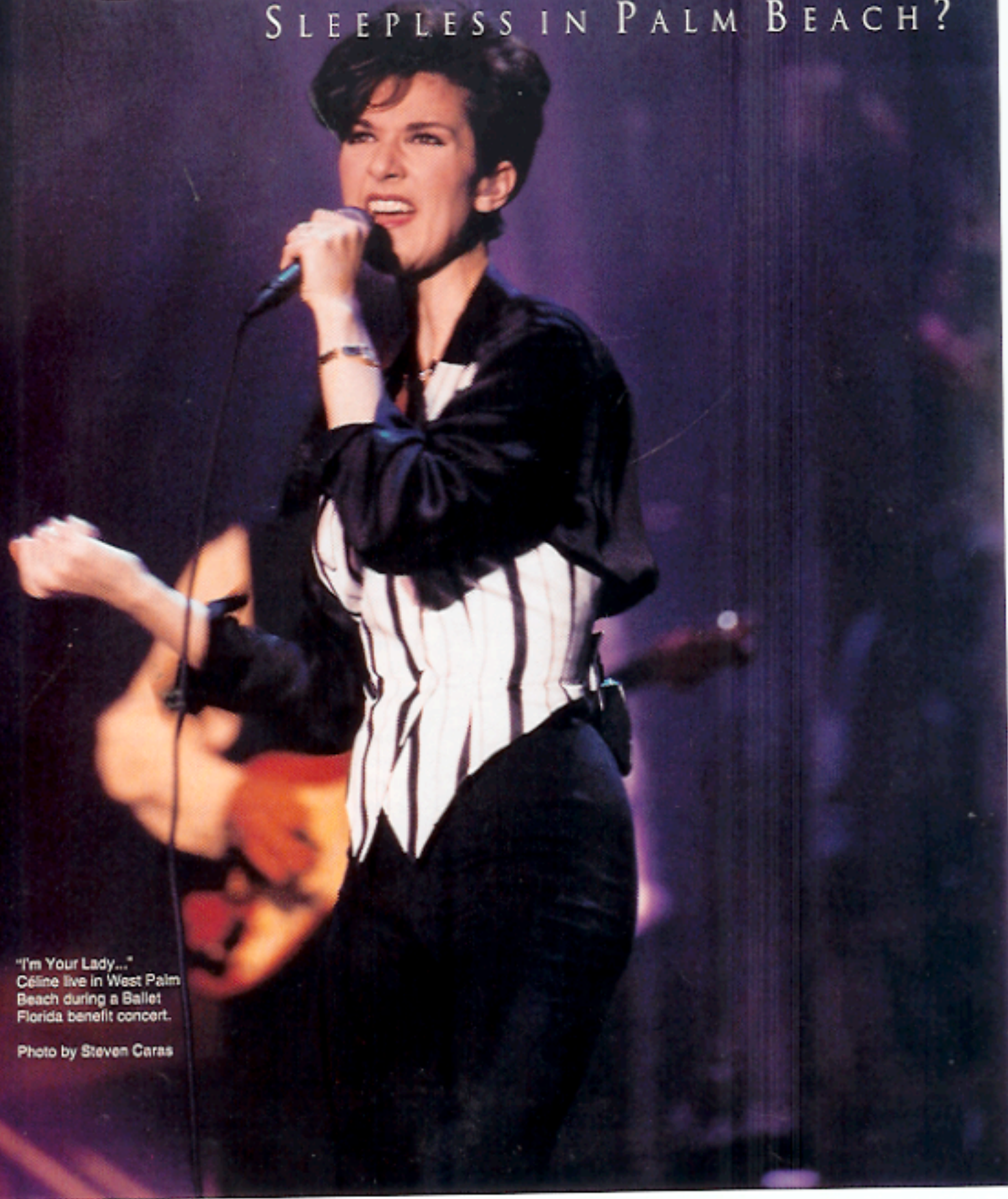


WHY IS

CÉLINE DION

SLEEPLESS IN PALM BEACH?



"I'm Your Lady..."
Celine live in West Palm
Beach during a Ballet
Florida benefit concert.

Photo by Steven Caras

THE VOICE ON THE
SOUNDTRACKS OF
BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
AND SLEEPLESS IN SEATTLE,
CANADIAN CHANTEUSE CÉLINE DION
IS ON THE METEORIC RIDE OF HER LIFE.
WITH A NEW HUSBAND,
A NEW ALBUM, A NEW HOME IN PALM
BEACH GARDENS, AND ONE HIT SINGLE
AFTER ANOTHER, THE POP MUSIC
WORLD'S HOTTEST
GIRL-WONDER HAS HIT THE BIG TIME.
WHO WOULDN'T BE UP ALL NIGHT?

BY JUDY D'EDUARDO

It's 6:10 p.m., less than two hours before show time, and Céline Dion is

sitting in a shadowed corner of her backstage dressing room, just beyond the glare of the fluorescent lights above. "The light is so bright over there," she explains, pointing to the chair I had offered.

"Certainly not as bright as what's on stage," I laugh. "Oh, but this is different. I'm not on stage where it is safe, where I am most at home, where I am in my most natural state," she admits.

The room is typical backstage-nondescript: A vase of uninteresting flowers sits next to a tray of mystery foods. A piece of paper with Céline's name laser-printed across the top hangs on the front door—which swings open every few seconds as her assistant attends to last-minute tasks.

Céline appears oblivious. Her hair, which she will arrange herself, is matted beneath a faded, floral bandana. A shock of auburn protrudes from the top. From beneath a plain black velour bathrobe peeks a yellow, nylon nightgown. In all, Céline is not at her best. I wonder if this show of immodesty is the nonchalance of a 27-year-old, or if the enormity of Céline's success has eluded her own consciousness. I also wonder if in five years will she still be giving interviews in her bathrobe.

