

Successful take-off for the Conchords

Television

Flight of the Conchords
Prime TV, Monday 10pm
Reviewed by Eleanor McKay

Conventional wisdom says New Zealanders can't produce good comedy. Luckily, the recent premiere of *Flight of the Conchords* has shattered that myth.

True, the series is produced by American powerhouse HBO, but the comedy is all Kiwi. Wellington comedy-folk duo Bret McKenzie and Jemaine Clement play New Zealand's fourth most popular folk duo trying to make it in the Big Apple. The humour is understated and dry and while it may not be to everyone's liking, for fans of the Conchords the half-hour show is a revelation.

The humour lies in the charm and endearing nature of the two leads who are, let's face it, geeky but lovable. Jemaine's voice alone is enough to make you giggle and while the dialogue is minimal and a bit hit-or-miss, the folk comedy songs are absurdly funny with lines like, "You're so beautiful, you could be an air-hostess in the 60s or a part-time model."

Bret and Jemaine are joined by band manager Murray, played by Rhys Darby, who works part-time as the deputy cultural attaché at the New Zealand consulate. Band meetings are held

in Murray's office which is plastered with posters "promoting" New Zealand. But with lines like "New Zealand - don't expect too much. You'll love it", - this isn't the 100% Pure campaign.

Their number one fan, well their only fan, is Mel, a married woman who regularly bumps into the boys outside their apartment by "accident". This subplot didn't add much to the first episode and could be a dud, but it reinforced the boys' loser status.

The droll, laid-back humour is so Kiwi it's easy to see the attraction for New Zealanders, but what exactly do Americans see in this comedy? The show has been well received in the US and demonstrates the risk a network like HBO is willing to take on new talent.

A running gag is Americans not knowing where New Zealand is, contrasted with how much they know about *Lord of the Rings*.

For the average American *Flight of the Conchords* must

come right out of left-field and the network is taking a huge risk that US audiences will "get it". TVNZ's idea of comedy is finding a vehicle for Matthew Ridge and Marc Ellis, so it's great to see such a chance being taken on Kiwi talent.

The Conchords' 12-episode deal with HBO is ironic as the network is known for its high production values, while *Flight of the Conchords* is delightfully low-tech. This was clearly seen when Bret and Jemaine shot their music video using Murray's mobile phone, wearing homemade robot costumes made from boxes and gaffer tape. It's this kind of Kiwi ingenuity which is both funny and endearing.

Coming off the back of *Eagle vs. Shark* (also starring Clement), it's obvious New Zealanders have the talent to make entertaining comedies and as much as I'm a proud Kiwi, I'm glad the Conchords headed offshore to make this series. New Zealand comedy is better for it.

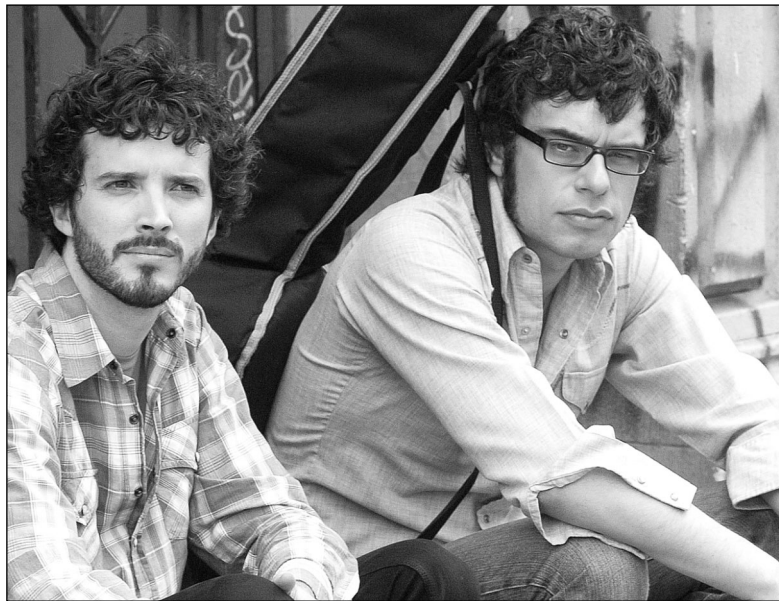


PHOTO: SKY TV

FLAPPING THEIR WINGS: Flight of the Conchords.

Cobain, Warhol and Magritte: fashion icons?

Event

Air NZ Fashion Week
September 16-20
Viaduct Harbour
Reviewed by Jessica Harkins

hot, and the rest of her outfit was far beyond most people's budget).

Petra Bagust made the most effort over the week, even bothering to change between shows, as did Gilda Kirkpatrick (when doesn't that girl dress beautifully though).

