

REVIEW

'Foe' stumbles despite star performances by Paul Mescal, Saoirse Ronan

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Directed by Garth Davis and adapted from a novel by Iain Redid, "Foe" on Amazon Prime Video unfolds in an arid landscape in 2065, when man has succeeded in destroying our planet. Quite aptly, the gloom and darkness are shown engulfing a young couple played by Paul Mescal (who was nominated for an Academy Award for his role in "Aftersun") and Oscar-nominated Saoirse Ronan. The depressing wasteland mirrors the couples' mood and circumstances.

"Foe" begins with Henrietta



The film stars Oscar-nominated actors Saoirse Ronan and Paul Mescal. Supplied

(Ronan) weeping in the shower, ruining her insipid life with husband Junior (Mescal). As the wind howls outside with the dystopian atmosphere heightened by famine and tornadoes, Junior sees a car approaching and a man steps out. It turns out to be Terrance (Aaron Pierre), who works for an organization that sends people to a space station as an experiment for a couple of years. Terrance has picked Junior for the mission, but his wife is distraught. Seeing Henrietta's misery at the forced separation, Terrance offers her an AI substitute of her husband for the duration of his stay in space.

Terrance has to stick around and observe the pair so that Junior's replacement can be as accurate as possible, lending tension to the drama.

It's an interesting concept with its own moral conundrums, but these are hardly explored despite the 108-minute runtime — of which you will feel every minute.

The movie may not have universal appeal, given our desire for easy-to-digest content. There is hardly any drama and the film is driven by lengthy blocks of dialogue set against a desolate outside world. "Foe" is visually rich with notable cinematography

by Matyas Erdely, while Victoria, Australia, stands in as a starker and more arid version of the American Midwest. Luckily, the natural environment is given the screentime it deserves.

This is the third feature by director Davis, following "Mary Magdalene" and the adoption drama "Lion," but his usual on-screen sincerity is lost despite the fact the script was co-written with the source novel's author.

Sadly, poor editing makes the work look clumsy and disjointed and the only saving grace are the compelling performances by all the actors.