400 Michigan Ave Ste 700, Chicago, 60611, Illinois, United States
Phone: +1 312 943 3226 **Email**: info.chicago@selectmodel.com **Website**: https://selectmodel.com/

MARIO

Height 180cm / 5' 11.0"

Waist 76cm / 30"

Shoes EU/US/UK 43.5 / 10.5 / 9

Eyes Brown

Hair Black

Inseam 30cm / 12"

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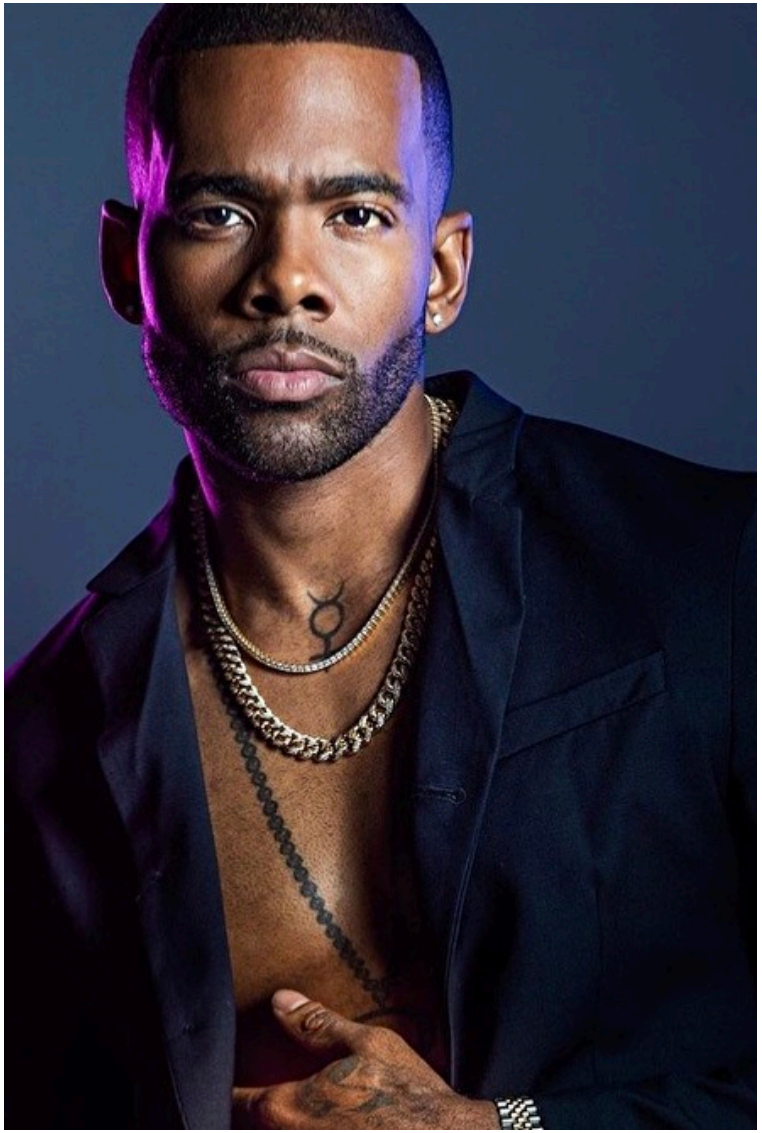

