

A T T H E

FROM THE MACHINE WOMAN TO R2-D2 TO *M3GAN*, HERE'S A LOOK AT SOME OF THE CREEPIEST,

BY JASON TEICH

→ **ROBOTS, ANDROIDS AND CYBORGS, USUALLY HUMANOID** in appearance and housing advanced artificial intelligence systems along with sentience, have been a staple of science fiction cinema for almost 100 years, producing countless indelible characters along the way. Here's a look at 23 of the greatest.

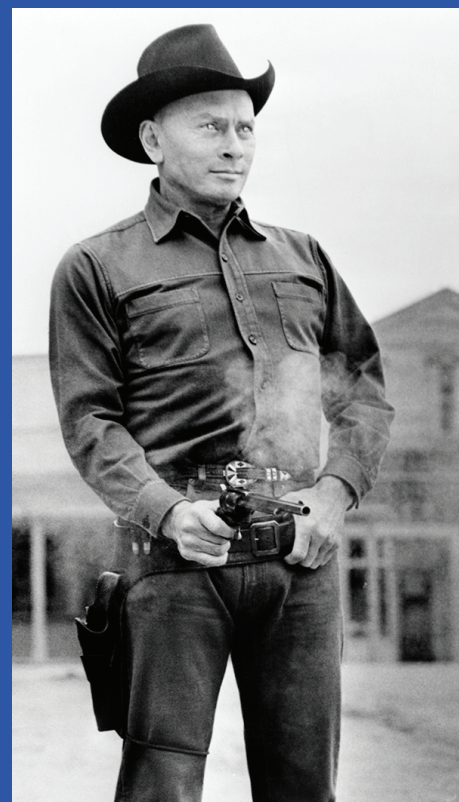


THE MACHINE WOMAN, METROPOLIS (1927)

The Machine Woman of Fritz Lang's seminal sci-fi classic *Metropolis* may not have been the first robot in cinema, but she made sure the conceit was here to stay. As an android who can pass for human, she leads a workers' revolt against their capitalistic overlords, though this is somehow depicted as bad. It was 1927. In Germany. They may not have had their fingers on the moral pulse.

KLAATU, THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL (1951)

When the humanoid alien Klaatu arrives to threaten Earth with annihilation if we use nuclear weapons recklessly in Robert Wise's Cold War-era classic, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, he's protected by an 8-foot tall, metallic humanoid robot, Gort, who melts adversaries with a laser blast from his cyclops eye.



THE GUNSLINGER, WESTWORLD (1973)

In Michael Crichton's sci-fi classic, *Westworld*, about an animatronic Old West theme park where the robots run amok and slaughter the guests, Yul Brynner's malfunctioning android hunts our human leads across the artificial desert landscape deep into the bowels of the underground control complex.

MOVIES

CRAZIEST AND MOST BRILLIANT ROBOTS AND CYBORGS TO GRACE A CENTURY OF CINEMA.



THE STEPFORD WIVES (1975)

In *The Stepford Wives*, the local patriarchy of a small Connecticut town takes it upon themselves to murder their wives and replace them with submissive, “well-behaved” android replicas.



R2-D2, STAR WARS (1977)

While the Skywalkers get the headlines, *Star Wars* wouldn't be *Star Wars* without the droids. Rebellious astromech droid R2-D2 and fusspot protocol droid C-3PO keep our heroes safe and provide us with laughs as the true odd couple of the galaxy far, far away.

HUMANOID ANDROIDS, ALIEN (1979)

In the legendary *Alien* franchise, the humanoid androids (or artificial people, as some prefer to be called), particularly the terrifying Ash, the loyal Bishop (Lance Henriksen) and Michael Fassbender's epic sicko David, are as important to the texture of these films as the deadly xenomorphs and their human prey.





THE TERMINATOR (1984)

While most cyborgs are human beings with biomechanical enhancements, the T-800 terminators introduced in James Cameron's sci-fi classic, *The Terminator*, are distinct as humanoid combat machines with an outer layer of organic human tissue for camouflage and infiltration, while the liquid metal T-1000 introduced in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991) can shape-shift into any human or human-size object it wants, while transforming its limbs into blades. They can't be bargained with, they can't be reasoned with and they absolutely will not stop, ever, until you are dead.

JOHNNY 5, SHORT CIRCUIT (1986)

When prototype military robot Strategic Artificially Intelligent Nuclear Transport #5 is struck by lightning mid-demonstration in *Short Circuit*, he gains sentience and becomes "Johnny 5," a precocious, lively robot who desperately wants to learn about the world and also stay alive.



MURPHY, ROBO-COP (1987)

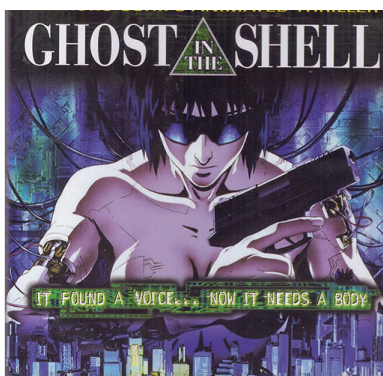
A Paul Verhoeven masterpiece, *Robo-Cop* introduces us to its iconic titular protagonist, also named Murphy, a murdered cop resurrected by advanced computer technology as a memory-wiped cyborg who sets about rediscovering his identity and avenging his own killing.



