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Love and algorithms, 'I'm Your Man' from Germany an intelligent, romantic sci-fi film

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Photo provided

In a not too distant future, Alma, an anthropologist and research director, is compelled to enter an experiment in order to get research funding: she is to evaluate a robot, human-looking, whose behavior and intellect has been designed to be her perfect romantic partner. Alma, being a rational individual who is passionate about her research, is not enthralled by the prospect of living for three weeks with a robot and she enters the experiment claws out. As the movie develops, the relationship between woman and robot of course evolves, until the surprising ending. This touching and amusing German film, "I'm Your Man," opens in Orinda on Jan. 21.

Current dating apps already use algorithms to analyze people's preferences and find for them the best possible matches. The movie takes this a step further and imagines algorithms that create that very special person who will be "the one." Director Maria Schrader, who previously realized the Netflix series "Unorthodox,"

has created a sci-fi romantic story with humorous moments and emotional aspects as well. The very entertaining film is first a reflection on a society that, through algorithms, feeds us what we already like and entangles us in an endless loop populated with our previous choices.

The start of the movie is reminiscent of the film "Her," but has a very different and intriguing dynamic. Tom, the boy-next-door-adorable-robot, is played by British actor Dan Stevens. He has been conceived to meet all of Alma's desires, both physically and intellectually. Stevens plays with a lot of self-irony the complexity of a robot that has been programmed to fit a role, but is also able to learn and improve. But why doesn't Alma fall for the perfect young man? Do we need a perfect match to fall in love? Is complete indulgence of all our dreams that appealing? Have we become so inept at facing the risks of failure that a safe relationship with a make-belief human is a better option?

Maren Eggert portrays Alma as a rigid middle-aged woman who is intellectually very strong and powerful but also has hidden frailties. Her fight between what her intelligence and her reason tells her and what her emotional weakness lures her to do is touching and so well depicted. Overall, it is the dangers of the seductive facilities and shortcuts given to us by technology that Schrader illustrates so well here. In an interview for the Berlin Film Festival where "Ich bin dein Mensch" ("I'm Your Man") was presented, the director said that what attracted her in the short story by Emma Braslavsky that serves as the base of this movie, are the unanswered questions the story raises.

Besides the crafty story and excellent acting, the attraction of the movie comes also from the slightly sci-fi esthetics created by the well-mastered cinematography. The film will be presented for a least a week at the Orinda Theater by the International Film Showcase starting on Jan. 21. Tickets at orindamovies.com

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