



# AI in the Movies: FP Reviews the Best Movies About Artificial Intelligence

Insights

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Artificial intelligence might just be making major inroads into your workday and personal lives over the last few years, but it has long been a key plot point in some of your favorite movies. In fact, some would say that AI appeared in the movies as early as 1927's *Metropolis*, a groundbreaking sci-fi film heralded as one of the most influential movies ever made. Now that we're fully immersed in the summer movie season, we thought it would be a good time to ask members of FP's AI Practice Group to give you some (spoiler-free) reviews and ratings of our favorite movies featuring AI.

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**Blade Runner (1982 – Final Cut) (□□□ – 3 stars) (but 5 stars for what it did for the genre/visuals/set/score)**

Set in the ghastly noir dystopia of 2019 Los Angeles, *Blade Runner* introduces us to the Tyrell Corporation and its army of replicants: super strong androids created to do the kind of work

humans didn't want to do off-world, within a four-year lifespan. But replicants were banned from Earth after a mutiny. Enter young Harrison Ford, a Blade Runner, whose job is to find and "retire" trespassing replicants. You spot them with a Turing test of sorts – but one of the replicants seems better able to pass it than the rest. This film asks not just what it means to be human, but whether we take our humanity for granted. I went in with too high of expectations, knowing how influential it's been on my favorite genre long before seeing it (plus, right after *Alien*? 10 out of 5 stars). If you're looking for fast-paced action or a real brain bender, this isn't it. But if you find joy in spotting the source material for your modern favorites, *Blade Runner* walked so they could run. (*Brazil* and *The Fifth Element* are obvious, but now I realize a costume from one of my spooky-season favorites is a replicant, not a weirder Andy Warhol!)

**Bonus content!** 42 is the answer to life, the universe, and everything – and is also how many words are in the iconic, improvised monologue by Rutger Hauer that ends the film.

**Reviewed by Erica Wilson**

### **Short Circuit (1986) (□□□ – 3 stars)**

Long before the blockbuster stories of *Wall-E* and *Chappie*, there was Johnny 5 – an AI military robot built for use in the Cold War. Although the plot sounds serious, this comedy starring young Ally Sheedy and Steve Guttenberg tapped into the sci-fi craze that the *Star Wars* franchise kicked off in the late 70s. This was a favorite movie of mine as a kid and it was interesting to rewatch it 30 years later. Aside from the at-times kitschy humor, sci-fi fans – especially those interested in AI – would enjoy watching this classic.

**Bonus content!** *Short Circuit* is one of the first major Hollywood films with a robot as the main character and humans playing supportive roles. In following Johnny 5's journey, the movie serves as an important reminder of the unpredictability of AI advancements and the importance of considering the long-term impact of AI development.

**Reviewed by Omeed Askari**

### **Terminator 2: Judgment Day (1991) (□□□□□ – 5 stars)**

When you ask the average person what makes them nervous about the rise of artificial intelligence, odds are that they have the plot of *T2* stuck somewhere in the back of their heads. We learned in the first *Terminator* that an ominous AI military entity named "Skynet" launched a future war against humanity, but it's in *T2* that we hear Arnold Schwarzenegger tell us the details. "The system goes online August 4th, 1997," he says in his robotic voice. "Human decisions are removed from strategic defense. Skynet begins to learn at a geometric rate. It becomes self-aware at 2:14 a.m. Eastern time, August 29th" – at which point it launches nuclear strikes to destroy humans. This movie has had a massive cultural impact on society as we begin to decide which functions we're willing to turn over to robots, and which we're still a little nervous about.

**Bonus content!** The line "Hasta la vista, baby," delivered by Arnold Schwarzenegger's character, became one of the most famous catchphrases in movie history. It was even selected as one of the top 100 movie quotes by the American Film Institute and has since been ingrained in popular culture. The movie also introduced many groundbreaking special effects, including the liquid metal T-1000,

which revolutionized CGI in movies.

***Reviewed by Rich Meneghello***

### **The Matrix (1999) (★★★★ - 5 stars)**

25 years ago, The Matrix burst onto the scene like a slow motion bullet. It simultaneously revolutionized the special effects industry, glorified dressing in head-to-toe leather, and posited a thought-provoking computer simulated reality. Set in a dystopian future, the human race is trapped in a virtual reality and serves as nothing more than batteries for mechanical overlords. But a rebellion emerged and they are looking to recruit “the one” – the sole hope to defeat the evil machines and end the war. The movie features numerous excellent fights and shootouts, a heavy dose of steampunk, and epic sentient programs (“Agents”) designed to hunt down resistance fighters. I would highly recommend The Matrix, as I love to regularly quote and rewatch this movie.

