

Lynchian epic revels in darkness and light

Television
Carnivale
 11.20pm, Friday, TV1
 Review by David Farrier

If you missed the stunning first season of *Carnivale*, then you can blame TVNZ. They buried the best bit of epic storytelling since *Twin Peaks* so late on a Friday night that you'd either be sleeping or doing something sociable. In a move that might redeem our state broadcaster, they're airing the second season from this month.

Carnivale introduces creator Daniel Knauf's vision of a travelling carnival, moving across a stark 1930s depression-era America. This was the basis for

his biblically-inspired vision, as the carnival picked up a migrant with a penchant for healing, Ben Hawkins (Nick Stahl).

In a parallel storyline that is just begging to converge with Hawkins' tale, the divinely-inspired preacher Brother Justin (Clancy Brown) sets out to gather a flock and create his perfect church, New Jericho. In the process he finds he's far from godly, and may in fact be the devil.

It's these two stories, intermittently narrated by Samson (the scary *Twin Peaks* dwarf, Michael J. Anderson), that make the second season so watchable, as the opening words of the first season really begin to hit home: "Into each generation is born a

creature of light and a creature of darkness."

As Justin becomes increasingly disturbed by his visions of hell on earth (and guess who's bringing it?), it becomes clear that Hawkins is probably going to be the kid that's going to have to do something about it.

It's a premise that could quickly become laughable (we all know David and Goliath), but Knauf impresses by keeping a simple concept convoluted enough so that the audience simply can't lose interest: back-stories of the Carny's, enough occultic imagery to make Aleister Crowley turn in his grave, and sets so complex they take your breath away.

If this isn't enough for you,

composer Jeff Beal's string arrangements complement the elements of plot and character that are clearly the focus of this show.

The violence and sex that was intrinsic to the first season steps up a notch (while Justin sits provocatively, he asks his teenage cleaner: "Your mother did teach you how to pray, didn't she?") as key players test their limits, perhaps subconsciously preparing for the big battle.

But maybe it's a battle that we won't be treated to; Knauf envisioned the end of season two as closing 'The Old Testament'. As for 'The New Testament', HBO has scrapped the show's funding.

This is the only thing that



may let this season down – closure.

But for a show that focuses on good and evil, perhaps closure is the last thing we should expect.

Wedding Crashers frat pack's best yet

Movie
The Wedding Crashers
 Dir - David Dobkin
 Review by Duncan Greive

Every so often a film comes along that profoundly changes the way a generation looks at itself. It is supposed to say something meaningful and moving about the human condition, but let's be honest, *Ghostbusters* and *Back to the Future* stayed with more people for longer than *Amadeus* and *Out of Africa*, the tear-jerking Oscar winners from their respective years.

So *Wedding Crashers* isn't gonna be lifting awards any time soon, but that doesn't mean it isn't near as dammit the greatest motion picture of the decade

so far. Why do our most important films have to be dimly lit, maudlin tragedies? Isn't nailing bridesmaids all drunk on romance and champagne an equally valid human ambition? No? Well tell that to a \$331million worldwide box office take.

Anyhow, John Beckwith (Owen Wilson) and Jeremy Grey (Vince Vaughn) are mediators in divorce settlements, working out of the same wood-paneled offices as every other mid-level lawyer-type in movie history has, but they live for the weekends and wedding season. They adopt identities, religions, back-stories, whatever it takes to get in the door and in the pants of the pretty young things at New York society weddings.

It all goes swimmingly and as

mentor Chaz Reingold (Will Ferrell) later notes they are "livin' the dream, man".

Then disaster strikes at their biggest and boldest crash to date: Beckwith falls, hard, for Claire (Rachel McAdams), daughter of Treasury Secretary Cleary (Christopher Walken), and all the hallowed rules of Wedding Crashing are obliterated in a weekend of low-brow humour of the highest calibre.

Do you really care, though? The lame set-ups of all the frat-pack movies are more or less irrelevant; they rely solely on the charisma and chemistry of their stars and the calibre of the script.

Wedding Crashers builds on last year's twin triumphs *Dodgeball* and *Anchorman* to

elevate this new-old genre to art.

Vaughn's monologues alone justify your attendance. On dating: "All the while you're really just wondering, 'are we gonna get hopped up enough to make some bad decisions? Perhaps play a little game called 'Just the Tip. Just for a second, just to see how it feels.'" On his disturbed sleep: "Yeah, it could have been the soft mattress. Or the midnight rape. Or the nude gay art show that took place in my room last night. One of those three probably contributed to the lack of sleep."

