

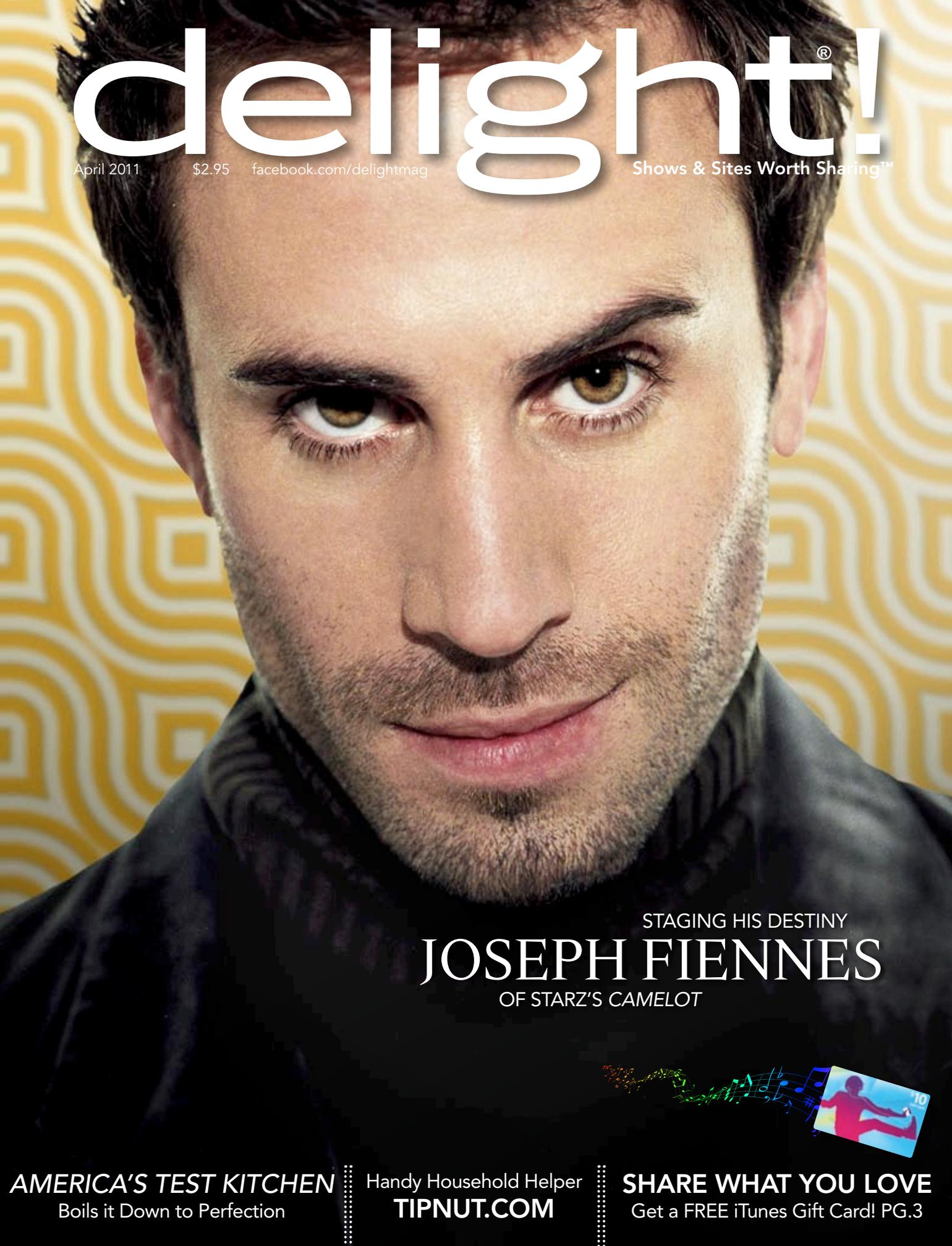
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STAGING HIS DESTINY

JOSEPH FIENNES

OF STARZ'S CAMELOT



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SOUL SURVIVOR

He's the consummate actor and a bit of a rebel.

An inside look at why JOSEPH FIENNES can't help but put his heart—

and a lot of soul—in everything he does.

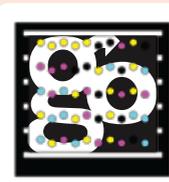
by Greg Archer

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WATCH IT NOW!

Get a sneak peek of Joseph Fiennes in Starz's *Camelot*.

Click it with your mobile device...



Clad in a dark blue blazer, designer jeans and a crisp, bright-white button-down shirt, Joseph Fiennes is the epitome of class. Resting back a bit in his chair in a spacious bungalow in Pasadena's posh Huntington Hotel, he's relaxed yet focused. And he's everything you'd imagine him to be—respectful and so wonderfully English. Make that English (Salisbury, Wiltshire) by way of being raised in West Cork, Ireland.

But then ... as you experience more of Fiennes, you realize that the dashing man is actually one thing you may not have ever realized he was—a nonconformist.

