

GREEN GUIDE

Preview

Movie of the Week Scott Murray

DIE HARD 2 (1990)
Channel Seven, Saturday, 8.35pm

John McClane (Bruce Willis) is at Dallas airport, in Washington, awaiting the arrival of his wife (Bonnie Bedelia). Ever alert, he notices some suspicious packages being passed across the floor of a crowded cafe. In the blink of an eye, McClane is on the trail of a renegade military unit hell-bent on freeing General Ramon Esperanza (Franco Nero) from custody. Like many good South American anti-Communists, Esperanza finances his activities through drug trafficking. Pitting one individual against a group of very bad guys within the confines of a snowbound airport is a fine idea and makes for tense action. But for McClane to maintain his iconic outsider reputation, the other cops and soldiers have to be stupid or corrupt. In this case, arrogance and dumb-headedness are beautifully personified by the head of airport security, Captain Lorenzo (Dennis Franz), who seems willing to risk the lives of thousands simply to preserve his big-fish-in-a-small-pond status. As in John McTiernan's *Die Hard*, made two years earlier, McClane is aided by a few freethinking individuals, usually African-Americans. Both films can be read as condemnations of American complacency and conformism in the face of a rottenness within. Many of the situations McClane finds himself in have a pleasurable sense of déjà vu. McClane even jokes: "How can the same shit happen to the same guy twice?" But critics were less thrilled, claiming the film was a simplistic rehash, made too quickly and with too keen an eye on the easy dollar. Seventeen years ago, *Die Hard 2* looked wildly excessive and director Renny Harlin was damned for it. Today, it feels relatively restrained and at least most of the stunts are real, not computer-generated. McClane is at his wisecracking, insouciant best, scurrying like a hyperactive rat through the labyrinthine bowels of the airport. There are still a few punters out there who refuse to face reality about Mr Willis. The fact is, no one does this stuff better than Bruce.

Pick of the Week

INSIDE AUSTRALIA: FOOTY — THE LA PEROUSE WAY
Wednesday, 8pm on SBS

This sporting spectacular is complete with colourful language and biffs. You might even learn something about rugby.

