

REVIEW

Review of the Netflix miniseries *Generazione 56K*

2021, Cattleya/Netflix, 8 episodes

Jackson Geary (Middle East Studies/Arabic, Italian Studies)
Brigham Young University



A lighthearted blend of humor, nostalgia, and romance, Francesco Capaldo and Kim Gualino’s *Generazione 56K* is in many ways reminiscent of your standard 1990s American Rom-Com. At the same time, despite the serendipitous meet-cutes and “quirky best friend” characters, the series still manages to feel completely fresh and captivating. The story centers around the abrupt reconnection of Daniel Mottola (Angelo Spagnoletti) and Matilda Pastore (Cristina Cappelli), childhood frenemies (now young adults), and their struggle to reconcile their newfound interest in each other with the complexities of their adult lives.

Daniel is an app developer searching for purpose in his work, striving to build something meaningful. Matilda works in furniture restoration and has passed up on her dream master’s program in Paris to pursue a relationship with “nice guy” Enea. As this brief synopsis suggests, their stories are realistic and relatable; and, while the budding romance is entertaining, perhaps more rewarding is the serie’s powerful central message of authenticity and self-discovery. In other words, the chemistry shared between the couple elevates the show from your typical rom-com affair into a genuinely gripping love story, even though the will-they-won’t-they romance narrative is hardly the most innovative aspect of the series.

Where *Generazione 56K* really shines is in its exploration of life as an Italian adolescent in 1998 – the year that the 56k (56 kbits/s) modem, which inspired the series name, was released. Approximately half of the series is comprised of flashbacks to Daniel and Matilda’s childhood on the picturesque island of Procida, off the coast of Naples. The growing capabilities of the internet combine with the emerging teenage hormones of the main characters to create unique opportunities for humor and absurdity. The juvenile antics of Daniel and Matilda, set against the warm backdrop of small-town Campania, provide a fun coming-of-age narrative with a distinctly Italian flavor. *Generazione 56K* trades school dances for Catholic mass and playgrounds for beachside cafés, but the frustrations of middle school heartbreak and parent-teen tension will be familiar to viewers from all backgrounds.

Although it does not necessarily break new ground in any genre, *Generazione 56K* holds up effectively as a coming-of-age tale, a heartwarming love story, and a love letter to a simpler time all arranged neatly into eight episodes of laughs and stirring moments. The series offers something for everyone by contrasting the innocence of youth with the challenges of adulthood. While it may rely on familiar tropes, *Generazione 56K* shakes up the formula just enough to appeal to anyone looking for a story that is at once compelling, upbeat, and sincere.