



Daddy's home!  
Usher hugs sons  
Naviyd (far left)  
and Cinco.

ENTERTAINMENT

## How Usher Got His Groove Back

Singer and producer Usher Raymond's growth, as a father and philanthropist, was the pinnacle of his megasuccessful year

**F**or Usher, 2011 has been quite a rebirth. While the multiplatinum singer's box-office-breaking OMG tour and tutelage of pop protégé Justin Bieber nabbed headlines, it was the entertainer's passion for fatherhood and paying it forward through his New Look Foundation that impressed us. The latter is critical, particularly given December 1 is

World AIDS Day. Earlier this year, Usher, 33, partnered with Belvedere Vodka, which is donating half of the profits from every sale of (Belvedere) RED Special Edition to the Global Fund. The international financing institution distributes resources to fight HIV/AIDS in countries such as Rwanda, Swaziland, Ghana, Lesotho, Zambia and South Africa. Though constantly in

motion, Usher found time in his hectic schedule to talk to ESSENCE about his amazing year and his most important role: being a good dad to sons Usher V, or Cinco as he's called, and Naviyd.

**ESSENCE: Congrats on your continued success. Now, let's talk about family. What does being a father mean to you?**

**USHER:** It means everything in life. I wanted to be a father before I became one. I didn't want to fall victim to the stereotype that [Black men are] elusive. I didn't want to be absent, like my dad.

**ESSENCE: So where do you pull examples about being a man and a father?**

**USHER:** Everything I've done with the New Look Foundation [stemmed from] my longing for my father. I was also a Boys & Girls Club kid. I had mentors and a great coach who went the extra mile to [guide] me. I have Cliff Huxtable to thank too, because he raised a lot of us [laughs]. There was also Uncle Phil from *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* and Fred Sanford from *Sanford & Son*. Those characters were great references.

**ESSENCE: Which of your traits do you see in Cinco and Naviyd?**

**USHER:** My boys are very calculating. When they've been away from me for a while, I see the little things they try to get away with because they've been around other people. I let them have their way, but not always.

**ESSENCE: What has being a father taught you?**

**USHER:** It's taught me the importance of standing up and being there to help them find their way. I'm also realizing that although they're kids, in the literal sense, I'm really raising future adults.

**ESSENCE: What do you want for your sons?**

**USHER:** I want them to know that there's a huge world out there, and [if there's anything] they want to do, all they have to do is put their mind to it.

—Regina R. Robertson