

Kingly Cash

by BROCK WEIR

It was nice to revisit the 1980s last week ? even for just a little bit.

As a 1985 baby, I nevertheless have a few first-hand memories of that potent time in our pop culture hanging on for dear life. Even if the memories that don't explicitly involve members of my family are typically related to movies seen and TV shows enjoyed (who could have guessed that in this social media age we live in that remembering watching *The Golden Girls* in prime time would have a degree of cachet?) I hold the memories close as if they were endangered species.

Last Wednesday night offered a trip back in time when we went to see a great play in Toronto ? *Ava: The Secret Conversations* ? at the CAA Theatre. The show centres on classic movie icon Ava Gardner, expertly portrayed by Elizabeth McGovern, who recently completed her long run as *Downton Abbey's* Cora, Lady Grantham, as she hires a celebrity journalist to help write her memoirs.

It was the 80s after all, and the tales she could tell of being married to such luminaries as Frank Sinatra still had the power to set the literary world, along with Hollywood, on fire ? but, given the clout of said ex-husbands in the business, there was no small degree of reluctance to tell her story.

The show was exceptionally acted, directed and produced ? and found creative ways to evoke the spirit of the decade, and it stayed with me as our little group left the theatre.

The evening was still young and we ventured down Yonge Street to find a nice place for a warm drink and some dessert. Easier said than done ? I couldn't believe the sheer number of eateries of all varieties that closed their doors at 9 p.m. on a Wednesday on one of Toronto's busiest thoroughfares.

We eventually settled on a retro diner ? just to keep the vintage vibes going ? for some coffee and a piece of pie ? and they kept going until it was time to settle up. While two of us paid with cards, I just happened to have a \$20 in my wallet and prepared to use it. The reaction of the server certainly told a tale. Out of instinct, he handed me the machine until he noticed the money in my hand and the mental gymnastics I could see him going through as he alternated hands between giving me the machine and taking the money, like two people who come face to face on a sidewalk and get caught in the perpetual loop of who's going to go around first, made me chuckle.

Evidently it had been a while since someone paid cash on his shift, but as much as it made me chuckle, it snapped me out of the 80s reverie I was still steeping in and back to reality.

Despite the prevalence of plastic in our everyday lives, we still often hear the phrase ?Cash is King.? You won't find an argument from me, nor, I suspect, will you find an argument from many small business owners who recognize some distinct advantages of filling their tills with a few slips of polymer rather than relying on a perpetual plastic tap dance, but if one person sees legal tender as a throwback, there are still more who are of the thought that if you have it, someone's out to grab it.

The phrase ?cash grab? has been bandied about over the last couple of months as the Province of Ontario moved to make automated speed cameras a thing of the past.

The Premier has been insistent that the move, which was previously authorized by Queen's Park, was nothing more than a ?cash grab? on the part of municipalities. This, despite the only cash being grabbed being those who were caught speeding on local and regional roads.

Whether or not these cameras were tantamount to a cash grab rather than being an effective deterrent against speeding is up for

debate ? and, in my personal opinion, the experts in this case have a distinct edge at the debate table ? but I am glad to see the Province is not necessarily adverse to a cash grab for the greater good.

The Ontario Government last week announced new measures that will require impaired drivers to pay ongoing child support if they kill a child's parent or guardian.

?No child should have to bear the weight of losing a parent to impaired driving,? said Doug Downey, Ontario's Attorney General, in a statement. ?The devastating impact reaches far beyond the immediate loss ? it can leave children struggling emotionally and financially. That's why our government is looking at practical solutions that can ease their burden in the wake of such tragedies and provide financial stability for children who are left behind.?

The potential legislation, the Province added, was inspired by similar laws implemented in Texas in 2023 pertaining to drivers convicted of ?intoxication manslaughter? and requiring them to pay child support until the child turns 18 or graduates high school.

This is a model the Province said they will be exploring ? and the idea received an early, if tempered, show of support from Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD).

?MADD Canada works with those impacted by impaired driving every day, and we know the harsh reality families face because of someone else's harmful choices,? said MADD Canada CEO Steve Sullivan. ?We applaud the Ontario Government for looking into additional measures that would hold offenders accountable and support victims ? particularly minors ? impacted by the loss of a guardian that was killed by a drunk driver.?

While I too applaud this move as an out-of-the-box approach not only to deter drunk driving but require those who make the conscious choice to get behind the wheel to pay for the ongoing impact of their decisions, this is not the only situation where a driver can make a conscious decision that very well might result in harm ? and, worse, the loss off a life.

As the proposal works its way through the system, it will be interesting to hear the conversations along the way.

It will also be interesting to see if similar penalties for those who get behind the wheel and make a conscious decision to go well beyond the posted speed limit, resulting in the loss of a life, will be considered under this umbrella as well. Or, will the Province deem its decidedly within-the-box alternative to speed cameras ? speed bumps and increased signage, measures that don't seem to be doing anyone a whole world of good ? are sufficient.

Let's hope it's not the latter.

If cash is king, let's make it count across the board.

Until then, I'll stick with The Golden Girls. They may have only won an electric skillet and a lifetime supply of soup when they appeared on the fictional game show Grab That Dough, but it wasn't due to lack of trying ? or grabbing.