

# 'Control Z': A high school sleuth sets out to find a vicious hacker



CHENNAI: Hacking — whether into bank accounts, mobile phones, or email accounts — is an unfortunate reality of the modern age. The new Mexican eight-part series “Control Z”, available on Netflix, focuses on those who find themselves victims of hackers and who have their deepest secrets and weaknesses exposed as a result.

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The subject has been dealt with before in films, but “Control Z,” created by Carlos Quintanilla, Adriana Pelusi and Miguel Garcia Moreno, gives its plot a Sherlockian feel, taking the audience inside a high school populated with affluent students sporting designer clothes and driving luxury cars. The environment is fraught with its own problems, which range from defiant and disrespectful youth to sexual misconduct. Not even the head of the institution is above scandal, and he yields to temptation — a misdemeanor that is soon out in the open.



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The hacker disseminates his juicy gossip — often true — among the students, taking advantage of a weak school wi-fi system to upload his messages through the account @\_allyoursecrets. Sofia (played by Ana Valeria Becerril), is a social outcast at her school, considered a freak because of her troubled past, having lost her father and spent time in a mental health facility. She has no friends until Javier (played by Michael Ronda), son of one of Mexico's biggest soccer stars, joins the school and befriends her.

Sofia has a knack for solving crimes, and when the hacker's text messages take on a nastier and more personal tone, she decides to find out who is behind the account. Javier uses his social skills to help Sofia in a campus atmosphere where chaos prevails and relationships between students go haywire. Couples break up, and new personal ties are tested. But soon, Sofia too falls victim to the hacker.



Three things that work in favor of “Control Z” are its developed characters, compelling performances and suspense. (Supplied)

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Three things that work in favor of “Control Z” are its developed characters, compelling performances (Becerril and Ronda in particular) and suspense. The creators withhold the identity of the culprit until the very end.

The hacker’s motive, however, is a weak point to the series. Although the setting is a high school, there is very little classroom activity. Instead, rowdiness and sexual flings seem to dominate. Is this the norm in Mexican schools? If not, a bit of subtlety and authenticity could have lifted “Control Z” higher. But I suspect that in the name of artistic liberty, the creators opted for a dramatic portrayal of a school “detective” and her efforts to unravel a mystery.

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