DATA, STAR TREK The Soong-type synthetic intelligence android life-form and Chief Operations Officer of the USS Enterprise in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and its four big-screen adaptations (1994, 1996, 1998, 2002), Data is a loyal, brilliant and highly ethical crewmate, and his quest to better understand human nature and emotions provides an endless fount of comedy and drama.

FEMBOTS, AUSTIN POWERS (1997)

In the Bond parody *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery*, the Fembots, gorgeous female androids and infiltration units designed to seduce and eliminate targets, are themselves parodies of similar androids in the 1970s TV series, *The Bionic Woman*. Despite their decades of man-eating, when Austin pops his shirt open, the Fembots can't take the heat.



MAJOR MOTOKO KUSANAGI, GHOST IN THE SHELL Major Motoko Kusanagi, protagonist of the manga series *Ghost in the Shell* and its two eponymous film adaptations (1995 and 2004), is a full-body cyborg with a human brain in mechanical casing and the assault team leader for Public Security Section 9. Her leadership, intelligence and moral depth anchor the story and guide her team's counterterrorist efforts.

EVANGELIONS, NEON GENESIS

Evangelions, of the TV series *Neon Genesis Evangelion* and its feature film adaptations, most notably *The End of Evangelion* (1997), are massive bioengineered humanoid entities integrated with advanced technology and weaponry, containing the souls of human beings and piloted by living people.



A Guide to Beings and Techno-Beings

Human being: An individual of the species *Homo sapiens*, distinguished from other organisms by superior intelligence, technological innovation, opposable thumbs with precision grip, complex language and upright bipedal stance.

Humanoid: A nonhuman entity that resembles a human being in shape and form.

Robot: A programmable, algorithm-driven machine, often metallic, capable of complex, autonomous behaviors and perceiving and interacting with its environment.

Android: A humanoid robot.

Cyborg: A being whose organic body parts are integrated with artificial, often machine, components.

Synthetic being: An artificial autonomous entity. This can include robots, androids and cyborgs, as well as genetically engineered humans such as replicants and fabricants, which weren't considered for this list of techno beings.

THE IRON GIANT (1999)

In Brad Bird's *The Iron Giant*, the titular Giant is a 50-foot-tall humanoid alien war machine designed for mass destruction until it crash-lands on Earth and befriends a brave, precocious young boy and his tight-knit local community.



DAVID, A.I. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (2001)

David is a small humanoid android known as a mecha in Steven Spielberg's film *Artificial Intelligence*. He has the appearance of a child and the unique ability to love and desire love in return. With the help of fellow mecha, Gigolo Joe, David makes his way to the forbidden land of Manhattan to seek the one thing all children want: their mother.



ANDREW, BICENTENNIAL MAN (1999)

In the film *Bicentennial Man*, this NDR series robot goes from loyal slave to self-possessed freedman. He pioneers medical breakthroughs, chases love, replaces his mechanical innards with mortal aging human equivalents and petitions for recognition as a human.

DOCTOR OCTOPUS, SPIDER-MAN

In *Spider-Man 2* (2004) and *Spider-Man: No Way Home* (2021), Otto Octavius, aka Doctor Octopus, has a neural interface implanted in his spine, allowing him to mentally control four massive externally attached mechanical limbs, making him a formidable cybernetic adversary.

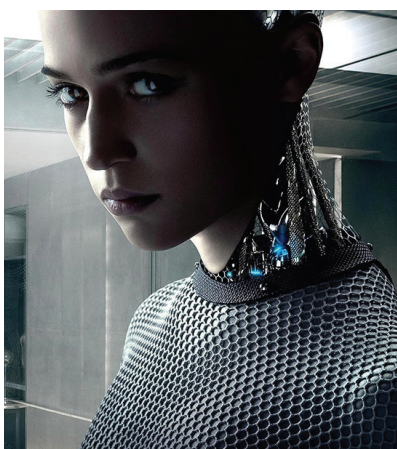


TRANSFORMERS (1984)

Heroic autobot Optimus Prime and villainous Decepticon Megatron, introduced in the animated TV series and featured in the modern live-action film adaptations starting in 2007, are giant, sentient alien robots from planet Cybertron capable of transforming into cars and other objects.

WALL-E (2008)

In the world's ecocidal ruins, Earth's last robot—WALL-E, a hopelessly romantic Waste Allocation Load Lifter: Earth Class—is cleaning up the mess, one compacted trash cube at a time, when love, adventure and outer space come calling.



AVA, EX MACHINA (2014)

In Alex Garland's *Ex Machina*, next-gen android Ava passes the "Turing test," proving her human-level-and-then-some smarts, besting her creator.



ALITA: BATTLE ANGEL (2019)

A resurrected Martian cyborg super-soldier with a human brain and robotic body whose epic combat and rollerball skills, fierce humanity and ardent desire to uncover her origins power every second of Robert Rodriguez's thrilling adaptation of the classic cyberpunk manga series named after her fearsome character.



AFTER YANG (2021)

In Kogonada's film, *Yang* is a young techno-sapient, a humanoid android with the appearance of a Chinese teen boy, charged with providing companionship and cultural connection to a young adopted Chinese American girl. But when Yang's circuitry breaks down, it seems there may be more to his past than meets the eye.



M3GAN (2022),

a Model 3 Generative Android in the film of the same name, is an android doll with advanced AI designed as companion and protector to Cady, a young orphan girl. Her acute emotional responsiveness turns deadly when either she or Cady is threatened.