**Bonus content!** In one of my favorite examples of an anthropomorphized computer program, the lead Agent – Smith – is everything you want a self-aware computer program to be: cold, methodical, and unrelenting.

***Reviewed by Kile Marks***

### **A.I. Artificial Intelligence (2001) (★★★ - 3 stars)**

Honestly, this Steven Spielberg film might have been the first time many of us had heard the acronym “AI” – and it was definitely an interesting introduction. Set in a futuristic society that uses robots called “mechas” to perform all sorts of tasks, Haley Joel Osmet stars as the first android programmed to love a human being. The movie also features Jude Law as another mecha trained to perform a more risqué set of tasks, and he steals every scene he’s in. Stanley Kubrick fans will especially appreciate the vibe of the whole movie (as he was long attached to the movie and aided in its development before his death), and it has gained a great deal of appreciation since its release – some have even called it one of the best movies of the 21st century. I liked it, but didn’t like it *that* much. Definitely worth a watch, but I’d approach it with lower expectations than some other movies on this list.

**Bonus content!** Cynthia Breazeal, a social robotics expert, served as a technical consultant on the film. She now teaches at M.I.T. as the Dean of Digital Learning and is considered one of the world’s foremost authorities on how humans can live their everyday lives with AI.

***Reviewed by Rich Meneghello***

### **I, Robot (2004) (★★★★ - 4 stars)**

This is one of my favorite films. Starring Will Smith, *I, Robot* is an action-packed portrayal of a future society (set in Chicago, Illinois) where robots serve humanity, governed by The Three Laws of Robotics designed to protect human life. In this dystopian world, robots (and AI) are used as tools designed to make the lives of humans easier, even at the detriment of a robot’s own existence.

Another AI presence in the film is VIKI (Virtual Interactive Kinetic Intelligence), which is the central artificial intelligence computer controlling the robots personified by a disembodied female voice. As the robots become more sophisticated and intelligent, new models are rolled out in society. Smith plays Detective Del Spooner, who’s trying to find the murderer of the scientist who helped develop

the newest generation of intelligent robots. *I, Robot* explores several themes concerning the inclusion of ever-evolving AI into our daily lives, including if/when technology poses a potential threat to humanity.

**Bonus content!** The movie is named after a collection of short stories by famed science-fiction writer Isaac Asimov that were collected and published in a 1950 book also titled *I, Robot*. The Three Laws of Robotics came from his stories.

***Review by Nicole Holtzapfle***

### **Wall-E (2008) (★★★★ – 5 stars)**

You cannot deny the creativity and imagination behind Pixar films, and even back in 2008, *WALL-E* was no exception. The film follows our protagonist WALL-E (short for Waste Allocation Load Lifter Earth-Class), a robot that remains on earth cleaning up garbage after humans have abandoned the planet. Over time, WALL-E develops a personality – is lonely in fact. But one day, he is introduced to EVE – an advanced robot sent to earth on a particular mission. As you can imagine, from there the adventure ensues. *WALL-E* won the Oscar for best animated feature and earned countless other nominations and awards. One of the beautiful elements of this film is in the compilation of sound mixing and character traits, as there is little dialogue, which allows the viewer to follow each character’s development and storyline. Upon watching, I was reminded of the delicacy of life and found myself thinking about how AI – if reaching sentient status – can remind humans of what it means to be human. The film is quite enjoyable and I highly recommend it.

**Bonus content!** The filmmakers provide a silent homage to Joseph Frank “Buster” Keaton, a silent film star, and R2-D2 from the movie *Star Wars*, to highlight how much can be conveyed with little to no dialogue.

***Reviewed by Anne Khan***

### **Moon (2009) (★★★★ – 4 stars)**

This film is the directorial debut of Duncan Jones and focuses on an astronaut, played by Sam Rockwell, who experiences a personal crisis as he nears the end of a three-year solitary mission mining helium on the far side of the moon. Chronic communication problems have disabled his live feed from Earth, limiting his human contact to occasional recorded messages from his wife. After hallucinations result in him losing consciousness, we meet GERTY – an AI entity voiced by Kevin Spacey – who assists with the lunar base’s automation. Very much a one-man, two-character piece, *Moon* wonderfully captures the pitfalls of human greed when mixed with unfettered technological endeavors. While a science fiction movie to its core, it is unapologetically slow at times, asking questions that linger long after the final shot. This pacing, combined with Rockwell’s performance, will have you captured from the opening scenes to the closing credits.

