

THE RO LES

CELINE DION

THE SUPERSTAR SINGER HAS RISEN TO A PLACE BEYOND WEALTH, FAME, STATUS, AND POWER. SHE HOLDS THE WORLD IN THE PALM OF HER HAND AND LIVES FOR NO ONE BUT HERSELF AND HER FAMILY—A MOST RARE AND ENVIABLE POSITION



"Hi Mark, this is Rene Angelil," says the legendary husband and manager of Celine Dion. He is with his wife en route to the studio in Florida where she is a week into rehearsals for her first Las Vegas residency since Caesars Palace built her a 4,100-seat coliseum to house "A New Day...", her \$400 million grossing musical spectacular that ran for five years and closed in 2007. Angelil gallantly offers a mobile number to reach him in case of further questions, then bows out of the conversation. "Have a great day. Here's Celine."

Celine Dion is a star. She is otherworldly in that she no longer needs to engage the world on any terms but her own. "I feel more glamorous now than ever," she says. "I don't have to dress, sing, or say things to please people. I can just feel good. Let's just say I don't have to be cool. It's not about being cool. I can just be chic. I can be myself and do things as I feel inside. And I don't feel I do wrong by doing that."

Hers is an incredible story that begins with meeting her future life partner as a 12-year-old pop hopeful from Charlemagne, Quebec. Having gone from the youngest of fourteen children



to Top-40 ubiquity, Celine is internationally famous for a voice that makes the world cry. She is the first and last word in professionalism; she is a brand founded on easy listening, delivered without cynicism or shame; and she is a lesson in dialing it all the way up, as she did for her 1998 Academy Awards performance of "My Heart Will Go On," her epic theme from *Titanic*—accessorized with a \$25 million Heart of the Ocean necklace.

Celine describes the as-yet-untitled show as "glamorous, grand, and chic," words she revisits often, pronouncing them with an elegant French-Canadian accent. A sophisticated, Art Deco-inspired, old Hollywood-style affair, the new show will have no dancers (unlike the last production, directed by Franco Dragone of Cirque du Soleil) but will include a full orchestra to back Celine as she sings her repertoire: standards by jazz greats, a James Bond medley, and a Michael Jackson tribute, among other surprises. She hints at "beautiful effects and magical things on stage" and speaks of a determination to achieve an unsurpassed level of polish, a process she compares to a couturier delivering work to the runway. "When they touch the fabric, when they're trying to find the right stone, when they're figuring out if there is going to be wonderful embroidery..." she trails off.

Her analogy is fitting for an icon with a history of adventurous

extravagances, from the daring John Galliano for Christian Dior backward white smoking tuxedo she wore to the 1999 Academy Awards to the unabashed opulence of her Melkite Byzantine vow-renewal ceremony at Caesars Palace in 2000. "It's always fun to be asked what I'm wearing because I appreciate clothing tremendously," Celine admits. "I'm wearing a Lanvin dress right now. No sleeves, beautiful chiffon, a wonderful way to wake up in the morning. Nothing too structured, but beautiful, elegant, and chic. I'm enjoying his work tremendously," she says of [Lanvin designer] Alber Elbaz, who contributes designs to the new show, along with Atelier Versace, Giorgio Armani Privé, Givenchy Haute Couture, and Elie Saab (all selected with guidance from her stylist Annie Horth).

Celine is a shopping dynamo. "I love to shop," she says. "I love fashion. I love so many wonderful things. It's not only about clothes, it's about shoes, it's about accessories, it's about jewelry. My husband is next to me right now and when I say jewelry I can see money signs in his eyes because he's going crazy! Sometimes I wish I could just wear a beautiful, elegant bathrobe with lots of jewelry that is like, 'Where are you going?' 'Exactly right here, hon. Nowhere else but here.' I can take a hot bath with just my beautiful wedding ring and it's like getting married

again. I'm probably wearing more jewelry and chic things in my house when no one sees me than when I'm out there trying to be accessible. Maybe it's a mistake, maybe it's not, but you should see me behind closed doors. It's quite something." Does she wear all of this to cook an egg? She laughs. "Sometimes you don't want to know when I'm wearing it. It's like up to the roof! It's just wonderful, I'm fortunate to have beautiful things."

If Celine's words sound wild in print, they are overwhelmingly gracious and endearing when spoken. She views her considerable resources as a gift to share with her family, allowing for impressive homes where they take turns on the waterslide, blow bubbles by the pool, and eat cupcakes on the beach.

She wears her unparalleled accomplishments as elegantly as she does her expertly cultivated wardrobe. "As time goes by, we feel that we've done it all," she says. "And here we are sitting in a car going to rehearsals beginning a new show. Are we going to be inspired again? Yes we are! And everything seems to be brand new." The show had already sold \$10 million in tickets at the time of our conversation. **Mark Jacobs**

Celine Dion in Montreal, 2008
Photography Gérard Schachmes