

GOODLIFE

ELEGANT LIVING IN MISSISSAUGA

THE HOUSE OF STROMBO

exclusive interview

George Stroumboulopoulos

summer
2018



House of STROMBO

George Stroumboulopoulos

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The front door to George Stroumboulopoulos' chic downtown home is wide open, in anticipation of our arrival. It's a fittingly warm welcome to come inside and talk to the legendary broadcaster about music, hockey, and his career including *The Strombo Show* on *CBC Music*, his new 10-part digital music series *House of Strombo* with *Apple Music*, along with his recent induction into Legends Row in Mississauga.

George's door is always open, in a literal sense, to the ongoing stream of extraordinary talent he welcomes into his home any given day of the week, but especially on Sundays when the artists perform live in his living room. Wanting to share his experience of celebrating live performance, George also opens his home to a live audience that crams into every nook and cranny in the place. Out goes the living room chairs—in comes the soundboard and instruments to join his grand piano. He estimates he does about 100 live music gigs a year.

"Robert Plant is coming by on Sunday," says George casually, as if the lead vocalist and lyricist for Led Zeppelin,

drops by for a coffee on a regular basis.

It's George's laid back, casual vibe and engaging interview style that made him a mega star as a *MuchMusic* host of *The New Music*, host of *Live in Toronto* on CFNY 102.1 The Edge, and later as host of *The Hour* which became the eight-time Gemini award-winning talk show *George Stroumboulopoulos Tonight* on CBC TV.

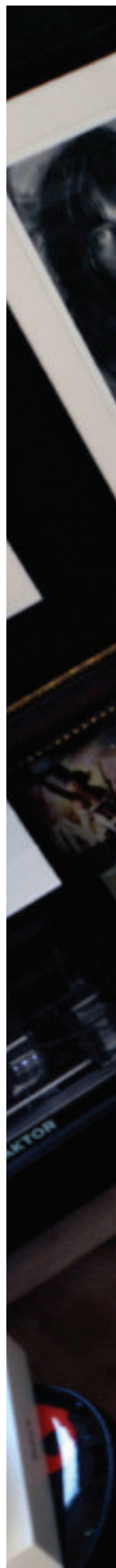
Dressed in a black Propagandhi t-shirt, black jeans ripped in all the right places, and retro- red and black OG Air Jordan 1 high-tops, George invites us upstairs to see his loft-like radio studio.

"This is it. We do our musical performance right here (in the living room) and produce the radio show upstairs in the studio, and we host our cookouts out front for the people in the band—it's a one-stop shop," explains George.

He says it is his duty to continue to showcase new and established talent in Toronto.

"When I worked at Much Music and The Edge, fans had an opportunity to meet bands, not just see them, but get close to them," says George. "I think that it's really important

George Stroumboulopoulos talks music, TV,
hockey and what it means to be
inducted to Mississauga's Legends Row





that you have this opportunity, usually a surprise, usually last minute, to go and get to be a part of something really interesting. I know the value of being close to artists and art you love and the inspiration it can provide for kids. I thought, what the f—k, I will do it here. No one is really doing that on a bigger scale. What we are doing here isn't on a big scale, but it's a decent size, and it's pretty cool."

If the artists can't come to George—Strombo goes to them. He travels extensively to New York and Los Angeles (where he has a place) to meet with artists like Keith Urban, Paul Shaffer and other legends

George describes *The Strombo Show*—his *CBC Music* show which airs from 8 to 11 p.m. on Sunday nights (8 to midnight starting in September)—as a show that celebrates the conversation around song, with no boundaries. Tune in and you will hear a musical menagerie from Aretha Franklin to Slayer.

"We play what we like," states George. "I know I could get a bigger audience if I was narrower in the focus, but I won't do that. I know people may tune out when I play the heavier stuff, go away, come back, whatever, but we are here for the next generation of music lovers. We will look back and say, we did our part."

Reflecting back on his TV talk show days which saw George sitting on his red chair across from the who's who of celebrities and world leaders, Strombo mentions a few of his favourite interviews: "My interview with June Callwood just before she died, and Michael J. Fox—he is so inspiring as a person and the work he does for his foundation. I have interviewed some amazing people in my lifetime. I am a casual person and don't have an agenda, so I offer people licence to chill."

George left his talk to join *Hockey Night in Canada*. "There are two shows that are the pinnacle of Canadian television - The National and Hockey Night in Canada. I was asked to do it and I did it for two seasons and have no regrets. I operate with no fear. People expect you to always do the same thing and stay in your lane. For me, there are no lanes. In a way I left hockey and hooked up with Apple Music, one of the biggest companies in the world, so I see it as a step up."

Not bad for a kid who grew up in Malton and never in his wildest dreams imagined a career that started as a rock jock in western Canada to becoming one of the most

acclaimed broadcasters in Canada.

"Growing up in Malton to me meant freedom," states George. "If my neighbourhood friends and I were in the house, my mom would tell us to go outside and play. Our boundary was as far as our bikes would take us. My mom worked multiple jobs and I was taught to make my own way in the world. I worked as an usher at the Woodbine Centre cinema, drove a forklift at the airport. My grandfather worked at Ford so I thought that was my career path."

Then fate led George to a career in broadcasting at the age of 18. "I was going to get my motorcycle license and picked up a course catalogue for Humber College and saw they offered a radio broadcasting course. I didn't think something like this was available to kids like me—a scrappy young cat from Malton. I realized then, that you have to create your own path—no one is going to clear a path for you."

George's path includes recently being inducted into Legends Row in Mississauga, along with Mayor Hazel McCallion and others in the class of 2017. Says Legends Row founder and president Ron Duquette: "Strombo joins fellow Legends Row inductees who he has interviewed, Tommy Hunter, Silken Laumann, Paul Henderson and Don Cherry as our newest member and we are proud to have him join the team. Welcome home Strombo."

George comments: "Why Legends Row is important is because someone may walk past here and see all of our names and think, if this guy from Malton can do all that, or this woman from Mississauga can do that, so can I."

George is an ambassador for the United Nations World Food Programme, Prince's Charities Canada, and is on the Canadian Board of Directors for Artists for Peace and Justice. He works closely with Amnesty International, the ONE campaign, the Michael J. Fox Foundation, One Million Acts of Green and was a driving force behind Canada for Haiti.

Going to concerts (*Slayer* and *U2* the same week), showcasing talent; George is "living the GoodLife" Add to that, hitting the open road on his motorcycle. "I'm not much of a vacation kind of guy, but my favourite place is on the seat of my motorcycle, riding across Canada or the U.S., with no agenda and no particular place to be. I am going on ride in a few weeks and will likely end up in L.A." ❶

George Stroumboloupoulos (Strombo) grew up in Malton, Mississauga Ontario and is the host of The Strombo Show (airing Sunday nights) on CBC Music as well as The House of Strombo, a 10-part music series on Apple Music. He was also recently inducted into Legends Row in Mississauga. Strombo also hosted The Punk Show and The New Music on Much Music, and he hosted Live in Toronto on 102.1 The Edge, and is most famous for hosting George Stroumboloupoulos Tonight (formerly the Hour) and anchoring Hockey Night in Canada on CBC.