

'Four Crows' Examines Reality

Author delves into stereotypes via thriller

BY KATHERINE KOVACICH
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

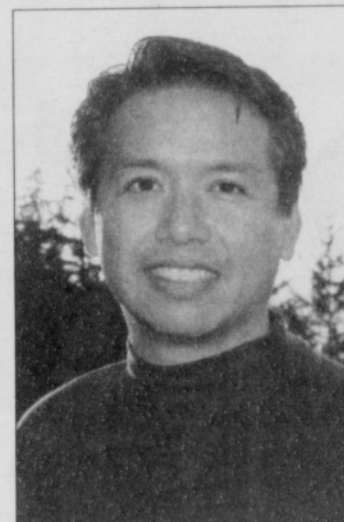
Anyone who owns a television can't deny being sucked into or even being addicted to a reality show. From super nanny rescues to chewing cow hearts to being trapped on a tropical island, the misfortunes and real life adventures of other people are fodder for anyone wishing to escape their own lives for an hour.

Author Andrea Peters got the idea for his latest book "Four Crows" while sitting around one evening, watching "The Amazing Race" and "Survivor."

The book is based on five strangers who become contestants on a forthcoming reality show, being promised to have all their wildest dreams fulfilled upon completion. It's only after their adventure begins, where they wake up in a jungle hut surrounded by snakes and tagged with monitoring devices on their wrists, that they come to realize their reality is more terrifying than they hoped.

Peters theorizes that the current appeal of reality television is "people like the idea of seeing someone be born and die in 60 minutes. They don't care if people succeed or fail. They like to ask themselves if they would stoop to those lows and ask if they would win the money. They can get an entire life to happen in a short period of time. It's both exhibitionist and voyeuristic."

He noted that reality television shows claim to be realistic, but truth be told, the characters are hand-picked to shape an intriguing story. This can often lead to stereotypical depictions of ethnicities that are,



Andrea Peters

ironically, clearly not based in reality.

"The people in 'Four Crows' end up in another country, dealing with what is acceptable. Being aware of the cultural differences is a good thing," Peters said.

Settings of the book involve Thailand, Rangoon and Singapore, places Peters has traveled to with his Asian ancestry.

Peters said that he's seen an interesting change in the way his ethnicity is viewed over the last 15 years. While prejudice was once very pronounced in the Midwest, he said that in the last five years he's noticed that being Asian has become "the in thing."

From his perspective, "the media is becoming aware of different cultures."

"I would like to say the book is not just an introspective on human character, that it's a heart pounding page turning thriller, but it also has the underlying theme of what we place value in and how we are going to keep that value," Peters said.

Peters will be reading from and signing copies of "Four Crows" on Thursday, April 14 at 7:30 p.m. at 23rd Avenue Books at 1015 N.W. 23rd Ave. For more information, call 503-224-5097.

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New Orleans Blues at Lefty's

Mem Shannon, a New Orleans blues man who's music ranges from funk to jazz will perform at Lefty's in Salem on Thursday April 21.

Shannon was nominated for the W.C Handy Award in 1995 for this first CD. "A Cab Driver's Blues" was inspired by Shannon's 15 years as a taxi driver in New Orleans French Quarter.

His new CD, "Phunkville" is Shannon's fifth album and is being released on April 19. The CD has collaborations with other musicians such as guitarist A.C. Gayden Jr. and Billy Martin.

Shannon's music is described as a "virtual ride through the Crescent City bringing together elements of blues, jazz, funk, rock and soul into one musical metropolis."

For jazz enthusiasts this event is a "don't miss." Mem Shannon and The Membership perform at Lefty's on 1230 State St. and for more information call 503-371-2171. This event is for 21 and older.

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