

Hey Hey It's Esther Blueburger
Australia – NY PREMIERE
Live Action, Cathy Randall, 2008, 103 min
In English

Recommended ages 12 to adult
IFC – Sat, Mar 7, 11:15am
SYMPH – Sat, Mar 14, 3:15pm

Hey Hey It's Esther Blueburger vaults over coming-of-age genre conventions with a droll sense of humor that celebrates the awkwardness of youth and plays like a cross between *Mean Girls* and *Welcome to the Dollhouse*. The cast features Oscar-nominated Toni Collette (*The Sixth Sense*, *Little Miss Sunshine*) and indie darling Keisha Castle-Hughes (*Whale Rider*), but the true standout is newcomer Danielle Catanzariti, whose winning performance in the title role is as funny and sweet as it is honest. It just plain feels good to spend ninety minutes with this girl! Plagued by puberty, beset by cliques at her private school, misunderstood by her parents and facing an upcoming Bat Mitzvah that no one will show up for, Esther Blueburger sulks from home to school and back gamely enduring each day's humiliations. Her only companion is a cute adopted duckling named Normal... until she befriends Sunni, a rebellious outcast from the local public school, and finds the freedom to experiment with more outrageous forms of behavior. Drama ensues—but one of the film's best assets is not taking itself too seriously, and the result is an utterly charming film that will leave you smiling from ear to ear. (A hysterical early scene with Esther and her brother practicing their Hav-Torah is worth the price of admission alone.)

Comment: Film contains some drinking and cigarette smoking, sexual references, and swearing.