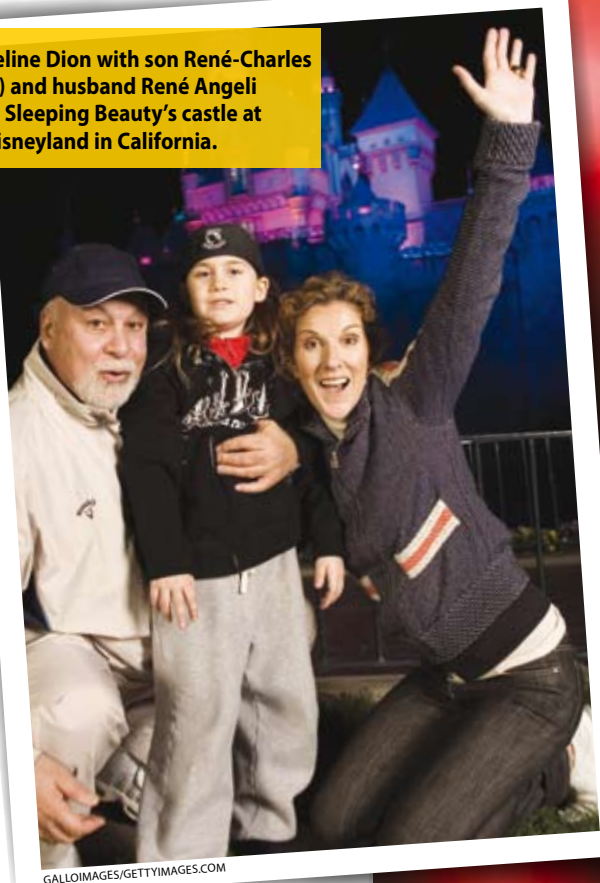


Celine Dion with son René-Charles (6) and husband René Angeli at Sleeping Beauty's castle at Disneyland in California.



GALLOIMAGES/GETTYIMAGES.COM

SHE'S one of the biggest-selling artists in history. Her vocal range has critics and fans enraptured – and it has won her more than 100 awards.

Her album *Falling Into You* is the most popular international album ever in South Africa, going platinum 12 times since it was released 12 years ago.

Now Celine Dion is finally on her way to South Africa. The international songbird will launch her *Taking Chances* world tour which she promises will be worth the long wait.

"I can't wait to perform for my South African fans," Celine says when she speaks to *YOU* on the phone from Paris.

Because her SA concerts will be the first time the *Taking Chances* show is performed she doesn't want to spoil any surprises but says it will be "very modern, very fresh and very up-tempo."

Not that SA fans need much

'It's going to be a vocal and visual spectacle'

CANADIAN SUPERSTAR CELINE DION TALKS TO US AHEAD OF HER SOUTH AFRICAN TOUR

By Sieraaj Ahmed

MAIN PICTURE: Celine Dion in action at the 2007 World Music Awards in Monte Carlo. BELOW RIGHT: The stylish diva at a function in France.



CAN'T WAIT to sing FOR YOU

encouragement. She's already breaking all kinds of local concert records.

Not only will she have more shows than any other international performer – nine across the country – her concerts have the highest-ever ticket sales in SA. More than 300 000 tickets are on sale which is much more than the previous record – 200 000 tickets sold during Michael Jackson's tour in 1997.

It's not surprising for a woman who has sold more than 220 million albums worldwide. And Celine certainly seems determined to live up to the hype when she arrives in Johannesburg on her private jet. "It's going to be a vocal and visual spectacle," she says.

CELINE (39) has been a star in her native Quebec, Canada, for more than 27 years. She's the youngest of 14 children and was discovered by her manager, René Angeli, when she was 12.

He took a second bond on his house to pay for her debut album.

Soon she was a star in French-speaking countries but had her heart set on conquering the English-speaking world too.

In the late '80s her image was overhauled and she learned English in three months at a language school. Her first English album, *Unison*, was released in 1990 and over the next decade she established herself as one of the most popular singers ever.

She married René, who's 26 years older than her, in the mid-'90s and gave birth to their son, René-Charles, in 2001.

"Before René-Charles all I had was my voice," Celine says. "Now he's the main thing in my life."

She's spent most of the past five years in Las Vegas, performing five nights a week in her *A New Day* show, and earning more than \$400 million.

The show ended in December but instead of taking a break she was itching to take a new show to fans around the world.

"I am exhausted sometimes," she admits. "But after recording my new album I wanted to go on stage and share this music with my fans."

Her new album is more adventurous than previous efforts and she plans to surprise fans even more when she appears on hip-hop producer Timbaland's new album.

She's aware she's a popular

target for comedians who poke fun at her dramatic on-stage movements and singing style. "I'm flattered people take the time to impersonate me," she says with a laugh.

The tour will take her to five continents and last a year. Afterwards she plans to settle in a new home which is being built for her family in Florida.

She wants to try to build a movie career and also hopes to have another baby, despite struggling to fall pregnant the first time. "René-Charles is hoping for a little sister but if it doesn't happen it's because life and destiny have decided that."

For now she's focusing on her tour and ensuring South African fans have a good time.

■ Celine performs in Johannesburg on 14 and 29 February and 1 March, Pretoria on 16 and 17 February, Durban on 20 February, Cape Town on 23 and 24 February and Port Elizabeth on 27 February.

Tickets are available from Ticket Connection. ADDITIONAL SOURCES: THE TIMES, OK! MAGAZINE, NEWSWEEK, THERECORD.COM



OUR Q&A WITH CELINE

■ **Why did you choose SA to launch your world tour?**

Mr Nelson Mandela called us about 18 months ago to invite us to a benefit show. But I was performing five nights a week (in Las Vegas) and couldn't come. René and I were very disappointed and agreed that when we did another tour we'd have to start in South Africa. We're very excited to see your beautiful country.

■ **Will your husband and son be joining you?**

My husband, son, two sisters, one brother and my 80-year-old mom will travel with me for the next year. It's going to be my most fun tour ever. A teacher will travel with us so René-Charles can go to school on days when I have a show.

■ **What are you looking forward to most?**

We've been told we'll meet Mr Mandela and are all excited about this honour. We also hope to go on a safari. René-Charles is so excited about going to Africa. He thinks he's going to live and sleep with elephants and tigers.

■ **What do you do to prepare for a concert?**

I try to sleep as much as I can, wake up around 1 pm, have a steam bath and start warming up my voice. The day before a concert I try to speak less.

■ **Have you heard our local Idol Jody Williams (Celine's opening act on the SA leg) sing? Do you have advice for her?**

I haven't yet but I'm looking forward to it. I'm pleased and honoured to have her there.

My advice is to train her voice well, trust her instincts and make sure her family is around.

■ **Stilettos or flats?**

Stilettos. Sometimes flats but I prefer heels.

■ **Favourite relaxation?**

To be near a fireplace.

■ **Favourite room in your house?**

The kitchen.

I love to cook.

WIN TICKETS!

■ 150 lucky readers will each win two tickets to see Celine's *Taking Chances* show in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, Cape Town or Port Elizabeth. To enter SMS the keyword for the city of your choice (CELINE DION JHB, CELINE DION PTA, CELINE DION DRB, CELINE DION CT or CELINE DION PE) to 34922 together with your name, surname and address

before 13 February. SMSes cost R2 each.

WIN CDs

■ 120 readers will each win Celine's new CD *Taking Chances*. To enter SMS the keywords CELINE DION CD to 34922 together with your name, surname and full postal address before 13 February. SMSes cost R2 each.