

## KITTY FLANAGAN – CHARMING & ALARMING

★★★★



Kitty Flanagan has been out of the local spotlight for a few years now (she was a regular on sketch series *Full Frontal* in the 1990s), but her regular appearances on *The 7pm Project* (now *The Project*) have clearly boosted her profile to DVD-selling level. This is a good thing. Flanagan's hour-long show is a frequently laugh-out-loud look at topics like getting old, learning about sex from nuns, travel (give Bolivia a miss), *Planet of the Apes* in French, not having kids and women drinking to rhino-levels. She's smart, she's likeable and doesn't always go for the cheap gags. What more could you want? How about a load of extras? There's a bunch of clips from the *7pm Project* and *Good News Week*, a handful of sketches from the *Full Frontal* days (including Flanagan being taught ballet by Shaun Micallef's gargle-voiced boxer character Milo Kerrigan) and *Daring Ray Fenwick*, the sharply observed short film Flanagan wrote and directed in the UK. Starring Julia Davis, it's worth the price alone. If you've ever laughed at Flanagan's work, this is a must. **ANTHONY MORRIS**

## SUPER 8

★★★★½

The year is 1979, and a group of pre-teens are making a low-budget zombie movie on super 8 film when they accidentally capture some electrifying and incidentally incriminating footage of a deliberately derailed train. Ignoring their parents' words of caution, the unlikely group of neighbourhood kids – led by local sheriff's son, Joe (Joel Courtney) and wrong-side-of-the-track resident, Alice (Elle Fanning) – become more than aspiring filmmakers as extra terrestrials invade their Middle American small town. Best described as homage to the much-loved sci-fi family adventure flicks of the 1970s and 1980s, *Super 8* is more about evoking nostalgia than achieving pasliche. A welcome collaboration between producer Steven Spielberg (who directed many of the films riffed on here) and writer-director JJ Abrams, this is genuinely enjoyable fare amid a wreckage of contemporary blockbuster adventure flicks. *Super 8* gives a now grown-up generation the opportunity to revisit their childhood – with a little added CGI. **TARA JUDAH**



## CLOUDSTREET

★★★★

Soon some bright executive will trademark the phrase 'Quality Australian production' (if they haven't already) and use it to excuse all manner of televisual misdemeanours. In the meantime, we can expect to see it plastered across any 'beautifully shot' (trademark pending) and 'wonderfully acted' (ditto) local production. In fact, it's possible we just filled the sleeve for the forthcoming DVD of *The Slap*. The long-awaited screen version of Tim Winton's masterpiece truly deserves these plaudits. It is, for the most part, wonderfully acted and it does look – and sound – rather beautiful. Emma Booth and Stephen Curry deserve particular praise for their warm, nuanced performances and the touching relationship they craft between father and daughter. Still, while the book's episodic narrative seems custom-built for the fast-paced nature of modern television, it's hard to shake the feeling that Winton – who co-wrote the script – hasn't watched much telly lately. The series has little of the playfulness of the original text. The novel feels brave and anarchic, but this is more like one of your grandma's rambling anecdotes. Lovely, yes. Quality, absolutely. Gripping, not quite. **MYKE BARTLETT**



### ANTHONY MORRIS → DVD Editor

WHAT MAKES PEOPLE laugh? Well, for six weeks at my place the answer was *Twentysomething*. This home-grown sitcom (out now on an extras-packed DVD) about two friends in their twenties trying to get rich quick despite not having real drive or social graces turned out to be surprisingly winning, thanks largely to the charm of leads Jess Harris and Josh Schmidt. Also in the 'pleasant surprise' category was Hamish Blake as Jess' likeable not-quite-boyfriend. But as Blake also has his own DVD out with Andy Lee (*Hamish & Andy's Gap Year*), it's not like he'll be in short supply come Christmas. Actually, the real star of *Gap Year* is Ryan Shelton. While it was great to see his short segments slipped in between Hamish and Andy's good-natured stunts and pranks on one another, it's fingers crossed that Shelton will one day have a DVD of his own.

Back at Sitcom Central: if you missed the much-publicised *At Home with Julia*, the DVD release is a good opportunity to find out that, behind all the controversial political content and dodgy impersonations, lies a traditional (and often sweet) relationship sitcom. Far more experimental are the



third and fourth series of *It's Garry Shandling's Show*, in which star Shandling speaks directly to the studio audience, utterly demolishing the 'fourth wall' and any semblance of reality, while still managing to make multiple jokes about his hair. It's brilliant and a complete must-see. As is the fifth series of *30 Rock*. For a show coming up to 100 episodes, it remains remarkably fresh and funny. Or perhaps I'm just a sucker for jokes about a gay cable network called Twinks.