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As published on page F4 on October 26, 2002

## Brent Mazerolle's Q&A with Roch Voisine, recording artist

**BRENT MAZEROLLE**  
Q&A

Roch Voisine sat down before his concerts at the Capitol Theatre on Wednesday to talk about his career, his forthcoming marriage and life as an international music star. Remembering the weeks of bickering in the Times & Transcript Forum after he performed his last Moncton show entirely in French in 1997, Roch also had a couple of things to say about language. The setting was the middle of the balcony lounge of the Capitol Theatre, with Roch seated beneath a magnificent crystal chandelier, kicking back in a plastic patio chair.



**LL:** How often do you do two shows?

**RV:** I've never done that.

**LL:** Oh really?

**RV:** Back to back like this, I've never done it. I've done matinees, then break, then a show at night but I've never done back to back.

**LL:** And with no opening act. I promise not to keep you talking too long. How's the knee? I heard you had a skiing accident over the winter.

**RV:** It's fine now. I started playing ice hockey again, so it's good. My leg is still a bit weak. I need to bring the right leg up to par if I want to start skiing.

**LL:** You haven't given up on skiing then?

**RV:** Oh no. Absolutely not. I have to be very careful but it's not something that will stop me from skiing.

**LL:** Are you taking physiotherapy while you're on the road?

**RV:** A strengthening program.

**LL:** So you can do it on your own. Is it the same knee that ended your hockey career as a young man?

**RV:** (chagrined) No.

**LL:** You know you're in your thirties now. Both knees gone.

**RV:** They're *not* gone. But I can't jog anymore. I can't do any jumping around. Skiing, skating, biking are okay.

**LL:** Skating? Even with all that lateral motion?

**RV:** Yeah, it's fine.

**LL:** And you still manage to play hockey?

**RV:** Two or three times a week when I'm in Montreal. I play in the mornings, mostly with firemen and cops.

**LL:** I suppose they're shift workers after all.

**RV:** They're shift workers and there in very good shape.

**LL:** Let's sort out the local Roch Voisine myths, rumours and legends. You have quite a bit of family here, I understand?

**RV:** Yes, my mom's from Point Sapin, so they're all from Bouctouche, Richibucto, Moncton. I have *a lot* of cousins. A few years ago we had a New Year's party and they had to rent a whole place. There was like 158.

**LL:** Ah yes, the sleigh ride at Dieppe's Rotary Park in 1998. We ran a small story on that at the time. Many of the family expected at the shows tonight?

**RV:** I don't know. They're pretty spread out now. My grandmother and mother will be there though. And some cousins.

**LL:** There's also a rumour that goes around that you lived in Moncton for awhile and worked in a local music store.

**RV:** (Surprised) Nope.

**LL:** You were in the Quebec Major Junior League for a little while, then . . .

**RV:** Then college, then the University of Ottawa.

**LL:** Physiology?

**RV:** Kinesiology then physiotherapy after that.

**LL:** At the time did you think of being a doctor?

**RV:** A few friends of mine from physio did med school applications and one of them is a doctor now. He wasn't better than me in school (laughing) so I guess I could be a doctor now.

**LL:** How do you feel about New Brunswickers, ever since you achieved success, claiming you as a New Brunswick boy?

**RV:** (Emphatically) I am a New Brunswicker. I was born here. I was raised here for the first 10 years of my life.

**LL:** And you feel those 10 years count most?

**RV:** Of course they do. If you know anything about child psychology, your psyche, your personality's built by the age of seven. So yeah, New Brunswick, if not a long part, is a pretty important part.

**LL:** Some say the adolescent years play a bigger role.

**RV:** Well, I think every step of the way's important.

**LL:** Speaking of important steps, I understand you're marking the first day of winter with a little celebration?

**RV:** (Laughing) Yeah, a little celebration, absolutely.

**LL:** Congratulations on your impending wedding. I know marriage is one of the finest things I ever did, frankly. (Roch is engaged to Myriam St-Jean, an accounts manager in Montreal. The two met this summer).

**RV:** I'm sure it is. I think it's the most important thing I'll ever do. It's pretty exciting - it's a lot of work, especially being away that much.

**LL:** That's the question. You're not marrying someone in show business. How do you prepare her for life married to a celebrity?

**RV:** You don't. You just go with it. You just do it. If you love that person more than anything, you'll make it easier for her. (As for) life in show business, I'm not a show business lifer. You'll never see me at premieres and this and that. I don't play the show business game. I do what I have to do because that's my job. And then I'm just a regular Joe when I'm living at home, doing regular things you'd do at home, whenever I can. I think most of the show business life I have is quite exciting, travelling a lot to beautiful places and doing a job, a great job. I'm not out there for the parties. I'm not out there for the, the "myth," the show business myth. That's not me.

