arts & entertainm

kudos & kvetches

Word up

If your Sundays don't involve worshipping an almighty creator or lying in bed moaning to your significant other about why they don't hustle you enough to stop drinking, may we suggest you drag your carcass down to Library Square and CBC Plaza Sept. 25 for The Word on the Street, everyone's favourite national book and magazine festival. Sure the Courier already plugged the free event early this week, but the daylong festival has had a special place in our hearts ever since K&K performed a one-minute ballad "Sympathetic Fire Poet" on the now-defunct Abnormally Long Gestation Period Stage.

Also, we're lining up our beret for another year, but audiences can still catch Anne Fleming, George Fetherling, Evelyn Lau, George Bowering, Charlotte Gill, Ivan E. Coyote, Susan Musgrave and dozens of other writers doing their stuff, as well as tables of books, magazines and freshly killed vermin. OK, that's a lot of an exaggeration, George Bowering won't be "doing his stuff," he'll be "reading."

The fun begins at 11 a.m. and goes to 6 p.m. or until Mayor Larry Campbell trashes the place, because, hey, he's a senator now and doesn't have to worry about getting re-elected.

Mingle mangle

Your diligent social climbers at K&K were lucky enough to swing an invite to a VIP reception at Sugar and Sugar this past week. In case you haven't been, Sugar and Sugar is an attractive, multi-tiered, elegant and white-as-a-wedding-cake space on Powell, rented out for private parties, fundraisers and other events. The reception we attended offered exotic drinks, catering by Diva at the Met, the stylings of lounge singer Luis Giraldo, art by Meghan Hildebrand and people in blue bodypaint posing somnambulantly. The occasion was Splash of Blue, a cocktail celebration to benefit the ALS Society (Lou Gehrig's Disease) of B.C.

And yet, as much social lubricant as we consumed, and as confident as we felt in our new flared designer jeans (hemmed to our specifications), we have to shamefacedly admit to an utter and complete lack of mingling on our part. Sure, we made eyes at the pretty young women carrying the duck and ahi tuna hors d'oeuvres our way, and joked around with the Fabio-licious bartender who kept our ginger pear cocktails flowing. We even requested a song from Giraldo (thanks for the smashing version of "Come Fly with Me," Luis!) and asked one of the girls in blue bodypaint the way to the bathroom. (And what's up with people who are bodypainted but not naked? We thought that was the whole point! Is there a new bylaw or something?) But overall, on a scale of 1-10, our mingling rating at this fabulous event was a sorry zero.

Perhaps it was the atmosphere of high society elegance that intimidated us. Perhaps our art appreciation/interpretation skills are, after restricting ourselves to restaurant and men's health spa openings for so long, a little rusty. Or perhaps we were simply saving ourselves for the East End Idol karaoke competition at the Princeton, a decidedly less swish environment.

One thing we do know is, those ginger pear cocktails came back later to haunt us (and the rest of the Princeton patrons) when we performed Jewel's "Foolish Games."

Despite boasting a scar-faced Ed Harris and hunky Viggo Mortensen, Canadian filmmaker D
of Violence is too one-dimensional to carry much weight.

Cronenberg's Violence lack

A History of Violence
Now playing at Paramount

★★

Reviewed by Greg Potter

As far back as 1981's *Scanners*, Canadian film director David Cronenberg has served up memorable entrees, each of them distinguished by some measure of weirdness (and finely-tuned gruesome) that is usually always refreshing. He has cut a prodigious swath through international horror/fantasy/sci-fi circles with features such as 1983's *Videodrome*, 1988's *Dead Ringers*, 1991's *Naked Lunch* and 1999's *eXistenZ*. When he tackles the real world, however, the results are far less entertaining.

A History of Violence, despite its title, is not especially violent at all, given what passes muster at the video arcade these days. The reason is simple: the story flatlined before it got to the screen. Brain-dead. D.O.A. Cut off from life support.

In fact, it's difficult to name a film in recent memory with a plot so utterly one-dimensional, unmercifully linear and astonishingly shallow. It's like a film-school project. Or worse, the needless embellishment of a minor subplot nicked from a Si-

pranos episode.

Tom Stall (Viggo Mortensen) lives in a smoothly happy-faced rural community called Millbrook where time seemingly stopped somewhere around 1953. There, he runs Stall's Diner, an equally bucolic eatery, with wife Edie (Maria Bello). Everything is idyllic—until a pair of psychopaths on a murderous rampage enter the town.

When the two men attempt to knock off the diner—after slopping around a waitress and terrorizing customers—mild-mannered Tom suddenly abandons the Clark Kent persona and becomes Superman.

Deftly dispatching one of the thugs, he quick-draws the dead man's gun and blasts several holes through his partner. Tom, naturally, becomes a "local hero" and gets his face splattered across newspapers and television coast-to-coast.

Tom plays down all the commotion in a gee-shucks kinda way, but there is something beneath the modesty that impels him to keep a low profile. When a trio of big-city gangsters saddle up to the counter at Stall's Diner, we realize that Tom isn't who he says he is.

Badgered and called "Joey" by disfigured mobster Carl Fogary (Ed Harris, looking like Max Headroom), Tom starts acting jittery, while his wife tries to figure out what's going on. Carl and the boys

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