

DWAYNE JOHNSON

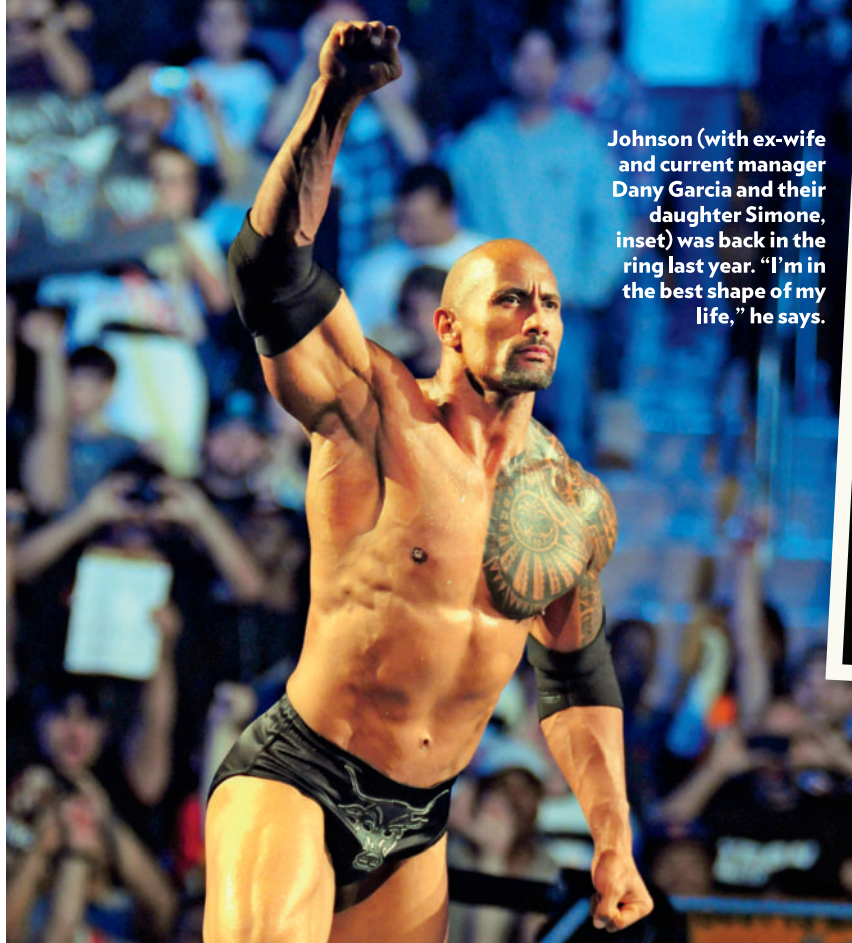
SOFT ON THE INSIDE

Back onscreen and in the ring, the guy once known as the Rock talks about family, fatherhood and finding love again

BY OLIVER JONES

"I grew up an only child and very selfish," says Johnson. "It wasn't until I had my daughter that I learned what it means to be selfless."





Johnson (with ex-wife and current manager Dany Garcia and their daughter Simone, inset) was back in the ring last year. "I'm in the best shape of my life," he says.



a teenager I struggled to stay on the right path," he says. "I started getting arrested when I was 13 and stopped getting arrested when I was 17. I'm a living example of how you don't have to let your environment or actions at that time dictate the rest of your life."

After earning a football scholarship to the University of Miami, the smooth-talking defensive lineman fell in love with Dany Garcia, a business major two years his senior. They married in 1997 and had daughter Simone but decided to divorce in 2007. Then a remarkable thing happened: Garcia stayed on to run the business she and Johnson created together. "He has a strong sense of family," says Garcia, who calls her ex-husband "DJ." "We have that extra layer of trust that can only come from family. We are just a different family, and we keep adding new people."

Indeed, a typical Thanksgiving includes Simone, Garcia, Garcia's boyfriend, Johnson's mother, Ata (who beat back stage 3 lung cancer in 2010), Johnson and his girlfriend, singer Lauren Hashian, 27, for whom Johnson is head over heels. "I was so fortunate to have fallen in love once," says Johnson. "To fall in love again? That's a hard thing to do twice in the position I'm in. I'm one lucky son of a bitch." If you're lucky enough to score a Thanksgiving invite? Be sure to bring an appetite for ukulele. ●

To say that the artist formerly known as the Rock has embraced his less macho side is putting it mildly. An ideal night in consists of rousing bouts of Jenga and Sorry. When he gets tired of getting his butt kicked by daughter Simone, 11, someone invariably breaks out a ukulele. That's when this behemoth of a man, who gets up for daily 4 a.m. workouts to perfect his 6'4", 260-lb. frame, starts to sing. "I like to do the classics: Sam Cooke, Willie Nelson," says Johnson. "I like a beautiful, well-written song."

But Johnson—who's continuing his unlikely transition from grappler

to family-friendly movie star with *Journey 2: The Mysterious Island*, out Feb. 10—insists all this domesticity is not a sign he's slowing down. "I'm just a little older and a bit more poised in my ambition," he says, his voice surprisingly quiet but his gaze intense. With his ex-wife working as his manager, Johnson, who turns 40 this May, has never been busier: He'll return to WrestleMania in April and costar in the big-budget sequel *G.I. Joe: Retaliation* this summer. "I'm not running like a banshee on fire wanting to tackle the world. Now it's more strategic. You align yourself smarter so you can achieve what you want to achieve." Then he adds, raising his trademark eyebrow, but only slightly, "In my case that's a little thing I call world domination."

Don't bet against him or his willpower. Johnson could have been preordained to pro-wrestling superstardom—his father was wrestler Rocky Johnson, and his maternal grandparents were both wrestling promoters—but he knows how easily things could have gone differently. "As



With Josh Hutcherson, Luis Guzman and Vanessa Hudgens in *Journey 2: The Mysterious Island*.

HAIR: RACHEL SOLOW; MAKEUP: JAMES MACKINNON; STYLIST: SAMANTHA MCILLEN/THE WALL GROUP; CLOCKWISE (FROM TOP LEFT): NYP/SIPA/RETNA; PERFECT: CARRIE DEVORAH/WENN; RON PHILLIPS/WARNER BROS.