

P O P C U L T U R E



A SIMPLE PLAN TO EARN RESPECT

THEY HAVE FANS AROUND THE WORLD, BUT NOW THEY PLAN TO WIN OVER THEIR HOMETOWN WITH A BELL CENTRE SHOW ON FRIDAY

T'CHA DUNLEVY
GAZETTE MUSIC CRITIC

Simple Plan might be international rock stars, but singer Pierre Bouvier is genuinely excited that his band is finally getting to play its first big hometown show. Despite having two hugely successful albums, each selling upward of 3 million

copies, the band has never headlined the Bell Centre. That will change on Friday. "It's going to be our biggest show on this (Canadian) tour," Bouvier said on the phone from "nice, cold Winnipeg" this week. "We didn't used to have that great of a reputation at home," Bouvier admitted. He's right. When Simple Plan shot straight onto the charts with its 2002 debut No Pads, No Hel-

rets ... Just Balls, it bypassed the usual intermediate step of having to build a solid hometown following. "Now that's definitely changed," Bouvier continued. "We're playing the Bell Centre. It may even be sold out. It's going to be a sick show. Our friends and family will be there. "We go around the world, to places no one ever sees. Our friends at home can't grasp

what it's like to play in those places to big crowds. Now they'll be able to understand." Simple Plan has been touring pretty much non-stop since the release of Still Not Getting Any ... in October 2004. The album and constant performing have seen the band really come into its own, according to Bouvier.

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DESIGN DAVID FITZPATRICK THE GAZETTE

An enforcer en français, a lawyer in English, this actor translates well

BRENDAN KELLY
THE GAZETTE

You can call Ron Lea many things. Like, seasoned actor, for example. That's fine. Just don't call this longtime Toronto resident a former Montrealer.

"I'll never be an ex-Montrealer," the actor said in a chat at a Montreal café this week. Lea headed down the 401 to T.O. way back in 1988 and, like so many other anglo Montrealers, he made the move to the city we love to loathe because there were more opportunities

in Hogtown. But Lea – who grew up speaking English and French on the streets of Villeray north of St. Urbain and Jarry – left his heart in his hometown and still dreams of moving back here if he could figure out a way to do it that wouldn't kill his career.

He has been back here a fair bit recently to star in Casino, a new French-language series penned by hot-shot TV scribe Réjean Tremblay (Lance et compte) that will make its bow on Radio-Canada in February. He plays the Montreal casino's tough-guy enforcer.

Lea has nabbed more franco gigs since playing in Omertà, the phenomenally popular, critically acclaimed Mafia drama that aired on Radio-Canada in the last half of the '90s. He played Mob boss Gino Favara in that series, and that put him on the radar for

Québécois TV producers. His "rêve" about returning to Montreal is based on the idea that he might eventually have enough francophone work to justify coming back home permanently.

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