



Bruno Pelletier performed in both French and English in Hawkesbury. The artist took a stand against linguistic barriers in music. (photo D. Millette)

## International star rejects barriers

By Dominique Millette  
Bruno Pelletier is easily one of the most recognizable faces in French-language music. The runaway success of Notre-Dame de Paris, which as of 2006 still held the world record for the most successful first year of any musical ever produced, made the singer a household name in his native Québec as well as in several European countries. The hit musical penned by star lyricist Luc Plamondon and international composer Ricardo Cocciante was subsequently translated into English. However, its runs in Las Vegas and London didn't generate worldwide crossover appeal of the same magnitude as on the continent for its French-speaking stars, some of which, Pelletier amongst them, were retained for the British production.

The singer shot to fame in the early 1990s,

performing in other well-known Québec musicals such as La Légende de Jimmy and Starmania before Notre-Dame de Paris. Pelletier has made several television appearances in Québec and performed during the Juno awards in 1999. He has garnered Félix awards for his multiple-platinum CDs and is known for hit singles such as "Miserere" and "Le temps des cathédrales", from Notre-Dame de Paris.

With this track record behind him, the artist has taken a different turn in his recent series of jazz-flavoured concerts with le GrosZorchestre. He kicked off the tour in Hawkesbury after a three-month hiatus. The corresponding album was launched September 11. "It's a parenthesis in my career," he outlined in an interview granted to The Review on the September 7 concert date. "I wanted to have some fun and explore

a little."

It's the first time any of his shows feature so many songs in English, observes Pelletier; so much so, that he had to bring in more French content to respond to popular demand.

Does this mean he might become another Roch Voisine or a male Céline Dion, recording in English to capture that bigger audience? The answer is no: "I have a great career in French," explains the singer, known to support Québec sovereignty in the past. "I might work in English again, the way I did in London (with Notre-Dame de Paris). But I can't say I have any aspirations to sing in English to conquer the American market... I did this show for personal pleasure."

On the subject of the two solitudes, he observes that "French-speaking people know English-language music very well. I'm not sure that anglophones are quite as familiar with the franco-

By Dominique Millette  
**HAWKESBURY** — With 340 tickets sold, the September 7 concert put on by Le Chenail and featuring international pop star Bruno Pelletier was a shot in the arm for the non-profit Hawkesbury cultural organization. The audience cheered progressively louder with each song and, in the end, Pelletier got a standing ovation.

"It went well", said the artist after two curtain calls, one of which he yielded entirely to local-born friend and Cirque du Soleil singer Roxane Potvin, to the delight of the crowd. "It was relaxed. It was fun. I found that the audience was really receptive."

Though the Québec border is only a bridge away, French-language culture doesn't always sell easily, even amongst its own. This is despite Le Chenail inviting stars from Québec with an international appeal: Robert Charlebois, Daniel Lavoie, Paul Piché, Jean-Pierre Ferland... and the list goes on.

Le Chenail has struggled to keep afloat and only recently underwent an administrative makeover, with a new board of directors working overtime to restore programming and win back the population. One event advertised last year, a show for which several tickets were sold was cancelled; and the Pelletier concert itself was initially intended to go

ahead in February.

Luckily, last Friday night's investment paid off. "People were asking us when is the next concert," said an obviously delighted Jean Jolicoeur, vice-president and one of several volunteers who have put in countless hours to bring Le Chenail back to life, including several once-a-week board meetings since the election of new members last April.

The day before the Pelletier concert, 10 youths and three adults worked for three-hours-and-a-half. On the day itself, Jolicoeur and president Jacques Castonguay were at Le Sommet high school on Cécile Street, where the concert was held, from just after 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. "It's an incredible amount of work," explains Castonguay, for whom the revival of Le Chenail has become a labour of love.

The organization's renaissance is being steered with care. Castonguay calls it the "small-bridges policy." "We're moving ahead slowly, instead of going really fast and having to backtrack, which is an awful waste of time," he says. One investment was to improve the website, which now allows people to input their preferences for concerts and other events.

