

13 ASSASSINS

★★★★



Gone are the days of *Visitor Q* (2001), *Audition* (1999) and *Ichii the Killer* (2004), when simply mentioning the name of Takashi Miike would send those in the know twitching in fear and revulsion. While the Japanese writer-director's amazing pace hasn't slowed (making two films a year is average for him), his early shock tactics have been replaced by a more subtle tweaking of genre conventions. It's so subtle, in fact, that for the first half of *13 Assassins* the real suspense doesn't flow from the plot (a band of killers comes together to kill a murderous lord the government can't touch), but from waiting for Miike to break apart the rigid conventions of the samurai drama. The early appearance of a mutilated victim of the evil lord is unsettling, but the team-building and the assassination scheme are pleasingly straightforward...and then they turn a village into one giant death-trap and spend 40 minutes wiping out dozens of the lord's guards. It's amazing filmmaking, astounding storytelling and the best action sequence in years. **ANTHONY MORRIS**

TERRI

★★★★½

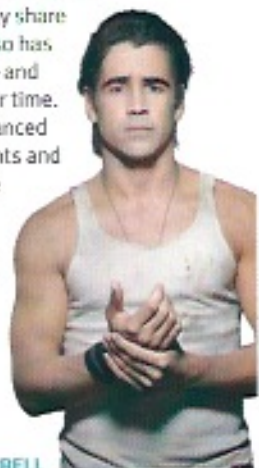
Obese, a loner, and with a home life that revolves around eating beans on toast and caring for an incapacitated uncle, Terri (Jacob Wysacki) doesn't see or feel much for anything or anyone. Attending school in his pyjamas, he quickly comes to the attention of Principal Fitzgerald (John C. Reilly), a slightly unconventional educator, to say the least. Fitzgerald, who believes there are two types of students, "good hearted" and "bad hearted", takes an increasingly intense interest in Terri. Mostly focused on a dysfunctional paternal relationship between teacher and student, *Terri* is a carefully constructed portrait of outsiders. A promising feature, it is sometimes let down by Terri's explained but not quite adequately explored apathy, as well as an occasional propensity to descend into a John C. Reilly showcase. *Terri* is polished enough, even if it didn't make its way to Australian cinemas, but it presents teen apathy without ever really interrogating it. That said, this film is enjoyable and at least as good-hearted as its title character. **TARA JUDAH**



FRIGHT NIGHT

★★★★

In addition to its catchy title and high-concept hook, the 1985 horror movie *Fright Night* was made just well enough to be remembered fondly by buffs of the genre. This, of course, makes it a prime candidate for a new-millennium remake. So, is this new take on the tale of an average suburban teenager (*Star Trek*'s Anton Yelchin), who discovers that his next-door neighbour (Colin Farrell, having a blast) is a voracious vampire, likely to make fans forget the original? Probably not, but that's not to say the new *Fright Night* (penned by Marti Noxon, of TV's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* fame) is a flop. The two movies obviously share many similarities, but each also has its own identity and attitude – and they're both very much of their time. They're both also a nicely balanced mix of gags, gross-out moments and genuinely creepy scenes – the ideal recipe for a Saturday-night scary movie. *Twilight* fans looking for their fang fix should take care, however: this new *Fright Night* is a lot bloodier and spookier than anything involving Team Edward. **GUY DAVIS**



VAMPED UP: COLIN FARRELL

ANTHONY MORRIS → DVD Editor

WHEN IT COMES to things people like watching, the only thing that even comes close to movies is sport. So, obviously, if you could figure out some way to combine both into some kind of...*sports movie*, you'd pretty quickly have all the money in the world. Unfortunately, as many Australian filmmakers will tell you, this logic fails to hold up in real life. It seems while sports fans like watching movies and vice versa, sports movies almost always end up combining obvious storylines with two-dimensional characterisation. But sports documentaries are often a different story. I've already gone on record in these pages about the amazing *Senna*, which reconstructs the life of 1980s Formula One racing star Ayrton Senna entirely from news footage, home movies and television coverage. Seriously, if you haven't seen this, it's a must. It also highlights one of the strengths of quality sports documentaries: you don't have to be interested in the sport in question to enjoy them. I have zero interest in boxing, yet *When We Were Kings*, the 1996 documentary about the classic "Rumble in the Jungle" fight between George Foreman

MUHAMMAD ALI
IN *WHEN WE WERE
KINGS* (1996)

and underdog challenger Muhammad Ali in 1974, is one of my all-time favourites. And while I literally could not care less about cricket, the recently released documentary *Fire in Babylon*, which looks at the unstoppable West Indies cricket team of the 1970s and 1980s, has been the viewing highlight of my summer. And not just for the fashion either: this gripping examination of a great team's rise will have even the most die-hard Australian fan cheering the Windies on.