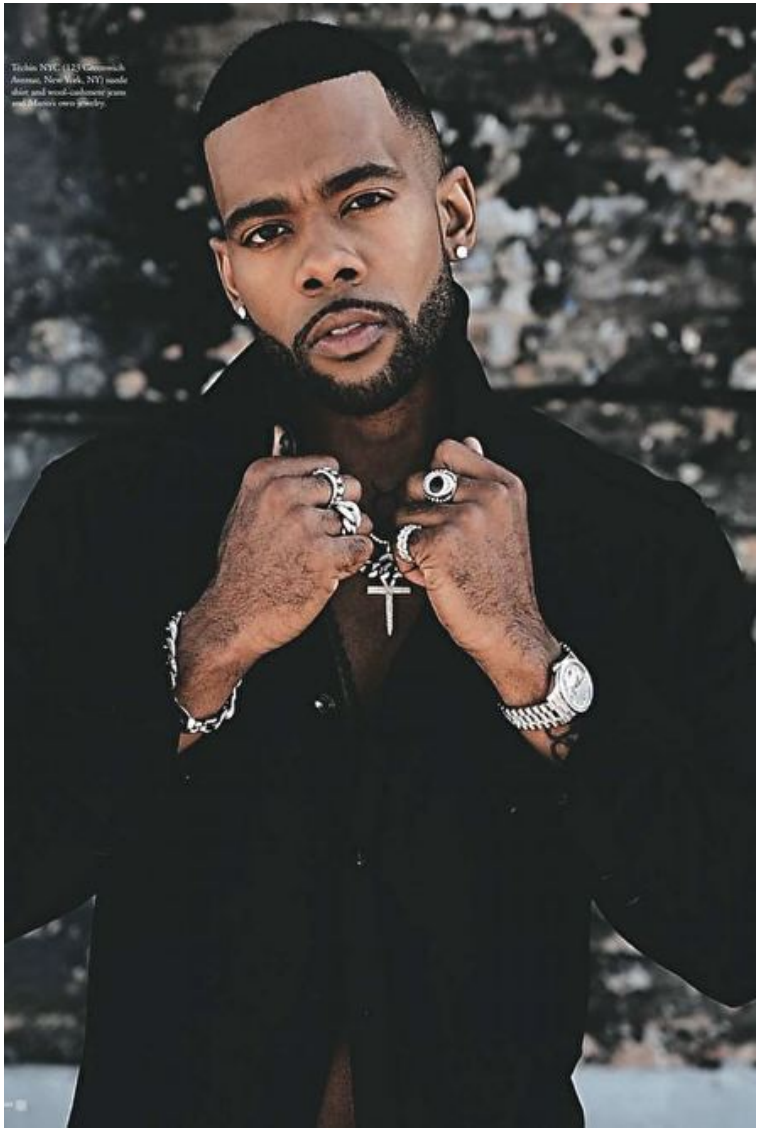

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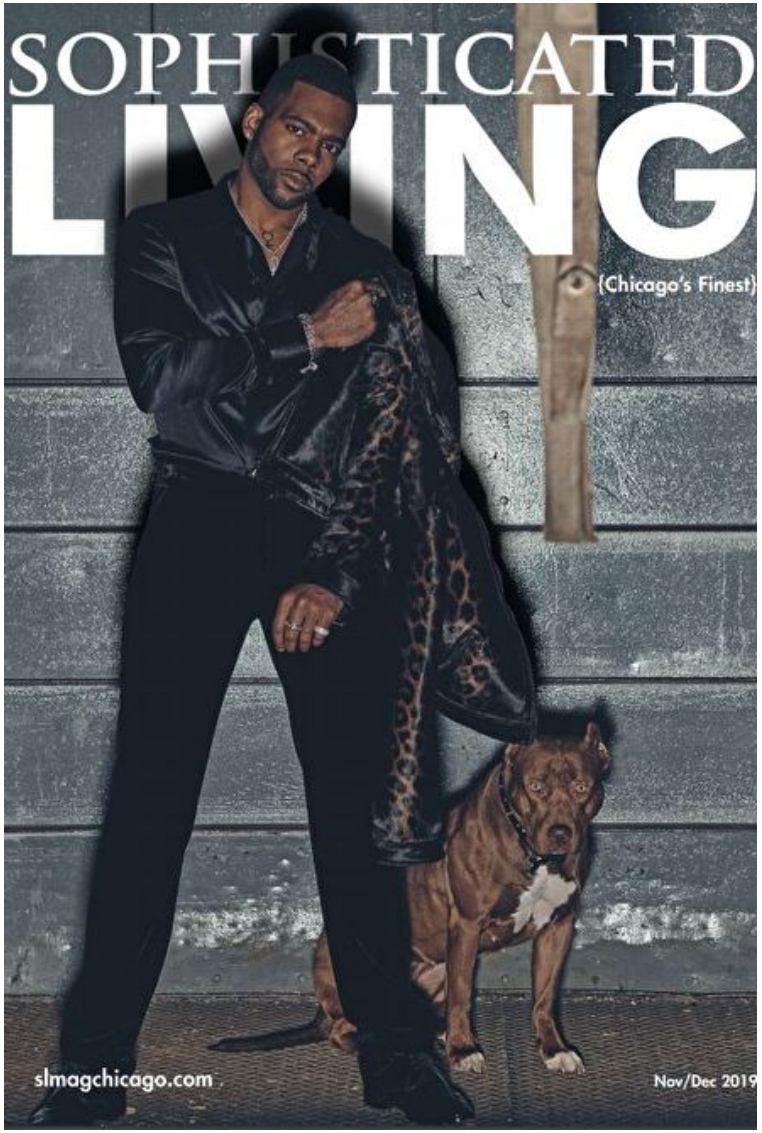



