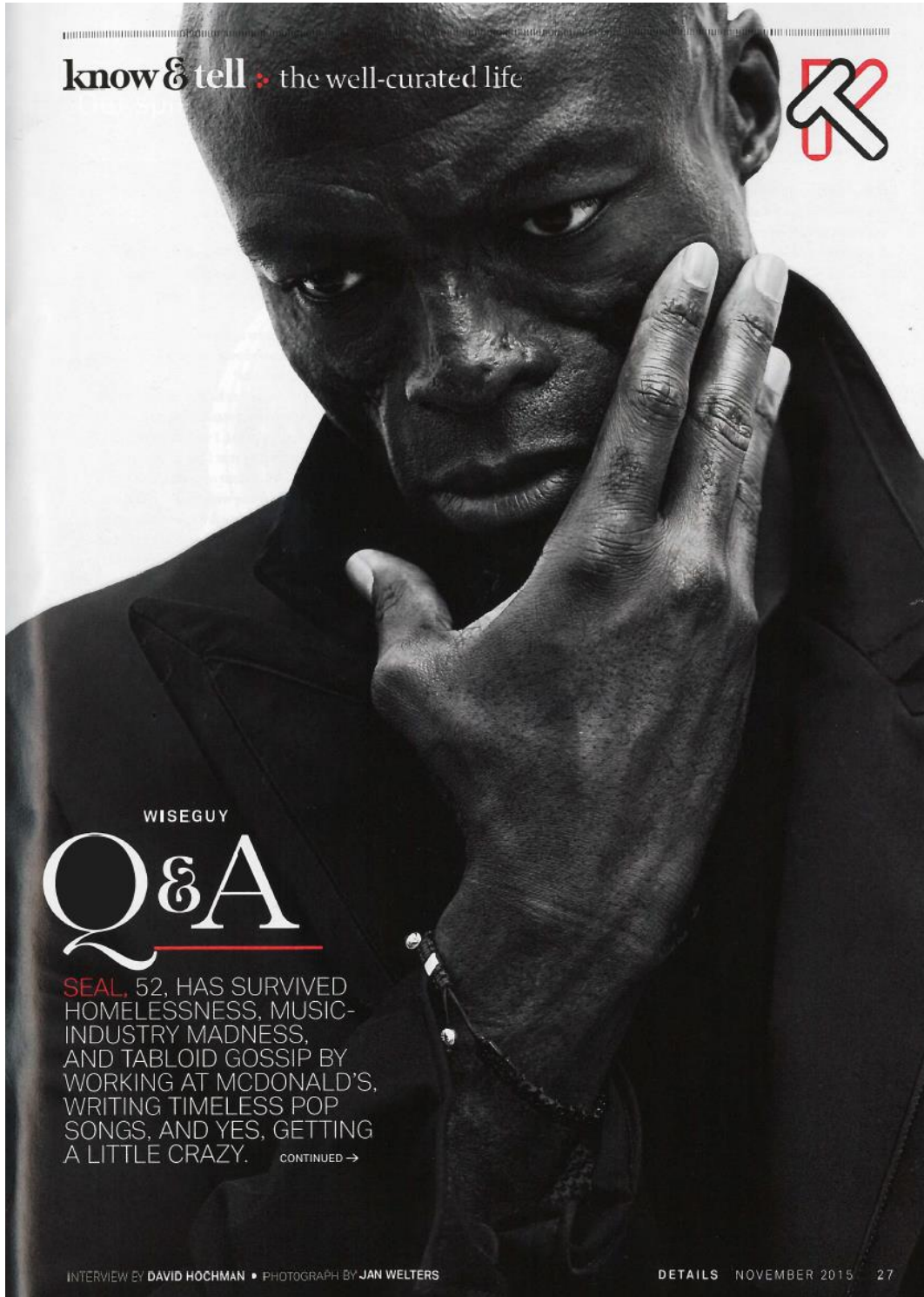


# DETAILS

November 2015



know & tell : the well-curated life



WISEGUY

## Q&A

SEAL, 52, HAS SURVIVED HOMELESSNESS, MUSIC-INDUSTRY MADNESS, AND TABLOID GOSSIP BY WORKING AT MCDONALD'S, WRITING TIMELESS POP SONGS, AND YES, GETTING A LITTLE CRAZY. CONTINUED →

INTERVIEW BY DAVID HOCHMAN • PHOTOGRAPH BY JAN WELTERS

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**Q:** You're releasing your ninth studio album this month. Do you fret about chart positions and sales at this point in your career?

