

RICK MERCER REPORT

The Paperback Book

Rick Mercer



ANCHOR CANADA

PRAISE FOR RICK MERCER

“No one on TV has done more to teach Canadians about their own country than Mercer.”

—*Toronto Star*

“Canada's hottest TV comic.”

—*Maclean's*

“Week after week, Mercer continues to delight with his alternately giddy and cutting political humour.”

—*Canadian Press*

“Canada's leading political satirist.”

—*The New York Times*

“It is 2:30 a.m. and I am sitting up in bed reading Rick Mercer ... I chortle, I chuckle and I laugh so loudly, I'm sure I've annoyed the couple in the next apartment.”

—*Lyn Cockburn, Edmonton Sun*



**RICK
MERCER
REPORT**
THE PAPERBACK BOOK
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ANCHOR CANADA

*For the 308 members of Parliament—the good,
the bad, and the indifferent, and in that order.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book took a lot of work and I would be lying if I said it was all on my part. I hit the print button and the excellent people at Doubleday Canada did the rest. Every word I had written over the past four years came out of the hard drive and my editor, Tim Rostron, valiantly sorted and cajoled them into an actual-to-goodness book. I couldn't have asked for a better editor if I'd called central casting and told them to send over a funny but brilliant bookish fellow with a penchant for words and a British accent. I thank Tim for making this such an enjoyable experience. The Doubleday team—designer Terri Nimmo, publicist Cathy Paine, and everyone involved in this project—exceeded my high expectations and I thank them for making it happen.

Rick Mercer Report: The Show is not a one-man show, it just looks that way on television.

The writers' room is small and dangerous. Paul Mather, Greg Eckler, Chris Finn, and Tim Steeves do the heavy lifting and make it seem easy week in and week out. If there are funnier men in the country, I haven't met them. If the walls in that room could talk, they would blush and then probably file some sort of harassment suit.

The show itself would never get done if it wasn't for the crackerjack production team of Alan MacGillivray and Marilyn Richardson.

Tom Stanley is RMR's associate producer and researcher. He spends a lot of time on the phone telling people my helmet size. If anyone else on the show gets hit by lightning, Tom has to fill in, because it turns out he can do anything. His secret weapon is Nik Sexton, his right-hand man in a two-man department.

The actual rants are a three-man operation. I write them, John Marshall produces them and cameraman Don Spence shoots them. John has produced everyone in the country at some point and Don can make a parking lot look interesting. The three of us have spent far too much time together in alleys and on the road, but I have enjoyed every minute.

The show itself is directed by Henry Sarwer-Foner. That's why it's the best-looking show on TV.

Mike Burroughs and the talented crew in the CBC graphics department have always gone above and beyond for *RMR*, and usually when we need something we need it yesterday. If Mike designed everything, it would make for a sexier world.

RMR is edited by Alan Maclean. Nobody looks over his shoulder, nobody bothers him, and in fact most people are not allowed in his little windowless room. He makes me look better than I deserve to, so whatever he wants is fine by me.

And then there is George. Seventeen years ago George Anthony travelled to Ottawa and went to a small gas station-turned-theatre in Ottawa to see me perform in a one-man show. It was a pretty rough show and basically featured me on stage ranting about, of all things, the Meech Lake Accord. Despite the fact that I know George had no interest in the Meech Lake Accord, he told me then that I belonged on the CBC. I've been there ever since.

Depending on how you look at things, George Anthony gets the credit or the blame.

Gerald Lunz runs the operation at *RMR*, not only as my partner in crime, executive producer and show-runner, but more importantly, as the funniest guy in the room. It is his baby. Gerald produced that first play in Ottawa 17 years ago, and I have been taking his notes ever since. It's the perfect storm.

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INTRODUCTION

The truth is I rarely know where I am going to be from one day to the next. My luggage has remained packed for over a decade and I have more long underwear than any city dweller in his right mind should need.



Over the last five years, while on the job, I have almost lost consciousness midair while doing aeronautics with Canada's Snow birds, I have experienced intentionally induced hypo thermia at the hands of a celebrated university professor in Winnipeg, I have made a five-thousand-foot free fall out of an airplane over Trenton, Ontario, and I have done doughnuts in the middle of Halifax harbour while operating a tugboat. I have faced death (or at the very least the possibility of severed thumbs) when lying “nose down, bum up” on a skeleton sled while hurtling down a

bobsled track in Calgary. In Rockland, Ontario, I signed a waiver and got behind the wheel and joined a demolition derby.

My job description includes sleepovers at Stephen Harper's house and getting buck naked with Bob Rae.

Despite the latter two, I am still convinced that I have the best gig in Canadian show business. And through it all I have managed to stay true to my one ultimate career goal—no heavy lifting.

The travel is the best part.

If you are lucky enough to spend time in the North, it will change you. It will inform the way you feel about the country in a way that no amount of reading on the subject ever can. When you spend time eating raw caribou north of the tree line with a politician in Nunavut or listening to an Inuit hunter before he heads out alone on the ice to hunt a polar bear—those things tend to stay with you.

The same can be said for spending time on the Prairies, in Northern Ontario, in Newfoundland, in the oil sands of Alberta, or in any of the many Chinatowns or Little Indias that dot the country.

Canada has so many problems—and geography is often the root cause. For the size of the population, we are simply too bloody big.

I can't count the number of times I've been in a situation where five people were busy complaining about what the problem was with another part of the country that they were happy to admit they had never visited.

I've had cabinet ministers lecture me on why people in Newfoundland should never have control of their natural resources and then in the next breath tell me they have it on good authority that the province is very pretty. Not a surprise, really. Stephen Harper coined the phrase “the culture of defeat” about Atlantic Canada before he bothered to go there.

Ottawa is a place that Canadians love to attack without having set foot there, and God knows everyone in Eastern Canada seems to have an idea of what Calgary is all about without ever having met the people whose drive and determination are responsible for our very own emerging superpower.