

Living the nightmare of reality television

television



Living the Dream
TV2, Tuesday 8.30pm

"What would you do if your entire world turned out to be fake?"

Meet Sam Chambers. One ordinary guy competing for \$50,000 in a reality TV game show he doesn't know is a fake.

This is the concept behind TV2's latest New Zealand reality TV show, *Living The Dream*. The show, directed by ex-*Shortland Street* star Katie Wolfe, is a parody of all reality TV shows.

It's *Big Brother* meets *Survivor* crossed with the idea behind the motion picture *The Truman Show*.

The over-acting and over-dramatisation of the show stretches credibility to the limit.

Sam is placed in a house with eight other housemates (actors) and must "play the game" in order to be the last housemate standing and win the grand

prize. The catch is, the production team plots his every move and scripts every conflict, drama, friendship, alliance and romance and Sam will get the prize only if the actors succeed in staying in character 24/7 and convince Sam the show is real.

Wolfe has scraped the barrel of New Zealand talent to find nine actors to play the stereotypical "heightened" characters on the show.

Each character is based on standard reality TV show characters.

There's Tiffany (Sarah Thompson) the rich bitch, Mick (Jason Fitch) the prick, Mary (Victoria Blackman) the virgin, Rima (Awanui Simich-Pene) the schemer, Mule (Stephen Hall) the SAS soldier, Billy (Jeremy Birchall) the gay guy, Ben (Charlie McDermott) the best mate, Betty (Kirsty Cooke) the

new age flake and the smarmy host, played by Mark Ferguson.

Sam, an average kiwi bloke, seems very down-to-earth and a bit astounded by all the conflict in the house. Compared to the over-the-top characters, Sam is very "normal" and "reserved".

This adds extra pressure to the production team, trying to make his diary camera interviews interesting when most of his responses are "crikey".

Just like *Survivor*, *Living the Dream* has "immunity challenges", "alliances" and "elimination ceremonies".

But unlike other reality TV shows, these are all scripted and rigged.

Hours of footage are cut to fit the one-hour time slot and we see a majority of the behind-the-scenes footage as well as the staged conflicts, ridiculous challenges, and how the actors and

production team cope with Sam being "so alarmingly observant".

The finale of each show is a dramatic elimination ceremony with tribal music to boot, where each housemate votes to evict someone.

Of course this is rigged and only Sam's vote counts.

And just to totally top it off, each housemate is represented as a photo on a plate. When they are eliminated, smarmy host Mark says "serve me your plate", smashes it in the fireplace then says very dramatically "you are now dead to us".

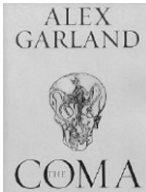
If you can handle the bad acting, the show is quite entertaining and it will be interesting to see how Sam reacts as the characters' behaviour becomes increasingly more outrageous.

As Sam says: "It just gets crazier."

— Jo Lewis

Life's no beach when you are in a coma

books



The Coma
By Alex Garland
Faber and Faber
RRP \$29.95

After receiving a savage beating at the hands of four teenage boys, Carl lies unconscious in hospital.

On awaking, he initially appears to make a full recovery.

He returns home and tries to pick up the thread of his life, only to find the thread has unravelled.

Carl suspects he may be brain damaged. He finds himself in places but can't recall getting there. His friends behave oddly.

His perception of reality seems to be increasingly distorted. It is becoming hard for him to differentiate between the real

and the imagined.

The title of Alex Garland's latest book, *The Coma*, gives the clue to this psychological drama.

Like Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*, the main character is actually in a coma, living in a dreamlike state in his subconscious, but that is where the similarities end.

Where Welsh's main character is trying to go deeper to escape, Garland's is trying to come up from his twisted ramble through dreamscapes.

The short, visually descriptive chapters in *The Coma* are punctuated by fantastic wood cut

illustrations, produced by the author's father, the renowned political cartoonist Nicholas Garland.

These stark black and white pictures are a compelling visual aid to the story, adding punchiness to the short descriptive chapters.

It seems there is no such thing as a typical Alex Garland story.

The writer of the bestseller, *The Beach*, and splatter horror *28 Days Later* has added another dimension with his latest offering.

— Michael Barrett



ALEX GARLAND

ART, THEATRE, MUSIC, FILM, SHOWS, ART, THEATRE, MUSIC, FILM, SHOWS, ART, THEATRE, MUSIC, FILM,

ART

Blind, Stephen Bambury's mixed media works. At the Jensen Gallery, 61 Upper Queen St, City. 9 Sept — 23 Oct.

Friendly Fire, International exhibition about the paradoxes and absurdities of technology. Gus Fisher Gallery, 74 Shortland St, City. Until 18 Sept.

Isaac Leuchs, Dunedin artist, exhibiting his figurative paintings at Oedipus Rex Gallery, 32 Lorne St, City. Until 17 Sept.

