

Sensory snacks

Stuff's the head chef and this month's menu contains a little Avi Buffalo, some scary talking sheep and a slice of the late Philip Seymour Hoffman



WATCH

A Most Wanted Man _cinema

There are two types of spy: the fun ones, and the realistic ones. Fun Spy gets sexy ladies, gadgets and kung fu. Realistic Spy is an alcoholic chain-smoker whose chief enemies are guilt and paranoia. The latter is much more interesting to watch, particularly when he's being played by Philip Seymour Hoffman in his last leading role.

The setting is Hamburg, the city where 9/11 was planned. A refugee turns up to collect an inheritance, and he may or may not be a terrorist. That's what the German spymaster has to work out before the Americans do.

There are secret information exchanges and meetings in anonymous places, and naturally, Hoffman plays a workaholic with

no life outside of playing 'guess the terrorist'. The film is committed to serving up all manner of fog and ambiguity; it's in no rush to spell anything out. It's not until halfway through that you're fairly confident who's who and what they're doing.

This is a slow builder, with time to weave past prejudices, human rights and wavering German accents. We don't reach top speed until the last 15 of the 121 minutes. But that means more time with Hoffman, which is a good thing. Here is an actor at his peak, coming from somewhere between power and fragility, despair and duty, with absolute conviction. Riveting stuff.

Ced Yuen

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★☆



Fargo Season 1 _Blu-ray

It's not the same story as the film and doesn't even take place in the town of Fargo, but the tone and pitch-black humour will be ambrosia to fans of arguably the Coens' finest work. It's seriously gripping, Martin Freeman does a brilliant job of shaking off Bilbo, and this is Billy Bob Thornton's most brilliant and creepy work in forever.

Tom Parsons

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★



Grand Piano _Blu-ray

A pianist is told he will die if he makes a single mistake during his comeback concert. It's a solid premise for a thriller, which mostly hits the right notes with tense direction and a convincing turn from Elijah Wood. Sadly, though, it's a belly flop of a third act: the villain is laughable, as is the heavy product placement for BlackBerry.

Ced Yuen

STUFF SAYS ★★★☆☆