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BACKGROUNDER

John Legend To Perform During Sunoco Welcome America!

PHILADELPHIA, June 9, 2008 – In 2004, John Legend made the leap from all-star studio session man to headlining singer/songwriter/pianist/performer with his debut album *Get Lifted*. Driven in part by the hit singles *Ordinary People* and *Used To Love U*, *Get Lifted* was a critical and commercial triumph, earning Legend an astounding eight Grammy nominations. He won Best New Artist, Best Male R&B Vocal Performance (*Ordinary People*) and Best R&B Album and sold more than three million copies of the album worldwide.

Born in Springfield, Ohio on December 28, 1978, Legend, whose real name is John Stephens, had a passion for music from his youngest days. His grandmother introduced him to gospel piano at the age of three, and he never looked back. Academically and artistically talented, Legend was the class salutatorian when he graduated from high school at the age of 16. As a student at the University of Pennsylvania, the English and African-American literature major formed Counterparts, an a cappella group whose vocals appeared on Prince's recording of *One of Us*.

In 1998, Legend got his first taste of success playing piano for Lauryn Hill's multiple-Grammy- winning album *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill*. He also honed his chops touring the East Coast, opening up for bigger R&B acts and recording and selling several live concert albums. In 2001, a college roommate introduced Legend to the then up-and-coming producer/artist Kanye West. By 2002, Legend was part of West's creative team, appearing on albums by Talib Kweli, Common and Mary J. Blige and on West's 2004 breakthrough *The College Dropout*. That same year, John lent his vocal talent to Alicia Keys' *You Don't Know My Name* and appeared on Jay-Z's acclaimed *Black Album*.

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In late 2003, Legend was the first artist signed to West's KonMan Entertainment (later renamed Getting Out Our Dreams); a deal with Columbia Records followed in May 2004. With pre-release buzz in its corner, *Get Lifted* debuted at number seven on the Billboard Top 200 and number one on the R&B chart the week of its release, three days after Christmas 2004.

With each recording, John Legend aims to tap into something honest and true within his audience and himself and to connect on that level. In 2007, after a trip to Ghana, Legend founded the Show Me campaign, an initiative that raises funds to help the people living Mbola, Tanzania, as well as several other non-profit organizations.

Three years ago, Legend was a highly regarded session musician. Today he's an artist who proves that even in an age of expediency and crass commercialism real talent not only still matters but will be acknowledged. When asked how success has impacted him, John replies, "I think I'm happier, not just because of winning Grammys and selling records, but because it's really fulfilling to have all these things happen with something you love to do. To have the chance to see your music be elevated and to have almost universally positive response to that music makes me feel better every day. I feel more confident and inspired, and that's fun. I'm feeling truly creative and I'm hoping that feeling will stay around because my hope and belief is that most people are down to grow and explore with me."

www.johnlegend.com
www.columbiarecords.com