She is surprisingly calm: A sell-out crowd is filing into the West Palm Beach Auditorium, and Céline hasn't performed in two months.

In the midst of it all, she has agreed to an interview, and begins reciting the storybook tale of her life—as if she's telling it for the first time.

"I have one life but have enjoyed two careers," you once said to a reporter. Do you still feel that way?

Yeah, for sure. My first career is everything that happened before I learned English about seven years ago. I am the youngest of 14 children and my parents were entertainers. So I grew up in this business and have been performing throughout Canada since I was five. My first television appearance was at age 13 when I sang "Ce n'était qu'un rêve" ["It Was Only a Dream"], which was written by my mother and later recorded on my first album.

Was that the time when you and your husband, René Angélil, first met and his Montreal record company invested \$1.5 million in your career?

Yes. One of my brothers had sent my tape to René. He was immediately impressed and wanted to meet me. I remember going to his office where he asked me to sing for him. He was so overwhelmed by my voice, he cried. I can't begin to tell you how that moment touched me.

When did you fall in love with him?

At that moment. Of course, I was only 13 and he was 26 years my senior—and married. But I knew that what I felt for him I had never experienced before. From then on he was my manager.

Was he your first love?

Yes. When I was 18, 19, I had a boyfriend. But I didn't love him. René was divorced by then and of course I was good friends with his wife and children. I grew up with them.

And the rest is history?

Well, yes. We were married in December.

It's not the typical entertainer-manager relationship, though.

No. Just as you can't separate my career from the rest of my life because they are one, you can't view René as two different people. We have a great respect for one another. Making deals and arranging concerts and such isn't just a money thing. If something is good for us, we do it. If not, no matter how much money is at stake, we don't. It's that simple.

Is motherhood in the cards for you?

Oh, yes. I'd like to start with one—perhaps by next year—and then see from there.

Meeting René was a pivotal point in your career, wasn't it?

Definitely. By age 15, I had won four Félixes [Quebec's equivalent to the Grammys]. By age 21, I had nine albums in French, had collected many more Félixes and had become one of Quebec's top stars.

That was also when you committed yourself to learning

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English. Did you do so to broaden your opportunities?

Yes and no. Not understanding English had always been a limit for me. I grew up like you, listening to and singing along with Aretha Franklin, Stevie Wonder, Janis Joplin...I just couldn't understand what the words meant.

Your entree into the English-speaking music world, however, came in 1990 with the release of "Where Does My Heart Beat Now?". Was that your proverbial big break?

Yes. It was the third cut of the *Unison* album—my first in English—which won best album at the Juno Awards. I also won that year for best pop female artist.

Your second album, *Celine Dion*, featured the Grammy Award-winning "Beauty and the Beast," which you sang with Peabo Bryson. I understand that there was some heavy competition over who would do the honors.

Yes, there was. Steven Spielberg's production company, Amblin Entertainment, looked at virtually all of the major American female singers before choosing me. It was quite an honor—and the opportunity of a lifetime.

Your success with duets continued when you and Clive

Griffin recorded "When I Fall in Love," which was immediately used as the title track for *Sleepless in Seattle*.

The song became the signature track for my third English album, *Colour of My Love*.

I understand that this year you are giving yourself a very special gift for your 27th birthday.

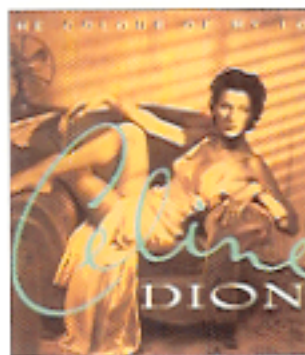
Yes, on March 30th, Sony will release my latest French album, with mostly new songs. I never intended to abandon my native language and had always wanted to keep a balance between the two. I am very excited and pleased to be able to do both.

You and René recently purchased a home in Palm Beach Gardens. What brought you here?

We have friends here and have visited often. Besides, René loves golf and I love the tranquility of this area, not to mention the shopping.

How is married life so far?

Wonderful. I love to cook and do things around the house. Being here in Palm Beach gives me the time to do these things, which other people might think are boring.



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To me, they are a treat.

What are your favorite shopping haunts?

In four words, Worth Avenue and The Gardens. Need I say more?

Who are your favorite designers?

Oh, Chanel, Armani, Versace. I also love things from less-known designers as well as items that are inexpensive. The only criterion is that I love it.

Are you on any special diet?

No, not at all. I eat what I want. I'm 5'7" and weigh approximately 115 pounds. I don't have a weight problem, never have. Should that ever change, I would do whatever is necessary.

Exercise?

No, not interested. I am such a physical performer that you could say I get my exercise while on stage. I get 14 hours of sleep a night. That's how much energy I exert.

Out of all your family members, you are the one who hit it big. How does your family feel about your success?

It's something that we all share in. Whenever possible they come to my performances. We are very close.

Do you have any other creative aspirations?

Funny you should ask that. After the wedding, we took two months off, and during that time I began getting ideas for videos and songs that I would like to write and arrange. The words and the melodies just started bubbling up.

Do you ever pinch yourself and wonder if this has all been a dream?

No. On the contrary, I am keenly aware that I am quite awake and this is all very real. My feet are firmly planted on the ground.

Are you satisfied with

yourself?

Oh, no! Never. Yes, I will always give 100 percent, but no, that often isn't enough. ♦

"I love to cook and do things around the house. Being here in Palm Beach gives me the time to do these things, which other people might think are boring. To me, they are a treat."

—Céline Dion