

## Jenna Fischer Stars in Sweet ‘The Giant Mechanical Man’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on May 2, 2012 - 3:48pm

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Don’t let the awful title fool you — “The Giant Mechanical Man” is not sci-fi. This cute dramedy tackles well-trod ground in the world of indie film but Lee Kirk conveys enough honest affection for his well-crafted characters that the piece works. With a very strong ensemble portraying interesting, believable characters, “The Giant Mechanical Man” isn’t a breakthrough film but is an entertaining slice of life nonetheless.

“*What’s the point of you? Why should anyone care about you?*” These are the kind of questions that face most of us at one point or another. For some people, they get tackled early in life and, however honestly, those people know the track they want to be in through life. Not everyone figures it out at the same time, however. And why should they have to? Why do we live in a society that demands standard, typical, defined roles? “The Giant Mechanical Man” weaves these themes into a sweet romance involving two incredibly likable characters and their quest for either some more definition in their lives or the understanding that they don’t really need it.



The Giant Mechanical Man

Photo credit: Tribeca Films

Chris Messina has done solid work in small roles in films like “Vicky Christina Barcelona” and “Away We Go” but he proves that he can easily carry a film with his strong work here as, believe it or not, the title character. Tim is one of those unique souls that paints himself silver, stands on stilts, and waits in complete stillness on a corner for someone to drop some change in his suitcase. While his girlfriend (Lucy Punch) found it charming at the start, she’s had enough and breaks up with him at the beginning of the film (which also features a strong cameo from Bob Odenkirk as her brother). After an interview on local news, Tim packs up his metal makeup and gets a horrible job at the zoo.

Meanwhile, Janice (Jenna Fischer) sees the interview and randomly bumps into the mechanical man a few times. She seems almost inspired

by his desire to do whatever he thinks is artistic and not what the world tells her to do. But not enough to change. Then she, of course, gets a job at the zoo, where she sells grape soda to kids and their obnoxious parents. She starts a very-sweet romance with Tim, never even realizing that he is the mechanical man.



The Giant Mechanical Man  
Photo credit: Tribeca Films

*“It only takes one person to make you feel special.”* While it may sound truly cheesy, those of you who have known the support of a loved one through a less-than-stable career venture know that it’s true. And “The Giant Mechanical Man” is a gentle, kind film about that truth. Tim & Janice aren’t unhappy because they have stupid jobs and can’t find the finances to make their dreams come true. They’re unhappy because the people around them make them unhappy and society keeps judging them. And then they find each other and all judgment subsides. It helps that Fischer and Messina have stellar chemistry. They’re both such engaging actors in the right material and these characters fit them like gloves.

Some of “The Giant Mechanical Man” is a bit forced and the pacing, especially in the first act, is a bit off. We know these two are going to get together or at least attempt to do so and so the set-up feels a bit unnecessary and sometimes repetitive. Also, some of the supporting characters — like Malin Akerman’s self-centered sister role and Topher Grace’s narcissistic potential beau — come off as two-dimensional and clichéd. Finally, the ending act requires a coincidence and a confession that feel extremely forced.

However, I’m a sucker for a romantic dramedy that actually presents two people with which I can not only identify for whom I can root. I like these people. They feel real (there’s a particular, remarkable truth that’s often missing from romantic dramas in a delicate scene between Janice and her sister near the end). I want them to get together. I want them to find what passes for happiness in a world where rent can’t be paid and our siblings don’t support us. “The Giant Mechanical Man” may just be a slice of life dramedy but it’s a slice of life that feels right.

*“The Giant Mechanical Man” stars Chris Messina, Jenna Fischer, Lucy Punch, Malin Akerman, Rich Sommer, Topher Grace, and Bob Odenkirk. It was written and directed by Lee Kirk. It is already available On Demand and open in some markets, opening in others, including Detroit (where it was shot), on May 4, 2012.*



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