

# There's no hiding from the applause

Quebec pop star Kevin Parent in spotlight at Franco-Ontarian Festival

BY GREG YOUNGER-LEWIS

Anyone looking for Kevin Parent this week would have found a sign on his door saying "Gone fishing."

Those who know the pony-tailed rockeur wouldn't be shocked to hear that he had taken off with his buddies to relax before stepping into the spotlight at the Franco-Ontarian Festival this weekend.

Unfortunately for local media, the young Québécois pop star walks softly off stage, carries a big grudge against "paparazzi" giving him excessive publicity, and couldn't be reached by his agent to schedule an interview.

The wild success of his debut disc, *Pigeon d'argile* (Clay Pigeon) in 1995 and his sophomore effort, *Grand parleur petit faiseur* (Big talker, Little Doer), released last summer, has earned the 26-year-old bilingual native of Gaspé a little more attention than he'd like.

He's now the hottest young singer-songwriter in Quebec, riding on the appeal of his original folk-rock songs. His eclectic musical mix has been compared to Hootie and the Blowfish and a gruffer version of Tracy Chapman.

In many of his songs and in interviews, Parent laments losing his low profile on his home turf, singing and talking in his understated way about how he's still the same ol' Kevin Parent, using Gaspé slang and fighting his fear of being seen as *un snob*.

"People like him because he sings about his life and his life's not perfect," said 28-year-old Nicole Gravel of Hammond. "He's very open and real."

But the burden of pop sensibility, memorable live performances, and rugged good looks don't fit with Parent's desire to remain an average Joe.

He grabbed headlines in French-language dailies this spring when he was nominated for four Junos.

Considering that he broke records for the number of sales of a first album by a Quebec artist, even more than Céline Dion, and has sold more than 600,000 copies of his two records, it should be no surprise that Parent could turn some heads in the Canadian music industry. He even sings some of his songs in English.

But his music hasn't reached nearly as many ears outside *la belle province*. His record execs estimate that 90 per cent of sales fall within the Quebec border, where he sold 100,000 copies of *Grand parleur petit faiseur* within the first 10 days of its release.

Over the past few years, he cleaned up at the ADISQ awards, the Quebec equivalent of the Junos, adding nine trophies to his shelf, but came away empty-handed from the national stage this year at the Junos.

Ontario audiences will get a chance to see the Quebec pop star tonight as part of the 24th Franco-Ontarian Festival.

He and his band are scheduled to hit the festival's Canada Stage at the regional government Festival Square (Elgin and Laurier streets) around 8:30 p.m., with opening act Franco-Ontarian singer Véronique Dicaire at 8 p.m.

Day passes for the festival's main-stage events, which includes Parent's show, are \$10, available only at the door.



LYNE CHARLEBOIS

His singing talent and rugged good looks won't allow Kevin Parent to be just an average guy.



JACQUES BOISSINOT, THE CANADIAN PRESS

Singer Nanette Workman performs at Festival Square tomorrow at 8 p.m.

## Schedule of events for Franco-Ontarian Festival

### TODAY

**National Gallery amphitheatre:** Afternoon programs from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., free. (Same schedule tomorrow.)

Paint and sculpture demonstrations all afternoon; storytelling from 11:15 a.m. to noon and 2 to 2:45 p.m.; dance performances by Mackinaw from 12:30 to 1:15 p.m. and 4 to 4:45 p.m. Family photography workshops from 12:30 to 1:15 p.m. and 2:45 to 3:30 p.m. Poetry reading by Jacques Flamand, Nicole

Champeau and Andrée Christensen from 3 to 3:30 p.m.

**Market Stage:** At the Institut Canadien-Français (York and Dalhousie), free. Rap-rockers Konflikt Dramatik at noon and 3 p.m.; Ontario group Vision affaiblie at 1:30 and 4:30 p.m.; Carcajou at 8:30 p.m.; Deux saisons at 10 p.m.

**Festival Square:** regional headquarters, Laurier and Elgin. Kevin Parent, with opening act Véronique Dicaire, 8 p.m.

### TOMORROW

**La Nouvelle Scène:** 333 King Edward. Storytelling with violin accompaniment, 4 p.m. Admission \$5.

**Market Stage:** Acadian singer Étienne Deschênes, noon; acoustic rocker Jonathan Fillion, 2 p.m.; and Alex Marquis, 4 p.m.

**Festival Square:** Nanette Workman, 8 p.m., performs with the finalists for the Ontario Pop contest for up-and-coming singers, composers, and musicians.

## We want your events

Throughout the summer, we are planning to highlight festivals, country fairs and other special events in Ottawa and the surrounding National Capital Region.

If you know of or are involved in any of these events, please let us know.

### Write Our Town

The Citizen's Outlook on Community Activities

Fax: 613-829-7033

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# Heat Waves

National Gallery of Canada

SUMMER MUSIC SERIES '99

## Kidding Around

Give your kids something new to experience, with the latest of our summer-long series of children's entertainers. Every Thursday at 12:30 pm from 1 July to 2 September. In the Amphitheatre (or the Auditorium in case of inclement weather). This summer's programming features:

Dufflebag Theatre



**July 1 - Allakomi** Seydou Zon leads his group of seven children through the music and dance of Burkina Faso and other West African countries. It's a delightful, rhythmic experience. (French)

**July 8 - Dufflebag Theatre** A National Gallery favourite, Dufflebag Theatre returns with another madcap interactive theatre production. Be prepared to be involved - you may have to stand on your head, make foolish faces or even kiss the princess... yuck!

**July 15 - Takadja** Juno Award-winning Takadja ("Best Global Recording," 1996) has put together a special family show that explores the rhythms, music and culture of Africa. (French)

**July 22 - Al Simmons** Winner of the 1996 "Best Children's Album" Juno Award for his hilarious *Celery Stalks At Midnight*, Al Simmons is one of the country's finest family entertainers. His delightful shows combine vaudeville antics, jazzy musical arrangements and a distinct brand of joyful humour.

**July 29 - Danielle Martineau's Accordeidon** Follow Danielle Martineau and her two acolytes on the accordion way. It's a unique and surprising show that tells the story, in voice and music, of this wonderful instrument. (French with some English)

Danielle Martineau

Pick up a brochure for a full listing of this summer's events for children.

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Janice Kennedy, The Ottawa Citizen

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Alan Hustak, The Gazette

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Elsa Lansdell, CHRO TV

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