

By Ric Kasini Kadour

In the last week of July, Montreal's gay and lesbian community unleashes itself onto the city in a week's worth of high-powered events called Divers/Cité. The festival begins the evening of Monday, July 25th and runs through Sunday, July 31st.

To call Divers/Cité Montreal's gay pride celebration is an understatement. The week-long event, jammed with concerts, lectures, performances, and parties, fits snugly into Quebec's festival tradition. From early May through the Fall, Montreal plays hosts to festival after festival after festival, sometimes dueling and overlapping, and generally focused on a particular ethnic or cultural attribute. Also in July is an international fireworks competition, Le Mondial SAQ; the International Jazz Festival; a classical music festival; a comedy festival; an African music festival; a boat race; and Les Francofolies which celebrates aspects of French culture supposedly left out of the dozens of other festivals.

These are no small affairs. Streets are closed. Large teams of security are hired. Lavish press conferences are held. Official parties celebrating the successful launch, completion, and sometimes simply the half-way point of the festival are had. At any one time, whole neighborhoods in the city are under the partial control of an overworked man or woman clutching a clipboard, screaming into a walkie-talkie.

The only thing special about Divers/Cité is that it is a gay festival. And by gay, I mean super-gay, and by super-

Montreal Shows Its Divers/Cité!

Songspiel: Opera meets electronic in a cabaret with the 2005 pop-art adaptation of Purcell's *Dido & Aeneas*



gay I mean big-hat-wearing-drag-queens, erotic-German-cabaret, queer-rock-electro-punk, lesbo-monde gay. And I do not mean, tucked-away-in-the-corner, or let's-pretend-they're-not-that-queer gay. Montreal embraces Divers/Cité the way it embraces the Grand Prix or the Festival Baroque. As they should.

The budget for Divers/Cité is \$1.5 million (CAN). Divers/Cité is big business with big business support. Sponsors of this year's festival include the likes of Molson, Air Canada, music vendor Archambault, condom maker Trojan, and Naya bottled water. Mainstream media partners include CBC television and the Canadian version of MTV, MusiMax, among others. A local television station will carry the parade live. Festival planners work closely with the Economic Development Canada and the Quebec Ministry of Tourism as well as the City of Montreal.

Divers/Cité has more in common with Berlin's Love Parade and Sydney's Mardi Gras than it does with gay pride celebrations in the United States. It is relatively free from the ongoing debates about the meaning of gay pride, whether or not pride should be a protest or a celebration, and what parts of the queer community are appropriate to show mainstream society. Liberated,

Divers/Cité is a celebration of things queer, a sharing of gay ideas and aesthetics, and quite simply, a damn good time. ▼

Ric Kasini Kadour is our Montreal cultural maven, and he maintains a residence in Shoreham.

Parade

Monday, July 25th

Divers/Cité launches with a night parade on Monday evening. The parade begins at 8PM and travels on Boulevard René-Lévesque from Avenue de Lorimier to Rue Berri. Expect a spectacle as this year's parade lights up the night. FREE

SongSpiel: Electronic Cabaret

Tuesday, July 26th.

Opera meets electronic music. For those who love opera, the program includes a must-see pop-art adaptation of Purcell's *Dido & Aeneas*. For those who think opera is gay, Songspiel is a sexy, multi-media whirl of video and dance with music that will move you and a twisted story about a man on the edge. 8PM at Cabaret du Casino de Montreal. \$35 CAN

La Mala Educación

Wednesday, July 27th

French isn't the only language spoken in Montreal. Diver/Cité presents Pedro Almodovar's *Bad Education* outside at Emilie-Gamelin Park. It goes something like this: you, sitting on the grass under a star-lit summer night watching Gaël Garcia Bernal emerge from the swimming pool in very tight white underwear. FREE

Lady Bunny @ Jello Bar

Thursday, July 28th

Who wouldn't want to see something called Lady Bunny at a place called Jello Bar? But seriously, the Grande Dame of Drag, Miss

WigStock herself will be hauling her huge headwear to Montreal for a performance at this retro-chic venue. If the big hats and legendary status of Lady Bunny aren't alluring enough, perhaps one of Jello Bar's fifty signature martinis will do the trick. Midnight, 151 Ontario East. \$12 advance, \$15 at door.

1, Boulevard des Rêves

Friday, July 29th

"Velvety jazz, smooth R&B, and crisp pop music" is how the folks at Divers/Cité are describing the sounds of this outdoor concert. It's free, so check it out. But the real Boulevard des Rêves, which means 'street of dreams,' is Sainte-Catherine from Beaudry to Papineau

where a few thousand people will pour into the gay Village for the start of Pride weekend. Expect the bars to be packed and the terraces to be overflowing with hot homo action.

Lesbomonde

Saturday, July 30th

Okay, I freely admit that Montreal is not the best city in the world for lesbians, but every now and then an event pops up that'll make women roar. Lesbomonde is one of them. NYC DJ Twisted Dee spins and new wave pioneer Carol Pope sings at an event guaranteed to show that women can party just as hard. Oh, if you've never been in a crowd of several hundred (sexy!) lesbians, here's your chance.

Must-Dos for Divers/Cité 2005

9:30-3AM, Just for Laughs Museum, \$22 before July 18th, \$27 after.

Sexgarage

Saturday, July 30th and Sunday, July 31st

"Sexgarage is a two-day onslaught of queer rock and electro-punk performances featuring some of the most sonically diverse and atypical acts in alternative music." This two-day festival will be on the Trojan stage on the corner of de Maisonneuve and Saint Denis. On Saturday, don't miss Quebec City's Echo Kitty, who makes electro-pop out of rockabilly, new wave, and glam. On Sunday, you have to see Lesbians on Ecstasy: politically infused dance music. Think of it as folk music on drugs. ▼

For more information, see www.diverscite.org.