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**Voisine worth the wait****Sheri Block**

The Leader-Post

Monday, April 07, 2003

ROCH VOISINE

Saturday

Centre of the Arts

- - -

Roch Voisine had a lot of time to make up for.

The two-time Juno award winner has been touring all across Canada and Europe performing in both French and English for well over 10 years.

But Saturday night's show at the Centre of the Arts marked the first time he has ever been to Regina.

And despite a fantastic opening with "By Myself," the first single from the new album Higher, and fan-favourite "Kissing Rain," which was re-worked beautifully with bongo drums and shakers, the audience was slow to warm up.

Don't get me wrong. The predominantly older crowd politely cheered and clapped throughout the first few numbers but the sheer enthusiasm and energy that should've been present, considering it was Voisine's first appearance and considering his performance thus far, just wasn't there (except for a few clusters of diehard fans, including said reviewer who was shrieking with excitement the entire time).

The semi-acoustic show marked a change from Voisine's usual arena shows and Regina was fortunate to have their first live experience of him in this very intimate setting.

**Roch Voisine**

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Accompanied by a four-piece band, Voisine's strong, clear voice left chills as it rang out into the auditorium.

But his voice is not the only thing that has remained in tact. At 40-years-old, Voisine looked as dashing handsome as he ever has, dressed sharply in black pants and shirt, with black and white oxfords he bought for a stint at the Montreal Casino five years ago.

He ran through old favourites from his first English album, I'll Always Be There, including the ever-popular "Am I Wrong" that he sang perched on a stool, as well as some new tunes, including the encouraging "Don't Give Up."

Voisine said the song helped one of his producers get through a difficult time and he hopes it will do the same for anyone else who needs it.

The pace picked up with the energetic "Pretty Face" from an early release, which turned into a medley of "La Bamba" and "Twist and Shout" that featured exceptional guitar playing by both Jason Lang and Jeff Smallwood, marking the end of the first half.

The second half opened with an acoustic set, but ironically, the crowd had found their enthusiasm and the energy level steadily increased from then until the end of the show, which finally matched what was happening on stage.

Much to the dismay of many of the ladies, and maybe even some of the gentlemen in the audience, Voisine told the story of how he proposed to his wife, whom he married in December.

He wrote her a song (what else?) and described the proposal -- him in a tuxedo with a guitar and a ring in his pocket and her in a bathtub full of bubbles.

In truly one of the most moving and memorable moments of the evening, Voisine performed "Myriam's Song (Will You Be My Wife)" bluegrass-style with only one microphone, accompanied by three of his band members on the course.


The crowd "ahhed" and choked back tears.

But the audience was in a frenzy by the time the encore arrived, which consisted of Voisine's first big French hit "H?l?ne," "Deliver Me" and not surprisingly, "I'll Always Be There" that brought the crowd to their feet.

Voisine started the show by saying he couldn't believe he'd never been here before. He ended it by saying he won't wait another 13 years to come back.

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