

Netflix's 'The Sea Beast' is an exhilarating sea-faring adventure



CHENNAI: Disney director Chris Williams' first outing with Netflix, "The Sea Beast," tells the age-old tale of man versus beast. And while the lesson sometimes may seem murky, the animated movie largely works for its heart and engaging script.



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In Williams' high seas spectacle, Kraken-adjacent sea monsters are stalked by hunters in a decades-long war, put on the job by the ruling king and queen of an idyllic island.

The movie begins when a little orphan girl called Maisie Brumble (voiced by Zaris-Angel Hator) successfully stows away on a famed hunting ship named Inevitable. Maisie's hunter parents died a heroic death fighting sea monsters, and she'd like to

follow in their footsteps. Led by the one-eyed Captain Crow (Jared Harris), who is bent on finishing the last of the marine monsters, the Inevitable is on a revenge-seeking path against the most dangerous of the monsters — the Red Bluster.

Crow's able second-in-command is Jacob Holland ("The Boys" star Karl Urban). Like Maisie, he is also an orphan, who was rescued and adopted by Crow after finding Jacob on a raft mid-ocean, his parents and their ship having been victims of sea monsters. When Maisie and Jacob get marooned on an island after a high-stakes chase after the Red Bluster, Maisie has a change of heart about the creatures they've been hunting and becomes the voice of the savior.

In the end, "The Sea Beast" lends itself to a debate, almost philosophical, between the hunters and the child, who adores the sea creatures and even gets the monsters to obey her.

And director Williams is convincing in what he has to say — "you can be a hero and still be wrong," Maisie muses in one of the best lines of the movie. Refreshingly, the movie does not over-infantilize the subject matter or "talk down" to its intended audience.

Williams has had the distinct advantage as an animator and accomplished cartoon helmer, who cut his teeth on films like "Bolt" and "Big Hero 6."

In fact, he seems to have used his open water adventure, "Moana," on which he served as co-director and writer, as a dry run for "The Sea Beast."

Mark Mancina's peppy score, excellent production design (the castle and the ships, for instance, look fantastically alluring) and smart writing by Williams and Nell Benjamin push the high-seas hunting game to exhilarating heights.

