

Vida: Why critics adore this little Mexican-American dram about sisterhood

- 100% critics rating, Rotten Tomatoes
- Time's 4th best TV show of 2019; also on top TV shows of 2019 lists by The Atlantic & AV Club
- Audience Award winner, SXSW, 2018
- Over 6m YouTube views for its trailers
- "One of TV's smartest and sexiest shows" Time Magazine
- "Reverberates with the aches and joys and conflicts of everyday life... elaborate, distinct, and beautiful" The Atlantic
- First on Showmax

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Take your average, mainstream white-hetero-male-dominated TV show, turn 180 degrees, and just keep going. Eventually you'll hit *Vida*, and if you're lucky, you'll be home.

The left-of-centre drama series, now first on Showmax, follows two Mexican-American sisters from the Eastside of Los Angeles, who couldn't be more different, or distanced, from each other. Circumstances force them to return to their old neighbourhood of Boyle Heights, where they are confronted by the past and the discovery that their deceased mother Vidalia (a.k.a. Vida) was in a lesbian marriage.

Given the choice, neither the sisters, nor Vida's wife, Eddy, would have anything to do with one another. But they are bound together by the keenly felt absence of the woman who shaped their lives (for better or worse) and by the beleaguered bar and apartment building they've inherited in a three-way split.

Already on its second season, with a third to come later this year, *Vida* has captivated the critics, earning itself a rare 100 critics rating on Rotten Tomatoes. As *The Guardian* says, "There's nothing else in the TV landscape quite like this hypersexual, celebratory show – in its embrace of Hispanic soapiness in a millennial English-speaking story, and in its dedication to female fantasy."

Vida popped up on three separate Best TV of 2019 lists from AV Club staffers and contributors, with Allison Shoemaker

saying, “Tanya Saracho’s *Vida* is rightly lauded for its excellent performances, incisive writing, and commitment to centering queer, female and non-binary, and Latinx voices both in front of and behind the camera. But you know what? It’s also one of the best-looking shows on TV. The cinematography is top-tier. The direction is impeccable. It’s beautiful, immersive, often dreamlike filmmaking.”

The series also made *The Atlantic*’s list of The 15 Best TV Shows of 2019, where Sophie Gilbert said, “*Vida* is a delight to watch, a funny, pensive show about the idea of home, and why holding on to it is so hard.”

To top it off, *Vida* is also at #4 on *Time Magazine*’s list of the 10 Best TV Shows of 2019, where Judy Berman calls it “one of TV’s smartest and sexiest shows”.



Mexican telenovela star Melissa Barrera (*Siempre Tuya Acapulco* and the upcoming Lin Manuel Miranda movie, *In the Heights*) plays the free-spirited Lyn, and Mishel Prada (*Fear the Walking Dead: Passage*, *Riverdale*) is her tightly-wound sister Emma. Mari is played by Chelsea Rendon (*Shameless*), Johnny by Carlos Miranda, and Eddy by Ser Anzoategui, who was nominated for a 2019 Imagen Award for Best Supporting Actor for the role. “Every actor on *Vida* is great,” says Vox.com.

“Prada is especially magnificent as Emma, a character whose internalised shame about her sexuality has turned into suspicion of those who claim to love her,” says *The Atlantic*, while Lyn, “as stunted as Emma by *Vida*’s pronouncements, her beauty is her only asset, uses sex as a tool to get what she wants, whether it’s emotional or material. She’s internalised the idea that her effect on men is her currency.”

Another of the many reasons *Vida* is getting so much attention is a creative team that’s smashed every boundary in US television production. Created by Mexican-American playwright and TV writer-producer Tanya Saracho (*Girls*, *Devious Maids*), *Vida* boasts the first-ever all-Latinx (and almost all-female) writers’ room on TV, with an all-female line-up of directors.

They’ve woven cultural authenticity into the fabric of the show, from story threads about “whitinas” (a.k.a. “white-washed” Latinas) and gentefication (a coined term for the gentrification of Latino neighborhoods by young, monied Latinos returning from college or the suburbs) to the way the English dialogue is peppered with Spanish and doesn’t stop to explain, because that’s just how people speak. (Don’t worry, there’s no danger of losing the story.)

But first and last, *Vida* is a story about what matters most. As *Vulture* puts it: “While *Vida* is a series that embraces people who have been pushed to the fringes by a white-hetero-dominant culture, it’s also very much about family, and how being part of one means inheriting secrets, memories, debts, bitterness, and belongings that may take years to unpack.”

Vida “reverberates with the aches and joys and conflicts of everyday life,” says *The Atlantic*, calling the hit show “elaborate, distinct, and beautiful.”

Watch *Vida* S1-2 first on Showmax: <https://www.showmax.com/eng/tvseries/sddk4qrd-vida>.

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