

## The plot's bad, and as for the dialogue...

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MALCOLM MERCER: Crowe f---ed big time in a club last night, belted three people, bit someone's face, ripped someone's dress off. We've got it on video.

PHILLIP CROPPER: What?

MERCER: We're just starting to get some negotiation happening. It's all on the video, the whole f---ing lot.

CROPPER: Can he fight?

MERCER: No, absolutely not. He was just fighting spastics.

CROPPER: He's just had a bad night on the piss.

MERCER: But you have to see him f---ing punching people.

CROPPER: He can't fight.

MERCER: Nah, he's belted three people and they've all stood there and there's like nothing wrong with `em.

CROPPER: He's filthy rich, isn't he?

MERCER: Absolutely mega.

The dialogue read and sounded like a script from a movie. It had suspense, some violence and a bit of comedy thrown in for good measure.

Set in the coastal city of Coffs Harbour, it had the stars: Hollywood actor Russell Crowe, South Sydney football coach Craig Coleman, two nightclub owners and high-profile sports manager Sam Ayoub.

The dialogue however, was part of a District Court trial in Coffs Harbour yesterday.

The nightclub owners, Malcolm Mercer and Philip Cropper, have pleaded not guilty to attempting to extort \$200,000 from Crowe.

The pair allegedly tried to get the actor to buy a video which depicted him in a brawl on November 18, 1999, outside the Saloon Bar nightclub.

## The Sydney Morning Herald

Unknown to Mercer and Cropper, however, their conversations were recorded by police through phone intercepts.

Those recordings were played to the court yesterday.

They included jokes about Crowe's lack of ability in the boxing arena, the brawl itself and how much money they wanted to make.

Throughout the playing of the tapes some of the jurors laughed; so did the defendants.

On the tape Mercer is heard telling Cropper about the fight in which Crowe "belted three people, bit someone's face, ripped a girl's dress off".

And Mercer later says: "He thinks the world revolves around Russell Crowe and he's just ... the f---ing biggest asshole you'd ever wanna meet, mate."

Cropper tells Mercer he had been trying to get Craig Coleman to contact Crowe for him.

Cropper says on the tape: "I said I know what I'd be doin', it's a commercial thing ... no-one's standin' over anyone, someone's gonna get it. So if he wants it, he'd betta put his hand in his pocket and buy the f---er."