

SOCIAL INTERCOURSE

A Christmas Carol

Directed by Bob Baker
Starring Tom Wood
Runs 1-23 December at 7:30pm
Citadel Theatre

Obviously based on the original Muppet movie by the late Jim Henson, *A Christmas Carol* welcomes the season of giving by turning the classic tale of greed and redemption into a live-action stage spectacle with human characters and of course, Tiny Tim. God bless us, everyone!

Margaret Macpherson Book Release Party

Friday, 1 December at 7:30pm
Laurie Greenwood's Volume II (12433-102nd Avenue)

The only book ever published that foreshadows its own launch, Margaret Macpherson's debut novel *Released* is being, for lack of a better word, released on 1 December. Macpherson's tale tells a fictionalized account of her life struggles, dealing with abuse, forgiveness and growing up in the Northwest Territories.

A Perfect Christmas Print Affair Fundraiser

Saturday, 2 December 9am-12pm
SNAP Gallery (10309-97 Street)
Gallery Hours: Tuesday to Saturday 12-5 pm;
closed Sunday and Monday

Holding their annual art sales fundraiser, the SNAP gallery will be selling original prints and handmade cards from professional and upcoming artists for the whole month of December. All proceeds from the sales will help provide community programming at SNAP.

Dual

Wednesday, 6 December at 9pm
Sidetrack Café
\$7 at door

Not to be confused with the wacky vaudevilian stage-act *Duel*, whose playful glove-slapping comedy antics have charmed audiences for years, *Dual* is the musical product of instrumentalist Chris Fehr and vocalist Ellie Chang. Not surprisingly a duo, the Edmonton-based pair along with their touring band pumps out experimental, ambient electronica with a focus on Chang's soulful voice, creating an uplifting and energetic jazz-techno mix that hits you in the face like a black leather glove.

Summer Of My Amazing Luck

Directed by Bradley Moss
Starring Chris Craddock and Beth Graham
7-17 December at 8pm
Roxy Theatre (10708 124 St)
Tickets: \$23 and \$18 Fri and Sat: \$25 and \$19

Just as we're entering the throes of winter and finals season, director Brad Moss has decided to taunt us with visions of a hot and pleasant summer. Billed as "a comical and cutting look at poverty, welfare and having a life," the show won the 2004/05 Sterling Award for Most Outstanding Play, making way for a sequel entitled *Winter Of My Shitty Discontent*.

5th Annual Drag Show

7 December at 9pm
The Powerplant

For any male who ever wanted to do a little turn on the catwalk—yeah, on the catwalk in a pair of frilly lace undergarments—this event is for you. The 5th Annual Drag Show is a campus-wide event being arranged by Siderite, the campus Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer group, to spread awareness for their cause and have fun. So if you feel like you're too sexy (and really, who doesn't), come down and support their event, which is Right Said Fred approved.

JONN KMECH
Halfway there



Shining a light on diamonds

From actor Leonardo DiCaprio to director Edward Zwick, *Blood Diamond* has made an impact

Movie preview: *Blood Diamond*

Directed by Edward Zwick
Starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Jennifer Connelly and Djimon Hounsou
Empire Theatres
Opens 8 December

AMANDA ASH
Arts & Entertainment Editor

Diamonds may be a girl's best friend, but after talking to the cast and crew of upcoming Warner Brothers' film, *Blood Diamond*, it's apparent that, for some, those sparkling gems can be more of an enemy than anything else.

Set in Sierra Leone in 1999, *Blood Diamond* explores the civil wars that evolved from the excavation of conflict diamonds, or diamonds that originate from areas that are controlled by factions opposed to internationally recognized governments. The film speaks honestly about the past—and reflects on the present—conditions of strife and poverty that plague countries like Sierra Leone, but for those given the opportunity to work on the movie and experience the political turmoil first-hand, there's no doubting that they also have some opinions to voice.

"Deciding to go spend five months in Africa in a very harsh environment to tell this story is pretty commendable," says Djimon Hounsou, who plays Solomon Vandy, a Mende fisherman that's forced to work in the diamond fields. "For me, personally, being a native of Africa, filming there hit home. I was glad to be a part of it."

"Given the fact that the studios were willing to take this on and shine light on the issue of child soldiers and illicit trade of diamonds hit home for me also," Djimon continues.

For the film, Djimon had to take on a completely new dialect, get roughed-up by extensive action sequences, and hear accounts and stories by those affected by the trade of conflict diamonds. Similarly, co-star Leonardo DiCaprio also underwent an accent change—he plays Danny Archer, an ex-mercenary from Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe—but from his perspective, the

most challenging part of the role was handling his emotional reaction.

"Doing a movie like this, you can't help but be affected," DiCaprio says. "Going to an orphanage, for example, in the middle of Mozambique, where there are horrific AIDS rates and poverty, it makes you want to come home and give back to your community. We felt moved by the people there and the circumstances they have to deal with, day in and day out, and it makes you thankful for what you have, and it makes you look at yourself."

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LEONARDO DICAPRIO

And while DiCaprio's experiences have led him to become more aware of social and political issues in North America, they also motivated him to lend a hand in cleaning up the problems in Africa.

"Right now, [the cast and crew] are working with Amnesty International and Global Witness," DiCaprio says. "There are a lot of situations in Africa, and a lot of people that need help. We've all gotten involved with them to try and make some improvements, and the whole *Blood Diamond* movie set up a fund in Mozambique to help the locals out, and the studio matched that. Hopefully, through those organizations, a lot of help can be contributed to Africa. We didn't feel right going to shoot there without giving something back."

Creating a film like *Blood Diamond* isn't all that easy, considering that it's wrought with ambiguity and involved an incredible amount of

research. According to director Edward Zwick, the film aptly describes the events leading up to the peace accord in 1999 by drawing from well-documented sources that haven't been entirely admirable, especially for diamond companies.

"It's my job as a filmmaker to tell the facts of the story as I've learned them to be," Zwick says. "I spent a great deal of time looking at the documentary footage of the period, and now that cameras are so light and there's so much footage available, we tried to get a sense of what it would be like to be there. We went out of our ways to put our cameramen in situation where they had to try to capture things just as the cameramen in those circumstances had to themselves. We hope it gave it a feeling of imminence, so one would be able to get a sense of what it would be like to be there at the time."

And for actress Jennifer Connelly—who plays Maddy Bowen, an American journalist who is sent to Sierra Leone in order to uncover the truth about conflict diamonds—sharing her experience of Africa was vital. Connelly brought her nine-year-old son along for the filming, hoping his exposure to the orphanages and ill-equipped schools would advocate a push for human rights education for children, as well as foster a more politicized and conscientious generation.

Besides playing mom and teacher, though, Connelly's role as a journalist encapsulates not only the grapples reporters have had to undergo in the past, but also the challenges they face today.

"I was very lucky to be able to speak to a number of women journalists, a couple of who had actually been in Freetown in 1999 doing stories on conflict diamonds," Connelly says. "One of the things they seemed to struggle with is knowing that they're there doing something good, but it's very difficult to be in a situation where you have to remain impartial. You have to be objective."

"They know they can't necessarily put down a camera or a pen and paper and actually pick up a child or do anything immediately," Connelly relates. "It was a challenge that a lot [of journalists] wrestled with."