

# GEORGE STROUMBOULOPOULOS

What you see is what you get with Stroumbo. Emer Schlosser pays a visit to CBC's hunky politi-punk.

**H**is office is a cozy corner of calm. I'm here to meet one of the most engaging Canadians to hit the airwaves. The tranquil atmosphere of George Stroumboulopoulos's office is in direct contrast to the fact that the ubiquitous *Hour* host appears to be one of the busiest bodies on the box.

The man's a machine, who won't even let something like a motorbike accident slow him down. (He was left with a broken collarbone and a banged-up noggin.) Stroumboulopoulos seems utterly dedicated to his talk show, a topic he talks about with the passion of a proud parent.

Stroumbo's journey through journalism began in '99 at a radio station in Kelowna, where he supposedly dressed up as a lizard and drove around promoting the station. He moved back to Toronto to work at sports radio's The Fan 590, after which he moved back to music and down the dial to 102.1 The Edge. Then MuchMusic came calling. "I didn't really want to go at first, but then thought about it and went. Sure, what the hell?" It was because "it was *The NewMusic*. I wouldn't have gone to be a VJ; it wasn't my thing. I couldn't be the guy to play the new \*NSync videos. I'd rather die." In addition to *The NewMusic*, he also hosted *MuchNews* and *The Punk Show*.

So, how did the pierced punk from MuchMusic fall in line with Peter Mansbridge and the fifth estate? It wasn't love at first sight. "When they called me I said 'no' the first few times... because guys like me aren't on CBC... I had a very similar misconception of the CBC as many people do. Old, stodgy, blah blah Nah. So when they called me I was like, F\*ck no. No! What the hell am I going to do there? I know I even said to them, 'Do you even watch what I do? Do you know what kind of person I am on TV?'"

There was no way Stroumboulopoulos would sport a tie and cooort himself into the CBC stereotype. "I'm not much for pretending... There aren't many guys like me who do this. There are many guys like me in the world; we just rarely get network shows," he says with a laugh. Being a bit different gives him an edge. "How do we go from - which we do all the time - Darfur, an AIDS story from Zambia, and then bring on Howie Mandel? Like, how do you do that?"

Well, he figured out how. He just did it - and that's part of what turns him on about the show. "It's the range that's more interesting to me than the individual



guest. As much as I love talking to person X, I think it's funnier and more interesting that we had Brian Mulroney on the same night we had Ron Jeremy. That's what impresses me. We get the range. I'm like, Wow, how did we pull that off?"

"My default position is, you're big kids, you'll figure it out. I'll hold your hand, but I'm not spoon-feeding anybody," he says. "If anything, I think our audience really likes the fact - at least, they told me so - that we don't talk down to our audience... And if there's shit you don't know... look it up. There's Google now. There's no excuse. Look it up."

"I genuinely enjoy talking to people, and if I can go to bed knowing more than I did when I woke up... I've become more enriched by talking to people... It's like that old line, man, that everybody's got a story that'll break your heart. That shit's true. And I feel that. I love that moment. I'm most comfortable just hanging out with myself, but ultimately I like to sit and talk to people... That's all I do. That's it. The fact that someone is currently paying me for it is astounding. I'm sure that'll go away soon enough, but it was all by accident." ★