

TRY A CURLEY-WURLY CONFLICTING EMOTIONS

PAM COHEN SUGGESTS A DELICIOUS CHOCOLATE TREAT FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T RESIST

IF YOU believe high street chocolate to be the best there is, William Curley wants you to think again.

As a pre-Valentine's Day option, the award-winning chocolatier will be hosting a night dedicated to the delicious dessert at Fulham Palace on Wednesday, complete with chocolate making and tasting for all.

William, 36, got involved in desserts almost 20 years ago as a pastry chef. Working with chocolate on a daily basis, it wasn't long before he decided to dedicate his entire profession to it.

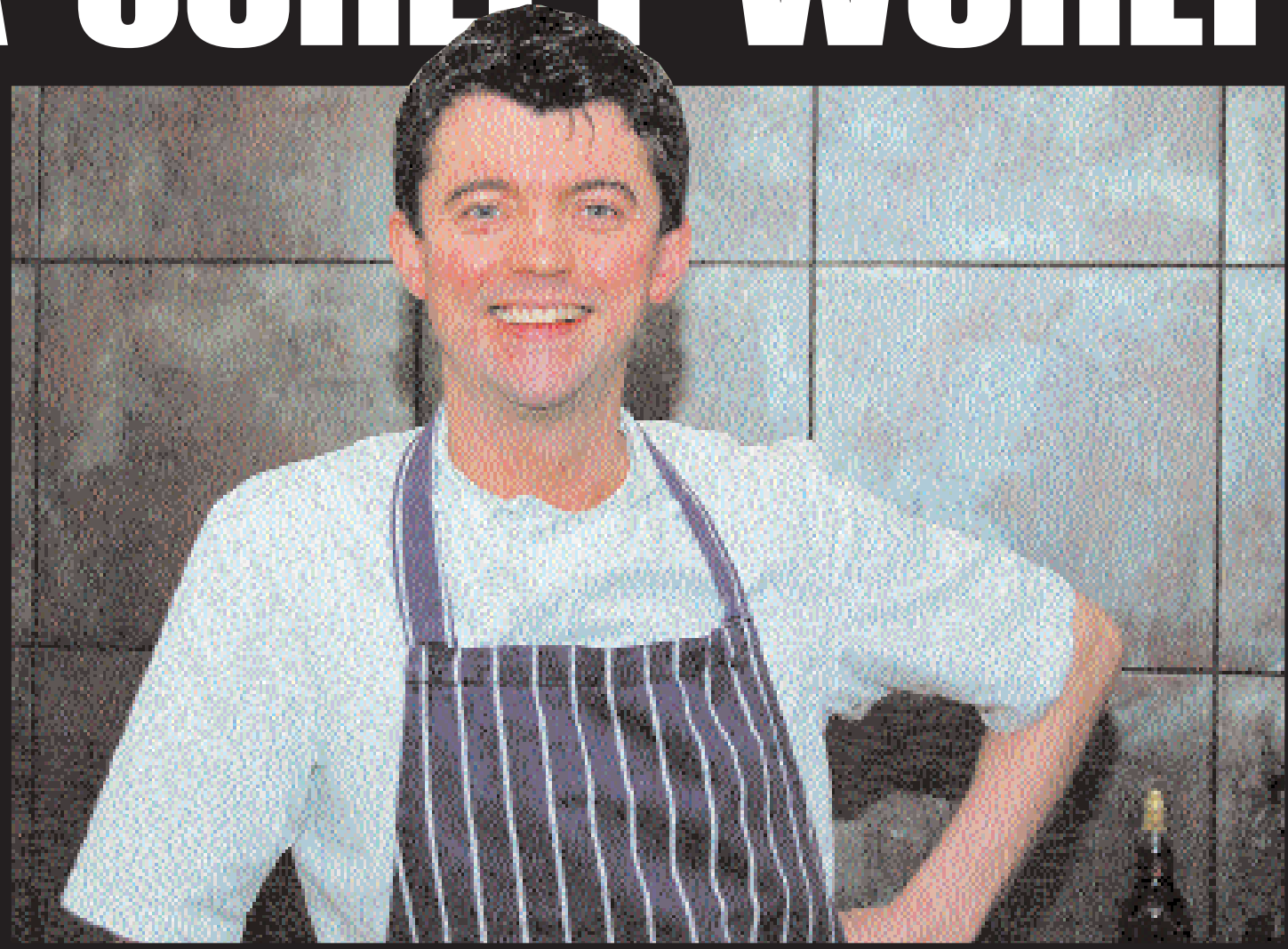
"There's a lot of mystique behind chocolate," William says. "Let's face it, who doesn't like it? Learning more about it is a wonderful thing to do."

