

# Critic's choice

May 11, 2014

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24: Live Another Day.

## 24: LIVE ANOTHER DAY

Series return  
FREE TO AIR

★★★☆

Monday 8.45pm, Ten

Jack's back - with a vengeance - as this deliriously over-the-top spy thriller returns. Although this time it should have been called 12, as it's only running for a dozen episodes instead of the traditional 24. That - and the change of location, to London - are about the only major departures, though. Why would you try and fix something that ain't broke? Jack Bauer is still possessed of almost super-human powers of both deduction and endurance. He's the master of all kinds of armaments and every single part of his body is surely registered as a deadly weapon (including his scowl). He is still an outsider, too, but now even more so, being considered a terrorist by the US and British governments despite being the only man capable of Saving Civilisation. As. We. Know. It. And - once again - he's not quite sure who are his allies in that fight, and who his enemies. As the trailers feature her heavily, it's no spoiler to say Chloe O'Brien, the cult hero from seasons past, is very much in the picture. Fans will be relieved to know that torture at the hands of the US government has neither dimmed her wits nor entirely removed her eye make-up. And while the necessity of embarking on a frantic bid to save civilisation as we know it prevents her from combing her hair, there has clearly been a moment to hastily reapply her eyeliner. It is easy, of course, to mock 24 but it also has to be admired for the skill with which it's constructed, and the way in which it remains absolutely faithful to its own universe. Just about everything that transpires in this opening episode is completely ridiculous. But a committed cast, (including old favourites like Kim Raver and Tate Donovan, and new faces like Benjamin Bratt) along with superb production values, keep it compelling.

## AUSSIE RECIPES THAT ROCK

PAY TV

★★★☆

Friday 8pm, Nat Geo People

Matt Stone is a relatively new kid on the celebrity chef block but he's clearly a talent to be reckoned with both in the kitchen and on the small screen. With his tattoos, skateboard and pierced lip (I have to say, not a great look on a chef - you keep wanting to reach out and brush the dirty big crumb off his mouth), he is certainly a rock'n'roll kind of dude and he has teamed here with Blur bassist Alex James, who, since his British pop heyday, has reinvented himself as a farmer and artisan cheesemaker. It's not clear whether these two were previously known to each other but there's plenty of relaxed chemistry as, in this first instalment, they travel through south-western Australia, meeting local producers and then putting it all together in spectacular dishes. Neither bloke seems especially interested in the camera, nor is this a lavish travelogue. The focus is firmly on the food, including oysters from Albany, whisky from the WA wheat belt and farm-smoked bacon from free-range pigs, combined to make an excellent interpretation of oysters Kilpatrick. A clever free-range chicken farm provides an extravagant dessert incorporating lavender and ants. The producers we meet are wonderful - long-time landholders who are also very forward-looking - and



Aussie Recipes that Rock..

the recipes really do rock.

**A PLACE TO CALL HOME**

Series return

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Sunday 8.40pm, Seven

The show is back for a second season, refreshed but without departing too far from its formula. We get some surprising answers to last season's cliffhanger. And we get plenty of Noni Hazlehurst's matriarch scheming and manipulating. Some of the younger cast members don't quite hold up against their more experienced peers but the storylines - particularly James' treatment for his "perversion" - are often both thoughtful and moving.

**TWO MEN IN CHINA**

New series

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Tuesday 8.30pm, ABC1

Tim Flannery and John Doyle are at it again, and if this adventure gets off to a bit of a shaky start it does eventually get us somewhere satisfying. But while Rampaging Roy taking the piss out of all things Australian is both appropriate and very funny, doing the same with the Chinese feels a tad uncomfortable. As always, though, the gents are there with a purpose and their exploration of Australia's relationship with China is intelligent and thought-provoking.

**OFFSPRING**

Series return

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Wednesday 8.30pm, Ten

You can just feel your mood lifting as the first scenes of the new season of *Offspring* unfold. Despite its heartache, this is a beautiful and a joyful universe to reside in. One of the things that makes it such a satisfying world to visit is the way it presents a big, bold, often cartoonish picture of modern life while still regularly striking real notes. There's a kind of subtlety and truth underpinning the quiriness that makes it as satisfying as it is entertaining.

**HUSTLING AMERICA**

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Thursday 9.30pm, NatGeo People

Tonight Alexis Conran is in New York, attempting to hustle a whole city of hustlers, with fun results. One of the nice things about this series is that Alex doesn't always pull it off. Some scams go wrong; sometimes the scam-ee is just too good for him. And with some of the stunts there seems the extreme likelihood that you'd get a pool cue cracked over your head if you tried this at home. But his explanation of the "proposition bet" is fascinating.

**PROJECT RUNWAY ALL STARS**

New season

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Thursday 8.30pm, Arena

No Heidi. No Tim Gunn. Is it really *Project Runway* without them? Well, yes and no. Certainly fill-in host Alyssa Milano is pleasant enough, but not a patch on Ms Klum. And mentor du jour Zanna Roberts Rossi just isn't in the same league. But elsewhere all the boxes are ticked as assorted former contestants reconvene for a second stab at a prize that ranges from cash and a car to bottled water. Apart from anything else, this is a chance to hate-watch Jeffrey Sebelia all over again.

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