NATALIE CRAIG, page 44

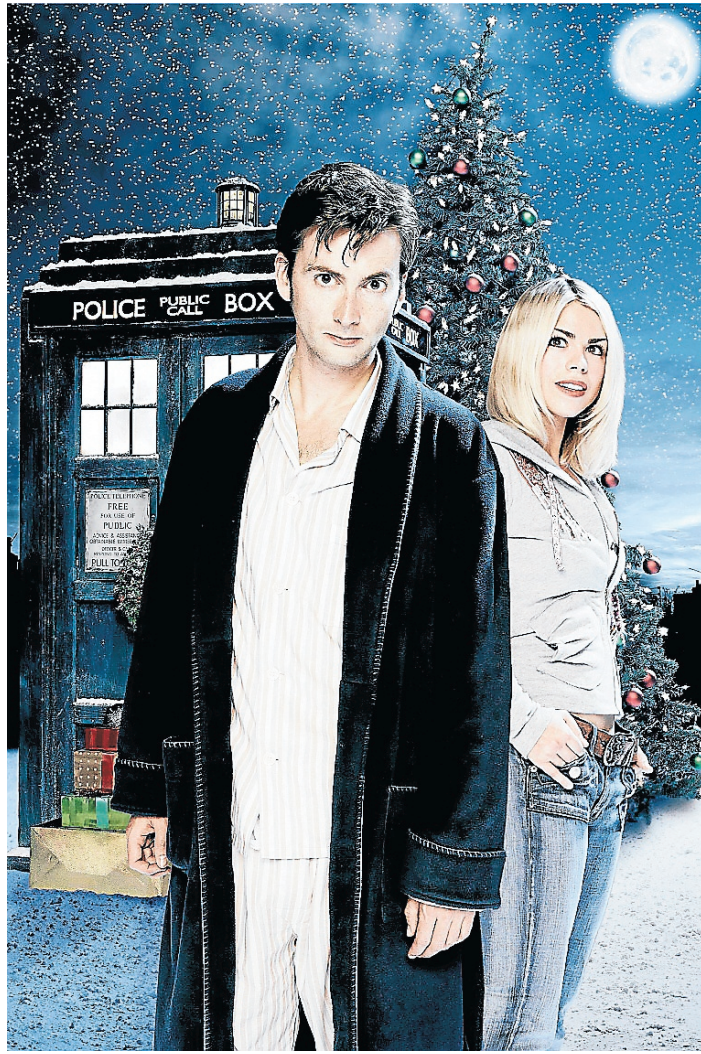
Carrying a torch for the Doctor

Spotlight
Adam Richard

I USED to think *Doctor Who* was gay. My people, the homosexual community, will frequently claim people to be gay for the most spurious of reasons, but I thought I had the Doctor pegged (so to speak). Despite the parade of scantily clad ladies traipsing around his Tardis, he never leaned in for a kiss. Also, I distinctly remember an episode in which the Brigadier got quite flustered watching a belly dancer, while the Doctor rolled his eyes in contempt. Proof enough, I thought, that *Doctor Who* was batting for my team. Well, until he went ga-ga over Billie Piper and pashed Madame de Pompadour last year. Next you'll be telling me Darth Vader isn't a transvestite. I was sure all that leather and cape-wearing meant his helmet was hiding eyelashes and lipstick.

When *Doctor Who* returned in 2005, Billie Piper eyelash fluttering aside, alternative sexuality managed to creep aboard the Tardis in the form of Captain Jack Harkness (John Barrowman), an omnisexual rogue time agent. Now Captain Jack's character has been spun-off into his own series, kind of like action-*Frasier*, and he reappears in the new sci-fi/horror/fantasy series, *Torchwood*.

Torchwood begins by following plucky Welsh police constable Gwen Cooper (Eve Myles) as she investigates the investigators of the paranormal and extra-terrestrial. Through her, we meet the mysterious *Torchwood* team, who lay claim to being "outside the government, beyond the police". Headed by Captain Jack, who has developed a fetish for dressing in World War II army gear, the team consists of the sulky ugly/sexy Owen (*Bleak House*'s Burn Gorman), the nerdy/sexy Toshiko (*Ab Fab*'s Naoko Mori) and the blandly sexy Ianto (Gareth David-Lloyd).



Billie Piper's eyelash fluttering has the Doctor, David Tennant, off Team Homosexual.

They are all, in some way, sexy. The show tries desperately to be sexy. It's populated with sexy aliens that suck the life out of you; a purple smoke alien that makes you have sex until you explode; a sexy woman from the past who wants to have sex; and a cyberwoman who seems not to have finished getting dressed before going on a killing spree. On top of all this alien sex, all the main characters experience at least one same-sex encounter before the end of the first series. (Oh yeah, nerdy pants here has seen them all).

Having discovered *Torchwood* through my love of *Doctor Who*, I found the visceral depiction of

gory, violent horror to be a shock at first because nobody bleeds in *Doctor Who*. Having said that, nothing on-screen is any more or less confronting than the splatter in *Heroes*. The graphic violence is not all that differentiates *Torchwood* from its progenitor, however; it's the sex. Nobody ever had sex in the Tardis, but everybody has sex in *Torchwood*, almost all the time. It's a wonder they ever get around to investigating anything paranormal or extraterrestrial. Even with all the sex and violence, *Torchwood* is a lot of fun, if only because it is borrowing from some very fun sources, and not just *Doctor Who*. The city of Cardiff in Wales,

where *Torchwood* is set, sits on a rift in time and space, and all sorts of oogly-boogly business falls through the rift into the middle of town, which is not unlike the town of Sunnydale in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, built on top of something known as The Hellmouth. The investigation into matters unknown harks back to '90s Zeitgeist series *The X-Files*, except they've taken the sexual tension between Scully and Mulder and consummated it five ways.

