More than anything, I want people to love me for how I make them feel during a film, because that isn’t going to fade. Regardless of how you look, the way you make a person feel, that’s eternal.”

Alonso applies the same philosophy to his relationships— both platonic and romantic. Maintaining many of the same tight-knit friendships he had before becoming famous, the humble star manages to keep his ego from going into orbit. Rather than getting caught up in the bright lights of the entertainment industry, he’s more likely to hit a karaoke bar, go paintballing or watch a Redskins game. Even when he’s in a relationship, the end result is the same: keep it simple but always have a blast.

“When dating somebody, I like to see them laugh and make the times we spend together more fun than they could ever imagine,” says Alonso, who serves as the travel ambassador for *blackatlas.com*. “They shouldn’t want to be anywhere else in the world but

// MORE THAN ANYTHING, I WANT PEOPLE TO LOVE ME FOR HOW I MAKE THEM FEEL DURING A FILM, BECAUSE THAT ISN’T GOING TO FADE. REGARDLESS OF HOW YOU LOOK, THE WAY YOU MAKE A PERSON FEEL, THAT’S ETERNAL. //

PHOTOS BY JENNIFER COOPER



there in that moment because that's how I feel when I'm into someone. I enjoy being in a relationship because I have the most fun when I'm sharing it with someone I care about."

As things stand now, though, Alonso will be spending this Valentine's Day solo. "I'm going to have some popcorn and watch a movie on my couch," he confesses. Hopefully fans are doing the same thing on Monday nights when his new NBC series, *Deception*, airs. Alonso stars as FBI agent Will Moreno who enlists the help of a former flame, Det. Joanna Locasto (Meagan Good), to investigate the murder of a young socialite whose own family appears to be prime suspects. According to executive producer Liz Helden, Alonso's role wasn't specifically written for a person of color. The best man simply won.

"*Deception* is an excellent title for the show because, as a viewer, you're constantly being deceived by either the character you love or the one you hate," explains Alonso, who shrugs away comparisons to another prime-time drama with a pair of African-American leads. "This is a different show and premise than *Scandal*. Once people actually see it they'll be able to give it its own merits."

At one point, the same could be said for Alonso. Cutting his teeth in commercials, music videos and "off-off-off-



LAZ AFFAIR: 1. Meagan Good and Alonso go undercover in *Deception*. **2.** Scoring a hit with co-star Paula Patton in *Jumping the Broom*.

off-Broadway stuff," the Howard University grad landed a pair of short-lived hosting gigs for BET in the early 2000s. But the former Merrill Lynch investment banker didn't ditch his cushy Wall Street job to play himself figuratively, or literally. He approached his career shift as personal asset management.

"People go to acting school to learn how not to act," explains Alonso, who bypassed formal training in lieu of his natural on-screen talents. "If you can watch a movie and tell when a person is acting, then they aren't doing a good job. The audience should believe that what they're watching is you really living that moment."

Especially when starring in a straight-to-DVD flick like *Leprechaun: Back 2 tha Hood*. "That's what put me on the map, baby," laughs the actor when asked about the questionable 2003 'hood classic. "I put my all into that film. It was an opportunity and I wasn't going to squander it. Yeah, a 2-foot tall green



guy was chasing me, but you would have thought he was a Sasquatch. People may say the movie was bad, but as long as my performance wasn't then I knew someone would take notice."

The gamble paid off. Since his humble beginnings, Alonso has evolved from a background player to a leading man, who has the distinction of appearing prominently in the highest grossing film of all time, *Avatar*—even though most won't recognize him on camera. Through the magic of revolutionary green-screen technology, Alonso was transformed into Tsu'tey, a blue-skinned warrior prince of an alien race known as the Na'vi. The mega-blockbuster went on to earn over \$2.7 billion worldwide and helped spark the current 3D-movie trend while also launching Alonso's career into a new atmosphere. "It's one of those Hollywood moments that you hear about when people tell their story," he says, still in awe. "I was like, 'Damn, this is one of mine. I got

one.' *Avatar* was a lot of fun."

Another enjoyable achievement for Alonso would be landing the role of a real-life father—but only when he's good and ready. Despite constant prodding from his mother, the 38-year-old would rather wait until he's married before starting a family of his own.

"I want kids," he admits. "Just not out of wedlock. I want to do it the right way. Because my father died when I was young, I'm extra cautious about not creating a single-parent home. I want to be the type of father that's involved in the daily lives of my children."

While offspring might not be on Alonso's immediate horizon, he is in the mood to create new opportunities in 2013. In addition to appearing alongside Chris Brown in the upcoming dance film, *Battle of the Year: The Dream Team*, he hopes to try his hand at comedy. If the right project doesn't present itself, he'll just make one for himself.

"This is the Year of the Boss," says Alonso, who's already produced two indie films, 2007's *Mano* and 2009's *Down for Life*. "I love guys like Denzel Washington, Ben Affleck and Sylvester Stallone, who direct as well as act, and turn this into a business. I got my creative hat on now and I'm really looking forward to doing more things behind the camera. It's time to boss up."

// I WANT KIDS— JUST NOT OUT OF WEDLOCK... I WANT TO BE THE TYPE OF FATHER THAT'S INVOLVED IN THE DAILY LIVES OF MY CHILDREN. //