



## PANEL OF EXPERTS

# Fight club

Each week, we show a DVD to a group of *real* experts. Here, a group of **battle re-enactors** draw swords for Oliver Stone's *Alexander*

**1:26min** "This is modern history for us," says Andy Cropper, a specialist in the 490-430BC period, about 100 years before Alexander. "It's like watching *Star Trek*."

**17:16min** The panel cringe as Colin Farrell's Alexander and his henchmen deliver their lines in a Dublin brogue. "The Irish have taken over the world!" sighs Elaine, a member of the Hoplite Greek re-enactment group.

**19:50min** Alexander tames his unruly steed, Bucephalus. Steve, the owner of *Skirmish*, Europe's leading re-enactment magazine, is impressed: "No stirrups, you'll notice; they weren't used until about 800 years later."

**27:00min** Lots of talking. "There is a long preamble before the first battle," complains a fidgety Elaine. "That's why I liked *Gladiator*."

**31:45min** "I'm always suspicious of leather armour," says Andy. "More Roman than Greek," Elaine agrees.

**36:10min** Enter Farrell, with sunbleached barnet. Rachel, the editor of *Skirmish*, is not impressed with the coiffed look: "They're all Britney Spears's exes!"

**43:20min** Huge excitement from everyone as battle is finally joined.

**48:30min** "Boeotian helmet!" chorus Andy, Elaine and Steve delightedly.

**51:27min** "I've never seen anything like it!" says Mark, a re-enactor of 30 years' experience, as Alexander rips through the Persians.

**57:10min** "The detail is spot-on," coos Steve. "And the confusion is there," says Mark. "I've been in smaller battles, and it's easy to lose track of what's going on."

**83:48min** Alexander and Jared Leto's Hephaestion share a tender moment. "It's like Anthony and Craig in *Big Brother*," says Rachel.

**93:16min** Eyes glaze over as Alexander foils a poisoning



attempt. "They're losing me again," says Elaine.

**121:10min** Angelina Jolie, as Alexander's unhinged mother, throws a hissy fit. "Did he go on all those campaigns to get as far away as possible from his mum?" wonders Elaine.

**126:07min** The Greeks square up to an Indian army in a jungle. "They're foolish taking sarissas [spears] into a forest area," says Elaine. "There aren't an awful lot of tactics apparent," agrees Andy. "You're always going to struggle against elephants," adds Mark, reasonably.

### VERDICT

Top marks all round for the battle scenes, and the detail and variety of weaponry, armour and clothing. Our bloodthirsty panel could have done with at least one more big dust-up, however, and were unimpressed with the intimate sequences. *Alexander: Director's Cut* is out now to buy and rent on DVD and video. Next week: *The Interpreter*

## DVD REVIEWS



### AT LAST THE 1948 SHOW/ DO NOT ADJUST YOUR SET

Stars: John Cleese, Graham Chapman, Marty Feldman, Tim Brooke-Taylor/Terry Jones, Michael Palin, Eric Idle  
Out to buy on DVD  
★★★★★

It seems odd that grainy footage of a 28-year-old comedy show should seem so fresh, but *At Last the 1948 Show* does. First shown as the satire boom of the 1960s was coming to an end, 1948 benefits from the timeless nature of its humour, with sketches about psychiatrists, policemen and chartered accountants providing the basis for some exemplary silly behaviour from Cleese and co. *Do Not Adjust Your Set* suffers in comparison, but the seeds of future Python mayhem still shine through.

### DVD extras ★★

The same interviews with Brooke-Taylor and Jones appear on both releases.  
JOHN McNAMARA



### SERGE GAINSBOURG: D'AUTRES NOUVELLES DES ETOILES

Stars: Serge Gainsbourg  
Out to buy on DVD  
★★★★

During his lifetime Serge Gainsbourg was the scourge of the French establishment, frequently outraging public morals with songs about Nazis, oral sex and incest. So, *quel surprise*, when he died in 1991 he was lauded as a national hero. This double DVD gathers together four-and-a-half hours of Serge's output. Sadly, there's no *Je t'aime*, but there is still an embarrassment of riches, ranging from mid-1950s cabaret right through to 1980s disco sleaze. If he'd never been a singer and songwriter Serge could surely

have smoked for France. There are psychedelic gems and rarely seen clips from 1960s television shows, reggae excursions with Sly and Robbie from the 1970s and an abundance of enigmatic interviews. The undoubted highlights, though, are the mouthwatering 1967 duet with Brigitte Bardot on *Bonnie & Clyde* and the complete mini movie of *Histoire de Melody Nelson*.

### DVD extras ★★★★★

Interviews, *Histoire de Melody Nelson* movie.  
ROB CHAPMAN



### TWIN PEAKS: FIRE WALK WITH ME

Director: David Lynch, 18, 1992

Stars: Kyle MacLachlan, Sheryl Lee, Chris Isaak  
Out to buy on DVD  
★★★

Unfairly derided on its theatrical release, David Lynch's big-screen prequel to his seminal television series deserves a second viewing. There are flaws: the decision to cast the musician Chris Isaak as an FBI agent is questionable and Sheryl Lee, then 25, is too old to play the 17-year-old Laura Palmer whose murder was the focus of the series. But there is much sumptuous weirdness to revel in as Lynch grants us a sexually explicit peek at the last week of Palmer's life.

### DVD extras

Featurette; interviews; character guide.  
ED POTTON

### Also out

### THE OC - COMPLETE SEASON 2

Fun and angst in the sun. Includes a commentary on episode 14 with creator Josh Scharz, music supervisor Alexandra Patsavas and editor Matt Ramsey. (12, retail DVD)

### THIS SPORTING LIFE

Richard Harris is a bruising rugby league player in Lindsay Anderson's classic Brit-flick. (15, retail DVD)

### HIROSHIMA

Docudrama charting the political, social and moral complexities surrounding the world's first atomic attack. (retail DVD)