

No Limits

When he's not driving a car very, very fast, three-times Formula 1 world champion **LEWIS HAMILTON** leads a busy life. He talks to **THERESA HAROLD** about what winning means to him, and what the future holds after his final chequered flag

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JACKET **VERSACE**
SWEATER **EMPORIO ARMANI**
WATCH **IWC SCHAFFHAUSEN**
EARRINGS (WORN THROUGHOUT) **DE BEERS**



SWEATER AND TROUSERS **GUCCI**
 SHOES **JIMMY CHOO**
 WATCH **IWC SCHAFFHAUSEN**

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N THE RACETRACK he's known for his natural talent, prodigious speed, killer instinct and, yes, sometimes a lack of patience. But on the day of his *Prestige* cover shoot, which takes place in a North London studio just 50km from his hometown, he's the perfect gentleman. By the time we sit down on the couch, he's wrapped up a four-hour photo shoot – on time – following a 5am flight from his home in Monaco. Tomorrow, he'll fly to LA – just for the day. Because when you're Lewis Hamilton, the world is not merely your oyster, but a vast oyster bed of possibilities.

During the shoot, Hamilton puts on a playlist of his favourite music. The beats are energetic, vaguely hypnotic – and sexy as hell. It suits him. Music, as we will find out, is very important to Team Hamilton. When pressed for names, he reels off a list of the greats: Prince, Marvin Gaye, Sam Cooke. Those are the old ones. As for new artists, he loves what The Weeknd's doing, Majid Jordan and Gallant. Drake is also name-checked, while, "Ed Sheeran is one of the best writers there is." Tupac, too, but that almost goes without saying nowadays.

In person, Hamilton's light frame (he has to keep his weight down for the car) and boyish good looks make him appear younger than his 31 years. Perhaps that's why L'Oréal Men Expert named him their new global spokesperson earlier this year. That, and the fact that Hamilton is an undisputed icon. A household name even to those unfamiliar with motorsport, he's racked up an impressive following (3.3 million on Instagram, 3.7 million on Twitter). And while that pales in comparison to famous friends such as Justin Bieber, with his 87.5 million, that's because Hamilton saves his record-breaking numbers for the track.

Back in 1998, he became the youngest ever driver to secure the backing of a Formula 1 team when he was signed

to McLaren's development programme. He joined the team proper in 2007 when, aged 22 and in his first Formula 1 season, he won four races and missed taking the world championship by a single point – a remarkable achievement by a rookie driver, and one that's still unequalled.

Since then, Hamilton has won three world titles, while at press time his Formula 1 race-win tally stands at 49, a total surpassed by only two drivers. Moreover, he's won races in every Formula 1 season he's contested, a feat matched by no other racer in history. Further wins this year with his current team, Mercedes AMG Petronas, as well as a fourth championship, would unquestionably secure his place among the all-time motor-racing greats – a place that many would say is rightfully his already.

Here in the studio, though, it's hard to reconcile these achievements – and the arrogance that one assumes would accompany them – with the soft-spoken and friendly man sitting opposite me. Over the course of our conversation, he makes me laugh more than any other celebrity has done in the past. In fact, he's far too easy to talk to, and before long the PR comes by with a "last question please". Once she's out of sight, Hamilton puts a finger to his smiling lips and whispers conspiratorially, "Two more."

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR DREAM ROAD TRIP?

It would probably be on a motorbike. We're actually talking about doing a trip from Utah, Colorado, to Vegas on cross-country motorbikes – a bit like the Dakar rally. We'll do rock climbing and stuff too, because they have some amazing rocks in Utah. I don't like riding for long, so that doesn't sound like too bad a trip. I couldn't do one that lasts days, I don't have the patience. I'll start for the first, like, 30 minutes to an hour, then I'd need to get the helicopter [laughs]. I'll meet them on the other side and say, "Oh, such a great trip!"



SUIT **BERLUTI**
SHIRT **ERMENEGILDO ZEGNA COUTURE**
SHOES **JIMMY CHOO**

I DID A HELICOPTER RIDE IN THE GRAND CANYON AND IT WAS HORRIBLE – I GOT SUCH AWFUL MOTION SICKNESS.

Bloody hell. I thought you were going to say it's the most incredible thing you've ever seen. I've been to the Grand Canyon, but I don't know why I haven't done that. I need to do that.

IF YOU DON'T GET MOTION SICK.

No, I don't. I'm lucky in that I don't get motion sickness in anything. Actually, I do – if I'm reading a book in a car, I feel terrible.

WHAT BOOKS DO YOU LIKE READING?

I find it very hard to find books. My favourite is *The Alchemist*. Yeah, I can't pronounce his name either. Coo-ella, Coo-ello? I just love that book. A friend gave it to me. Right now, I'm reading *Conversations with God*. It takes me a long time to read a book. I try to read at night but I pass out – it's the perfect remedy, it's like a sleeping pill.

