

TV SHOW REVIEWS

Sharp satirical take on human psyche

➤ *Sirens* challenges perspectives on family trauma, gender inequality

BY JOHN TAN

IT is easy to hold onto our morals when circumstances favour us. The absence of pressure or temptation allows for less deviation from one's values. But what happens when we are placed in challenging situations?

Can our moral compass withstand the pressures of our survival needs? This question is pondered through Netflix's latest series *Sirens*. Set throughout the course of a single weekend at a lavish seaside estate, the series explores themes of gender dynamics, power and social class.

Devon, the main protagonist, kicks off the series by looking for her sister Simone upon receiving her father's diagnosis of early-onset dementia. Devon ventures to the lavish seaside estate, where Simone works as a live-in assistant for her boss Michaela "Kiki" Kell.

Unfortunately for her, Simone is not keen on returning home and



Kevin Bacon is the show's billionaire Peter Kell.

aims to continue working for Michaela, who seems to have a strong influence on Simone. Concerned, Devon finds ways to convince Simone otherwise.

But as she stays longer on the estate, Devon too gets trapped in Michaela's world, falling deep for her manipulative ways. Tensions further arise when Michaela's husband Peter Kell enters the picture, spiking tensions between the three women.

Surviving hardships

Many were confused with the show's premise as the title hinted at supernatural. From talks of the women being half-bird, half-human creatures to murderous allegations, the series is simply an intelligent take on gender roles and social class.

White Lotus and *Stepford Wives* may have been among the first to explore these themes, but *Sirens* differentiates itself with a more holistic and realistic approach. Throughout the six episodes, viewers are spoiled with different points of view.

Each core character's struggle



Sirens explores themes of gender dynamics, power and social class.

➤ **Directors:** Nicole Kassell, Quyen Tran and Lila Neugebauer
 ➤ **Cast:** Meghann Fahy, Milly Alcock, Glenn Howerton, Bill Camp, Felix Solis, Kevin Bacon and Julianne Moore

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and life experience is given priority, allowing viewers an in-depth view of the damages and effects they have inherited from the societal system they inhabit.

While *White Lotus* and *Stepford Wives* are quick to call their villains evil, *Sirens* allows for its core characters to speak for themselves through their emotions and life experiences.

Compelling performances

The complexity, therefore, makes it difficult for viewers to draw a line between good and evil. All the characters are entitled to sympathy and judgment under the microscope of justice.

Considering the richness of *Sirens'* plot, it is hard to pinpoint who is right or wrong. *Sirens* will have you rooting and cursing at all the characters at different points of the series. Even the "purest" of characters have their frustrating moments on screen.

This maturity that is afforded to the core characters is what makes *Sirens* frustratingly addictive and distinct from other societal-based satires.



Fahy (left) and Alcock play sisters in *Sirens*. – PICS FROM INSTAGRAM @NETFLIX

The nature of *Sirens* may be tied to reality, but the performances of its actors resemble whispers of alluring magic. The majority of its main cast will have you glued to the screen throughout the series.

The three leads, especially, haunt the frame whenever they come on. Juliana Moore, who plays Michaela, delivers a compelling performance as a woman struggling with the troubles of being a trophy wife.

Whereas Meghann Fahy and

Milly Alcock portrayed a convincing sibling duo dynamic on screen. Their interactions alone were entertaining to watch.

Sirens, overall, was worth the binge. In an era where one-dimensional plots are common cinematic treats, *Sirens* stands out for its intelligent and entertaining portrayal of the society around it.

Sirens is available for streaming on Netflix.



Moore plays the billionaire wife Michaela 'Kiki' Kell.

Juan's military experience comes into play against *The Eternaut's* hostile forces. – PIC FROM NETFLIX



Trapped under ice

BY MARK MATHEN VICTOR

THERE are countless ways to die, but for the Argentinians in Netflix's *The Eternaut*, death has arrived in the form of a snowstorm.

Adapted from Hector German Oesterheld's *El Eternauta*, a comic considered a classic in Argentina, the six-episode Netflix series takes place in Buenos Aires.

As a snowfall that kills on contact with skin envelopes the city, friends Juan Salvo (Ricardo Darin), Tano (Cesar Troncoso), Lucas (Marcelo Subiotto) and Ruso (Claudio Martinez Bel) find their friendship challenged.

Risking the safety of himself and the group, Juan braves the storm in a makeshift "snow-proof" suit to find his ex-wife and daughter, while Tano

and Lucas grapple with the appearance of Inga, another survivor that stumbles into the building.

Soon, the group of middle-aged men find themselves fighting for survival against other survivors and a dangerous, otherworldly presence that has made landfall in the snow-steeped capital of Argentina.

The Eternaut joins the army of similar series and films – mostly from zombie and monster shows from South Korea – on Netflix, but it differentiates itself by being an all-around solid survival thriller that eventually throws science fiction into the mix.

Having a solid foundation with Oesterheld's source material certainly bolsters what show creator and director Bruno Stagnaro does with the series. Though the original

comic is certainly dated – it was created in the late 50s – Stagnaro and his co-writers update it sufficiently to modernise the story.

Despite the introduction of the primary antagonist faced by the Argentinians halfway into the season, the series does not lose itself by becoming a generic show about guns, explosions and violence.

There is action, but Stagnaro does not waver from the vision of keeping *The Eternaut* grounded with the character drama of its adult cast and their equally adult problems. The layered performances by Darin, Troncoso and the rest of the cast further elevate the believability of the situation their characters find themselves in.

The Eternaut is streaming on Netflix.