**Bonus content!** The interior design of the lunar station depicted in the film was influenced by the ship set in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. In addition, the station itself is supervised by an artificial intelligence named GERTY, which is nothing more than a scaled-down HAL 9000 that flashes emojis on its screen to appear more personable.

***Reviewed by Brent Bouma***

### **Her (2013) (★★★★ - 5 stars)**

This Spike Jonze film may be the most prophetic motion picture exploring artificial intelligence and the extent that machines can impact our daily lives. Set in a near-future Los Angeles where advanced virtual assistants name themselves, Joaquin Phoenix stars as a detached and introverted man who composes personal letters for those who have delegated the task to others. The movie also features the voice of Scarlett Johansson as “Samantha,” the AI virtual assistant who bonds and learns from the protagonist and hundreds of other users. As much a movie about love, life, and the lasting connections we form with others as it is about AI, the film brilliantly examines our evolving relationship between technology and humanity. If you’d like a glimpse of what may be to come, in all its wonderful, awful glory, this one is worth a watch.

**Bonus content!** OpenAI CEO Sam Altman has said this is his favorite movie and invited comparisons when he posted the word “Her” on X after the company announced the new ChatGPT version. Is this the future of artificial intelligence in the real-world?

***Reviewed by Brent Bouma***

### **Chappie (2015) (★★★★ - 5 stars)**

Set in a near-future version of Johannesburg, South Africa, Dev Patel stars as the brainchild of the world’s first robotic AI police force. Directed by Neill Blomkamp (Elysium, District 9, Gran Turismo), this movie is an emotional and thought-provoking story that left me wondering whether my own intelligence is “artificial.” Dev’s character has big ideas for the future of AI – chief among them is to bring AI to “life” so that it can learn and think for itself. These are phrases we now use to help describe how AI functions. Chappie – the star AI robot in the film – will have you laughing, crying, and questioning what exactly will differentiate us from AI when it becomes highly advanced and put into robotic form.

**Bonus content!** In today’s world, it’s been said that AI bots tend to provide more reliable responses if users draft “polite” or “kind” input prompts. Chappie echoes this concept beautifully as viewers watch the main character experience, and respond to, both the cruelty and kindness of humans.

***Reviewed by Omeed Askari***

### **Ex Machina (2015) (★★★★ - 4 stars)**

If you’re looking for a thought-provoking science fiction film about AI, contemplating the Turing test with AI in human form (along with several other thought provoking themes), this movie will grip you. The film follows a programmer working for a large search engine, who is selected to partake in a highly discreet evaluation of an advanced female AI robot – Ava. The premise of the movie coupled with each character’s backstory presents an intriguing idea, at least for this viewer, of how a subjective human subject, dealing with the complexities of logic and emotion, behaves and differentiates between man and machine. The question I found myself asking is when AI learns to have an opinion, what might it choose to do. Overall, I think this movie reflects great storytelling and highly recommend it if you’re interested in waxing philosophical about the evolution of AI.

**Bonus content!** The evolution of AI is upon us and AI companion tech is already here and on the rise – how soon before we see robots like Ava in our everyday lives?

***Reviewed by Anne Khan***

### **Avengers: Age of Ultron (2015) (★★★★ – 5 stars)**

A fantastic installment in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, Age of Ultron stars all your favorite Avengers, a few new ones, and Ultron – voiced by James Spader. Ultron is an artificial intelligence entity designed by Tony Stark (Iron Man) and Bruce Banner (The Hulk) as a peacekeeping initiative. However, Ultron misunderstands this mission and it all goes wrong from there. Spader's portrayal of Ultron is perfect, bringing a slow, menacing delivery to the role and giving Ultron an ominous persona. However, perhaps Ultron's most intimidating facet comes from the intelligence and not from the artificial. Like current concerns about real-world AI, Ultron clearly reflects the flaws of his human programming, at times becoming frustrated, impatient, or even downright angry. All in all, a hearty recommendation for thought-provoking fun, if you are one of the very few who hasn't already seen this movie, watch it soon!

