

Bleached hair, pom poms, sports bras and Jimisms

Television

Camp Jim
8.00pm, Wednesday, C4TV
Review by Caitlin McGee

It is hard to know with a title like *Camp Jim* whether MTV's latest offering of a reality TV show is about a camp or...err Jim's sexual orientation.

But whether you are part of an addicted-to-reality-TV supporters club or merely intrigued by the morbid fascination of watching real people humiliate themselves on television, *Camp Jim* is pure comic gold.

Set amongst a flurry of pom poms, the frantic squabbles of teenage girls and the flying debris of bleached hair and sports bras, *Camp Jim* follows the trials and tribulations of 15 wannabe cheerleaders as they attend all-star trainer Jim McMullan's two-week training camp.

In one episode, we watched Jim's moulding of the beautiful but inattentive Ty. A 15-year-old from Arizona who has the concentration span of a toddler, she throws herself into Jim's gauntlet, unaware of the catty one-liners and hardline approach Jim will take with her.

But fear not, Jim's version of tough love is about as far away from Jake "the muss" Heke as you can get, and his feel good factor oozes out at the seams.

Throw in Jim's pearls of wisdom (commonly known as Jimisms) and you get moments of poetic magic like: "Camera on, camera off Britney. I am over you! You have been talking smack about me and my camp!"

Camp Jim is in stark contrast to the reality TV that is most commonly served up. Perhaps what won this reality cynic

over was that this is not the *Survivor* for cheerleaders.

Mark Burnett introduced us to these when *Survivor* backstabbed its way into our hearts in 1999.

Burnett realised the prospect of beautiful but stupid people doing unbelievably ridiculous tasks with the hope of the ultimate prize, hits the spot with everyone.

For some reason, real people cat fighting and copulating is far more interesting than made up characters.

Camp Jim is different to *Survivor* and its reality TV cousin *America's Next Top Model*, as there is no ultimate prize, and no elimination process that takes place each week. There is no formulaic humiliation of contestants and grandiose enhancing of the presenter's ego.

The show is born from the womb of reality TV, but does nature or nurture make better entertainment?

Camp Jim has grown up into a vastly different programme – a hybrid combining the pure comical quality that comes from following a gay cheerleading coach around with a camera.

But no matter how serious Jim and his cheerleading coaches profess to be, *Camp Jim* is pure hilarity.

It's hardly drama, but it is as good as reality TV gets.

It makes you laugh instead of cringe, and as I watched the opening scenes with trepidation and peering through my fingers, I was thanking the moguls at MTV for giving viewers a break from shows like *The Apprentice* and *The Contender*.

But a warning: the serious television connoisseur must proceed with caution. *Camp Jim* must be viewed with your tongue firmly lodged in your cheek.

'Gob-smacking vulgarity' drives you to *Distraction*

Television

Distraction
9.25pm, Friday, TV2
Review by Miles Erwin

The tired old game show format is losing its charm and being overtaken by the latest winners and losers fad, reality TV. The shock value of a *Fear Factor* narcissist downing a maggot and bile thickshake consistently out-performs the ponderous decisions of a *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* contestant.

But Britain's Channel 4 has come to the rescue. Realising the game show is a natural vehicle to humiliate stupid people, the entire premise of reality TV, it has merged the genres. The result is *Distraction*.

Instead of answering questions by pressing buzzers, contestants hit mousetraps or electric currents. In keeping with reality TV tradition they don't take points off for an incorrect answer (that's just boring); they shoot contestants in the groin with a paintball gun.

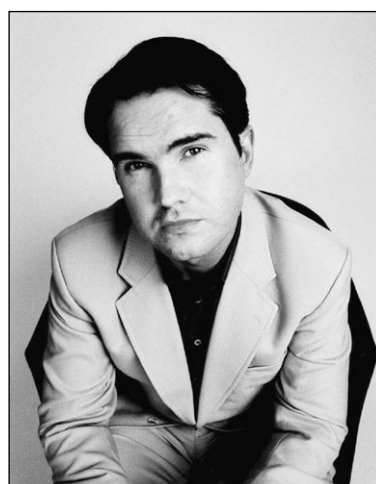
It's a simple game – three rounds of simple questions with one contestant sent home at the

end of each round to wash the maggots out of their mouth or recover from wheelbarrowing a nudist. All until only one is left to face the wonderful climax.

The chaos is set in the calm façade of a Victorian manor library and host Jimmy Carr, with a schoolboy side hair parting and a cream smoking jacket, is every inch the soppy English aristocrat. But this is no reading-Dickens-by-the-fire and the brilliant Carr is far from wet.

His humour (although "humour" is too benign a word) is a mix of dry British wit delivered at breathtaking speed and gob-smacking vulgarity. He completely savages the dim-witted contestants, obviously chosen from the bottomless pool of suckers that spawns reality TV participants.