He now owns three eponymous chocolate shops in Richmond, Mayfair and Oxford Street and puts his success down to "the rapidly evolving demand for chocolate in the UK".

Five years ago William embarked on a global journey to research his passion further, taking him from Paris to Tokyo in search of market trends and traditions.

His findings are key to the evening as William aims to match excitement with education. "Many people come to the events with preconceived notions about what chocolate should look and taste like, but they leave with different ideas," he says. "There are a lot of charlatans out there and I'm trying to clarify the truth about chocolate."

● *Chocoholic!* is being held at 7pm on Wednesday, February 6, at Fulham Palace in Bishop's Avenue. Tickets are £10, and must be ordered in advance. Call 020 7736 3233. See www.williamcurley.co.uk



IN FLIGHT: Amit Lahav (airborne) and Al Nedjari (seated) are, respectively, Jew and Arab

Picture: ED COLLIER

REVIEW

THE ARAB & THE JEW, LYRIC STUDIO, HAMMERSMITH

BANG! The Arab man fires at the Jew. Bang! The Jew fires back. Bang! Bang! Bang!

The audience doubles up laughing as the two carry on firing. Not the usual chain of events when dealing with an ethnic conflict that has dogged the Middle East for time immemorial.

Then again, Amit Lahav and Al Nedjari, the duo that make up the physical theatre company Gecko, are not known for being ordinary.

In their latest play, *The Arab & the Jew*, the scene opens with the two men in khaki suits, face down in a sandbox that covers most of the Lyric Studio theatre's stage.

The themes are simple, yet their representation is complex. Israeli-born Lahav, who plays the Jew, has said physical theatre is

"unlike a straight play on stage". He added: "It's about telling a story using your body and images rather than words; it engages the imagination to create a visually metaphorical world with movement, colour and music."

Waking up alongside Nedjari, Algerian-born and playing the Arab, the two babble barely comprehensible words to each other as objects such as a shoe

and radio fall from the sky on to the sand. A representation of human nature, the two share, hug, communicate, and even make a baby doll walk by joining forces in moving her articulated joints.

Yet the inevitable tragedy begins to unfold, their trust broken over an orange in the sand that the Arab slips in his pocket, refusing to share.

A scene where the Jew treats the Arab like a horse, tutting to calm him, then ensnaring him with a lasso, is exceeded in cruelty by a boxing match between the two where realism annihilates the humour of all the early shoot 'em up scenes.

Sadly, no matter what tack one takes, the Arab-Israeli conflict is too real to be reduced to farce. The second half of the hour-long work shifts to more solemn and mysterious representations of land ownership, backed by religious callings and family ties.

The wooden child they once controlled together is buried in a tomb in the sand; resurrected to be blow to pieces, which evokes the consequences of bomb blasts. In conclusion is disheartening, but so, too, is the reality.

● *The Arab & The Jew* is at the Lyric Studio, Lyric Square, Hammersmith, until February 9. Mon-Sat, 8pm. £7-12. Call 0871 2211 722. See www.lyric.co.uk

Christian McLaughlin