But we were there to see what will be hot next winter, not what's cool now. This week proved that New Zealand can foster some pretty good designers. Contrary to what some of the big hitters in New Zealand fashion think (Denise Le Strange Corbet most notably), we do have some great up-and-coming talent.

Ex-AUT fashion design student Alex "Jaeha" Kim is pretty nifty with the zips and 10m-long scarves. Winner of the Deutz Fashion Design Ambassador Award Jann Wong (who has chosen to work with Stella McCartney as her prize) showed she could do button holes and sportswear at the same time, to great effect.

Crowd pleasers of the week were Stolen Girlfriends Club, touted as New Zealand's answer to Ksubi, although under greater scrutiny all they really did was recycle current styles, adding some studs and clear raincoats

here and there. I was a big fan of competitors Lonely Hearts, whose early '90s grunge-inspired collection attracted an audience bursting at the seams. No, they didn't send 35 Kurt Cobains down the runway, but cleverly drew on the time in-between '80s pop and '90s rock'n'roll. There were leather ra-ra skirts, plaid prints and cute Madonna-esque bra tops. I want the lot.

Referencing the pop and surrealist art forms, Kate Sylvester blew my mind with Warhol glasses and Magritte bowler hats as part of her surprise menswear launch.

Obviously the week of non-stop shows and parties got to some people, and by the end of Huffer's party on Thursday night gossip writer Bridgette Saunders' dress was soppier than the Lorraine Downes tribute that was the Petrena Miller show. People actually thought she had died.

After a bloody tiring week, it was nice to finally chill out at the Karen Walker/Runway Reporter party celebrating another successful week for New Zealanders here and abroad.

Maybe next year there'll be even more button holes.

I was told the week before I embarked on my first Air New Zealand Fashion Week that I'd be disappointed with the clothes people wore. So when I ask celebs what they're wearing, will they tell me: "My top's from Max and my pants are from Farmers?"

Not quite, but Boh Runga did wear Jay Jays jeans (she looked

music

Marilyn Manson
Auckland Town Hall
October 3

The self-proclaimed Antichrist superstar returns to Godzone for the first time since 1999, on the back of his band's latest album, *Eat Me Drink Me*. Tickets are \$79.90 from Ticketek.

World Battle of the Bands New Zealand Final
Kings Arms
October 6

400 unsigned bands all over the world are competing to be number one. Check out the last few Kiwi bands in the running. Tickets are \$20 from Ticketek.

Napalm Death
Kings Arms
October 12

The pioneering grindcore band have come all the way from England to show you what real metal is. Tickets from Ticketek.

Muse
Trusts Stadium, Waitakere
November 23

Britain's finest electro-space-prog band must love New Zealand, as it's their fourth time here in three years. Tickets from Ticket Direct.

Static fm 88.1

- Mon - 8-10am Gavin & Luke
10-12pm Holly M & Kinsey
4-6pm Tina & Holly J
6-8pm Liz & Nick
- Tues - 8-10am "AA"
12-2pm Lauren and Dom
2-4pm Rich & Nancy
4-6pm Vaughan & Althea
- Wed - 10-12pm Amber M & Lisa
2-4pm Lana & Sara C
4-6pm Amy & Alea
- Thur - 8-10am Tim & Erin
12-2pm Scott & Clint
4-6pm Jax & Livi
- Fri - 2-4pm Amber & Ilsa
4-6pm Leon & Thomas

Planet fm 104.6

- Mon- Tongan 6.30am
Mandarin 1.35pm
Arabic 2.10pm
Singhalese 6.00pm
- Tue- Nuiean 8.00am
Ghanaian 6.15pm
Russian 7.20pm
Kiribati 9.20pm
- Wed- Hindi 8.00am
Cantonese 1.35pm
Punjabi 4.25pm
Sri Lankan 8.15pm
- Thur- Tongan 6.00am
Korean 11.35am
Cook Islands 6.30pm
Samoan 7.40pm
- Fri- Fijian 4.55pm
Dutch 7.25pm
Romanian 8.30pm
Latino 10.40pm
- Sat- Albanian 9.25am
Scottish 11.05am
French 3.35pm
Portuguese 8.40pm
- Sun- Jewish 9.00am
Finnish 1.15pm
South African 2.55pm
Bangladeshi 7.10pm

Entertainment editor's pick:



PHOTO: DENDY FILMS

Joe Strummer: The Future Is Unwritten
Rialto Cinemas
Showing now

Director Julien Temple (*The Filth And The Fury*, *The Great Rock And Roll Swindle*) looks at the life and times of the late, great Joe Strummer. The film, shot in Temple's signature high-energy style, has had critics and fans of the Clash wetting themselves in anticipation for months, and now it's finally here. Celebrity fans of the band such as John Cusack, Bono and even Steve Buscemi make appearances, and the film is also loaded with classic footage of the world's greatest ever punk band in full flight.