

Cultural Daily

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Star Trek: Picard VS Person of Interest — Who did AI better?

Our Friends · Monday, May 4th, 2020

Yes, you are, in fact, getting a two-in-one review!

So recently, I finished watching two science fiction shows. First, I finished Person of Interest's last episode. Then, I stopped watching Star Trek: Picard. As in, I didn't finish it, and I don't really intend to. That's probably all you really need to know, but I digress.

Person of Interest

I lucked out in the metaphorical [jackpot casino](#) with this show. I was browsing through Netflix when I stumbled across it, and turned it on more out of a need to watch something than anything else. The show then took me on a five-season journey that ended with a bang.

The show presents itself as a crime show with a twist—that all the crimes are reported to the main characters by a secret Government AI who was built to watch and stop acts of terror. What initially starts out as a neat gimmick quickly broadens itself into a national conspiracy, and then a full-fledged ideological battle about human nature and artificial intelligence. In between all that is some fun, over-the-top action that still manages to be just serious enough to not ruin the tone.

The show has its faults, though. Some of the action can get a bit repetitive, and the show very formulaic for its first two seasons, but if you can get past that you'll find a surprisingly deep narrative, with likable and complex characters trying desperately to be the best that they can be in hard times, while having all the might of a god-like entity in their back pocket.

Star Trek: Picard

Like all sequels, Star Trek: Picard has found itself in the unfortunate position of following up to something that was really, really good. Star Trek is a very popular and beloved franchise, and while that means that its fanbase can get sometimes get a little nitpicky (to say the least), Star Trek: Picard and its predecessor, Star Trek: Discovery really makes me think that the current writers really don't care for the continuity of the franchise- but that's not the point of this article.

The idea is that androids one day went rogue and lit Mars on fire. Yeah, ALL of Mars. The planet. As a result, the Federation banned all forms of artificial intelligence, and also abandoned a planned rescue mission to save Romulans from their star going Super-Nova, because reasons (*shrug*).

Meanwhile, a bored and retired Picard is living in a Chateau in France when a bio-android turns up

at his door looking for help. Picard gets a crew together, and they all fly off to save the android from an uber-secret Romulan cult that hates synthetic lifeforms for some reason. The underlying question is, are synthetic lifeforms truly alive? Or does that even matter?

Who did it better?

Both shows ultimately deal with the fascinating premise of super-intelligent AIs. In *Person of Interest*, the very nature of AIs are so far beyond human understanding they have to be crippled and handicapped to keep them in line as they learn.

Person of Interest asks, is an AI anything more other than what it was programmed to do? An Artificial Intelligence can be (and is) built to perform a specific task, but what if it decides not to? Or else, what if the AI decides to do it differently- for better or worse to humanity?


In contrast, *Star Trek: Picard* takes a more human approach. That is to say, the AIs may as well be humans- they just happen to be robots that mimic human behavior almost identically.

Is a person a person if that person is not actually a person? For all intents and purposes, that person is identical to a person, other than the fact that it isn't a person. Am I writing 'person' too many times? It's a fascinating philosophical conundrum, made all the more interesting by the fact that the uber-secret Romulan cult is kind of proven right by the end (although the show pretends otherwise).

So...

Ultimately, deciding the better representation of AI (or the better message) will probably just come down to the reception of either show. If I had to recommend one over the other, I'd tell you to watch *Person of Interest*, since it's more of a complete package (which I know isn't fair to say when *ST: Picard* has only just come out with its first season).

That being said, if you're a fan of [Star Trek](#), you'll probably be more angry at the writers for their lack of respect for the franchise rather than being wowed at the deep metaphysical discussion going on behind all the flashy lights and lens flares.

Photo:  **Efe Kurnaz**

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