YOU HAVE TO TRAVEL SO MUCH, SO HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH JET LAG AND THEN BE ON PEAK PERFORMANCE?

Usually it's never a problem. My body has probably never really known where it is. It's just getting on that time zone as soon as possible, and obviously keeping your body healthy so you don't get sick on those flights. I generally sleep on all the flights. For example, I'm going to LA tomorrow, so I won't sleep tonight. I'll push myself into tiredness to be able to sleep the whole flight. I'd go crazy staying awake for 12 hours on a plane. That's one way I do things, but there are specific things you have to do – some guy who's a specialist gives us help through our trainer.

“People think that you're just sitting there. But it's so physical”

SPEAKING ABOUT YOUR TRAINER, YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY VERY FIT – A LOT MORE SO THAN FORMULA 1 DRIVERS USED TO BE IN THE PAST. DO YOU HAVE A REGIME THAT YOU STICK TO?

It's not often recognised, that – unfortunately. People think that you're just sitting there. But it's so physical. It's so strenuous, it's the g-force you're pulling, you're using your core, your glutes, your legs. When you're going around a corner, the car goes like a fighter jet and your body doesn't want to keep up with it. So it is really, really physical. We have to train, but we can't be big and bulky. I have to stop doing weights because I just put on muscle and I get too heavy.

Diet is like 70 percent of it. On an average day, usually I have two poached eggs in the morning with half an avocado, and then I'll have a bowl of porridge. I'll probably have some fruit around 11 o'clock. For lunch, generally I'll just have a salad.

DO YOU EVER TREAT YOURSELF? IN-N-OUT BURGER WHEN YOU'RE IN LA?

No, I don't eat red meat anymore – I stopped this year. I mean, I love red meat. I love burgers. There's a great spot in London with amazing burgers, but I haven't had it in so long. I stopped eating red meat and I'm basically – I joke about it – a chicken-pescetarian. I can't stop eating chicken right now.

WAS IT FOR HEALTH REASONS?

I actually do feel a little bit healthier for not eating red meat, but it's more that I've been exposed to

what happens to animals. And while it's not me doing it, you're kind of endorsing it. While I'm only one person, and it's not going to change anything ... there's a lot of cruelty. I think there are ways we could do it better. But people do inhumane things to these animals. We take it for granted. I know it's not like we did it, but shit man, if I showed you some of these videos ... It makes you want to cry. You're like, “I'm fricking eating that poor little dude that they just sliced open.” So that's what led me down that direction.

YOU'RE A REAL ANIMAL LOVER – YOUR INSTAGRAM IS FILLED WITH ADORABLE PICTURES OF YOUR BULLDOGS.

I love animals. I've had dogs ever since I was born. My parents had a labrador called Goldie, who was my best friend until I was eight. Saddest day ever. Mum picked me up at my dad's house. I'd been there for the weekend, and I couldn't wait to get home and see Goldie. My mum pulled over in the car and said he had to be put down. It was the fricking saddest day – I didn't even get to say goodbye to him. I've lost people, which has been sad, but that was the worse thing.

But anyways, after that we had a black lab, we had a brown lab. I was like, “One day, I'm getting my own dog.” I thought bulldogs were the cutest things ever, because they're kind of cute but they're also kind of ugly. And they don't know it – bless them. I got one, Roscoe, and he was kind of lonely. While we spend a lot of time together, I'm travelling, so I thought I'd get another one – a girl.

Out of three that were being sold from the same breeder, I chose Coco. My mum came up with the name. But she has all these problems. Her femur bone is really short and doesn't have a



JACKET AND TROUSERS **HUGO BOSS**
T-SHIRT **LOUIS VUITTON**
SHOES **GIUSEPPE ZANOTTI DESIGN**



JACKET **EMPORIO ARMANI**
SWEATER **BOTTEGA VENETA**
TROUSERS **VALENTINO**
SHOES **JIMMY CHOO**



JACKET **LOUIS VUITTON**
SWEATER **PORTS 1961**
TROUSERS **DOLCE & GABBANA**
SHOES **JIMMY CHOO**



COAT **BURBERRY**
BRIEFS **CALVIN KLEIN**
TROUSERS AND SHOES **LOUIS VUITTON**

ball at the end so it doesn't go into her hip. She's got dysplasia in both front elbows. Her tongue's too long, and she's epileptic as well! She's the funniest, most stubborn bloody dog in the world! But she's the sweetest.

They travel around with me. Roscoe is about to be four, and Coco is about to be three. They come out to Colorado with me, they've been out to LA. They went to Baku – the last race – with me. They've been out to Montreal, New York, generally for all the European races, they'll fly with me. They have the jet-setting life.