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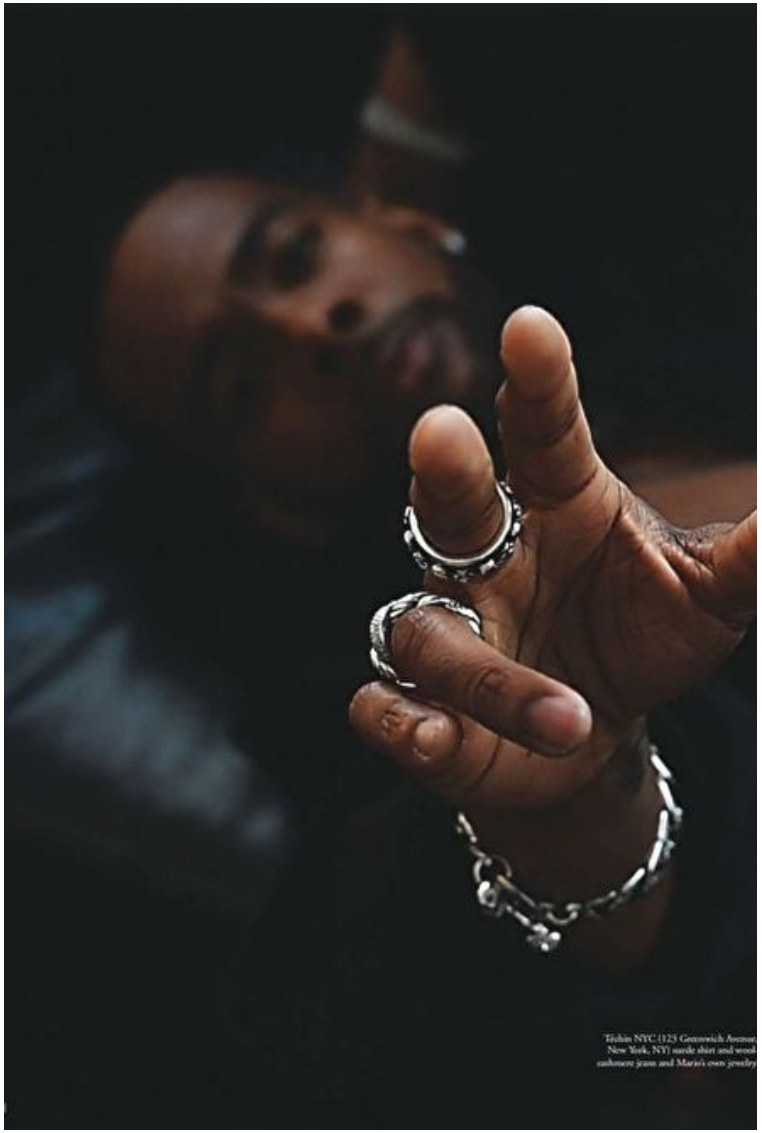
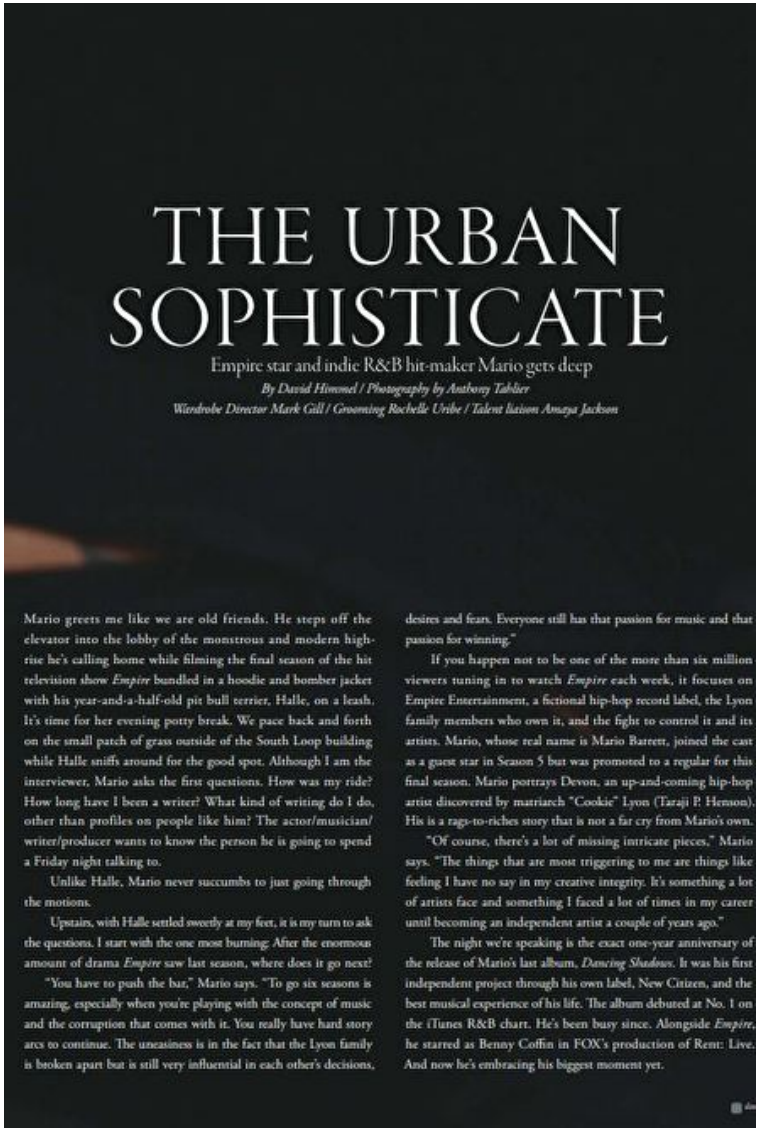


