

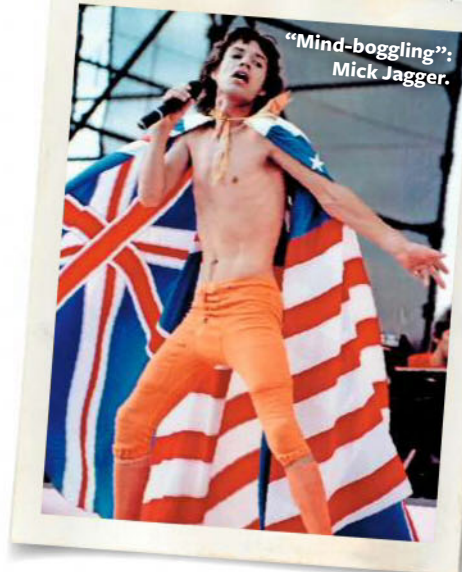


**“What makes a  
perfect gentleman?  
Leave big tips,  
baby!”**

**“I’m the hip-hop  
Amadeus!”: Wyclef Jean  
lays down the laws.**

# Wyclef Jean

The rapper and musician's rules for life.



## 1 KARMA IS GONNA GET YOU

The number one thing I've learned as a musician is: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. I call that the law of karma. You look back and be like, "I remember when I was 27 this person was an asshole to me." Or it could be the reverse and be like, "Oh, this person was great..." Now you're in a position to help someone, you're going to help the people that wouldn't have shit on you on your way up.

## 2 KNOW WHEN TO MOVE ON

As a producer, when I was working on [1996 *Fugees* hit] *Killing Me Softly* and the record exploded it was like when I was in high school and they were giving me all this sheet music to learn when I wanted to do my own songs. I liked *Killing Me Softly*, but I wanted to write my own *Killing Me Softly*. On *Ready Or Not* I sampled Enya, but I was like, "I want to create my own Enya!" With hip-hop you do one record and then you're supposed to do another one and another one, so ours was a unique story. We just knew [second LP] *The Score* was special. Maybe if we had gone on to do two, three, four of them then you wouldn't have got *The Miseducation Of Lauryn Hill* or you wouldn't have got *Gone Till November*.

## 3 MUSIC CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE. LITERALLY

When I first started to play music it saved my life. When you're in these communities as a teenager, music gave me a refuge. I was finding myself through poetry, through sounds and that distracted me from being on the block. At times when a shooting was going on, I missed it by 15 minutes because I'd decided to practise this Jimi Hendrix solo.

## 4 GENRE IS JUST A WORD

Genre is nothing but a concept. The world revolves around fusion. Carlos Santana taught me that, so I just do music. It could be a song like Maria Maria that I wrote years ago – DJ Khaled calls me and he's like, "Yo, can I sample this song?" So it becomes [Rihanna collaboration] *Wild Thoughts*. As long as it's pure and it's real, it's going to happen.

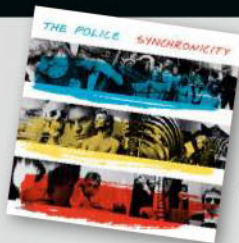
## 5 THINK LONG, LONG-TERM

When I do music, I'll be like, "In 10,000 years will people still like this song?" People say, "What's bigger than a hit?" I say, "A cultural phenomenon." When you create that, it don't have no colour, it don't have no creed, no nothing. Everyone in every country is just singing it.

## 6 GET MOVES LIKE JAGGER

I was doing a gig in Shepherd's Bush in London and I looked up at the balcony and I see Mick Jagger. I told the DJ, "Stop everything, put one of Mick Jagger's records on so he can understand how he's influenced me." He was one of those people that made pop culture think about things that it wouldn't have necessarily looked at. For example, he's the reason people in pop culture figured out who Peter Tosh was [in 1978]. People were saying, "Who's this guy singing with Mick Jagger?" For me, getting the chance to be in the studio with Mick [on his 2001 solo LP] was one of the most mind-boggling experiences.

## THOU SHALT COVET THESE FIVE ALBUMS



### The Police *Synchronicity*

"Everybody needs to have this. What I love about *The Police* is you can hear the reggae influence mixed with the British pop culture and the rock culture."

### Tupac *All Eyez on Me*

"Because those are not words, they are a moment in history. What Tupac was doing was Shakespearean."

### Miles Davis *Bitches Brew*

"You can put this against any film score you want. It falls into no rhythm – it just takes you into the theory of sound. It's the big bang theory."

### Bob Marley And The Wailers *Exodus*

"That record gives you a place of refuge. It makes you feel you belong somewhere."

### Santana *Supernatural*

"Incredible – a fusion across generations where Santana remains as the Woodstock man, then everything around him was current sonics."

## 7 A PERFECT GENTLEMAN HAS RESPECT

[2000 solo hit] *Perfect Gentleman* was a record I did about how there was a strip club around the corner from school and there was this girl who was stripping and she ended up becoming a doctor. What makes the perfect gentleman? It's that if you go to that bar it's important that you understand that these people have families and they're doing this as a hustle. So the perfect gentleman would leave big tips, baby!

## 8 MIX POP AND POLITICS

Before I decided to run for the presidency of Haiti [in 2010] the country was being run by an old regime so I felt like the cycle needed to change. When they took me out of the race I gave my support to [singer turned politician] Michel Martelly and it broke the cycle. The idea that a musician couldn't be president went out the window.

## 9 MONEY ISN'T EVERYTHING

What's the value of life? Is it billions of dollars? You can have someone who is working a nine to five job, they come home, they're happy as hell. The true essence of life is family and friends.

## 10 WORK THE CHOIR

I'm like the choir director. Every Sunday, I see who's working the solo, I do the arrangements to make the congregation feel something. My longevity is based on the fact that I'm composer and conductor. I'm like the hip-hop Amadeus, man. 📺

■ *The Carnival, Vol III: The Rise And Fall Of A Refugee* is out 15 September.