

## SOCIAL INTERCOURSE

### Grant MacEwan/University of Alberta Big Band Concert

Monday, 3 December at 7:30pm  
John L Haar Theatre (10045 155 Street)

Performing together on the same stage, the Grant MacEwan big band and the University of Alberta big band will combine this coming Monday, creating a band the size of which can't be described with a simple adjective like big. Rather, it would require a conglomeration of descriptors, like "ginormous" or "hugelarge." Conducted by professors Raymond Baril and Dr Tom Dust, the humungolossal group will play a wide selection of jazz standards and should provide an entertaining night for fans of the genre.

### Trooper

Thursday, 29 November at 8pm  
Century Casino (13103 Fort Road)

Here they come, classic rock group Trooper, driving in a bright white sports car on their way through Edmonton. These 40-year veterans of the Canadian rock scene are still rollin', waving their arms in the air, and honking at all the girls, despite reports by an old lady that that sports car was stolen. But, you may ask, who do they think they are? And more importantly, where did they get that car? All these questions and more will be answered at the concert.

### Sleuth

Directed by Kenneth Branagh  
Starring Michael Caine and Jude Law  
Opening 6 December at Princess Theatre

It's always been my opinion that Jude Law should leave romantic comedy behind and stick to firing at Nazis from behind rubble or acting as someone's genetic surrogate. Directed by Shakespearean provocateur Kenneth Branagh, Law ignores such advice as he portrays Milo Tindle, a hairdressing actor who seduces the wife of wealthy homeowner Andrew Wyke (Michael Caine) and attempts to get her to marry him. But Caine isn't about to give up without a fight, and starts using the strange contraptions and odd gizmos in his house to get the upper hand.

### Jesus Christ Superstar

Running 10-11 December at 7:30pm  
Jubilee Auditorium

As if Jesus didn't already have enough cred during yuletide, we have a full-blown musical that boasts his celebrity status right in the headline. Sure, Jesus is hot right now, but it's anyone's guess as to whether his star power can last.

Written by the famed duo Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice, this whimsical stage show portrays Jesus in the last weeks of his life: a happier time in the Middle East, when extravagant choreographed dance ensembles broke out spontaneously, and no crucifixion was complete without jazz hands.

### The Nutcracker

Running 14-16 December  
Jubilee Auditorium

The timeless classic *The Nutcracker* is presented every Christmas season to teach young children about the wonders and joy of juvenile sexual humour.

Performed as the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra plays the Tchaikovsky score, the ballet has been choreographed by Mikko Nissinin and depicts the tale of Clara, a girl pulled into another world by her uncle's magic. Her doll, the Nutcracker, comes to life and leads a force into battle against the villainous Mouse King, who he vanquishes through swift, repeated blows to the groin. After his defeat, the lucid wooden puppet introduces Clara to a mystical land of magic, intrigue, and ruptured testicles.

JONN KMECH  
Soon to be dreadless

## Losing Will walking a tightrope to fame

Joe Vanderhelm talks botched audio, improvising scripts, and hoping that his locally filmed flick—complete with Edmonton scenery and music—has enough pull to reach cult status

### filmpreview

#### Losing Will

Runs 7-9 December  
Directed by Mike Robertson and Arlen Konopaki  
Starring Arlen Konopaki, Joe Vanderhelm, and Julian Faid  
Metro Cinema

BRYAN SAUNDERS  
Arts & Entertainment Staff

As Joe Vanderhelm, one of the stars of Highwire Films' *Losing Will*, puts it, producing a local independent movie is a lot like walking on a tightrope.

"When you think of [a] high-wire act, there's the chance of falling and the chance of failure, but that always just makes it all the more interesting to watch," he says. "People get captivated by something that can be dangerous [or] that is risky. Part of Highwire Films' mission statement is to take risks, one of those risks being filming local cinema because it's not the most popular thing."

But, as Vanderhelm says, when the risk pays off, it pays off big.

"[Local films don't] catch on very often, but every once in a while, you can get those little gems; every once in a while, you'll get a *Fubar*. While we certainly don't think that *Losing Will* is a shoo-in to become one of those, we think it has the potential."

*Losing Will* takes risk with plotline, too. The main character, Will (Arlen Konopaki), is suffering from depression after losing the use of his body to quadriplegia. Suddenly, Will announces that he wants to go on a road trip with his friends Jerry (Joe Vanderhelm) and Samuels (Julian Faid), and at the end of the road trip, he wants his friends to help him commit suicide.

