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Time Out New York / Issue 649 : Mar 5-11, 2008

TV Review Terminal City

Critic's Rating

Thursdays 9-10pm, Sundance Channel

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God damn!
Published at 3:37pm
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The well-traveled Maria del Mar (she's had brief runs on *24* and *JAG* and has starred in a number of Canadian series) delivers a searing performance as a housewife with breast cancer in this ten-week miniseries from Canada, with a tone that strongly recalls *Six Feet Under*. *Terminal City* prominently counts reality TV among its subjects, but its chief concerns—marriage, family and mortality—are timeless ones that are given fresh urgency by the way screenwriter Angus Fraser approaches them from odd angles.



IN TREATMENT Del Mar tackles life with cancer.

Katie Sampson (Del Mar) spends most of the first episode dodging phone calls that confirm what she already suspects—that her recent mammogram has detected a malignant growth. The hospital where she's being treated is the backdrop for a daily live medical reality show on a Lifetime-like cable channel, and after Katie delivers a spontaneous monologue to the camera (laden with profanity and accompanied by a flash of her breast), the producers decide to fire the balding physician who hosts the series and persuade Katie to become both its principal on-air personality and chief subject.

Perhaps the most compelling aspect of *Terminal City* is the effect Katie's cancer (and subsequent celebrity) has on her marriage to Ari (*Ally McBeal*'s Gil Bellows), as well as its impact on her children (Katie Boland is particularly fine as her teen daughter). The sleek, claustrophobic production design and spare dialogue recall the films of Atom Egoyan, as well as the 1996 movie *Kissed* (which was written by Fraser and directed by Lynne Stopkewich, who shot two of the episodes), and result in a wry yet raw and understated drama unlike anything else presently airing.

—Andrew Johnston



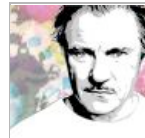
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