"I wouldn't really give any advice," Fiennes admits when asked about how to live one's life outside of the box. "Probably because I think the human mind wants to latch onto an idea or an emotion like a leech and then, once it's

set on the idea, it's no longer cherished; it's slightly destroyed.

"I think you can live well by advice, but I think what you need to do is feel without thinking," he adds with sheer grace. "In fact, my advice, even though I said I wouldn't give it, would be to shut up the senseless chatter of the mind and ... just feel."

And so it goes with one of Hollywood's more profound artists. Here's a man with an open heart, yes, but somebody who apparently is also smart enough not to get caught up in the trappings of "fame." When his celebrity soared to great heights after starring opposite Gwyneth Paltrow in 1999's indelible, Oscar-winning *Shakespeare in Love*, Fiennes did something absolutely unpredictable. He respectfully turned down a five-picture deal with Miramax, all so that he could return to a place that just "felt" better—the stage. >>>

23 FIENNES

>>>>

16

FIENNES >>>>

FINDING FIENNES

d!: In *Camelot*, Merlin is gutsy. In what ways do you feel you are courageous?

JF: [Laughs] By getting back into a pair of tights.

d!: Who do you most admire in history?

JF: Desmond Tutu. He's an extraordinary man that had to look at the essence of forgiveness and how to bring a really fractured landscape to pull itself into unity—without shedding blood. It was a brutal program of truth and reconciliation after apartheid, but somehow, it moved South Africa forward in a way I don't think other countries can do.

d!: When you think of home, what comes to mind?

JF: My wife, my daughter, and the two little dogs we picked up in L.A. from a rescue home.

d!: What do you love most about acting?

JF: You get picked up by the scruff of the neck—if you're lucky—and get dropped off at the front line of a very different perspective. You broaden your mind as a consequence. And I think that ... is really a gift.

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CAMELOT

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Fiennes (right) as Merlin on the set of *Camelot* with fellow actors Jamie Campbell Bower (left) as King Arthur and Peter Mooney (middle) as Kay.

(At the time he reportedly noted: "I went back to what my initial voice was ... If that meant not following up with a typical leading-man role, then that's what it is. I'm an actor, and whatever speaks to me I will do.")

It's just one of many indicators that Fiennes, a Screen Actors Guild Award-winner, marches to the beat of other creative percussions. Completely comfortable in his own skin, he sets a stellar example of how to remain true to oneself by making life choices more from the "heart" than the head.

Enter *Camelot*, the epic and impressive 10-part mini-series hitting Starz this month. At first glance, the "King Arthur reboot" seems to be the perfect vehicle for Fiennes, who takes on the pivotal role of Merlin opposite Jamie Campbell Bower's (*The Twilight Saga*) young, reckless Arthur. The show is lush with legend and, oh so English.

But Fiennes saw other possibilities with the role.

"I thought, 'you know, fly or fail, I'm going to have fun with Merlin,'" he says with enthusiasm. "I thought, I, as an actor, am going to tackle Merlin in a different way—dispense with the long hair, the prophet-like look, with the beard and the long staff and the pointy hat, and I am going to do more of a bullish, warrior monk."

Eva Green costars as Arthur's dark yet powerful half-sister Morgan and Tamsin Egerton takes on Guinevere. Collectively, Fiennes notes that the kinetic energy amongst the cast made stepping into this series all the more inviting. His instincts to take on the role were right on, but those instincts must have been nurtured at a younger age.

"My mother and my father [Jini and Mark Fiennes] were the greatest influences in terms of my creativity and what I do," Fiennes opens up. "One of my mom's phrases was, 'Put your guts into it. You have to instill your presence with discipline as much as just winging it.'"

As a result, the Fienneses exposed their children to literature, great writing, the arts. "My mother was a writer and an artist," Fiennes notes. "She felt that the whole world

was integral to our society. Typically, it is that there's politics, sports and then the arts. That was never the case [at home]—that the arts were second best. It was vital and pertinent. I grew up in that atmosphere, that belief. It was encouraged."

So much so that Fiennes, a fraternal twin and the youngest of six siblings—older brother Ralph also turns heads on screen—plunged into art school and later consumed himself in theater at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He stood out in numerous stage productions and captured the eyes of producers, who cast him in standout film roles like *Stealing Beauty* and *Elizabeth*. He carefully chose his roles after *Shakespeare in Love*—everything from *Luther*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Running With Scissors* and, more recently, TV's *FlashForward* filled an emotional purpose for Fiennes.

"I'm an actor, and whatever speaks to me I will do."

-Joseph Fiennes

Still, deep as he is, the creatively adventurous 40-year-old may not have realized he'd be going deeper. After the birth of his daughter with his wife Maria Dolores Dieguez last year, suddenly life—living—had new purpose. Becoming a father allowed him to explore a different frontier within himself.

"What I am learning about myself lately comes from my infant daughter. Suddenly, it's more about this little person; how they show up and mirror aspects of yourself.

"[Children] are so uniquely different than you," he muses. "Yet at the same time, you share so much with this amazing being. I'm learning about a kind of evolution of mind, body and spirit in the most extraordinary way—seeing all that as it silently filters into the oasis of my brain ... and my heart." **d!**