

## strut and fret

penelope mulligan

### YELLO DIABLO

Friday, November 2

Access Artist Run Centre

David Yonge, the man behind the **Yellowboy** alias, made his singular contribution to the LIVE Biennial when he took on the persona of an historic 1970s Mexican wrestler and went flesh to metal with a car outside of an art gallery.

finally yielded to muscle and the hood cracked free. The testosterone team was in extremis. Unable to contain themselves, the lads rushed the Camaro and had to be "booed" off.

This wasn't contemporary art practice—it was extreme vaudeville, bending back to shake hands with Harry

ple—the third art-damaged whatnot had drawn a capacity crowd. I snagged a perch on a coffee table next to some friends while an act called **Of Sex, Your Body** was on. Although the frontwoman used a microphone, I could barely decipher a word she was saying, but it could have been something like: "I'm so strange and arty that I

He slid to the ground, microphones shrieking, and attempted to wrench off one of the doors, but the Camaro was stubborn. Testosterone simmered, car-buffs whimpered and tactical matters were debated.

Well before start time, a twitchy crowd swelled onto Carrall Street, where a Camaro was lowered defiantly at the curb. Fresh from a showdown with a washing machine in a Seattle cinema the night before, Yonge sported a deep 3" gash in his right palm but otherwise looked to be in fine shape—all lean, muscular and menacing in flared jeans and a glitter-encrusted balaclava.

He and a handler taped eight microphones to his body before he jumped onto the car, ripped off his t-shirt and struck a victory pose. The crowd cheered—eager to play along like trailer trash at a WWF match. But in the first of several contextual shifts that the 45-minute performance would make, audience engagement became seriously real the moment "Diablo" leapt into the air and came down in a full body-slam onto the roof as he slid to the ground, microphones shrieking, and attempted to wrench off one of the doors of the stubborn Camaro. Testosterone simmered, car-buffs whimpered and tactical matters were debated as a couple of rumble-ready lads who probably thought they'd died and gone to heaven kept offering to help.

When a very high stepladder was brought onto the scene, the crowd groaned, its own endurance already fraying. By this time, the style-cramping body mics had been jettisoned. Besides, the arty embellishment of a sound collage seemed unnecessary here. Floating from the top platform like a diver, Yonge twisted in the air to land with a sickening thud on his side, barely making a dent in the metal. As he repeated the dive, I thought of mythic figures like Sisyphus and Wile E. Coyote. Then he was under the hood, trying to shoulder it off its hinges, his back becoming smeared with the soot of a thousand road trips. Muscle car

Houdini. The early 20th century escape meister was, after all, a performance artist who set himself high-stakes challenges in realtime, giving onlookers some nail-gnawing entertainment in the process. And hanging in the air now, as it must have been then, was the beautiful heroic pointlessness of the act itself.

After the show ended, there seemed to be a lengthy period of audience disorientation. It was as if in the heat of pure spectacle, Art had melted down and slunk away unnoticed, leaving everyone to mill around aimlessly in front of a floodlit gallery.

And me? I just wanted to give Diablo a massage.