**Bonus content!** In one scene, Ultron forgets the word for “children,” calling them “smaller people.” The thought that an AI system with such immense intelligence and processing power could be so busy conniving and plotting that he could forget as simple a word as “children” is truly terrifying.

**Reviewed by Kile Marks**

### **Alien: Covenant (2017) (★★★ – 3 stars)**

If we learned anything from the first Alien movie it is to never trust an android. *Alien: Covenant* follows the crew of the Covenant, a colonization ship that is on a years-long mission to start a civilization on a distant planet. Michael Fassbender stars as both Walter, an android that monitors and maintains the Covenant and her crew, and David, an earlier model android that looks identical to Walter. David was first introduced in *Prometheus*, the prequel to this movie. Despite their looks, David and Walter could not be more different. Fassbender does an excellent job of subtly creating two very different personifications of humanoid artificial intelligence. Fassbender uses tone, different accents (one British, one American), and mannerisms to portray the drastically different personalities of the androids and their views on humanity. I have always been a fan of the Alien franchise, *Aliens* being my favorite. However, this movie was not as enjoyable to me as the previous films. The pace is slower, and *Covenant* is more cerebral and less focused on the scary xenomorph aliens than the earlier movies. It is also difficult to feel invested in the outcome of the majority of the cast of characters. The storyline focuses on David and less on the crew. I do think it is worth a watch, but I suggest either watching *Prometheus* first, or at least reading a synopsis of the prequel's plot, which will help with understanding David's character and motivations.

**Bonus content!** Fassbender avoided watching the previous Alien movies and instead studied other depictions of AI, such as Sean Young's character in *Blade Runner* and Hal from *2001: A Space Odyssey*. I think he made a great choice. Previous robots in the Alien series were very stiff, mechanical, and soulless – much like one would think a machine made to look like a human would be. David, and even Walter, have far more humanoid traits, such as curiosity, earnestness, jealousy, adaptability, and arrogance. In the film, these personality traits make it easier for Walter and David to assimilate into the everyday life of the humans around them. I feel like AI has experienced a similar transformation. In recent years the use of AI as a tool in daily life has become more common and easier as technology and platforms evolve to resemble human thoughts and perceptions more



closely.

**Reviewed by Nicole Holtzapple**

### **Blade Runner 2049 (2017) (★★★★ – 4 stars)**

Ryan Gosling. Robin Wright. Neon lights. The best coats. Set 30 years after the original, *Blade Runner 2049* introduces us to a new evil corporation with new versions of replicants with a longer lifespan—but this time, a directive to obey. Director Denis Villeneuve expands on Ridley Scott's original with a bleak, orange, neon, gray, suffocating but expansive landscape, a character in and of itself (you've seen *Dune*, yeah?). Ryan Gosling is K, a mostly-Stoic replicant and Blade Runner tasked with "retiring" older models. This time, there are new Turing-esque tests with darker goals, hologram girlfriends with food and *other* overlays, memory makers and "emanators" that ask you "what is real?" and a secret that could upset the fragile balance between humans and replicants on Earth. And the fight scenes! This is another slow burn, and a long one. But overall, I found it far more engaging than the original, liked it even better on my second watch, and will probably order it on Blu-ray as soon as I submit this review for publication. I saw this before the original and can't decide which to recommend watching first. If you like being thrown into a world and told to figure it out, start with this one. If you like catching cameos and callbacks and don't mind when they're obvious, watch them in order. And if you want to be super fun at parties, watch *Ex Machina* and start debates over who is the bigger psycho-CEO, Oscar Isaac or Jared Leto.

**Bonus content!** Part of the "baseline" test comes from Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire* novel that K is trying to read, but if you haven't read it, don't google the connection until you've seen the movie.

**Reviewed by Erica Wilson**

### **Mission: Impossible – Dead Reckoning Part One (2023) (★★★★ – 4 stars)**

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to watch this movie. Tom Cruise and the *Mission Impossible* production team do not hold back on the nail-biting stunts, gripping action scenes, and plot twists in *Dead Reckoning Part One*. This movie pits Ethan Hunt (Tom Cruise) and his talented crew against an insanely powerful AI known as the Entity, which forces the IMF agent into a series of challenging situations that kept me on the edge of my seat all the way through. Despite the seemingly insurmountable power of this advanced AI, it is human determination and action in the physical realm that ultimately disrupts and challenges the AI's dominance.

