

# Sci-fi flick proves Smith not just an action hero

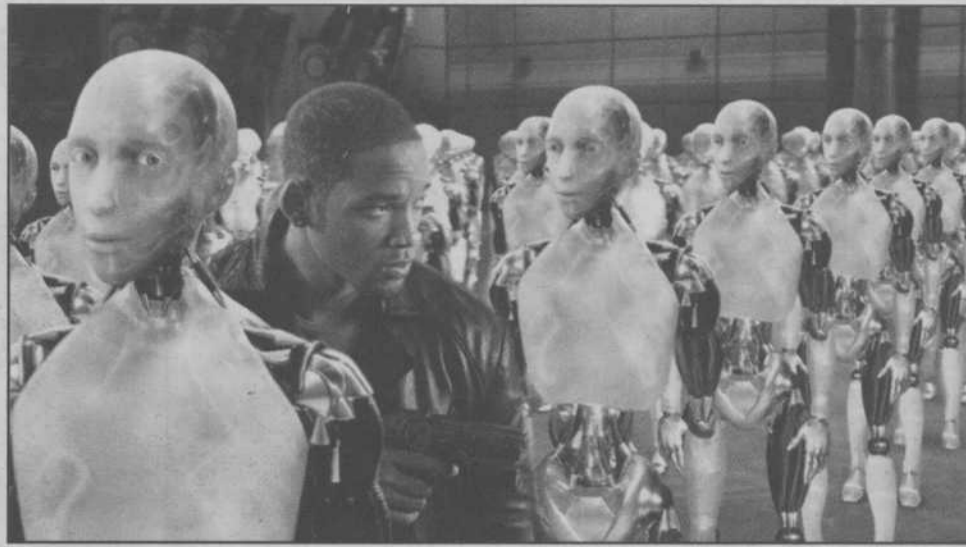
By Kam Williams  
Sentinel-Voice

Chicago, it is the year 2035, with virtually every aspect of life fully automated. Technology has practically taken over. For instance, automobiles can now drive themselves and, thanks to U.S. Robotics (USR), the ratio of robots to humans is 1 to 5.

For this manufacturer of people-friendly androids has figured out how to program their very sophisticated machines for good. And since none has ever committed a crime, nobody bothers to question whether the robots are trustworthy.

Nobody except cynical Del Spooner (Will Smith). Del, a detective on the city's police force, is a nostalgic throwback who still wears Converse sneakers and who likes to drive his car himself. And the world is lucky that he becomes increasingly curious about the circumstances surrounding the suicide of USR's leading scientist, Dr. Alfred Lanning (James Cromwell), who supposedly leapt to his death inside corporate headquarters.

Given the impending roll out of its next generation of robots, the NS-5, the company wants to squelch any rumors circulating that might implicate an automated domestic as-



The undisputed king of the summer blockbuster and a \$10 million-plus-per-movie actor, Will Smith has yet another hit with "I, Robot," a film adaption of an Isaac Asimov novel.

sistant. So, it assures the authorities that their product is "Three Laws Safe," meaning guaranteed to comply with the 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 to 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.

Though his boss, Lt. John Bergin (Chi Coltrane), capitulates to the considerable pressure to accept the official explanation, Del alone remains suspicious and refuses to close the case. USR suggests that he work with attractive Dr. Susan Calvin (Bridget Moynahan), who has been ordered to accommodate him in any way possible.

Besides a little flirting, the pair's relationship is basically all business. She is a shrink of sorts whose job is "to make the robots seem more human." Together, they embark on an intriguing adventure as they first uncover frightening evidence that Dr. Lanning was, in

fact, murdered, and then attempt to get at the root of by whom or what, and why.

This is the fascinating premise behind "I, Robot," a movie very loosely based on a collection of sci-fi stories by Isaac Asimov about robots gone wild. This screen version is the most intellectually intriguing action film of the year, as it raises quite a number of thought-provoking, philosophical questions while simultaneously offering one heck of a wild roller coaster ride with eye-popping special effects.