We Fought Fashion and Lost: WORLD, Fashion House WORLD presents a historical overview of its work, at the Auckland Museum throughout September.

Re Vision, Impressionist painter Vern Brocas exhibits his work focused on the connection between beauty and the sublime at Morgan St Gallery, 9 Morgan St, Newmarket until 8 Sept.

THEATRE

A Midsummer Night's Dream, Shakespeare's comedy is reinvented with a modern twist by Stage 2 Productions, At the Maidment Theatre, 8 Alfred St, City. 2 — 11 Sept, Mon — Sat 7.30pm, Saturday Matinee 1.30pm.

At The Bay, Katherine Mansfield's stories interpreted by acting students at UNITEC Theatre, Carrington Rd, Mt Albert, 3 — 18 Sept.

Snoopy! The Musical, presented by Harlequin Music Theatre, with a jazz-style musical score. At Harlequin Theatre, 563 Pakuranga Rd, Howick, 17 Sept — 2 Oct.

Skin Tight, a play directed by Miranda Harcourt, starring Jed Brophy and Danielle Cormack. Based on the poem *The Magpies* by New Zealand writer Denis Glover. At Bruce Mason Centre, Takapuna. 17 — 19 Sept.

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? Starring David McPhail, directed by Colin McColl. At Maidment Theatre until 18 Sept.

MUSIC

Jerome Hendrix, Soul and Jazz, every Thursday, 9.30pm at Grand Central, Ponsonby Rd, City.

Sing Sing, James Reid from the Feelers, members from 48 May and Opshop plus guests. At Float, Viaduct Harbour. Every Thursday, 8pm.

Bonnie Prince Billy, Five piece band from USA, led by Will Oldham (Palace Brothers).

10 — 11 Sept, 7 — 9pm, The Dog's Bollix, Newton.

De Ja Voodoo, Slavetrader & Foamy Ed, at The Kings Arms, Newton, 16 Sept.

Muse, the popular UK band has one show only at St James Theatre, 14 Sept.

Adeaze, the Tupa'i brothers showcase their R&B sound at Safari Lounge, Ponsonby Rd, 17 Sept.

Foster & Allen, bring Irish music to our shores, at the Auckland Town Hall on 20 Sept. Tickets from Ticketek.

One Million Dollars, the popular New Zealand soul funk group performing at The Studio, K' Rd, 17 Sept.

Dave Kilgour & The Heavy Eights, Indie Rocker presents work from his new album *Frozen Orange*, at The Kings Arms, Newton, 17 Sept.

Lucid 3 & Stylus 77, at The Dog's Bollix, Newton on 23 Sept.

The Datsuns, after a successful stint overseas, New Zealand's success story returns home with new music from their latest album *Outta Sight/Outta Mind*, at Bruce Mason Centre on 11 Sept. Tickets from Ticketek and Real Groovy.

The Checks, teenage rock-and-rollers put on a high-energy show at Rising Sun, 373 K' Rd. 17 Sept.

YellowCard, popular US band are holding two shows for all ages, at The Studio, K' Rd, 20, 21 Sept.

The Whiz Kids are playing at The Studio, K' Rd on 16 Sept.

Frivolous, play hip hop, soul and reggae sounds with members of The Krates, Opensouls and Verse Two. At Khuja Lounge, 536 Queen St, every Wednesday night after 10pm.

COMEDY

The Improv Bandits, talented comedians improvise shows every Friday night at the Covert Theatre, 84 K' Rd at 10pm.

Saturday Night Late and Live, pro comedians mix it up with sketch, improvisation and stand-up comedy every Saturday night at The Classic, 321 Queen St at 10.30pm.

FILMS

The Terminal, starring Tom Hanks. Drama/comedy loosely based on a true story. Hanks plays an Eastern European who arrives in New York only

to find that his passport is invalid. Denied entry into the US and unable to return home, he must live in the airport terminal.

Opens 9 Sept, at Berkeley, Rialto, Hoyts and Village SkyCity cinemas.

Supersize Me, Doco-film by Morgan Spurlock, who looks into obesity in America, and the not-so-obvious costs behind the American penchant for fast-food. *Now showing at Rialto, Village SkyCity and Hoyts cinemas.*

I'm Not Scared, Italian thriller about a young boy in southern Italy, who stumbles across a hole in the ground where a boy his age is chained, starved and mistreated. The dialogue and friendship between the boys carries the film. Eerie and terrifying. *Opens 23 Sept, Bridgeway cinema.*

The Return, Russian brothers Vanya and Andrey embark on a trip when their father returns home after 12 years absence. Loyalties are tested after sudden violence and tragedy. *Opens 16 Sept, Lido cinema.*

To Be and To Have (Etre et Avoir), salutes the art of education through this fly-on-the-wall doco which traces a year at a rural French school. *Now showing at Lido cinema.*