



Actor Crowe battered in loo punch-up

By MIKE SULLIVAN

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HOLLYWOOD hellraiser Russell Crowe was quizzed by riot squad cops yesterday after a boozy brawl in a London restaurant.

Ex-EastEnders actor Ross Kemp leapt in to separate Gladiator star Crowe, 38, and fellow New Zealander Eric Watson after they came to blows.

Security staff at trendy Zuma, near Harrods in Knightsbridge, Central London, called police when trouble erupted in the early hours.

Officers spoke to Crowe and tycoon Watson and warned them about their behaviour.

It was the latest in a long line of violent episodes that have dogged Crowe's career.

He went to the Zuma " which attracts celebrities, heads of state and foreign royalty " at 8.30 on Tuesday night.

Earlier he had been sinking pints of strong Stella Artois lager in a West End pub.

At the restaurant he ran into businessman Watson, one of New Zealand's wealthiest men.



Movie wildman ... star Russell Crowe after yesterday's amazing punch-up at Zuma



The pair are said to have a history of bad blood after falling out over a girl several years ago.

They began rowing in the gents' loo and then tore into each other.

One of Crowe's two minders heard the commotion and dashed to the toilet to find Crowe on the ground and Watson pummelling him.

The men were separated but the trouble then spilled out into the main bar area.

Kemp, 37, lunged forward to split up the fighting pair.

One customer said of policeman's son Kemp: "He was in like a shot when he saw what was happening and pulled Crowe and the other guy apart.

"All hell broke loose for a few moments and Crowe completely lost it. You could tell he had been drinking heavily."

Before the fight erupted, beefy Crowe polished off a mountain of Japanese food, then began hurling **PLATES** around the restaurant, witnesses revealed.

One said: "He was out of control. To begin with it was funny. He was throwing plates and it was like something out of the movie My Big Fat Greek Wedding.

"But then the booze wore on and he turned aggressive and nasty. It was sad to see him in that state.

"Apparently the fight started when Crowe went to the loo and had words with a guy called Eric.

"One of Crowe's minders rushed in after hearing shouting and found Crowe lying on the ground with the other guy on top of him.



Fury ... Crowe rows with girl



“At that point a lot of people started moving out of the way and the staff called the police.

“But Ross Kemp dived straight in to help break up the fight. It was like watching him sort out a dodgy punter in the Queen Vic.”

Pony-tailed Crowe suffered scratching round his eye and swelling to his face and forehead.

Watson, in his late 30s, also sustained marking to his face.

Crowe then appeared to become entangled in a row with an attractive brunette, thought to have been with Watson at the bar.

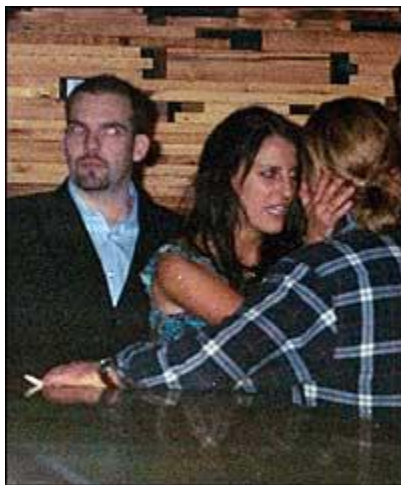
The customer added: “The woman seemed really angry with Crowe and there were heated words between them.”

A diner at a nearby table said: “Crowe was very loud and seemed to have been drinking beforehand.

“He got more and more boisterous and at one point started having a game with his minder. He was throwing plates and the minder was trying to catch them.

“One of the plates smashed and a couple sitting just behind Crowe got up in disgust and asked to be moved to another table.

“The people with him were trying to calm him down and for a while he started behaving really charmingly to everyone.



Face-to-face ... she grabs him



“But it all went off when Crowe and this guy recognised each other. They were at each other’s throats.”

The Metropolitan Police Territorial Support Group raced to the scene in vans and cars after bar staff dialled 999.

Police spoke to both Crowe and Watson in the bar area of Zuma, where a meal for two in Japanese themed surroundings costs £100 with drinks.

A witness went on: “By that time Crowe had completely calmed down and was trying to have a laugh and a joke with the police.”

Neither man wished to pursue a complaint and the cops left after satisfying themselves that the trouble was over.

A Scotland Yard spokesman said: “Police were called at 00.42am to the Zuma restaurant and bar in Raphael Street, Knightsbridge, to reports of an altercation involving two men in their thirties.

“When police arrived the situation was under control. No allegations of crime were received.

“There were no injuries and there will be no further police action.”

Crowe was driven away in a black Mercedes to the Dorchester Hotel, where he is staying.

The actor, famed for his roles in LA Confidential and A Beautiful Mind, came to Britain last week for the funeral of his fellow actor and drinking buddy Richard Harris.



Fist clenched ... she is held back



Watson has a retail and finance empire worth more than £50million. He owns racehorses and Auckland Warriors rugby league club.

He started out as a butcher's apprentice and moved to London a month ago he says to escape publicity.



Enemies ... cop keeps watchful eye on Crowe, right, and Eric Watson after brawl in restaurant loo yesterday

Crowe's hard-drinking ways have repeatedly landed him in fights:

THE TV BOSS. In February he attacked BBC executive Malcolm Gerrie, 51, at the BAFTA awards. Crowe, who had just been crowned Best Actor, was angry that a poem was cut from his speech. Critics believe the incident cost him an Oscar for his part in *A Beautiful Mind*.

THE POP STAR. In August, pint-sized singer Moby said Crowe attacked him in a nightclub. Moby, 36, said: "I was in a bar in Sydney and had to go to the bathroom. Russell Crowe was in there with friends and was in the way of the door, but I really had to pee. "So I pushed open the door a bit and he grabbed me and threw me against the wall. He shouted, "You fucking Americans, you think you rule the world"."

THE MEXICAN BAR BRAWL. Crowe attacked another actor in August while filming in Mexico. Witnesses said he grabbed the man at a bash in Rosarita and threw him across the bar. A woman martial arts expert put Crowe in a headlock until he calmed down.

THE AUSSIE BAR BRAWL. Two years ago Crowe was caught on video fighting in a bar near his Australian ranch after chatting up two local girls. Witnesses said he became offended when the girls showed they were not interested and local men went to their aid.

THE BITING INCIDENT. Around the same time Russell was said to have bitten a chunk out of a man's neck and spat it in his face during a nightclub brawl in Sydney.



THE CANADIAN BAR BRAWL. In 1998 Crowe had to be rescued by Mounties after sparking a fight by insulting locals in a bar in Alberta.

THE MOVIE MAULING. The same year he attacked fellow-actor Peter Cousens while starring in the musical Blood Brothers in Sydney. Cousens said:

“He tried to punch me but the guys in the dressing room held him back.

“He was hurling abuse and broke free and headbutted me in the face. The bastard broke my nose.”

But last week Crowe told The Sun’s showbiz reporter Thomas Whitaker that he was misunderstood. He insisted: “I’m not a bad man.”