2015 WAS A VERY SPECIAL YEAR FOR YOU. YOU WON A THIRD CHAMPIONSHIP AND YOU OVERTOOK THE NUMBER OF GRAND PRIX WINS BY YOUR HERO, AYRTON SENNA. LOOKING BACK, WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS?

Still today it's very surreal to me. I remember coming home from senior school, putting this tape on and it would be Ayrton racing. I had a poster of him and his car. I aspired to drive that car, and do it like he did it. And to think that I've matched him, in most areas apart from pole positions, anything from now on is just a bonus.

But I'm kind of getting to a point now ... I feel like there's a lot of elder drivers who don't like to let go, because they once had records and I've sometimes overtaken them. I feel like, hopefully now, I'm on a respectable level with them. I'm a grown man now, so hopefully with the results, I've earned their respect. My goal is to win this championship. I'm just super-competitive. Everything I do, I want to win.

Of course, there's a huge amount to learn from losing. But I love winning. That's what I live for. The crazy thing is, people are constantly commenting on how I am after a bad race. They have no comprehension of how it is. It's easier when it's [the car's fault]. But when you've made a mistake, after thousands and thousands of hours of practice, after you've studied and you've done everything you need to, and you make a mistake? That is painful.

But it's character building, and there's never an end to how much of that you can have. The great

thing is, I've got some incredible support. I grew up in Stevenage; I never thought that I'd have people turning up wearing my jersey, or wearing my cap. There are several people that message me every day on Twitter. Obviously, I don't reply because I don't want to make it a ... you know, the other day, I replied to one and then she posted the reply, so everyone saw it and was like, "Why didn't you reply to me?" So that's why I don't, but it's incredible to have that kind of support, [and especially because] this has definitely been one of the toughest years so far.

“There's a huge amount to learn from losing. But I love winning”

PEOPLE HAVE THE IDEA THAT THE SPORT IS FOR RICH MEN, BUT THAT CERTAINLY WASN'T THE CASE FOR YOU. I UNDERSTAND THAT AT ONE POINT YOUR DAD TOOK SEVERAL JOBS TO SUPPORT YOU. HOW DIFFICULT WAS IT IN THOSE EARLY DAYS?

Honestly, it's hard to put into words how difficult it was for us. It's so expensive. It's not like going and buying a basketball or a tennis ball.

Yes, my dad had to remortgage the house several times. He was in debt already after our first year. They spent their life savings, my family. My poor brother's walking around in old shoes, and we're walking around in old clothes because all the money went into racing. My dad had huge foresight and belief in me. It's pretty amazing what he did.

Our first British championship we won was against a multi-millionaire kid. It felt amazing! We drove away in our load-of-shit RV, while they had like the most glitzy, glamorous, brand-new shit. It was crazy.

We wouldn't have succeeded along the way if we hadn't been signed by a Formula 1 team. It was getting to the point where we had to raise a quarter of a million pounds, half a million pounds, a million pounds, two million pounds. Fortunately, with the support of McLaren, [team principal] Ron Dennis and Mercedes, I was able to get there.

YOU'VE GOT A VERY FULL LIFE AWAY FROM THE TRACK, ESPECIALLY WITH YOUR MUSICAL ACTIVITIES AND YOUR INTEREST IN FASHION. SOME PEOPLE HAVE EVEN CRITICISED YOU FOR IT, SAYING IT'S TAKEN YOUR EYE OFF THE BALL. HOW WOULD YOU REACT TO THAT?

Well, I've been doing it for a long time. My music I've been doing since I was 22, 23. We all have to find a balance. But undoubtedly, as soon as you have a down, people are going to look for the closest reason or excuse for potentially why it is. If I just sit and focus solely on racing, I'll go nuts, which I had done in the past. I've found a happy medium, where I'm getting to do and experience these other things. I'm 31 now, so I need to also experience and discover what's beyond racing, because it's going to end sooner or later.

DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT YOU'D DO AFTER RACING?

At the moment, no. I'm really just in discovery. But what I'm finding out is that I've got talent in other areas, I'm good at other things. The goal is to find which one I like most and work on it.

IN THE PAST, YOU'VE EXPRESSED AN INTEREST IN BRINGING OUT A CLOTHING LINE, BUT HOW ABOUT ACTING?

I would love to. But look, I've done thousands of hours in my racing. Actors or musicians, they've also done the same thing in their craft. When I want to do one of those things, I realise I've got to commit myself the same as I have done in my racing, which is not easy to do. So, right now, all those things are just hobbies, because I can't commit like I can to my racing. You can't commit 100 percent to everything. **P**

JACKET **HUGO BOSS**
SWEATER **BURBERRY**