



EX MACHINA

Director: Alex Garland
Writers: Alex Garland
Stars: Alicia Vikander, Domhnall Gleeson, Oscar Isaac
Strength: Script, acting and character development
Weakness: Gets predictable towards the end
Runtime: 108 minutes
Rating: 4/5

PLOT: A young programmer is selected to participate in a breakthrough experiment in artificial intelligence by evaluating the human qualities of a breathtaking female A.I.

REVIEW: A reclusive CEO of a leading technology company hires a young whiz kid who works for him to test his latest

development, a highly advanced android called Ava. Specifically he is tasked with using the Turing test on her to establish if her AI is sufficiently convincing to pass as human. Despite contributing several scripts for the screen, this is writer Alex Garland's first directorial effort. It's a hard sci-fi movie which examines concepts and ideas above everything else. That's not to say it isn't dramatic or even thrilling, but it's not an action movie which sci-fi lovers are usually used to seeing. The central concept that it examines is artificial intelligence. How we interact with AI as humans, as well as how a seductive machine could in turn manipulate us. The very well written script

poses philosophical questions such as moral or immoral ways to treat AI. If AI exists, should there be AI rights? While the very small cast all acquit themselves very well, it is Vikander who stands out in the film's most challenging role as the android. It's a nuanced performance that captures the fine balance between the human-like and machine. The marvelous special effects compliment her performance to create a very distinctive character. Aside from the effects, this is probably quite a modestly budgeted film, as the small little-known cast and limited sets suggest. But these restrictions have been used to the film's advantage, as the unknown cast delivers well and the

restricted setting gives off a claustrophobic feel which works well given the script and the story, while forcing us to focus in even more on the ideas being put in front of us. A scene setting ambient soundtrack additionally creates just the right off-kilter mood to accentuate the events. But it's ultimately the very good writing that underpins the success of this film. All-in-all, very impressive science fiction for those who appreciate the genre's more cerebral side. It's a must watch for people who primarily watch movies for their story and acting performances, and love movies that explore new ideas.

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Reviewed by Mohammad Haque



Director: Shoojit Sircar
Writers: Juhi Chaturvedi
Stars: Amitabh Bachchan, Deepika Padukone, Irrfan Khan
Strength: Story, Acting
Weakness: Maybe slow for some audiences
Runtime: 123 minutes
Rating: 4/5

PLOT: A quirky comedy about the relationship between an ageing father and his young daughter, living in a cosmopolitan city, dealing with each other's conflicting ideologies while being fully aware that they are each other's only emotional support.

REVIEW: Piku is the story of a cranky old Bengali widower Bhaskor Banerji (Amitabh Bachchan) who subjugates his paternal instincts to the health, or the lack of it, of his alimentary canal. The more trouble that the crotchety gentleman has clearing his bowels, the more difficult he becomes for everyone around him, including a harried maid who he summarily accuses of kleptomania. Mr. Banerji has a formidable counterpoint is

an equally strong-willed daughter, Piku (Deepika Padukone), a busy architect who, despite the challenges that her dad poses every waking hour, takes the man's frequent mood swings in her stride. Caught between the two is a cab service owner Rana Chaudhary (Irrfan Khan) who, as the baffled outsider in the course of a road trip that threatens to run off the rails, gives both father and daughter perspectives that promise to deliver them from the stalemate they are trapped in.

What is truly surprising, and impressive, is that director Shoojit Sircar puts just enough spin on this wild whimsy to keep it whirling engagingly over its running time of two hours and a bit.

He is aided, of course, by a remarkable cast of actors who plunge headlong, and with full conviction, into the film.

Piku isn't only about a man and his toilet travails. It is also about ageing, filial responsibility and nostalgia for what is gone forever. It is an absolute must watch for people of all ages.

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Reviewed by S.M. Intisab Shahriyar

CLASSIC REVIEW

SECRETS & LIES (1996)

Director: Mike Leigh
Writers: Mike Leigh
Stars: Timothy Spall, Brenda Blethyn, Phyllis Logan
Runtime: 136 minutes

PLOT: A successful black woman discovers that her birth mother is a lower-class white woman, but the woman denies it. As emotions run high, everyone's secrets are exposed.

REVIEW: It would be easy, but wrong, to describe the plot of "Secrets & Lies" as being about an adopted black woman in London who seeks out her natural birth mother, discovers the woman is white, and arranges to meet her. That would be wrong because it sidesteps the real subject of the film, which is that the mother and her family have been all but destroyed by secrets and lies. The young black woman is the catalyst to change that situation, yes, but her life was fine before the action starts and will continue on an even keel afterward. Much of the film is devoted to the domestic life of Maurice and Monica. He is a photographer specializing in wedding pictures; she is a loving woman whose life becomes unbearable for herself and her husband every 28 days.

Given the deep waters it dives into,

"Secrets & Lies" is a good deal funnier and more entertaining than we have any right to expect. Hilarious and gruelling by turn, Secrets & Lies proves that a film can have a big heart and a harsh edge, and that the British suburban landscape at its most mundane is a fascinating terrain that our cinema has hardly begun to explore.

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Reviewed by S.M. Intisab Shahriyar