Tiziano NYC (123 Greenwich Avenue New York, NY) suede shirt and wool cashmere jeans and Mario's own jewelry



THE URBAN SOPHISTICATE

Empire star and indie R&B hit-maker Mario gets deep

By David Himmel / Photography by Anthony Tahlier

Wardrobe Director Mark Gill / Grooming Rochelle Uribe / Talent liaison Ameya Jackson

Mario greets me like we are old friends. He steps off the elevator into the lobby of the monstrous and modern high-rise he's calling home while filming the final season of the hit television show *Empire* bundled in a hoodie and bomber jacket with his year-and-a-half-old pit bull terrier, Halle, on a leash. It's time for her evening potty break. We pace back and forth on the small patch of grass outside of the South Loop building while Halle sniffs around for the good spot. Although I am the interviewer, Mario asks the first questions. How was my ride? How long have I been a writer? What kind of writing do I do, other than profiles on people like him? The actor/musician/writer/producer wants to know the person he is going to spend a Friday night talking to.

Unlike Halle, Mario never succumbs to just going through the motions.

Upstairs, with Halle settled sweetly at my feet, it is my turn to ask the questions. I start with the one most burning: After the enormous amount of drama *Empire* saw last season, where does it go next?

"You have to push the bar," Mario says. "To go six seasons is amazing, especially when you're playing with the concept of music and the corruption that comes with it. You really have hard story arcs to continue. The uneasiness is in the fact that the Lyon family is broken apart but is still very influential in each other's decisions, desires and fears. Everyone still has that passion for music and that passion for winning."

