

SIMULANT

A film by April Mullen 95 mins, Canada, 2023 Language: English

Distribution

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"If Al's develop the ability to self-govern and create their own memories, at what point does their consciousness intersect with that of humanity?" *Director, April Mullen*

LOGLINE

A humanoid Al's attempt to win over a widow's heart places it in the path of a government agent trying to stop the rise of machine consciousness.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

The laws governing androids dictate that owners must deactivate unwanted Simulants (SIMS). But since Faye (Jordana Brewster) already pulled the plug on her late husband, she can't bring herself to do the same to Evan (Robbie Amell), his android counterpart – even after she realizes her relationship with him is only prolonging her grief. Instead of deactivating Evan, Faye sets him up in an apartment to live illegally on his own. While there he meets Casey (Simu Liu), a brilliant programmer who helps him become more human in order to win Faye back. Unbeknownst to Evan, his new friend is wanted for questioning by a determined Artificial Intelligence Compliance Enforcement (AICE) agent Kessler (Sam Worthington). Evan has to win over Faye's heart before they are both discovered and he loses everything.

LONG SYNOPSIS

The near future. Androids walk among us. Some look, talk, and act like robots. Others, called Simulants, are physically indistinguishable from humans. You could pass one on the street without knowing what it was. Or you could engage with it for pleasure and decide to leave its identity a mystery. No matter what you choose, it's reassuring to know that all androids have to obey the Four Precepts: Do not harm humans. Obey humans at all times. Obey local and international law. Do not interfere with other androids.

This is the world Evan (Robbie Amell) and Faye Aline (Jordana Brewster) inhabit. They are an affluent couple with a cottage in the country and have their very own Land-based Interior Service Android, or L.I.S.A. Unfortunately, their picture-perfect life is about to shatter. On their way back to the city one day, a truck slams into their car. The accident leaves Evan dead and Faye seriously injured. But was this just a dream? Evan thinks so, because when he wakes up in his bed months later, there's not a scratch on him. He goes downstairs to find Faye making breakfast. Still, something is awry. Nevertheless, the day goes on as many have before. Lisa does chores. Faye paints. Evan plays piano. But when the eerie strain of it all becomes too much, Faye reveals something to Evan that changes everything.

Faye explains to Evan that what he experienced was not a dream, but a memory. The car accident left Evan in a coma and on life support. Faye eventually pulled the plug, but not before activating an android Simulant of her husband and uploading his memories to it. And that's who Evan is now. Faye

has a Simulant too. She keeps it in a special capsule in their house. Having these Simulants was supposed to be a way for her and Evan to live forever, but neither anticipated forever would come so soon. She has tried to use Evan's Simulant to overcome her loss, but the truth is, it is only prolonging her grief.

The laws governing androids dictate owners must deactivate unwanted Simulants, however, Faye can't bring herself to take another Evan out of the world. Instead, she sets him up in a temporary residence on his own. There he meets Casey (Simu Liu), a brilliant programmer who removes inhibitors in Evan's coding and helps him become more human in hopes it will make Faye want him back.

Unbeknownst to Evan, his new friend is wanted by Kessler (Sam Worthington), a determined Artificial Intelligence Compliance Enforcement (AICE) agent responsible for tracking down illegally operating androids and their human masters. It appears Evan isn't the only Simulant Casey has tampered with. Another is Esme (Alicia Sanz). She's captured by Kessler. He questions her and studies her code and abilities to try and find out where Casey is and what he's capable of. But Esme doesn't give Kessler the answers he's looking for. Instead, she slowly starts to win him over. Kessler starts to question his own beliefs and finds himself growing fond of having Esme around. That all comes to a crashing halt after a raid on a trailer park full of illegal Simulants uncovers a secret that will force Kessler to cut ties with Esme and try to stop Casey at all costs.

Meanwhile, Evan's efforts to get Faye back have not fared well. Despite him becoming more human, Faye seems to be slipping away. It's clear she has become uncomfortable with their little arrangement. To make matters worse, a romantic relationship is developing between her and a friend that owns a gallery.

