

Pull up a throne to watch fantasy



TV preview
Sarah Lang

I REMEMBER ALL too well as a young teen watching *Montana Sunday Theatre* with my parents. I'd be so embarrassed during the "rude bits" of people getting it on (tame by today's standards) that I wouldn't know where to look. I'd squint and studiously avert my gaze from my parents, counting the seconds until the scene ended.

Twenty years later, I'm a little harder to embarrass, though watching season one of hit HBO fantasy series *Game of Thrones* on DVD

did occasionally make me blush. *Saturday Night Live* certainly nailed it with an amusing spoof which interviewed the show's purported sex-scene adviser: a boob-obsessed 13-year-old boy.

Now, as the first series of *Game of Thrones* makes its free-to-air premiere in New Zealand (it has already screened on Sky's SoHo channel), Prime has edited out some of the "explicit content" sex and violence to comply with Broadcasting Standards Authority decrees.

Given *Game of Thrones*' phenomenal popularity, it's hard to see an edited cut going down well with the faithful. But Prime promises a careful edit that doesn't disrupt storylines, not a butchering. Indeed, it's done so seamlessly I noticed only one trifling difference between the two versions.

The pre-show warning of "very strong and graphic adult material" is still well warranted, with numerous dismembered heads and naked

whores. The show that is a guilty pleasure for some has earned multiple Emmy and Golden Globe nominations and the dubious honour as the most pirated show this year, possibly of all time.

Based on the series of books, *A Song of Ice and Fire* by George R. R. Martin, *Game of Thrones* is set in the medieval fantasy world of Westeros. It centres on the rivalry between two aristocratic families: the Starks from the north (the goodies) and the Lannisters from the south (the baddies, but one is queen and one is heir to the throne).

Then you have the ethereally beautiful exiled princess Daenerys from House Targaryen, who is intent on crossing The Narrow Sea and reclaiming the Iron Throne. Oh, and there's the Night's Watch, a military order consigned

by choice or by punishment to live out their lives as celibate border guards, with a much harder job than today's contemporaries (think scary, half-dead creatures who want to scale The Wall).

There are numerous sub-plots, but it's basically a chess game in which the kings, queens and their peers outplay each other, or fatefully overplay their hands.

Although you couldn't call its characters complex, apart from clever, randy dwarf Tyrion Lannister, played by Emmy winner Peter Dinklage, the high production values and fine acting make *Game of Thrones* the undisputed standard-bearer for the fantasy genre.

The show draws you into its world so completely that, after a while, Westeros' very different values — life is cheap, violence is justice, women are possessions, dwarves are sex gods — seem strangely normalised.

I watched all 10 episodes of season one in three days and, although I felt kind of peculiar afterwards, I wanted more. Roll on season two.

Game of Thrones makes its free-to-air New Zealand debut on Prime on Wednesday, 9.30pm.

Prime promises a careful edit that doesn't disrupt any storylines, not a butchering.

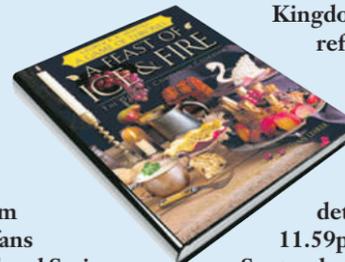


EXPLICIT: Windswept and worried, Sean Bean plays Eddard Stark in the medieval fantasy tale.

Visual feast

BE IN to win one of the official companion cookbooks, *A Feast Of Ice & Fire* (RRP \$44.99), courtesy of HarperCollins.

This passion project from *Game Of Thrones* superfans Chelsea Monroe-Cassel and Sariann Lehrer, and endorsed by George R.R.



Martin himself, replicates a range of cuisines from across the Seven Kingdoms and beyond, though refined for modern cooking.

To be in the draw, go to www.winwithheraldon.sunday.co.nz and enter the keyword **COOKBOOK** and your details. Entries close at 11.59pm on Wednesday, September 5. Terms and conditions online. Winners named September 9.

New to TV

Caught on sharp point of eternal triangle

Aussie actress Gigi Edgley plays a romantically challenged debt collector in *Tricky Business*. By Kerri Jackson.

DEBT COLLECTION with a side in fire twirling; the eclectic mix of skills acquired by actors is always interesting. Aussie actress Gigi Edgley is a perfect case in point. The 34-year-old daughter of concert promoter Michael Edgley has been performing since she was a child.

After roles in *Farscape* and Aussie staples *The Secret Life of Us* and *Stingers*, Edgley can be seen on Kiwi screens in the Aussie paramedic drama *Rescue: Special Ops*. But, from this week she looks decidedly more glammed up as stressed mercantile agent (debt collector) Kate Christie in new Aussie drama *Tricky Business*.

"It is hands down one of the best scripts I've read," she says. "I was so excited in the audition room. I just kept saying out loud 'I've got to get

this part. I've got to get this part'. It's also great to see a script where a strong woman is the central character."

When we meet Kate Christie she is running the family mercantile agency in Woollongong with her long-term partner, Rick. Business is ticking along nicely but, as is so often the way in TV drama, by the end of episode one Kate's personal and professional landscape is less rosy.

"Kate has just got her life together. She had a child at 17 and instead of taking off around the world like her friends, she decided to stay, be a mum and go into the family business. Just when she's on her feet, everything crumbles underneath her and things that made sense to her just don't anymore, particularly her long-term relationship."

Enter Kiwi actor Antony Starr, who plays mercantile agent Matt Sloane, the third point in



STRESSED: Gigi Edgley and Antony Starr.

what will surely be a fairly feisty love triangle.

"Matt is really mysterious and extremely confident in his abilities. He goes about the job in a different way from Kate, which she finds frustrating but also kind of intriguing."

Tricky Business is the latest notch in an increasingly strong belt of Aussie shows that

tread a fine line between drama and comedy. Think *Packed to the Rafters* and *Offspring*.

"Shows like those and ours are doing well because that's what life is like. Amazing things and terrible things can happen every day."

She adds that a lot of the show's humour comes from the show being set in Wollongong. "It's a smaller community. If we're serving papers on someone it's usually someone we know. That adds humour and tension."

Tricky Business brought Edgley back from LA where she had a few roles on TV and directed and produced a short film. "But I was out of money and I'd kind of fallen out of love with the job. I was thinking about coming back then, but my partner, who's a street performer, persuaded me to work with him fire twirling."

"Then *Tricky Business* came up, so it all came at the perfect time."

Edgley is returning to the US while she waits to hear if *Tricky Business* will get a second season. If not, there's always fire twirling.

Tricky Business debuts on TV3, Tuesday at 8.30pm.