If you happen not to be one of the more than six million viewers tuning in to watch *Empire* each week, it focuses on Empire Entertainment, a fictional hip-hop record label, the Lyon family members who own it, and the fight to control it and its artists. Mario, whose real name is Mario Barrett, joined the cast as a guest star in Season 5 but was promoted to a regular for this final season. Mario portrays Devon, an up-and-coming hip-hop artist discovered by matriarch "Cookie" Lyon (Taraji P. Henson). His is a rags-to-riches story that is not a far cry from Mario's own.

"Of course, there's a lot of missing intricate pieces," Mario says. "The things that are most triggering to me are things like feeling I have no say in my creative integrity. It's something a lot of artists face and something I faced a lot of times in my career until becoming an independent artist a couple of years ago."

The night we're speaking is the exact one-year anniversary of the release of Mario's last album, *Dancing Shadows*. It was his first independent project through his own label, New Citizen, and the best musical experience of his life. The album debuted at No. 1 on the iTunes R&B chart. He's been busy since. Alongside *Empire*, he starred as Benny Coffin in FOX's production of Rent: Live. And now he's embracing his biggest moment yet.

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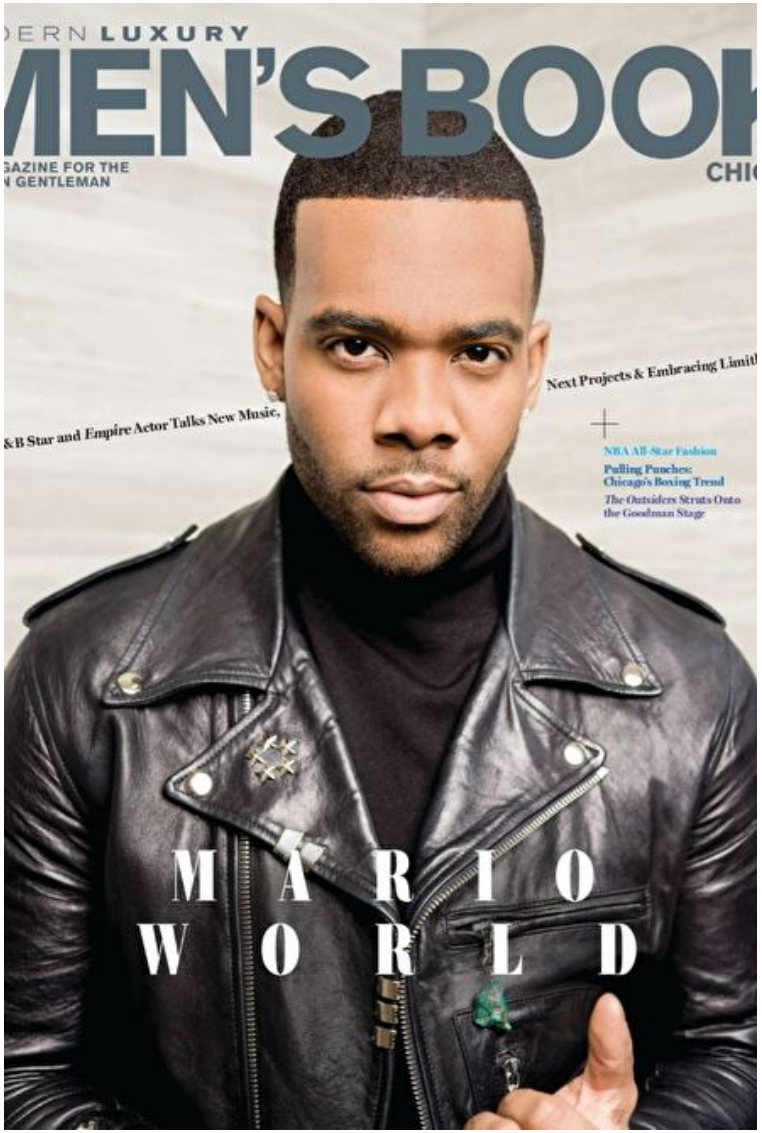



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