**LL:** Ah, then you are a New Brunswicker. As for your wedding, I hear you're not inviting the press - and frankly I don't blame you, that ilk.

**RV:** No, I'm not inviting the press. We may have pictures but there's no interviews.

**LL:** I believe you've been quoted recently as saying you're not having a Celine Dion type of wedding. No camels?

**RV:** I did not say that. Why would I say that? I'm not here to put down someone like Celine. Everyone has their taste and their choice. I just basically said, "I'm not making a show out of my wedding." That's not me. I think people automatically pair Celine and me. But you know she's at a totally different level.

**LL:** Who's your best man?

**RV:** My best man is my Ottawa U. coach.

**LL:** Your hockey coach?

**RV:** Michel Boucher, yes. He became my best friend. I knew him when I was in college, then we kept in touch. I have the highest regard for that man. He's probably one of the only people who's been close to me through a lot of stages of my life as an adult. Childhood friends I don't have anymore and high school friends I don't have anymore. College friends - it's been 15 years since I graduated. You need to find someone that's been there every step of the way. So I asked him and he accepted. Plus, I'm not going to have all my head that day so someone has to.

**LL:** Ha ha! An old coach is probably a good choice. "Okay, Roch, you need to do this and this . . ."

**RV:** Ha ha! Yeah. "You do this, then you go down this aisle and you stop there."

**LL:** A hockey coach. He'll probably give you a stick of gum.

**RV:** Yeah, there you go. He'll have his whistle around his neck.

**LL:** As for not still having school friends around, I'm not sure that's a reflection of your life as a travelling musician, but more the way we all live these days. However, speaking of the travelling life, is marriage going to change anything now? Does the career go forward?

**RV:** It will change a lot of things. I will not do my job the same way I used to do my job with a big change in my life like this. And this is becoming more and more of a job. It is still my passion and my talent and I make a living at what I like in life. That's very important, but deep down it's just a job. The most important things now are going to be my wife and my future kids. I won't travel as much. There are ways to do this business without running around left and right and there are ways to travel with a family.

**LL:** So you're hoping to have children?

**RV:** Absolutely.

**LL:** You hope to have a lot?

**RV:** Sure. We'll have as many as she wants (laughing).

**LL:** Ha! Your wife probably is the one to be consulted. I have noticed it is mothers who tend to do all the work. So, will you stay in Montreal?

**RV:** I don't know. It depends how my work goes. If it picks up south of the border we'll probably have a base there.

**LL:** Do you still have a home in California?

**RV:** No. But we may move there or New York or maybe a place in Europe.

**LL:** There's always that elusive U.S. breakthrough. But does it matter any more?

**RV:** You need the song. It's all about one song.

**LL:** But does it matter if the song ever comes? You're already a big success.

**RV:** I would like to have success south of the border like any other artist of course. We're going to be working towards that goal, but it's not as important as it used to be. It'll

probably happen in Europe with this new record. And then you never know, they may hear the song on the radio and go "Oh my God!" and boom, you know, that's the way it happens. It's that easy. When it happens.

**LL:** So no retirement plans? You're not going to say like John Lennon, "I'm having children. I'm going to stay home and bake bread."

**RV:** No, I think there's a way to live in a central area where most everything happens. Other artists have families. But I'm not 20 years old. I don't want to do and go as fast and far as I did then. I don't see life the same way. It's a good thing I'm a late bloomer in having a family.

**LL:** Well it will make you feel young again.

**RV:** (laughing) I'm going to have to be.

**LL:** As we're doing this interview you still have back to back shows ahead of you, so I won't keep you talking much longer. Planning to do a lot from the new CD on this tour?

**RV:** No. Nobody knows. You don't want to do a concert following a chart. There's songs off the record, four or five. It's a 22-song concert. Ninety-five per cent of it's in English, of course. It's an English tour.

**LL:** Hmmm.

**RV:** Yes. And every time I come here I always get caught in the middle of some dispute about language and stuff. That's not what I'm here for. I'll give it to the French and I'll give it to the English. This is a matter of music, not politics. Tonight is 95 per cent English - with a few surprises.

**LL:** You weren't here to stir the pot last time either but people chose to do it for you after you left.  
**RV:** That's what I'm saying. They used me as a - for reasons. I don't like that.

**LL:** Here's hoping we're all over that. Good luck with the tour and best wishes on your wedding day.

**RV:** Thank you very much.

***Roch Voisine's new CD 'Higher' is scheduled for release Nov. 15. The first single, 'By Myself' is getting airplay now.***

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