



PREVIEW

# I'm Your Man (Ich bin dein Mensch)

When Ira Levin wrote *The Stepford Wives* the world was a very different place. The 1972 society he satirised wasn't reliant on pocket-sized technology and patriarchal hierarchies were woefully rigid. Maria Schrader's *I'm Your Man* looks at similar territory to *Stepford* but through a contemporary gender-flipped lens. Our protagonist Alma (Maren Eggert) doesn't live in perfectly manicured suburbia or need the robot partner she is given to clean her house, stroke her ego or raise her children; instead, he is designed only to make her happy. 'After all,' he says with a fixed, unblinking stare, 'doesn't everyone want to be happy?'

*I'm Your Man* is a sci-fi romcom mashup, but leans harder into the latter; the existence of these robotic partners is never explained much beyond 'science', and the ramifications of their existence within wider society are barely glanced at. The story focuses on Alma, a successful anthropologist, recruited as one of a group of experts to spend a few weeks with a Tom (Dan Stevens), a robot designed to be her perfect partner, and report back on whether she believes robots like him should be allowed to exist.

Alma both is and isn't a typical romcom heroine: she has a demanding career, an ex she hasn't entirely recovered from and a complicated family life, and wears the hell out of a silk trench coat. But she's not a twentysomething 'cool girl' who downs cocktails with an assortment of two-dimensional pals in a luxury apartment. Eggert makes her wary but kind, cerebral but sensitive. She approaches the task of her relationship with bemused professionalism, but cracks of vulnerability soon begin to show. At times she is dismissive and cruel towards Tom, whose reactions are not always what we, or Alma, would expect. While he is programmed to make her happy, that doesn't mean complete obedience, and it's in those moments of defiance that their relationship and Stevens's performance are most intriguing.

The blossoming romance between woman and robot is easy to be swept up in – hard to imagine anyone resisting Tom's charms. At first Stevens plays up the robot, glitching and offering precise but unsolicited advice. But, as he promises Alma, he improves, learning from her and becoming more nuanced and sensitive. Stevens sparks the film's greatest joys with Tom's physicality, creating subtle comedy with the way he holds a ten-euro note or pours a coffee. Even as Tom evolves into something increasingly human, Stevens offers an understated reminder of his robotic origins with a peculiar flick of the wrist. Particular praise must go to Sandra Hüller as Tom and Alma's relationship counsellor, gliding into scenes dressed as a retrofuturistic flight

attendant and delivering exposition effortlessly entangled within sensible advice. While *I'm Your Man* doesn't entirely embrace romcom gender stereotypes and suggest that all an uptight woman needs is a candlelit bath, some flowers and a few compliments to be happy, it also doesn't stray very far from that path. In the second act some regressive ideas begin to creep in and our heroine, now dressed like a resident of Stepford, seems to lose sight of the complicated woman we first met. But in the final act the film restores Alma to her former glory and the conclusion, while not perfectly satisfying, doesn't land as a betrayal.

For the most part *I'm Your Man* seems to want to make the opposite point to *The Stepford Wives*, which satirised suburban housewives becoming increasingly reliant on machines to do the chores and pills to make it through the day. Levin's book suggested men didn't care about their wives' existence beyond their ability to do housework and sexually satisfy them and would be perfectly happy with a robot partner. Schrader's film instead posits that being happy might itself chip away at a person's sanity and produce existential chaos. Whether or not that is a price worth paying for being loved and nurtured is something the film isn't quite confident enough to answer.

*I'm Your Man* is an enjoyable but essentially lightweight affair; it poses questions about love, freedom of will, and what it means to be human but doesn't really attempt to answer them. Instead we're left with something far simpler, and its 105 minutes pass by pleasantly, which according to Tom is all we needed in the first place – just don't think too hard, and 'Be happy.'

**Leila Latif, *Sight and Sound*, September 2021**

## **About the director**

One of Germany's most acclaimed actresses, Maria Schrader is a two-time winner of the German Film award and three-time winner of the Bavarian Film award. She achieved her international breakthrough with *Aime e & Jaguar* in 1999. She worked with directors such as Margarethe von Trotta, Peter Greenaway, Max Färberböck and Agnieszka Holland.

Recently, she starred in the Emmy-winning series *Deutschland 83/86/89*. Her directorial debut *Love Life* premiered at the Festa del Cinema in Rome (2007). Her second film *Stefan Zweig: Farewell to Europe* premiered at Locarno's Piazza Grande in 2016. It then became Austria's Oscar submission and won the People's Choice Award for Best European Film at the European Film Awards. In 2020 Maria was the first German director to win a Primetime Emmy for the series *Unorthodox*. *Unorthodox* also received two nominations at the 2021 Golden Globes.