Don't go into *Torchwood* expecting "grown-up *Doctor Who*". In some respects it is, but not grown-up enough. *Torchwood* is only on the cusp of adulthood. Like a 17-year-old, it's capable of inflicting pain and eliciting pleasure; it's just not exactly sure how.

As the series trundled along, the characters annoyed me, confused me and then began to charm me. By the end of 13 episodes, I was dreading their departure. I started the show in lust with the cheesy Captain Jack, but within weeks my attention turned to the brooding Owen. (How I became infatuated with the grotesque Mr Guppy from *Bleak House*, I'll never know.)

Torchwood is a bit of spooky sexy sci-fi fun. Like all British drama, it still has a bit of tongue lodged in its cheek, so it's not as overwrought as *Supernatural* or *Lost*. Plus it features scads of girl-on-girl action for the boys, boy-on-boy action for the girls and boy-on-girl-on-purple-smoke-creature action for the exhaust fans that might be watching.

■ While Adam Richard is an employee of Channel Ten, he in no way feels compelled to be nice about it. He will tell you, until your eyes bleed, no doubt, how much he is loathing this year's ham-fisted attempt at *Big Brother*, and that no matter how pretty the boys on *Supernatural* are, he just can't bring himself to care about their allegedly scary plight.

Torchwood screens on Mondays at 9.40pm on Ten. *Doctor Who* screens on Saturdays at 7.30pm on the ABC.

Mass hiss-teria as obnoxious evictee gets a boo job

THE ejection of loud-mouthed suburban mum Michelle from the household was not only the most predictable eviction from the *Big Brother* house so far this year, it was also the most welcome.

Simply put, the central tenet of *Big Brother* is for housemates to get along with each other — to appreciate other points of view, to reach understandings, to learn and respect differences, to make accommodations and adjust behaviour. This, of course, leads to conflict but it is the effort by housemates that makes the show entertaining and, on occasion, valuable.

Michelle, however, showed no



Watching Big Brother

interest in acknowledging or respecting the feelings of others. In her mercifully short time in the house, she proved herself the very antithesis of the model *Big Brother* housemate. Her standard response to repeated, politely worded pleas for her to

consider the feelings of others was: "Tough titties. I'll never change." No surprise, then, that everyone, including good-natured truckie Travis, turned against her.

So obnoxious was she that *Big Brother* even changed the rules to allow the viewing public to nominate housemates for eviction. As expected, Michelle's disapproval rating almost went off the chart.

The week was replete with examples of Michelle's arrogance and pig-headedness. She abused people, berated Travis behind his back — forcing him into a rare bout of confrontation — and took food without asking, in open defiance of a

house agreement. She even tried to defy *Big Brother*, who managed to shut her up by stating: "When *Big Brother* talks, you do not."

But the tipping point came with her unforgivable personal attack on Aleisha. This crossed the line from obnoxious to downright cruel. Fully aware of how much it would hurt her, Michelle deliberately belittled the suffering Aleisha had endured in her life, reducing her to tears and putting her in a state of deep distress. Yet Michelle refused to relent.

Michelle has provided many moments of humour on the show and it is always amusing to watch a buffoon on TV. Her comic value

aside, however, she easily ranks as one of the most repulsive *Big Brother* housemates on record.

Proof of this came on Sunday night when she was booed by the audience. This was in stark contrast to the rapturous reception most evictees receive and it provided a salient lesson about the perils of fame in the modern media age.

You simply do not go onto a show such as *Big Brother*, behave in such a callous manner, and then expect the public to like you. The only pity about Michelle's eviction was that it did not occur sooner and that she was still entitled to all those prizes.

JIM SCHEMBRI