



FILM: **EX MACHINA**

FDG RATING: 3.7 ☺☺☺☺○

Film Discussion Group (FDG) Scale is 1-5 (5 is best)

Alex Garland: *Director*
 Oscar Issac: *Actor: Nathan*
 Domhnall Gleeson: *Actor: Caleb*
 Alicia Vikander: *Actress: Ava*

DATE: May17, 2015

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **EX MACHINA**

Nathan, a reclusive genius and tech billionaire CEO of BlueBook, the world's largest internet search company, (superbly performed by Oscar Isaac) has created a beautiful, seductive female robot named Ava with the most advanced artificial intelligence (AI) ever developed. (We also meet a few of the previous prototypes but because of flawed AI, they are used as his private sex slaves.)

Nathan connives a competition to select a young programmer to test the humanness of Ava's AI in his isolated mountain retreat. If Ava can fool Caleb, (the naïve somewhat endearing geek who was actually specifically chosen by Nathan), into interacting with her as if she were a human, then Nathan's creation is a true success. Ava's AI is so advanced that she not only seduces Caleb into an emotional relationship, but, also acts out on her own self centered impulses.

The film raises a myriad of questions including how to program the ability to make good moral decisions. What are the ethics of AI? And if we are limiting the beings ability to make certain decisions to prevent destructive impulses, then have we really imbued the being with the most advanced artificial intelligence possible?

Our discussion explored the ideas of command and control, manipulation, egotism, deception, the mad scientist, Frankenstein, the film Blade Runner, Hal from 2001 A Space Odyssey, the creation of Adam and Eve, and God. Some of our resident reviewers were offended by the violence and drinking. Many recognized Nathan's super egotistical personality as similar to our CEOs in Silicon Valley. We all agreed the special effects were masterful especially Ava's transparent mechanical body. It was interesting to constantly see that she was a mechanical being but her behavior was tenderly, convincingly human.

Our female contingent liked that the feminist robots out smarted the genius men. And the transition from male fantasy to male nightmare was a strong ending. It didn't occur to Nathan that by giving Ava true artificial intelligence, she would think on her own and act on her own motivations. Our resident film critic, Bill, suspects that Nathan's dead ego would proudly characterize his murder by Ava as the ultimate indicator of his success.

Her actions actually went against Isaac Asimov's "Three Laws of Robotics":

1. A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
2. A robot must obey orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.
3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.

Evidently Nathan had not programmed these laws, or perhaps Ava used her intelligence to over ride that specific programming to achieve her own impulsive needs.

The film was thought provoking, absorbing, and engaging with timely, interesting issues at its core. The performances were very compelling and the cinematography was outstanding. The story is actually plausible. It feels a bit creepy knowing that something like this could really happen.

We gave this film high marks with two 4.5s and four 4s, a couple 3.5s, and then a single 2 and a lone 2.5 averaged our score to an upbeat 3.7 on a scale of 1 to 5.



.....

See you at the movies!

Adriane Dedic, adedic@pacbell.net, Film Discussion Group (FDG) organizer