

The season three cast strut onto the scene

It's going to be a killer trip

# Hot, rich & MURDER

Why we can't get enough of *The White Lotus*



Belinda's back!

On paper, a stay at a White Lotus resort should be the ultimate luxe vacation, a chance to switch off and leave life's troubles behind. After all, with locations in Hawaii, Italy and Thailand, this should be the comfort break of dreams.

However, it takes mere seconds of watching HBO's hit comedy-drama

to figure out that this fictional hotel isn't quite the haven it proclaims to be. Every season of *The White Lotus*, which first aired in 2021, begins with the discovery of a dead body. Whose corpse is it, anyway? That's the mystery to be solved.

The show then flashes back one week to the staff welcoming the new batch of guests. But the smiles plastered on their faces

are entirely forced – this is a place where luxury attracts a spoiled clientele, and bad behaviour is rife.

With all the sex, lies and intrigue (and, somehow, loads of laughs too), it's no wonder the show is a hit. It's earned rave reviews, won numerous Emmys, and turned Jennifer Coolidge (aka Stifler's Mom from the *American Pie* movies) into the icon she deserves to be.

Now, the class satire returns for its third season in mid-February, and while Jennifer's Tanya McQuoid sadly won't be returning after meeting her rather undignified end in season two, the whodunnit is promising to be another success.

## MURDER IN THAILAND

Season three is set in Thailand and the cast is



THE  
WHITE  
LOTUS IS  
BACK!



Aimee Lou Wood has nabbed  
Walton Goggins as a sugar  
daddy for S3

# ROUS

once more chock-full of stars like Carrie Coon (*Gone Girl*), Jason Isaacs (*Harry Potter*), Michelle Monaghan (*Bad Monkey*), and Parker Posey (*Scream 3*), not to mention Patrick Schwarzenegger, and singer Lisa from the stratospherically massive K-Pop group Blackpink.

Natasha Rothwell, who played Belinda the spa manager from season one, is also back. Having been

royally screwed over by Jennifer's Tanya, she's hoping for a second chance in Thailand. And while details of season three are tightly under wraps, Natasha has teased that she 'gasped out loud a minimum of five times... reading the scripts'.

The fact that *The White Lotus* has become this watercooler-moment machine of a show was never a given – in fact, it



So long and  
thanks for all  
the killing





No Jennifer Coolidge this time. Soz



could have easily been a pandemic-era flash in the pan. Creator Mike White, who you might know as Ned Schneebly from *School Of Rock*, pitched the first series in 2020 on the logistical basis that it could all be filmed at the Maui Four Seasons.

That first season, Connie Britton and Steve Zahn were among the guests at the Hawaii hotel overseen by moustached hotel manager Murray Bartlett. Then for season two, we jetted off to *The White Lotus* Sicily, where couple-swapping and affairs were the dish *della giornata* (that's 'of the day' in Italian, BTW) among Theo James, Aubrey Plaza, Michael Imperioli and Meghann Fahy.

## PRIVILEGED & POISED TO KILL

It was during season two that the show really took off. But while, on the surface, *The White Lotus* may seem to be a simple crime comedy-drama, it's main draw is its satirical take on the sneaky and murderous lives of the 1%.

It joins an ever-growing canon of shows focusing on that topic, kickstarted

Monterey, who found themselves embroiled in a homicide investigation.

Reese Witherspoon and Nicole Kidman were the waspy leads, with Nicole returning to the genre last year in Netflix's *The*

## 'Their wealth drives their crimes'

by 2017's *Big Little Lies*, which was based on the novel by queen of the 'deadly rich people' genre, Liane Moriarty. That series followed five women living in the privileged California enclave of

*Perfect Couple*, about an expensive family wedding derailed by a killing. Then there was *Apples Never Fall* (also based on a Liane Moriarty novel), *The Undoing* (also starring Kidman), and most recently, we had Netflix comedy-drama *No Good Deed*.

It's no wonder we love these shows. There's something deeply satisfying about peeking behind the façade of the rich and powerful to see the sleazy secrets that prop up their privileged lives. Often, their wealth is a driving factor behind their lies and crimes. Mike White makes it no secret that he sees *The White*

*Lotus* as a class satire first and foremost.

## THE HOLIDAY FROM HELL

And let's face it, people with money have fantastic lives that we just love to ogle at. *The White Lotus* does this better than its peers. Who didn't watch season two and drool over the turquoise Sicilian waters and immediately Google, 'Cheap flights Italy'?

In fact, *The White Lotus* is already being credited with Thailand labelled this year's must-visit winter holiday destination. That the show makes its locations look so damn appealing is one of its biggest ironies. It pokes fun at tourism, then makes you want to visit yourself.

Judging by the new season's trailer, we can also expect plenty of digs at Goop-style boujee spiritualism – although, judging by interspersed shots of violence and bodybags – that doesn't last long.



As season two concluded, Mike teased that Asia would be a 'rich tapestry' for a new season. 'The first season kind of highlighted money, and then the second season is sex,' he said. 'I think the third season would be maybe a satirical and funny look at death and eastern religion and spirituality.'

If there's another factor that makes *The White Lotus* such a hit, it's Mike's eye for casting and ability to turn emerging actors into full-fledged stars. Sydney Sweeney, Fred Hechinger, Leo Woodall:



Being rude to waiters since season one





A selection of season two's wealthy wrong'un's



We said goodbye to Tanya last season

they can all credit *The White Lotus* with their current profiles.

This year, it looks to be the turn of *Sex Education* star Aimee Lou Wood. In the trailer, the 29-year-old appears to play the much-younger girlfriend of Walton Goggins, 53.

With just weeks to go until the show premieres, we can guarantee it's going to be another smash hit. And with the year just beginning, there's still time to maximise your annual leave allowance and squeeze in a trip to Thailand... ■

# LOADED & DEADLY

## More shows with cash-rich killers

### APPLES NEVERFALL

Adapted from a Liane Moriarty novel, it features all the classic tropes of the class-satire genre. Some have criticised it for being a trifle laboured, but we'll forgive the clichés for a cast as good as Annette Benning, Sam Neill and Alison Brie (and another *White Lotus* alum, Jake Lacy).



### BIG LITTLE LIES

Nicole Kidman! Reese Witherspoon! Shailene Woodley! Laura Dern! Zoë Kravitz! *Big Little Lies* remains the gold standard of the rich-and-privileged crime drama, and that's before Meryl Streep even appears in season two. Name a more iconic cast – we'll wait.



### NO GOOD DEED

We'll watch anything Lisa Kudrow does, and the *Friends* favourite is a total scene-stealer in this dark comedy about three families racing to buy the same perfect (or so it seems) LA home, which they think will solve all their problems – spoiler alert: it doesn't.



### THE PERFECT COUPLE

Murder at a lavish wedding in stunning Cape Cod? We're listening. Nicole Kidman gives her best ice-queen performance as novelist matriarch Greer Garrison Winbury, and we're totally here for *The White Lotus*' Meghann Fahy as an irritating influencer-type.