It may sound dark, but *Losing Will* also has a hopeful note to it.

"Jerry and Samuels decide to take Will [on this road trip], but during the course of [it, they hope to] show him the value of life and hopefully change his mind," Vanderhelm explains.

Serious subject matter aside, there are surely chuckles to be had during the film. After all, the trio of actors are all improv comedy veterans with Edmonton's Rapid Fire Theatre. In fact, *Losing Will* was actually born from a scene at one of Rapid Fire's shows a couple of years ago.

After the performance, Konopaki suggested there was more to the scene than was explored, and he and his friends immediately went to work on turning that scene into a full-length movie.



"The [script] is improvised as well," Vanderhelm quips. "Meaning that we knew what the scenes were going to be about, but none of the dialogue was ever written down. So everything that is said in the movie was made up pretty much spontaneously."

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JOE VANDERHELM  
LOSING WILL CO-STAR

It again sounds risky, but between the three of them and cameraman/producer Mike Robertson, the group has over 30 years of combined improv experience.

This off-the-cuff style of acting almost led to Vanderhelm losing all hope post-filming, when he had to do some automated dialogue replacement (ADR) work after the original audio from some of the scenes came out mangled.

ADR involves deleting the audio that was originally on the film and then sitting in a booth and saying your lines over again while

trying to match your speed and tone with how your lips are moving on film.

"I made a choice that my character was a nervous guy, and [that] he stuttered a lot," Vanderhelm laughs, "And trying to match your stuttering again and again and again is an incredibly difficult thing to do."

"There were times I just wanted to throw down my headphones and say 'Screw it! Just take the original audio, and it will sound like crap!' But I was reminded that we wanted our movie to be great visually, and [aurally] as well, so it had to be done."

In addition to Vanderhelm's stuttering ADR, local acts like Whitey Houston, Christian Hansen, Hot Panda, and The Corduroys also grace the film's soundtrack—and audiences will recognize many of the film's settings.

"You might recognize the Powerplant. You might recognize Murrieta's. You might just recognize some of the actual driving shots from being in and around Edmonton," Vanderhelm reveals.

"I mean, that's always a cool thing. That's why movies like the 'Jesse James' thing can be popular in the cities where they're filmed: people want to go out and say 'I know that street!' or 'I know that guy!'"

While he and the rest of *Losing Will*'s crew have to wait to see if their gamble will pay off, Vanderhelm has some advice for others.

"I think it's just really important that people realize that if they have a cool story to tell, they don't need super-fancy budgets or anything like that. They really just need a camera and some time to spend editing it and making it look good."

### siteunseen



www.whatisstephenharperreading.ca

ELLIOT GOODINE  
Arts & Entertainment Writer

Sure, Stephen Harper's smart, but does the Prime Minister appreciate literature? Yann Martel, the author of the award-winning *Life of Pi*, is trying to figure it out.

Martel's taking time to write letters and pick books for his website, [whatisstephenharperreading.ca](http://whatisstephenharperreading.ca). Martel has vowed to send Harper one book and a personally written letter every two weeks for the remainder of Harper's stay in office.

According to Martel, the aim of the letters and the website is "not to educate—that would be arrogant—less than that: to make suggestions to his stillness." The list of books that has been sent so far is diverse, ranging from George Orwell to Agatha Christie to Voltaire.

In his letters, Martel takes some pretty good jabs at the PM, noting that PMs King and Laurier were both keen readers with a mass of books between them; in another letter, he points out that Harper once named the *Guinness Book of World Records*

as his favourite book.

The beauty of these letters is that they mock Harper subtly, rather than coming straight out and calling Harper a philistine who probably spends all of the free time watching Flames and Senators games.

Aside from the satirical manner of the site, it's also a great place to build a reading list. Of the 15 books listed since the site was launched in April, all of the titles are sure to be appreciated by Martel's readers.

The site also promises to post whatever response he receives from Harper. So far, there's been only response, from one of Harper's assistants: "On behalf of the Prime Minister, I would like to thank you for your recent letter and the copy of Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych*."

If you need to know what our PM isn't reading, Martel's site is a good place to start. Or you could ask Martel yourself when he comes to the Stanley A Milner Library theatre on 5 December.