**A:** Obviously, I'd like to see it do well, but the record's already successful for me. As a singer, you get to express yourself in a medium that communicates with lots of people. It's the same as going to a shrink. You know that old adage "A problem shared is a problem halved"? You're able to express what you internalize on a massive level. Suddenly, the burden is no longer that heavy.

**Q:** So is it fair to assume that the song "The Big Love Has Died" is about the end of your nine-year marriage to Heidi Klum?

**A:** I wouldn't say that. I never explain songs, because I think that takes something from them. I want listeners to attach their own, personal experiences. It's why you won't find lyrics with the album. I always think if people are vaguely interested in what goes on in my life, they can listen and form their own opinions. I always loved Joni Mitchell's storytelling. Was it autobiographical? It must have been, but I never felt that way. I felt that she was singing to me about my life and that she just understood.

**Q:** What about "Kiss From a Rose" from *Batman Forever*? You're probably the only person whose career benefited from that film.

**A:** That song had already been released. It charted briefly, and then it was gone. I was in the studio recording my third album when Joel [Schumacher] called and said he needed a song. My manager sent it to him. He called back the next

day and said, "It doesn't fit the love scene between Kidman and Kilmer, but I really like it. I'm going to put it over the end credits." We made a video. Next thing you know—three Grammys and 8 million albums. These days, kids think I was Batman. It taught me a lot about the industry. People tell you they know what will be a hit. Nobody knows shit. It was always a good song. Was it a hit? It wasn't the first time around.

**Q:** Is it annoying to hear fans calling for it 20 years later?

**A:** Hell no! That's not annoying at all! From their mouths to God's ears, as far as I'm concerned. Any artist should be so lucky to have one song in their career that people still want to hear.

**Q:** The industry is tougher today than it was when you released your debut album in 1991. If you had it to do over, would you still choose music as a career?

**A:** I couldn't imagine doing anything else. But it's a different business, and not just from a financial standpoint. Things like Spotify and iTunes have completely changed the experience of being a fan. When we were kids, we didn't just buy an album; we subscribed to that artist, their philosophy, the way they saw the world. Record labels weren't dealing with the situation of diminished returns. We were afforded the luxury of failure. Nowadays, you're fucked. And for the most part, the charts are full of music with all the integrity of commercial jingles. It drives me nuts when you hear a song on the radio, like, "There's a message on my tele-tele-

tele-phone-phone-phone-ph-phone." That's just fucking laziness!

**Q:** Rihanna's "Umbrella" is like that.

**A:** That's an exception. That's actually a really good song. [Laughs]

**Q:** You grew up in and out of foster care in London and were homeless for a bit. What was that like?

**A:** It wasn't as bad as some people's situations. I was homeless by choice. At another point, I was squatting in a derelict house that I broke into and tidied up a bit. I slept on a mattress I placed on one of those wood pallets forklifts use to lift concrete. I was on the dole for a while. My first job was at a McDonald's in Kentish Town, which was good character-building stuff. Girls from school would come and tease me about the brown uniform, which was about three sizes too small.

**Q:** You also spent a year touring Asia.

**A:** It's one of my fondest memories. I was traveling in Thailand, and one night I decided to get up with this Bangkok blues band and sing. I was drunk, and they were playing some Hendrix. It went down really well with the tourists, so the owner asked me back. He said, "I'll pay you 1,100 baht"—roughly \$30—which meant I could live for another two months. A bungalow was around 30 baht—less than a dollar—a night.

**Q:** The Daily Mail recently reported that you and Australian model Erica Packer are expecting a child. Are congratulations in order?

**A:** Ah, you've read the rumors! I'm going to be annoying and say if you read it in a magazine . . . The fact that people are even remotely interested in if I'm becoming a father again is ridiculous.

**Q:** Any guesses on the number of babies conceived to your music?

**A:** I would hope lots. After all, that's what it's for. ■

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