One event for children gave an encouraging indication of the possibilities: Les Clowns du Carrousel attracted 550 people, or far more than the 300 originally anticipated.

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Lisez l'article intégral en français sur le web au [www.ther-venon.on.ca](http://www.ther-venon.on.ca).

## Chenail concert with Bruno Pelletier a welcome success

Concertgoers at the Pelletier event warmed up to the artist most in the second half of his performance. Though the artist is known for pop rock, his present tour has taken a radically different turn. Accompanied by a band called le GrosZorchestre, he performed several covers of jazz and crooner standards, including songs by Frank Sinatra, Jacques Brel and Nat King Cole, as well as hits from singers such as Billy Joel and Peter Gabriel with a jazz twist. Pelletier and the band released their eponymous album on September 11.

The amount of English-language content is a first for the artist. A known supporter of Québec sovereignty in the past, he insists he will not follow in the footsteps of fellow francophones such as Roch Voisine or Céline Dion by trying to conquer the American market in its own tongue. Despite this, he has consented to perform at Canada Day concerts in the past - and was roundly lambasted for it as a "traitor" on separatist bulletin boards.

Ticketholders had mixed reactions at first, but ultimately embraced his style. "It's beautiful," said Denis Levac. His wife added: "It's lovely. It's different, with the jazz." Luc Villeneuve, coming in from L'Original, had a similar opinion: "It's good. It's a change of pace. I didn't know it was going to be in a crooner style, but that's okay." One dissenter, Lau-

self as a political activist, music doesn't really have any borders," the singer declares. "It's an area where you have to stay really open... It's a way for us to evolve." Though Pelletier believes French-

language music needs continued protection, he states categorically that imposing barriers is "a total mistake."

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The next event put on by Le Chenail is an art exhibition by Solle Martineau which runs until September 30 at the centre at 1210 Main Street. There will also be a local-artist music festival November 3 and 4 at Le Sommet high school. More information is available at [www.lechenail.ca](http://www.lechenail.ca).

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## CIP remediation public meeting aims for fall

By André Dumont  
**HAWKESBURY** — The public could have its say on the future of the CIP (Canadian International Paper Company) wet lagoons some time in October.

"We hope to have a public meeting in October. We will present everything to the public and let people participate," Hawkesbury Mayor Jeanne Charlebois said in an interview last week.

Town council, Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) project officer Suzanne Lafrance and two neighboring dry lagoon owners are currently contemplating possibilities for the decontamination and rehabilitation of the CIP's sludge-filled wastewater pond.

Until now, the public and the media have been barred

from meetings. However, The Review was able to publish information on four scenarios, which could range from simply monitoring the site to a full-scale remediation with a \$69-million tab.

Other ideas now include partnering up with the private sector and turning the sludge into fertilizer.

"We are trying to be as transparent as possible, but sometimes transparency takes time," Charlebois said.

The mayor says she is satisfied with discussions with dry lagoon owners, who also have to find a solution for the hundreds of tonnes of paper mill rejects stockpiled on their land.

"I feel there is movement, compared to where we were last year, Charlebois said. At least we are going somewhere."

As of now, there is still no indication of where funds for the remediation will come from. The MNR has committed to planning the remediation, but not to fund it.

## Harrington rezoning approved

By Dominique Millette  
**HARRINGTON** — After some initial opposition, a zoning change to allow the construction of a recording studio on a private property of 3,000 acres on the Rouge River Road was approved unanimously by municipal councillors during the September 4 meeting.

"I'm very happy for the municipality," said Har-

ington clerk secretary and director general Robert Lacroix to The Review. "I think it's a good project."

Ownership of the property has been attributed to race car driver Jacques Villeneuve. Doubts were raised by certain members of council as to whether the file received preferential treatment compared to the zoning changes needed by Harrington College of Canada.

"We are trying to get the provincial government to see what kind of funding is available, Charlebois said. I cannot say they are going to give us anything, but we are working on it."

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Location: The Hawkesbury Legion, 152 Nelson St. East Hawkesbury

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