

ARTS & LITERATURE

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SHINAM
GOVANI

FERGILICIOUS

The Canadian

cobbler who won

the Duchess of

York's feet. *ALY*

Ron White tends to the Duchess of York's toes

A royal foot soldier



SHINAN GOVANI
In Toronto

Sarah Ferguson's toes are about as famous as she is.

In the annals of anatomy, her feet are both accomplished and no stranger to the limelight. What **Streisand's** schnozz is to her, or the mole to **Cindy Crawford**, so the Duchess's hooves are to her.

Many women, after all, have been known to utter, "My feet are killing me," but in the case of the **Gloria Gaynor** of the House of Windsor, they almost did her in. Think back to 1992 when Britain's Fergie — always a bit of a brawler, as well as a tigress, and then separated from **Prince Andrew** — was found having her toes attended to by an American financial manager while on a lazy holiday.

Photographs went fast and furious, and nobody in newspaper-land had any cold feet about publishing the pics. In the end, the toe-sucking was the last ghastly gasp of a royal union.

Fast-forward to some 15 years. In Toronto. At a party, where the woman's feet were actually killing her! In fact, by the time **Ron White**, the shoe tycoon, had bumped into her in the VIP room at the One X One event last month, Fergie

"It was like a scene out of The Devil Wears Prada"

was already holding her shoes in her hands and walking around barefoot.

One thing led to another — as it does when we're talking both business and royalty — and someone introduced Ron to the fire-haired dogooder, telling the Duchess that this man was the "answer to all her problems." That this was the man with the "All Day Heels."

A few weeks later, White received a call from Hartmoor — Fergie's lifestyle and media company — in New York City.

He was being summoned.

And so he went, amidst myriad reschedules and mad-dash time changes, flying to Gotham with 45 — 45! — pairs of shoes!

By the time our Canadian shoemonger had gotten to Hartmoor, he learned that *she* hadn't even arrived yet. But while he was setting up his samples, he noticed a call coming into the office, and moments later, everybody was running around and exclaiming, "The Duchess in on her way!"

"Like a scene right out of *The Devil Wears Prada*," Ron tells me. "Staff were changing their shoes, fixing their hair, putting on blazers and running around madly in anticipation of her arrival."

"OK, I have 10 minutes," the 47-year-old Duchess said when she finally wafted in, with four assistants in tow, all of them taking notes, reviewing items, taking instructions.

An hour and a half later, the

lady was still putting her famous feet into shoes.

Her favourite? The Dina Boot — named, indeed, after *Breakfast Television* host from Toronto **Dina Pugliese**. Also drawing her eye? A zebra-print shoe bag with pink satin lining that's he's selling right now, with all proceeds going to the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation.

Loving the bag, and the cause, the royal buyer immediately dispatched one of her senior assistants. "Order those bags, buy lots!" she instructed. "Are you writing this down? I want lots!"

At one point, the Duchess said to Ron, "I love the shoes you brought — why don't you bring a full boot selection?" To which the entrepreneur cooed, "Darling, you gave me 10 minutes, and I brought over 40 shoes."

Last I heard, the footloose Duchess was trying to fit in time for another fitting!

MEANWHILE, I SEE, I HEAR:

That the Mayor's Arts Awards Lunch, happening today at the Four Seasons, is being hosted by bubbly broadcaster **Jian Ghomeshi**, and is set to draw quite the left-brain swirl.

Local luminaries scheduled to attend include: artistic director of Soulpepper Theatre (and last year's award winner) **Albert Schultz**; Genie Award-winning actor **Martha Burns**; composer **Brian Current**; previous award winner and a multi-disciplinary dance-artiste **Peter Chin**; Waterfront Toronto CEO **John Campbell**; broadcaster **Andy Barrie**; Ontario Media Development Corporation head **Karen Thorne-Stone**; video artist **Kim Tomczak**; Ontario Trillium Foundation chair **Helen Burstyn**; no-stranger-to-society architect **Bruce Kuwabara**; entrepreneur **Sam (the Record Man) Sniderman**; curator **Judith Tatar**; city councillors **Kyle Rae** and **Joe Mihevc**; The Gardiner's **Alexandra Montgomery**; fashion designer **Pat McDonagh**; United Way chieftess **Francis Lankin**; OCAD prez **Sara Diamond**. And, of course, all of the peachy finalists.

AND ALSO:

That **Mike Myers** was at Czechoski's on Queen last Sunday, just around the time that **Don Cheadle** was doing Morton's on Avenue Road and just some hours after Cheadle did brunch with **Justin Timberlake** at Eggstacy on Bay, and just hours before Timberlake showed up the next morning at Casa Loma to shoot scenes from his movie with Myers.

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Sarah Ferguson, left, has found a sole mate in Toronto's **Ron White**.