

Science-ish

Description

Over the past week, I have seen two movies about "science," but in reality, discuss much bigger topics.

The first one I saw was a movie from a few years ago, "Splice," starring Adrien Brody and Sarah Polley. The plot is simple mad scientists gone rogue kind of tale " make a discovery, make something freaky, try to keep it a secret and live to regret that decision.

****WARNING " THERE BE SPOILERS AHEAD!****

The science in the movie is kind of iffy " Brody and Polley, as genetic engineers, splice DNA from a variety of species to create a new life-form and harvest precious chemicals for the pharmaceutical industry. But, when they perish, they go Frankenstein and decide to add something else into the DNA melting pot " MAN.

Moving away from the ethical implications, the animals they splice together would never truly be compatible. According to the X-Rays in the credits, there are reptiles, amphibians, mammals, birds, fish, etc" all in the mix.

Just " no.

And then, they create a new creature that looks like a bird mixed with a lamprey with human-esque eyes, which then gradually turns into something resembling a little girl with a cranial fissure bisecting her head and a very long tail with a stinger at the end. The creature, named "Dren" (get it? Nerd backwards) almost dies before they realize she has TWO sets of lungs, one of which is amphibious.

After a series of events, Dren quickly matures into a woman that Adrien Brody has sex with after learning that Sarah Polley used her DNA to make the hybrid.

Oh, and Dren sprouts wings like an archeopteryx.

Then, as if to make things worse, Dren then scampers off, kills Brody, switches gender, rapes Sarah Polley and dies. And then, surprise surprise, Sarah Polley ends up pregnant and "sells her soul" and unborn child to the same pharmaceutical company that she was originally working for.

The movie ends with her saying, "What"s the worst that could happen?"

Normally, I can shut my brain off for stupid movies and just enjoy it, but I became more and more upset by this film as it slowly pranced along. It got to a point where I was yelling at the TV, "NO! Bad science!"

I believe what bugged me the most was that there are two types of science fiction movies: those based in a close-facsimile to our world (whether in the future or present-esque time) or one based in a different universe with superheroes, aliens, etc.

Splice was visibly in a world quite similar to ours, but pushed the boundaries of science and imagination into the other territory. It required too many intuitive leaps to make it believable.

Take another sci-fi movie based in a world similar to our own – The Fly, by David Cronenberg and Jeff Goldblum.

You take one premise, that Goldblum’s character invents teleportation, and the rest of the movie builds upon that one premise. You learn all the –rules– of the experiment quickly and, when his DNA merges with that of a fly, it’s a believable. And his disgusting transformation needs no other scientific explanation.

The other movie I saw was Ridley Scott’s –Prometheus–.

A lot has been written on the movie from two very different perspectives – that it is a prequel to the Alien movies, and that it is its own movie. And, I don’t think either of those is quite right. I believe it is more of a hybrid of the two, since it has connections to the Alien series, but not quite a straight line.

The science in the movie is a bit more believable because it takes place in such a dystopian future on an alien world with bizarre beings. So, because of that, you’re able to distance yourself from the reality of our world and focus on the mysterious new one displayed on the silver screen.

You do get a bit of DNA/human evolution/creationism/evolution in the movie that muddies the waters, as well as so many hidden meanings regarding empowerment and the merits of life that could make your head spin.

But then there’s the xenomorph.

From all the blogs and commentaries I’ve read, it appears that we are witnessing the evolution of the xenomorph – the spot in the bottle that David finds, the –face lampreys,– the squid baby, giant face hugger and finally an early xenomorph.

And if you take a close look at creature that emerges from the Engineer at the end of the movie, it is similar to the alien we all know and love, but a bit more rudimentary. It is lacking some of the specific traits of the xenomorph that we all know and love.

I enjoyed the movie as a separate entity from Scott’s Alien franchise, but as a prequel lead-in, I can see why people are disappointed. It answers a few bigger questions from that universe, but adds so many more.

Two movies: One that deals with a human/multi-species hybrid that kills scientists and blurs the lines of acceptable science, while the other deals humankind’s search for answers about life, the universe and xenomorphs on an alien world in the far future.

But at least science is IN the movies, right?

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