Globe Review

Inside

THE PAGES OF REVIEW

Outside

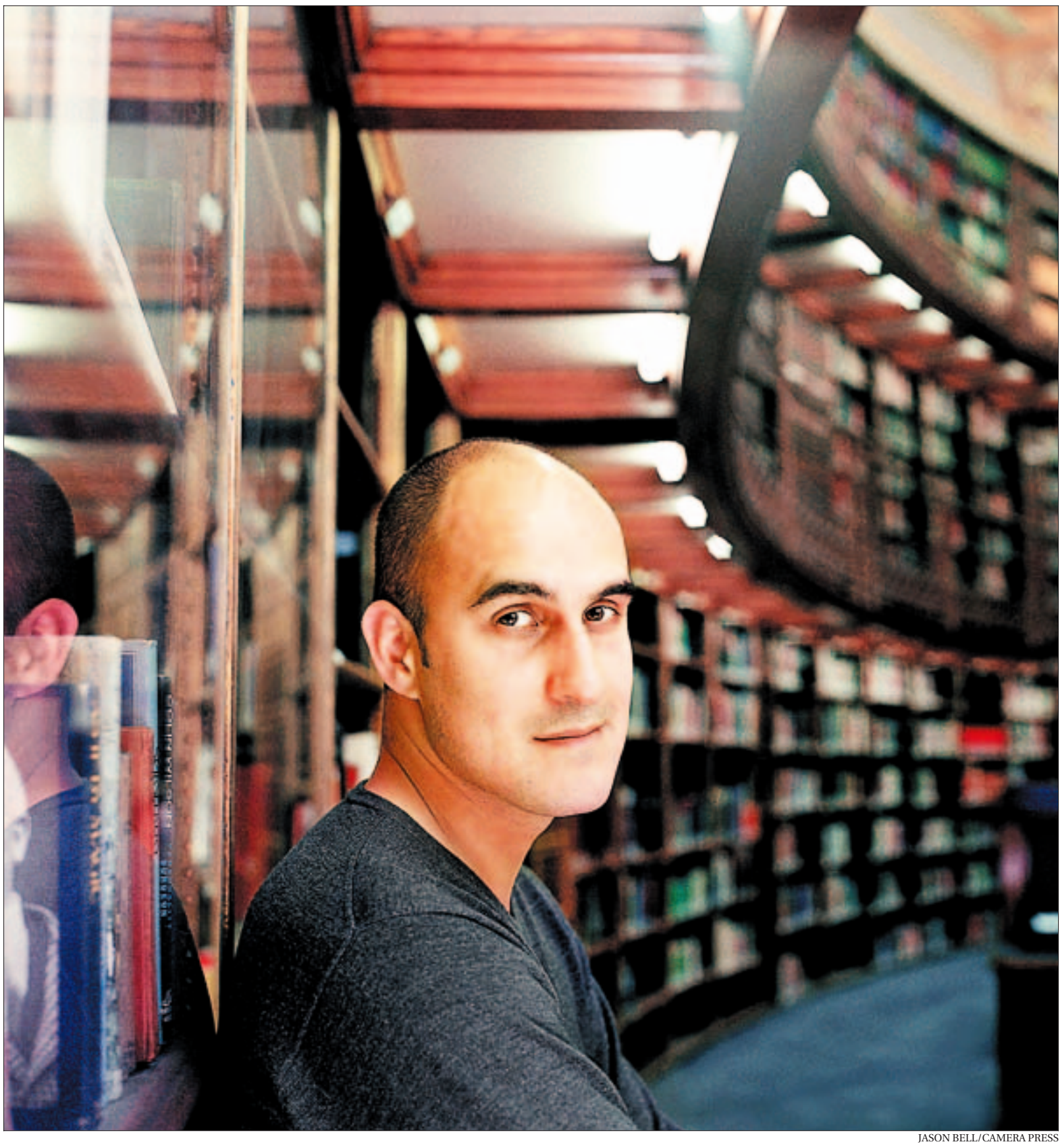
ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Event: The Calgary International Children's Festival, featuring 88 theatrical and musical performances from around the world, begins today.

Theatre: Montreal's Théâtres du Monde festival continues with Lars Norén's *Guerre*, a story of a family destroyed by a modern conflict.

DVD: Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* returns to shelves in a new two-disc edition in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of D-Day.

THE GLOBE AND MAIL ■ CANADA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER ■ GLOBEANDMAIL.COM ■ TUESDAY, MAY 25, 2004



JASON BELL/CAMERA PRESS

Newly minted millionaire Hari Kunzru still lives in East End London: 'I don't require meditative concentration 24 hours a day.'

He's the millionaire scribe

Hari Kunzru raised eyebrows with his huge advances. Will his second novel place him in the pantheon of great authors?

BY NICK RYAN, LONDON

It is a quiet street. The house is large, but not immodestly so. Like its new owner, it is in many ways easy to miss.

The door opens, the shaven head behind it tilts pensively. The eyes are recessed within brown sockets, giving the impression of deep thought. The face is long. Then he laughs and the youthful Hari Kunzru emerges from the perma-cool exterior. "Come on in," he beckons, turning his back on London's East End behind us.

