

Mai Review: A Grieving Sakshi Tanwar Plays Miss Marple to Nail Daughter's Killers



The search for her daughter's assailant leads Sakshi Tanwar into many possible death traps in Mai, and she manages to escape each one of them in very unconvincing ways.

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GAUTAMAN BHASKARAN

Sakshi Tanwar as Sheel Chaudhary in Mai

Mai

Director: Atul Mongia

Cast: Sakshi Tanwar, Wamiqa Gabbi, Raima Sen, Prashant Narayanan, Vivek Mushran, Anant Vidhaat, Ankur Ratan

Originality is hardly a hallmark of Indian films or television series, and Atul Mongia's outing, Mai, on Netflix is no exception. Headlined by a popular star of television serials, Sakshi Tanwar, the six-episode series reminded me of the Sridevi starrer, Mom, in which she kills several men responsible for raping her daughter. The methods she adopts are mindbogglingly varied and include making a concoction of poison from the seeds of a fruit.

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Sheel Chaudhary (Tanwar) has no such luck; her murders are either accidental or committed under grave threat to her own life. Doting on her young daughter, Supriya (a sparkling Wamiqa Gabbi), who can hear but cannot

peak, the mother or Mai is shattered when an accident just outside her home happens. A truck runs over Supriya and she is dead, and later Sheel suspects that this was nothing but cold-blooded murder.

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At a court hearing, Sheel is asked to identify the guilty driver, and she does. Quite unbelievable! How does one say with any certainty that he or she could have seen the driver in a vehicle that whizzes past after knocking someone down!

Bad writing and the series tries to wriggle its way out of this mess by introducing several other incidents and characters. Sheel meets the jailed driver, who apologises for his crime, but something tells the mother that he is a mere scapegoat. Her suspicion grows stronger when she follows the driver's wife and son to his school, which turns out to be a posh institution. How could a poor driver afford this for his son?

Sheel, who works in an old-age home, runs into a benefactor, a wealthy man, Jawahar Vyas (Prashant Narayanan), whose girlfriend, Neelam (Raima Sen), was earlier seen fixing the boy's admission at the school.

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up a grave misdemeanour as a quid pro quo.

The six episodes of close to six hours pull us in varied directions (some needless) and end in a cliffhanger – paving the way for a second season, which I hope would not be as lazily written as the one now streaming. Performances are nothing to write home about with a wooden Tanwar and an equally uninspiring Sen adding to the disappointment. Tanwar's transformation from a meek housewife/caregiver to a merciless killer is hardly apparent. As for Raima, she used to be fantastic once (Parineeta is one excellent example); wonder what went wrong?

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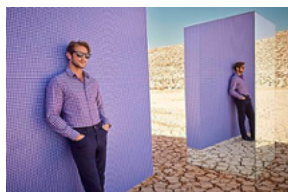
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