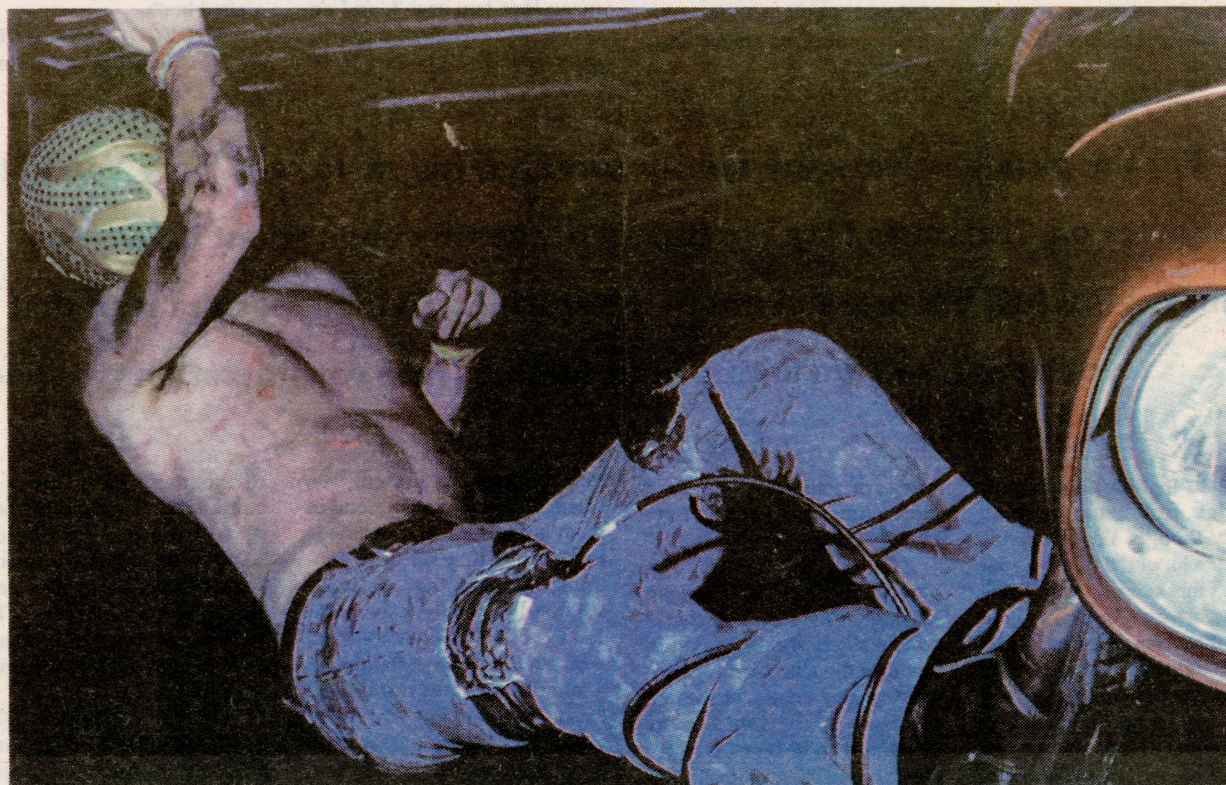
**ART DAMAGED CABARET #3**  
Saturday, November 17  
Ms T's Cabaret

By 10:30, the bowels of 339 West Pender were heaving with peo-

ple—don't bother about mic technique. I'll just make my voice arty and seductive and talk into my collarbone and keep running my hand over my brush-cut because that will give a sexy touch to my deep artiness." Came with two very serious-looking sidemen on musical instruments, Cabaret was horribly damaged by this. Shame on art!

Things perked up with The 3 Bitches—old-school drag queens who have suddenly found themselves part of the neo-cabaret scene. With every show, they're a little more polished and theatrical with their material. However, these gals turn into raging workaholics as soon as they get near a stage, and reappeared so often throughout the evening that they risked diluting themselves. A few less numbers would have kept us wanting more!

Art Damaged regular, Evil



David Yonge in Yellow Diablo. Photo by Cedric Bomford.

## art damaged radio

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noon 'til noon

Stevil, is developing a nice bit of comedy shtick as a slacker-clad, heavily-pierced grumbler who disapproves of panhandlers, squeegy kids and bus transfer hawkers. At the end of his set, he strapped on an axe and sang his catchy little grunge ode to Kraft Dinner.

Man of many aliases, David Yonge, played lion tamer to his friend's beast in a chaotic circus

vignette as **De Suza and De Paula**. Yonge's sinister, boxy face mask nibbled at the edges of Dada and the audience visibly receded as the act raged against the front tables.

Still, I didn't see anything that made my mind slip sideways until **Nico Orgasmico** took the stage. Then I knew we were onto something. She's a great, zäftige young woman,

further volumized by two big balloons under her pullover. Nico and her two sidemen all wore helmets and she carried a red phallus on a stand. As she slowly limped around with a cane, her black-suited males followed solicitously, providing backup to her salacious little yelps. This was tilted, perverse and outrageous. I really liked it.

Adding an MC to these evenings was a wise choice, and T Paul St. Marie was definitely in command as he kept things moving like a rockabilly Joel Grey. He was also ready to slam the audience with his own potent spoken word when a misplaced dildo or sudden wig crisis caused a slight delay.

The producer of the series is deeply buried within the persona of **Satina Saturnina** (or is it the other way around?). This unit is always intense, compelling and hilariously deadpan about it. Their costumes are works of art in their own right and tonight, in the ultimate act of frontwoman narcissism, the boys in the band wore prosthetic headcovers moulded after Satina's own face and hair-do. Ms. Saturnina herself was packing a plush strap-on. Their sound is slowed-down, old-school punk with vocals which suggest Siouxsie, but listen to the hypnotically repetitive lyrics and you'll know that Satina's got her own fantasies going. The band won many new fans on this night, so get ready for #4. •