

Chappie (2015)

Rated R. Running time: 2 hours

Our content ratings (1-10): Violence 5; Language 5; Sex/Nudity 2.

Our star rating (1-5): 3

On every side the wicked prowl, as vileness is exalted among humankind.

Psalms 12:8

Director Neill Blomkamp in his 3rd science fiction film returns to his native South Africa where in the near future Johannesburg is the first city to replace most of its human cops with robots called Scouts. As a result street crime has been greatly reduced. The brainchild of engineer Deon Wilson (Dev Patel), they have enriched the corporation where he works, Tetra Vaal, but he wants to raise the robots to the next level, artificial intelligence. His boss Michelle Bradley (Sigourney Weaver) is content with them as they are. He also has a rival employee Vincent Moore (Hugh Jackman) whose invention The Moose is like a tank set on legs. It's ugly and cumbersome, but with the success of the Scouts the company has set his invention aside. He will stop at nothing to discredit Deon.

Matters become complicated when Deon begins to experiment on a damaged Scout and then is kidnapped by three klutz's who want to use a robot in their criminal activities. Out of this mess emerges the Scout with A.I., its mind like that of a child. They name it Chappie. Deon wants to instill ethics into it, but the crooks work to turn it to crime. There is a lot of action involving the crooks and some higher up thugs demanding they pay a past debt, and of course Vincent and his Moose.

Some of the events are funny, a couple poignant, reminding me of some of the intimate scenes in the animated film *The Iron Giant*, and some aimed at viewers who enjoy the mayhem that erupts when Chappie and The Moose engage each other in combat.

A good deal of the humor is provided by two members of the South African rap-rave group Die Antwoord. Its members Ninji and Yolandi are the whacky 2/3s of the bumbling trio of small time crooks. Ninji is the dumb one, and Yolandi the sentimental one, whose fate is touching.

The strange ending depends on the Cartesian concept of the split between mind and body and might remind you of Johnny Depp's character in *Transcendence* who enters into an existence that transcends his body. The film might not be up to the standard of the director's first film, but it offers plenty to think about and discuss in regard to mechanized law enforcement and the body-mind (or spirit) dualism Descartes vs. the Biblical fusion of soul and body.

The review with a set of discussion questions will be in the April Visual Parables.