Expect to witness vintage Will Smith in a familiar, if slightly more serious, role than usual. Instead of wisecracking about aliens, ala "Men in Black," here, he's up against automatons in a relatively sinister, "worst that could happen" scenario. Smith's engaging persona, plus the film's impressive, computer-generated imagery is primarily what distinguishes its familiar-sounding plot points (think Paycheck, Minority Report, and Blade Runner) from other similar sci-fi flicks.

Between cracking a few corny jokes about his ex-wife, Spooner's very intent on determining to what extent artificial intelligence might have spiraled out of control. Is it due to a mad scientist, a greedy CEO, or something beyond anyone's control? What has enabled the rebelling robots to think for themselves, to emote and even to behave independently of their programming?

The surprising answers are satisfying, yet designed to leave you scratching your head wondering about humanity's prospects as you walk up the aisle. That's quality entertainment!

Excellent (4 stars). Rated PG-13 for intense sci-fi action and brief nudity.

## Interview

(Continued from Page 8)

already sees you as attractive, strong and self-assured.

HB: "I got a good act going on. (laughs) And people have bought it. That's lovely."

KW: Do you think of Catwoman as a female empowerment flick?

HB: I think, as women, we suffer because we're expected to behave a certain way in society. At least I've been taught, since I was knee-high to a bull frog to be somewhat subservient to men, to look for a man to rescue me and to be my Prince Charming. And that I was not complete unless I had a man. Catwoman represents the total opposite, that we are okay and complete and full, all by ourselves. That we can do what we want to do, when we want to do it, how we want to do it. We can be in charge of ourselves sexually, and use our sexuality in the ways that we want to, to serve our higher good. I wasn't taught that as a kid. I'm learning it now as an adult."

KW: How has that lesson helped you?

HB: "As I get older, I definitely feel more confident. As I go through each experience that life sends my way, I learn new lessons. I've become more confident and more assured of myself, and I start to care less about what everybody else thinks about who I am evolving into. I've found that great strength and power comes with just not caring what other people think, and realizing that what I think and feel is really what's important for me."

KW: Did you have pets as a child? Were you a cat person or a dog person?

HB: "I was always more of a dog person. I've had dogs my entire life. Never a cat."

KW: So, did you have to study the behavior of cats in preparing for this role?

HB: "I did, because I was more of a dog person. If I had to play a dog, I'd know just how to do it. Being around cats, and the psyche of cats was all new for me. So, I did spend a lot of hours studying cats. I worked on the walk and I tried to implement as many cat-like movements into my character as I possibly could. And I even ended up adopting a cat from the

movie."

KW: Well, you certainly look very natural in the role, like the movements were almost second nature.

HB: "That's good. Hard work pays off, if you really put in the time. When something looks effortless, it's really because they spend so much time rehearsing."

KW: Catwoman's jumpsuit was certainly striking, but I was wondering whether anyone actually walks around on the street in a leather outfit like that?

HB: "Catwoman!"

KW: Did you feel special when you were in that outfit?

HB: "I felt really confident because people reacted to me differently. Everybody stood back. People were afraid to approach me. And when they did, they did so with the utmost respect, and kindness. They measured their words when I had the Catsuit on, that made me act and feel more empowered."

KW: Maybe you should continue to wear it, then.

HB: "I should." (giggles).

## Nielsen

(Continued from Page 8)

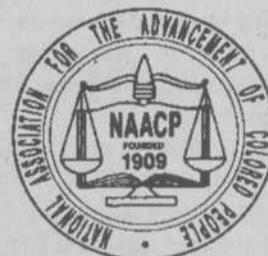
San Francisco in September, and then Detroit, Washington, Dallas and Philadelphia next year.

Last month, the independent Media Rating Council decided not to recommend accreditation of the new service in New York. The council, an association of television, radio and advertising agencies, said it has

concerns about the way minorities are classified under the system.

Nielsen eventually wants to include data from many of the participants in the local measurements in the national sample the company takes.

Critics suggest the national numbers will show the same viewership drops seen in the cities.



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