Pots of paint, boxes, scattered pieces of art give little clue to an occupation.

"I've only been here a week and a half," Kunzru offers by way of explanation. "Just moved." There is a characteristic laconic drawl, an ever so slight nasal twang to his voice. He is fond of saying "urrr . . ." as he pauses for thought.

Friend to luminous contemporaries such as Zadie Smith (*White Teeth*), Monica Ali (*Brick Lane*) and Dave Eggers (*A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*), books have brought Hari Kunzru upward mobility: £1.25-million ($3.07-million) of it, if the stories of his two-book advance are true.

Kunzru was the man who burst onto the literary scene two years ago with an audacious debut novel, *The Impressionist*. The comic tale of an Anglo-Indian boy constantly swapping identities, it placed his literary credentials firmly on the map. It was shortlisted for the Whitbread Prize and Guardian First Book Award as a result. In 2003, Kunzru was listed as one of Granta magazine's Best of Young British Novelists.

Yet, it was less the character of Pran and his exploits, more the rumoured advance that had the literary world agog and that initially guaranteed so many column inches. (*The Impressionist* is in fact a sublime first novel, marred only by — a deliberate, Kunzru says — emptiness in its protagonist.) Had the publishing world gone mad? Could publishers ever recoup such vast figures? Kunzru is reported to have said "Oh . . . my . . . god . . ." when told of the deal by his agent as he was sitting in a London café. Prior to this a struggling freelance journalist, he was used to filling out tax-exemption status because of his low earnings.

Now the second book, *Transmission*, is coming out on June 3. Naysayers should be assuaged.

See KUNZRU on page R5

Ray, Fay Wray and destiny

Ray Harryhausen saw the movie King Kong when he was only 13, and it had a very special effect on him, **JAMES ADAMS** writes

Okay, so maybe it doesn't rank with King Henry's chat with Pope Gregory at Canossa in 1077 or the Elizabeth Taylor-Richard Burton hookup in Rome in 1962. Still, Ray Harryhausen's meeting with Fay Wray at New York's Empire State Building a couple of weeks ago had to have been pretty cool.

Admittedly, the sparks probably didn't fly. The Alberta-born Wray, after all, is a frail 97 this year, while Harryhausen, who moved to London from Los Angeles 40 years ago, is a touch more spry at 84. Nonetheless, they knew they were making a bit of B-movie history by having a date of sorts on May 15 at the Empire State Building because they invited the press along. There she was, the Queen of Scream, back at the skyscraper that made her famous in 1933, when she played the reluctant girlfriend of the besotted, doomed giant ape King Kong. There he was, the dapper, courtly chap who saw Wray in *King Kong* at Grauman's Chinese Theatre when he was an impressionable 13-year-old and decided then and there to dedicate his life to making special effects for the movies.

Or, as he put it during a stopover in Toronto a few days after his Wray reunion, "It struck a chord in me that I could not get out of my mind."

Harryhausen got Wray, who lives in New York, to visit him for two reasons: First, he "hadn't seen her for a good many years;" Second, he's just published a five-year labour of love, a huge, colour-packed hardcover of his life and art retailing for $50 in the U.S. and a hefty $75 in Canada. Units, in other words, must be moved, just as Kong moved up the 102 storeys of the Empire State Building with a hysterical Fay Wray in his sweaty paw.

Even if you don't know of Harryhausen, you know his work — or at least the impact of his work. Most of today's film buffs have probably never seen the 15 or so movies for which Harryhausen did the special effects — films like 1952's *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms, 20 Million Miles to Earth, Mysterious Island, Jason and the Argonauts, The Valley of Gwangi*. But some of those who did, people with names like Spielberg, Cameron and Lucas, never forgot them, and later went on to perfect Harryhausen's revolutionary stop-motion animation and split-screen techniques in *Star Wars, Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and *The Terminator*.

JOHN MORSTAD/ THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Harryhausen: Spielberg, Cameron and Lucas never forgot his films.

If, in today's computer-generated imagery (CGI) era, some of Harryhausen's effects now seem more charming than jaw-dropping, well, let's not forget that he never had a 10th or even a 30th of his more famous protégés' budgets during his heyday. *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* cost all of $200,000, *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* around $600,000. In fact, virtually all the conceits you see in a Harryhausen film were done by the man himself ("Now you see films where they're crediting 80 persons with special effects"). And while it may have taken weeks or months to prepare the effects for one scene in a Harryhausen picture, when it came time to shoot that scene, "90 per cent of the time it was done in the first take because the money was so tight."

Harryhausen got out of the movie business in 1981, after his biggest-budget movie ever, a $16-million romp through Greek mythology called *Clash of the Titans,* featuring Harry Hamlin, Laurence Olivier and Maggie Smith ("The actors got most of the budget"), suffered a drubbing at the box-office and from critics. "I just couldn't sustain my enthusiasm any more," he said.

See HARRYHAUSEN on page R2