Outback brought to life with an emotional ride

Ed Gibbs

LOOSELY based on real events, and adapted from a play, the Aussie road movie Last Cab to Darwin explores themes of mateship and identity, while also trying to tackle the issue of euthanasia.

At the heart of its story is an ailing loner named Rex (played by Michael Caton).

Rex, a Broken Hill cab driver who, when told he doesn’t have long to live, sets out on an epic journey to Darwin in a bid to die on his own terms.

Along the way he discovers that before you can end your life you have to live it, and to live it you have to share it.

Filled with hope, humour and heart, Last Cab to Darwin is set against the stunning Australian Outback.

Rex has lived all his life in Broken Hill. He drives a cab and enjoys beers with his mates.

And although he clearly has a relationship of sorts with a feisty neighbour named Polly (Ningali Lawford-Wolf), he claims to live alone.

That is, until his cancer spreads.

Caton, always a joy to have on screen, brings an innate pathos to what might otherwise be an unlikely character.

Rex’s actions, particularly his public rejection of Polly, soon come back to haunt him.

He keeps the road moving, as does Tilly, a skilled interviewer and Cd Kuepper’s music never fails to stir.

Long-time Centralians will certainly recognise some scenes as the journey goes through Alice Springs. Some sequences struggle to convince.

Rex’s talkback radio confession that exposes his condition to the town feels too pat in tone.

Similarly, Tilly finding himself suddenly accepted by a barn-sized country pub of all-white locals doesn’t ring true.

And the issue at hand, of voluntary euthanasia, feels more like an afterthought, despite being the impetus for Rex’s road trip.

Jack Weaver in a welcome return to local screens has little to work with in his role as a doctor. Some judicious editing would have helped, too.

Still, Jeremy Sims’s film certainly has its heart in the right place, with Caton effective as Rex and the outback a stunning backdrop.

Last Cab to Darwin is currently showing at Alice Springs Cinema.

Rocky Horror takes a spring to Alice

IT’S a time warp, so just a jump to the left and head down to Alice Springs Cinema on Saturday to celebrate the 40th anniversary of The Rocky Horror Picture Show.

Although largely critically panned on release, it soon became known as a midnight movie when audiences began participating with the film in New York City in 1976.

It has been shown in cinemas four decades after its premiere; it has been the longest-running theatrical release in film history.

The Rocky Horror Picture Show has a large international following.

To help celebrate its 40th anniversary, Alice Springs Cinema is showing, for one night only, The Rocky Horror Picture Show as part of its Retro Night Series.

Dress up as your favourite character as there are prizes for best dressed available.

Doors open at 8pm on Saturday for the 8.30pm screening. Tickets are $10 per person. Alcohol is available.

Alice Springs Cinema is also presenting its next Arthouse Films offering at 6.30pm on Sunday – the Academy Award nominee Estonian-Russian war drama Tangerines.

Tune in for some spooky, kooky, juicy fun

Shannon Molloy

NATIONAL TV WRITER

THERE’S a US thriller about zombies, an Aussie comedy about hapless public servants and a brilliant British miniseries about espionage and family secrets.

You’ll find a chat show, a doco about a Marie Antoinette, and people telling historical stories and a reality show about tattoos.

Breathtaking, delicious dishes, funny internet videos and a much-loved Hollywood blockbuster – there’s something for everyone.

Some picks of what to watch on television this week.

WINNERS & LOSERS

At one time wither funny cat and dog videos trump the TV ratings, it’s nice to see a good Australian drama still kick arse on the big screen.

This one, about a group of girl-friends, has loads of heart.

Tuesday, 8.30pm, Channel 7

Honourable mention for guilty pleasure viewing goes to Bondi Ink Tattoo on Eleven at 8.30pm.

THE HONOURABLE WOMAN

My God, this is brilliant television.

It aired on FoxTel a year or so ago, but if you missed it here’s your chance.

Secrets, lies, political intrigue, espionage and Nessa Stein’s fabulous wardrobe. Maggie Gyllenhaal leads a brilliant cast.

Thursday, 8.30pm, ABC

Honourable mention for guilty pleasure viewing goes to World’s Craziest Foods on 7mate at 7.30pm.

Australians love video clips from the internet, it seems, so here’s another show – hosted by Mr T, strangely – looking at crazy people doing stupid stuff.

THE GRAHAM NORTON SHOW

I’VE said it a million times and I’ll say it again – this chat show is fantastic viewing.

He’s a skilled interviewer and could get something witty or interesting out of a box of pencil shavings.

Thankfully, tonight’s guests include Meryl Streep, David Beckham and Benedict Cumberbatch.

Friday, 8.30pm, Ten

Honourable mention for guilty pleasure viewing goes to Donut Showdown on Lifestyle Food at 8.30pm. It’s a battle of the doughnut makers who will go to any length for baking glory.

ERIN BROCKOVICH

SATURDAY nights are all about movies on the small screen, and this 2000 classic never gets old.

Julia Roberts as the crusading Brockovich is a joy. I love this movie.

If you’re staying in tonight, order in some take-out and flick it on.

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