With Kessler closing in, Evan and Casey are forced to flee. They take refuge at Evan's cottage. A showdown with Kessler is imminent. Evan almost loses everything, but he finally figures out a way for him and Faye to live happily ever after.

SIMULANT (aka SIM, an android with the appearance and downloaded memories of pre-existing humans)

Simulants are designed perfectly to replicate human beings, they are almost non-distinguishable on a physical, vocal, intellectual and social level.

What makes *Simulant* truly unique and brings the film to the next level is how far advanced every SIM is. Not only physically and intellectually, but every SIM is built to contain the essence of the spirit and personality of the specific human they are programmed with. It begs the question if we can no longer distinguish between SIM and humans, how do we continue to differentiate between the two? At that point is there still a difference?

MAIN CAST

<u>Sam Worthington</u> (Avatar, Avatar: The Way of Water, Clash of the Titans) KESSLER - An Artificial Intelligence Compliance Enforcement (AICE) agent who has hardened to a world that has grown to accept human-like androids as a substitute for actual human beings. He becomes determined to find the person responsible for bringing the simulant's AI to this level of consciousness and to make sure it never happens again.

<u>Simu Liu</u> (Shang Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings, Barbie) CASEY - A leader and brilliant programmer spearheading a revolution where simulants and human beings can co-exist.

Robbie Amell (*Code 8*, *Upload*, *The Babysitter*) EVAN - A SIM coming to terms with the reality that he is not his flesh and blood human counterpart that died in a tragic car crash. Determined to get his wife back at any cost, he embarks on a journey to regain his humanity, even if it means breaking a few laws and being on the wrong side of the Artificial Intelligent Compliance Enforcement agency.

<u>Jordana Brewster</u> (*Fast & Furious* franchise, *The Faculty*) FAYE - Faye is a successful painter whose idyllic life is dramatically upended when her husband Evan dies in an unfortunate accident. In her grief, Faye activates a lifelike android who was made in Evan's exact image.

DIRECTOR'S PULL QUOTES

"In a very real near future, where technological advancements force us to reckon with our conceptual limitations around life, death and consciousness, how do we as humans push ourselves into the next stage of evolution?" Director, April Mullen

"This film stamps our generation. Whether we like it or not, we are a society that walks alongside AI, Infiltrating every aspect of our day-to-day life at frightening speeds; you only need to check your newsfeed to see the "who's who" weighing in on this momentous shift in humankind. Artificial intelligence is now creating original content; paintings, essays, poetry; and this is just the beginning. Simulant will be a chapter in this discussion and will be looked upon for decades to come." Director, April Mullen

"It begs the question if we can no longer distinguish between SIM and human, how do we continue to differentiate between the two? At that point, is there still a difference? " Director, April Mullen

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The sparks of life, the intangible, unreal and minuscule moments of awe are exactly what drew me to filmmaking and directing. In life, two polarizing miracles of the heart occur while being in our fragile human form: Love/Birth and Loss/Death. How can these human experiences be cemented into a moving picture, left to resonate and connect audiences to a common emotion that reminds us of what it truly means to be human?

Simulant demands we explore Love and Loss and their unhinging power over our morals. Faye and Evan's love story feels dangerously alive, weaving wildly through the greater theme of the film: how do we allow life to end? Is there a moral code we must uphold to protect the fragility of love between us?

If we could use AI to preserve our memories, dreams and connections to serve our mortality/immortality and those we love, would we? Should we? Would you?

As human beings, we are motivated by two primary states: running towards pleasure and bliss or away from pain and suffering. Everything we step into can be boiled down to this simple concept. Suppose we could recognize these inherent motivations with every decision we face. Could we learn to push to a new level and grow into a further evolution of experience? An evolution that would allow us to see the strength we can achieve through the pain of loss.