Wilson and Walken tussle hard for second spot, trading ferociously unhinged lines and generally never letting momentum slip for more than second or two (outside of these bizarre

inserted musical moments, but that's cool, they mean you can sell it as a romantic comedy if need be).

Ferrell's late-game cameo is the clincher, though, pushing it over the precipice into outlandish monsterism, with his yammering absurdist physical comedy which sings off of the screen.

It ties off all mushy, but by then you've had a couple of hours of mesmeric comedy, so many fantastic characters assembled and detonated that you're pretty much beyond caring.

Wedding Crashers is just money; anyone who tells you different is some kind of bad-sex square with their pants on backwards, OK.

What's on

exhibitions

The Chartwell Collection: Snake Oil

The Gus Fisher Gallery
 The Kenneth Myers Centre
 74 Shortland St

Now until September 18

A contemporary collection of pieces made since 2002 by Australian and New Zealand artists. There is an emphasis on younger artists. The collection is a great resource for exploring similarities and differences between the two countries.

Intrepid Kiwis

New Zealand National Maritime Museum, Viaduct

Now until October 9

A showcase looking at daring New Zealanders who have sought adventure and challenge at sea.

Robert Ellis: Covenant

Milford Galleries Auckland, 26 Kitchener St

Now until September 17

The latest works by Robert Ellis centred on the shape and location of Mt Eden. The works are based around the calendar year.

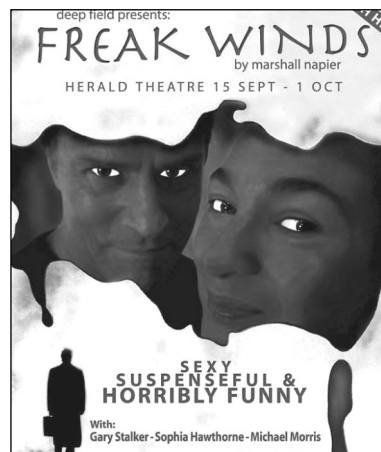
theatre

Freak Winds

Herald Theatre, Aotea Centre

September 14 to October 1

Described as a black comedy, *Freak Winds* tells the story of a young insurance salesman who is forced to take shelter at a stranger's house on a stormy night. He takes the opportunity to make a sale but what he encounters is beyond his wildest imaginings. Directed by Paul Gittins and starring Sophia Hawthorne, *Freak Winds* is hitting New Zealand shores after two sell-out seasons in Sydney.



Ladies Night

Centrestage Theatre

From September 17 to October 1

Five unemployed Kiwi blokes desperate for cash decide to have a go at being R18 entertainers. With the venue booked and seats sold the boys set about losing their beer bellies and their transformation into strippers.

It's an R18 show but under-18s will be permitted as long as they are accompanied by a guardian over 18.

Edward Allbee's The Goat or Who is Sylvia?

Silo Theatre

September 16 to October 15

Martin Gray is the perfect man, an intellectual, financially well off and a loving husband and father. At 50 he is the youngest recipient of the Pritzker Prize for Architecture. However, Martin tears his perfect world down with an illicit affair of an unspeakable nature. A contemporary piece directed by Oliver Driver, this play delves into the issues of obsessive love, forbidden desire and repressed sexuality. Starring Michael Hurst and Jennifer Ward-Lealand.

comedy

The Classic Comedy Election Night Special

The Classic, 321 Queen St

September 17

People who care about politics and local comedians get together and target the issues and idiots.

Raw Comedy Night

The Classic, 321 Queen St

September 19, 8pm

New faces have a go at entertaining the crowds with a guest host. There is a two-for-one deal for students.

music

Howe Gelb (frontman for Giant Sand, from Arizona)

Kings Arms

September 22

With guests Boxcar Guitars. Pre Sales \$30 from Ticketek and Real Groovy.

Heavy Loungin'

Galatos

September 16, 10pm

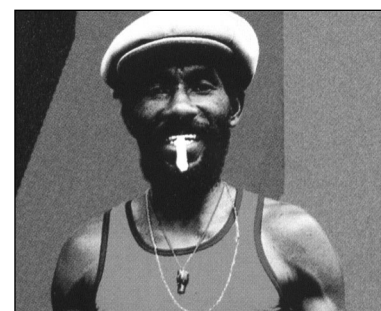
Hosted by Plant Master Grant and special guest. No Cover.

Lee Scratch Pery and The Mad Professor

The Studio

September 18, 7pm

Lee Scratch Pery heads down under for the third and final time with his unique reggae style.



Elvis to the max - In concert

SkyCity Theatre

September 16 & 17

Max Pellicano performs some of the King's greatest hits spanning from the 50s to the 70s.

These Four Walls

Dogs Bollix

September 17

Prepare to rock hard with *These Four Walls*.