

Artificial intelligence

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The movie *Artificial Intelligence: A. I.* is written and directed by Steven Spielberg, and stars Haley Joel Osment (“David”) and Jude Law (“Gigolo Joe”). The movie is set in the future in a civilization that has taken drastic steps to ensure the survival and prosperity of society by limiting human population.

Wealthy nations stay afloat by limiting the number of childbirths allowed per married couple. In fact couples who exceed the minimum legal standard for number of children were penalized by law. Human beings also co-exist with androids, called “mechas” who perform various functions for their human owners, such as gardeners, nannies, laborers, and, in Joe’s case, gigolos.

Traditionally, the androids built by humans were not programmed to feel any emotions. They were programmed merely to assist in the day-to-day lives of human beings. This all changes when a company called Cybertronics creates a boy mecha called David, who is built not only with artificial intelligence, but with emotional intelligence (or EQ) as well.

In other words, David can love, looks for love, and responds to love from a human being. As such, David is an experimental model, since no other mecha had been built quite like him, and Cybertronics selected one of their employees, Henry Swinton (played by Sam Robards) from a list of candidates of possible parents-to-be to take in David and to treat him as his own son.

Henry decides to take David home under the advisement of the doctor who was worried about the health of Henry’s wife Monica (played by Frances O’Connor).

Their own son, Martin (played by Jake Thomas) was seriously ill and was in suspended animation for a long time. The doctors did not see the possibility of him recovering.

The doctor told Henry that instead of worrying about his son, he should start worrying about the emotional wellness of his wife. In order to do that, Henry thought that he should fill the void left by the “ loss” of their son by taking home David to take Martin’s place.

At first, Monica (played by Frances O’Connor) is appalled at the idea. The very thought of taking home an android to take Martin’s place angers Monica in the beginning. Henry then appeases her by telling her that he will take David back.

He then informs Monica that there is a code consisting of 7 random words that, if spoken, will enable a mechanism in David to start acting and feeling like a real boy. He warns her that if that code is enabled, David can no longer be returned. He will have to be destroyed in the factory because if activated, the android would recognize no other mother and would be worthless.

She is initially afraid of David, and tries to ignore him, but her maternal instincts take over, and soon, she warms up to David and starts treating him as her son.

One morning Monica decides to activate the code embedded inside David, and he himself starts to respond to Monica in the way a human child responds to his or her parent. David does everything he can to please Monica, and she responds with warmth and love. At the Swintons, David also

makes friend with Teddy, a mecha teddy bear who speaks and has taken it upon himself to keep an eye out for David.

Unfortunately, David's happy stay at the Swintons, where he is treated as a real live boy and a son, does not last for long. Martin, the Swintons' real son, recovers miraculously from his illness and is sent home to his parents. Upon his arrival, Martin becomes jealous over the attention and love his mother bestows on David.

He starts thinking of ways to get David into trouble, to make his mother Monica love David less, and to give him, Martin, her full love and attention.