As a Director, I'm intrigued by these questions and the moral and philosophical dilemmas being presented to society as our world continues integrating more advanced AI into our lives.

Simulant speaks to society's challenges when mixing primal human emotions like love and loss with advanced AI technology camouflaged in human form. I intend to plant the seeds of contemplation in the minds of audiences, igniting in them the spark to start questioning the philosophical gray areas around consciousness and the limits around their own capacity to feel pain and loss.

Director, April Mullen (Wander, 88, Below Her Mouth)

PRODUCER STATEMENT

Simulant is an elevated sci-fi that confronts powerful themes in an intimate low-fi setting. The film explores topical issues surrounding AI, prompting numerous philosophical, emotional and ethical questions society is currently grappling with. The film also explores the themes of mortality and complicated grief, challenging our traditional notions of loss, life after death and the difficulties that arise when humans use technology in an attempt to fill their deepest and darkest emotional voids.

Simulant is extremely relevant and hits on themes the world is hungry to dissect. How do we use AI to better our lives while keeping the magic of the human experience intact and authentic? In recent years the world has experienced firsthand the surprisingly intuitive abilities of AI, shocking us all with its speedy integration into our daily lives. Simulant is an extension of those complicated feelings we all now have surrounding the powers of AI. Set in a world that feels familiar to our own, Simulant allows audiences to easily relate to our main characters, as they struggle to understand what it means to be a conscious being.

A sexy thriller with a stylized aesthetic, gritty action, meaty characters, and a female director at the top of her game, *Simulant* is a riveting rollercoaster that will leave audiences questioning the human

experience as we know it. April Mullen has an unparalleled ability to pull outstanding performances from actors and she has far exceeded her reputation on *Simulant*. Whether human or robot, Mullen has left us sympathizing with each character's humanity. She has executed effectively her distinctive vision of a future where love, loss, consciousness and survival intersect in uncharted ways.

The past 15 years of experience in the feature film marketplace have provided me with invaluable wisdom in creating an end product that is both thought-provoking and entertaining. *Simulant* is just that, an easily digestible, tremendously topical sci-fi that tackles philosophical dilemmas while keeping audiences on the edge of their seats.

Simulant sparks our curiosity about what's to come for all of us entering this strange new world. Excited to bring this one to life!

Tim Doiron Lead Producer, (Wander, 88, Relax I'm from the Future)

PRODUCTION HISTORY:

Simulant, originally titled *Hello Stranger*, was written by Ryan Christopher Churchill. This project reunites April Mullen in the director's chair, with Tim Doiron and James van der Woerd producing. Their previous collaboration in these roles was 2020's paranoia thriller, *Wander*.

Utilizing the gritty backdrop of Hamilton's cityscape (with some subtly-futuristic adjustments) and its nearby rural lands as the setting, *Simulant* began shooting in the last days of January 2022. With COVID-19 scares and protocols in place, production began at a trailer park in the most rural of locations for the shoot in Puslinch, Ontario. After 22 shoot days over the course of 5 weeks, filming wrapped on March 1, 2022.

Post-production started, and after assembling a cut of the film, the VFX process began. From processing dailies during the shoot, all the way until the completion of the final cut of *Simulant*, Urban Post Production (UPP) in Toronto was a part of the process. Orlee Buium was the main editor on *Simulant* and after handing over her incredible cut to UPP, they handled all sound and colour on the project while VFX shots were individually sourced to outside vendors. All digital screens, gunfire and Nexerra technology were a part of the massive job of creating these VFX shots. These shots were delegated to several incredibly talented agencies and vendors from many parts of the world. The VFX process wrapped up in late-2022 and the movie was completed and ready for the world to see for its release in 2023.

ABOUT WANGO FILMS

Formed in 2005 by April Mullen and Tim Doiron, with offices in Los Angeles and Toronto, Wango Films is a full-service production company, founded on a blend of grassroots innovation and bold creativity. Producing partner James van der Woerd joined the team in 2011. Past films include the psychological thriller *Wander* starring Aaron Eckhart and Tommy Lee Jones, 88 and *Relax I'm from*

the Future. Up next for Wango is the feature film action thriller *Unleashed*. The company is focused on elevated genre films with compelling characters from unique voices.