The finale is *Distraction*'s finest hour. Just when the poor victorious contestant thinks they have won the prize (a car or wad of cash), they face five more questions and each incorrect answer means a sledgehammer smashed into their new car or a wad of their winnings burned. Watching the contestants as they are psychologically traumatised by Carr is gut-



DISTRACTED: Jimmy Carr

wrenchingly good entertainment.

It must be said – nay begged – that this show has no spin-offs. Were it not for the combination of sartorial elegance, biting English wit and immaculate poker face that is Jimmy Carr, the show would undoubtedly collapse.

It is a measure of his ability that the new Canadian version keeps him as host as there is simply no North American who could behave so disgracefully, yet so impeccably, in such complete chaos.

BBC strikes again with Mancunian grit

Television

Burn It
10.30pm, Sunday, Prime
Review by Brigid Lynch

-Meet three boys from Manchester: Andy (Kieran O'Brien), Jon (William Ash) and Carl (Chris Coghill). The stars of BBC drama *Burn It* are on the eve of their 30s, but in true trainer-shod fashion they haven't quite got it together yet.

From their teen roller-disco days to ecstasy-fuelled 1990s sweatfests to downing pints at the pub, we get the idea that the bond between these three likeable larrikins is thicker than the warm lager they're rather fond of.

Carl: Mr "It's not you, it's me". Smooth, cheeky, a year older than the others and an accomplished heart-breaker, especially of clingy occasional girlfriend Sue. A builder, he glides effortlessly from raiding a client's fridge to making the moves on the pretty daughter of the house, helping fix her radiator that is predictably strewn with teeny knickers.

Andy: Mr Vaguely Stable. An affable, lazy postie who's still

bludging tenners off his mates. He's cruising for a kick in the pants from his long-time girlfriend, exhausted nurse Emma (Lisa Faulkner) who wants more out of life than a glass of house white on a Friday night.

Jon: the sensitive one. A closet *Marie Claire* reader, but at least he still gets laid. A successful blind date ends in the leopard-print lair of Claire (Mel Brown – the artist formerly known as Scary Spice). She gets all the best lines: "He's like a lost child – it makes you want to scoop him up and breastfeed him."

There are pregnancies, football, pokey flats, beers thrown in faces and escapes from handcuffs – think *Cold Feet* meets *About a Boy*, with a smidge of *Trainspotting*. There's no snappy shooting, it's perfectly "lad lit" for the small screen.

The preview for the second show hints at tears, ten-pin bowling and hospital beds: all compelling reasons to come back for more.

Burn It is not one to watch with your Catholic grandmother, but it's certainly big on appeal for Generations X to Z – and maybe even V.

Eastwood's *Baby* a gut-wrenching triumph

DVD

Million Dollar Baby
Deluxe Edition DVD, Warners
Review by Catherine Westwood

After its knockout Oscar success, it was only a matter of time before studios cashed in and released a "deluxe" edition of Clint Eastwood's masterpiece, *Million Dollar Baby*.

Based on a short story by boxer F.X. Toole, *Baby* tells the story of aged boxing manager Frankie (Eastwood), coerced out of retirement to train his first female contender, the stubborn but endearing Maggie (Swank). Frankie, estranged from his

own daughter, coaches Maggie to the top, before the movie delivers a gut-wrenching twist, sending the characters reeling.

Eastwood is gruff to perfection as Frankie Dunn, exhibiting enviable chemistry with both of his co-stars.

Swank is superb in her role as white trash heroine Maggie Fitzgerald. She continues the tradition of pretty women dressing down to win an Oscar, adding almost 10 kg of muscle for the part.

Scenes are seamlessly woven together through the commentary of the often underrated Freeman (Eddie "Scrap-Iron" Dupris), who provides the perfect balance to Eastwood's

rough, acidic performance, while managing to deliver a few solid hits of his own.

Despite being a "boxing" movie, non-fans are spared drawn-out scenes in the ring, usually as a result of Maggie's penchant for knock-outs.

Those who have seen Eastwood's previous effort *Mystic River* will immediately draw parallels in the cinematography. The scenes are sparsely lit, giving the movie a gritty and often dreary appearance.

Highlights of the deluxe edition include a post-Oscar interview with the three stars, conducted by the unintentionally hilarious James Lipton (*Inside the Actors' Studio*).

Also worth checking out are *"Born to Fight"* and *"Producers' Round 15"*. The first takes an in-depth look at female boxers, while the second has *Baby*'s producers discussing the transition of Toole's story to film.

A glaring omission from the DVD is a cast commentary. This would have given Eastwood's faithful followers a better insight into his work than the stilted interview by Lipton.

The verdict? An excellent and compelling movie, driven by strong performances and beautiful cinematography.

The DVD lacks the extras which would justify purchase, so it's best to just rent it and let the movie be the star.

