

Diva Las Vegas

It's 6 p.m. on a rain-soaked August evening and Céline Dion and husband René Angélil are ensconced in a gleaming white limousine that's weaving its way through thick Friday-night traffic in Ft. Lauderdale. The indefatigable 34-year-old will perform four new songs from her *A New Day Has Come* CD for 15,000 adoring fans. She'll then fly to Los Angeles at the crack of dawn to sing for a crowd of 75,000 at the Rose Bowl.

The pitch-perfect voice on the title tracks of *Beauty and the Beast* in 1991, *Sleepless in Seattle* in 1993, and *Titanic* in 1997, Dion enjoyed a meteoric rise throughout the 1990s, with eight platinum albums and more than a dozen top singles to secure her place in the limelight. But as she watches the kaleidoscopic dance of light and shadow reflected against the coal-black windows, the world's best-selling contemporary artist has only one thing on her mind: Her 17-month-old son, René-Charles—whom she has just kissed goodbye—is teething. Stardom and success aside, motherhood now shares center stage.

Céline: It's OK, really. There are 20 other artists performing tonight so I don't have the pressure of doing a whole show myself. I sing my songs and then I'm home in time to put my son to bed.

RC: Yes, but I'm sure it's hard to leave him behind.

Céline: Always! I can't imagine a mother feeling any other way. Motherhood changes everything, yet it completes everything. It makes all of the pieces of the puzzle fit neatly into place.

RC: Looking back on the years of international touring, you must be

thrilled with your upcoming theatrical production [at the Caesars Palace Colosseum in Las Vegas, which opens in March 2003 and will run five nights a week for three years]. How did it come about?

Céline: I always felt that it would take something very special to drive me back on stage every night. And when René and I saw Cirque du Soleil perform in Las Vegas in 2000, I knew that I had found what I was looking for. Caesars was capable of giving us everything we wanted—the building, the theater, working with celebrated director Franco Dragon—versus trying to tour with a production of this enormity, which would have been impossible.

RC: Did being pregnant have anything to do with your decision to anchor yourself to one place?

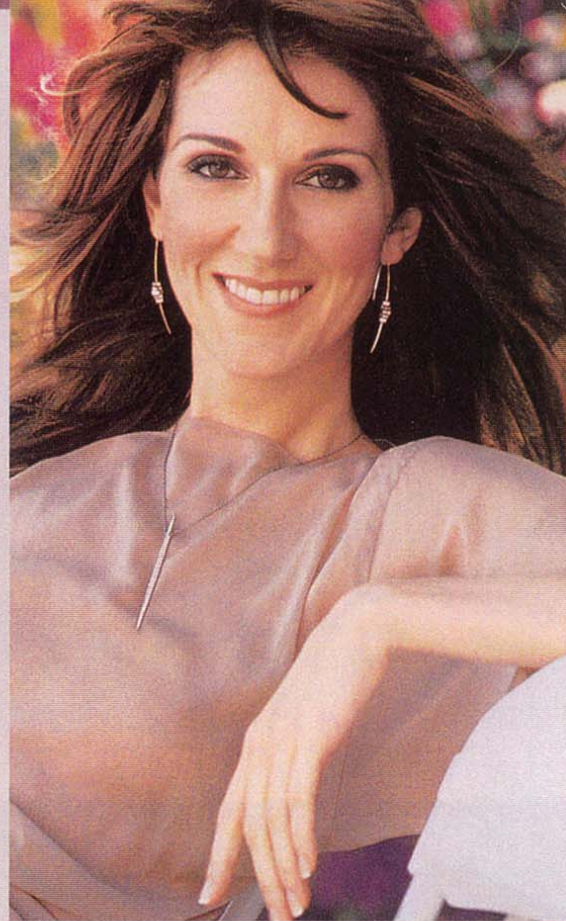
Céline: Not at all. But it's the perfect arrangement, isn't it? It's the best of all worlds by allowing me to be the best I can be as a performer without compromising myself as a mother.

RC: What is your schedule for this production? How much time and energy will it take away from your added role as a mother?

Céline: For the first few months of the show, I'll have to be at the theater several hours before show time each night until we sort out all of the technical challenges. But after that, I'll be able to leave my house 30 minutes before show time for the 90-minute set and be home in time to see René-Charles to bed.

RC: What are you most looking forward to about being settled, so to speak?

Céline: You never realize how wonderful the little things are that



you give up when you live in hotels and are on the road all of the time. Don't get me wrong, I have loved every minute of it and am incredibly grateful for all of the opportunities that my life's choices have afforded me. But for me, staying in my pajamas until noon with my son and my husband and making my own toast is the most wonderful thing.

RC: How has motherhood changed the way you travel?

Céline: Oh dear. It's nerve racking, as any mom will tell you. I can't stop thinking about my son. And when I'm flying through a storm, forget about it! I'm very stressed.

RC: Where would you most like to visit in the world that you haven't been?

Céline: My favorite place is always "home," whether that's in Montreal, where my roots are, or in Florida, where René and I have been living for quite some time. It's the reason why I personalize every hotel room in which I stay because not every city has a Ritz-Carlton, which I love. I bring some candles, family pictures and my son's bed sheets with me so that I am surrounded by everything that makes me feel happy.

BY JUDY ALEXANDRA DIEDWARDO