April Mullen - BIO

April Mullen's latest feature directorial offer, *Simulant*, is a sci-fi thriller starring Sam Worthington, Simu Liu, Robbie Amell and Jordana Brewster. Her last feature Wander (2020) is a conspiracy thriller starring Aaron Eckhart, Tommy Lee Jones, Heather Graham, and Katheryn Winnick.

Mullen also directed *Below Her Mouth* (2016), a relentless love story shot entirely by an all-female crew which had its World Premiere at TIFF 2016, and she was honoured with the TIFF Birk Diamond a tribute to Women in Film that same year.

A true maverick in the feature film world, Mullen is known for her bold and stunning visuals, ambitious shooting style, strong performances and unique voice.

Selected directorial TV credits include the pilot for Spencer Sisters which just premiered, CBS's Blood & Treasure, Netflix's *Tiny Pretty Things*, *Lethal Weapon*, *The Rookie* and *Wynonna Earp*.

Her previous features include: 88 (2015), an action thriller, *Dead Before Dawn 3D* (2012), which confirmed April Mullen as the youngest person and first woman to direct a live-action stereoscopic 3D feature film. The film was celebrated for its technological achievement and was awarded the Perron Crystal.

Mullen is co-founder of the independent production company Wango Films, alongside Tim Doiron. The company has produced eight films to date.

April Mullen Short Bio:

A true maverick in the feature film world, April Mullen is known for her bold and stunning visuals, ambitious shooting style, strong performances and unique voice. As a Director, Mullen is a pioneer and force to young female directors. She has been at the helm of 8 feature films and over 20 episodes of television. Her latest feature as a Director, *Simulant*, is completed and being distributed theatrically in 2023. *Simulant* is a Sci-Fi Thriller that stars Sam Worthington, Simu Liu, Robbie Amell and Jordana Brewster.

April Mullen Demo Reel & Select TV Episodes:

Demo Reel

Select TV Episodes

Password: mullen

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an APRIL MULLEN film

SIMULANT

Directed by APRIL MULLEN

Starring
ROBBIE AMELL
JORDANA BREWSTER
ALICA SANZ
With
SIMU LIU
And
SAM WORTHINGTON

Produced by TIM DOIRON p.g.a JAMES VAN DER WOERD p.g.a.

Written by RYAN CHRISTOPHER CHURCHILL

Original Music by BLITZ BERLIN

Executive Producers SIMU LIU

Executive Producers
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APRIL MULLEN

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Production Attorneys DANIEL GOLDENBERG

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CYNTHIA ANN MURRAY, DEAN ARMSTRONG, EIZAL ANN BAUTISTA, KALANI BARI, MANOLIS ZONTANOS, MEGHAN HUGHES, MEINA ISTAFANOUS, MITCHELL BRUCE, MUHAMMAD ZAFAR IQBAL, OLGA SOKOL

TOMISIN ODESILO, VLAD KABANETS, ANDREA COOK-GRAHAM, CODY POTTER-WILSON, FARAH FOSTER MANNING, LESLEY LEE, LUNA SZETO, MESHACH O'BRIEN, ROY URBANOZO, STELLA LEE, WESLEY CHOY

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JAKE RICE, JUWAN CLARKE, LA TOYA SALMON, MAHER EL HARES, MANISHA MAHARALH, MICHELLE DOIRON, PETER KAEWANKA, SCOTT GERARD, SHANNON MILLER, SOLE COLIE, VERONICA

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MUSIC

"Behind the Sun"

Performed by Odesza

Written by Harrison Mills and Clayton Knight

Courtesy of Foreign Family Collective Publishing, LLC

"For One Moment"

Words and Music by Lee Hazelwood

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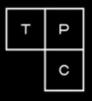
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