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## I'M YOUR MAN (ICH BIN DEIN MENSCH)

*Director:* Maria Schrader  
©: Letterbox Filmproduktion, Südwestrundfunk  
*Production Company:* SHPG - Studio Hamburg Produktion Group, Letterbox Filmproduktion GmbH  
*In association with:* SWR  
*Presented by:* Majestic Filmverleih, Südwestrundfunk  
*World Sales:* Beta Cinema  
*Executive Producers:* Dan Stevens, Maria Schrader  
*Producer:* Lisa Blumenberg  
*Commissioning Editor for SWR:* Jan Berning, Katharina Dufner  
*Line Producer:* Marcus Kreuz  
*Production Manager:* Martin Rohrbeck  
*Post-production Supervisor:* Petra Kader-Göbel  
*1st Assistant Director:* Tanja Däberitz  
*Script Supervisor:* Rosa Schein  
*Casting:* Anja Dührberg  
*Screenplay:* Jan Schomburg, Maria Schrader  
*Inspired by the short story 'Ich bin dein Mensch' by:* Emma Braslavsky  
*Director of Photography:* Benedict Neuenfels  
*2nd Unit Director of Photography:* Phillip Wölke  
*Gaffer:* Benjamin Dreythaler  
*Stills Photographer:* Christine Fenzl  
*Visual Effects:* Automatik VFX  
*Editor:* Hansjörg Weissbrich  
*Art Director:* Cora Pratz  
*Costume Designer:* Anette Guther  
*Make-up Designers:* Barbara Kreuzer, Andrea Allroggen  
*Title Design:* Martin Eichhorn  
*Music:* Tobias Wagner  
*Choreographer/Dance Instructor:* Daniel Stelter  
*Sound Design:* Daniel Iribarren, Sebastian Morsch  
*Production Sound Mixer:* Patrick Veigel  
*Re-recording Mixer:* Adrian Baumeister  
*Dialogue Editor:* Sabrina Naumann  
*Stunt Co-ordinator:* Rainer Werner

## Cast

Maren Eggert (*Dr Alma Felsler*)  
Dan Stevens (*Tom*)  
Sandra Hüller (*Terrareca host*)  
Lans Löw (*Julian, Alma's ex*)  
Wolfgang Hübisch (*Alma's father*)  
Annika Meier (*Cora*)  
Falilou Seck (*Roger*)  
Jürgen Tarrach (*Dr Stuber*)  
Henriette Richter-Röhl (*Steffi*)  
Monika Oschek (*woman in café*)  
Karolin Oesterling (*Chloé*)  
Marlene Sophie Haagen (*Jule*)  
Victor Pape-Thies (*Leon*)  
Inga Busch (*Regina*)  
Amal Keller (*café saleswoman*)  
Mignon Remé (*Rita*)  
Gabriel Munoz Munoz (*Barmann*)  
Franz Schmidt (*Nico*)  
Christoph Glaubacker (*Stefan*)  
Sebastian Schwarz

Germany 2021  
105 mins

Courtesy of Curzon

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## IN PERSON & PREVIEWS

**BFI & Radio Times Television Festival presents:**  
**TV Preview: Vigil + Q&A with cast and creatives**  
Mon 23 Aug 18:10  
**UK Premiere: I've Been Trying to Tell You**  
**+ Q&A with Alasdair McLellan and Bob Stanley**  
Fri 3 Sep 18:30, 21:00  
**Mark Kermode Live in 3D at the BFI**  
Mon 6 Sep 18:00  
**Black to Front + Q&A with special guests TBA**  
Tue 7 Sep 18:00  
**Doctor Who: The Evil of the Daleks (animated)**  
Sun 12 Sep 12:00  
**Preview: Sweetheart + Q&A with director Marley Morrison**  
Mon 13 Sep 17:50  
**Prime Suspect: 30th Anniversary**  
**(First Series Complete Screening)**  
Sun 19 Sep 14:00  
**Lynda La Plante in Conversation**  
Sun 19 Sep 18:45  
**60th Anniversary: Whistle Down the Wind**  
**+ actor Hayley Mills in Conversation**  
Sun 3 Oct 12:00

## REGULAR PROGRAMME

**Projecting the Archive: The Blue Lagoon**  
**+ intro by actor Susan Stranks (young Emmeline)**  
Tue 10 Aug 18:00  
**Member Picks: Almost Famous**  
Thu 12 Aug 17:45  
**Silent Cinema: The Wit and Wisdom of A.A. Milne**  
**+ intro by Bryony Dixon, BFI Curator**  
Sun 15 Aug 12:40  
**DVD Launch: Great Noises That Fill the Air: Music, Poetry and**  
**Performance on Film**  
Mon 16 Aug 17:50  
**S.O.U.L. Fest 2021**  
Fri 20-Sun 22 Aug  
**Experimenta: Thundercrack!**  
**+ intro by Jane Giles, author of 'Scala Cinema 1987-1993**  
Sat 21 Aug 17:00  
**Relaxed Screening: Stand Clear of the Closing Doors**  
Tue 24 Aug 18:00  
**Woman with a Movie Camera Preview:**  
**Souad + pre-recorded Q&A with director Ayten Amin**  
Tue 24 Aug 18:00  
**Terror Vision: Dr Terror's House of Horrors**  
Thu 26 Aug 20:40

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