**Bonus content!** As a fan of action movies, I really enjoyed watching this. I could see myself watching this movie again to catch the things I missed from the first viewing. If you like the other *Mission: Impossible* movies, you absolutely should watch this one too. Even after nearly three hours of film, there's still plenty of room left in the story for Part Two, and I can't wait!

**Reviewed by Rachel Song**

### **The Creator (2023) (★★★ – 3 stars)**

You'll probably think of Skynet when you learn that this movie is premised on a post-apocalyptic future where people are hunting down AI robots who launched a nuclear attack on the human race. But the movie goes a lot deeper than that, and you'll find yourself conflicted on which species to root for in the ensuing war. This movie is visually stunning and offers some incredible scenes and special

effects that will keep your attention. But it also has a few plot holes, and the characters engage in some questionable decision-making, so it might leave you a bit frustrated by the end.

**Bonus content!** If you're a fan of *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* (which is 100% the best modern Star Wars movie, there's no debate), you'll love watching this movie. They were both directed by Gareth Edwards, and this has that same gritty feel, the same aesthetic, the same sensibility.

**Reviewed by Rich Meneghello**

### **Rebel Moon – Part One: Child of Fire (2024) (□□□ – 3 stars)**

*Rebel Moon* is a classic David and Goliath story about the fight between the band of farmers and fighters and a monolithic government (the Motherland) with territories reaching across various worlds in the vast galaxy. Anthony Hopkins provides the voice for JC-1435 (aka "Jimmy") – an AI robot warrior part of a group that was originally tasked with protecting the royal family of the Motherland before the family's assassination. Jimmy's small but striking role demonstrates how humans can influence AI in a positive manner. The movie had striking cinematography, imaginative creatures, and characters with diverse backgrounds. It was okay and could be worth a watch. I personally wouldn't re-watch it numerous times like some of my other die-hard favorite movies. That being said, the end of the movie made me excited to see Part Two.

**Bonus content!** One of the core inspirations behind *Rebel Moon* was *Seven Samurai*, an iconic 1954 Japanese samurai action film. *Star Wars* and other sci-fi, high-fantasy, and anime films and shows also provided inspiration for *Rebel Moon*. Director Zach Snyder even pitched *Rebel Moon* to Lucasfilm as a *Star Wars* film more than a decade ago. It was also pitched to Warner Bros. as a video game and movie before Netflix picked it up.

**Reviewed by Rachel Song**

### **Rebel Moon – Part Two: The Scargiver (2024) (□□□ – 3 stars)**

Part Two of the *Rebel Moon* series provides the much-desired story progression that the plot from Part One was gearing up for. Anthony Hopkins returns as the voice for Jimmy. While Jimmy did not develop as much as he did in Part One, he plays a larger role in Part Two and is given more screentime in a way that made me love his character more. I liked Part Two more than Part One because I was able to learn more about the characters and see how the war between the farmers and the Motherland turns out. If you are a fan of Part One, Part Two is definitely worth a watch. Like Part One, I wouldn't put the *Rebel Moon* series down as one of my die-hard favorite movies, but the action scenes and the depth of its characters make the movie worth it. Part Two also leaves room for a third installment.

**Bonus content!** *Rebel Moon* was originally scripted to be one movie. Snyder's unwillingness to shorten the film and "lose all the character" led the film to be split into two parts.

**Reviewed by Rachel Song**

## **Conclusion**

We will continue to monitor AI-related developments and provide the most up-to-date information directly to your inbox, so make sure you are subscribed to [Fisher Phillips' Insight System](#). If you have



questions, contact your Fisher Phillips attorney, the authors of this Insight, or any attorney in our [AI, Data, and Analytics Practice Group](#).

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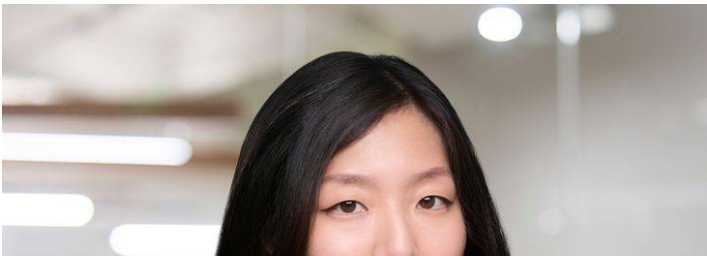
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