I have talked before regarding the dreaded "preconceived expectations" of a movie, which is the bane of a movie critic. Most often, it comes in the form of me expecting too much from a film. Other times, I expect too little based upon the comments from advanced screenings, or my own personal prejudices when it comes to films.

I went to "The Social Network" with an entirely different set of prejudices in mind. It was just too highly praised by all the "snooty" critics. Too many "four stars" trumpeted from the likes of the New York Times, The New Yorker, The Wall Street Journal, NPR, etc., which for some reason just turned my stomach a little bit, probably out of envy…a slight bit of jealousy for the "elite" snobs at those places, people who couldn't possibly understand the tastes of those of us brought up in the Midwest, loving our beer, our football, and our action adventure movies.

My second prejudice has to do with the fact that "The Social Network" is one of those dreaded "based on real events" stories. I have gone on and on in previous articles about how much I HATE a movie that takes actual people and facts, and then chooses to just make crap up whenever it suites them. Sometimes I still really like the movie; such as Mark Wahlberg's football film "Invincible"…but it still grates at me as to why they chose to add in Vince Papale's father to the cast, when in real life, the senior Papale had passed away years before Vince tried

out for the Eagles. And let's not even get into how much I despised "A Beautiful Mind" for the way they completely disregarded the truth when it came to John Nash.

Finally, there is that whole thing with Justin Timberlake being one of the stars. Gag.

So with all of that said, I went into the movie theater positive that the best I would possibly score "The Social Network" would be a 3 ½, determined to take off a half point no matter what due to the literary licenses taken.

And then the movie started, and five minutes in, my expectations were completely shoved out the door, and I was hooked.

Aaron Sorkin is one of the greatest writers of dialog in the business, and the opening scene with Jesse Eisenberg as Mark Zuckerberg talking at a bar with his soon-to-be ex-girlfriend Erica (Rooney Mara, soon to be Lisbeth Salander in the English version of "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo") was one of the best short scenes I have ever seen. If you look back at Sorkin's career, you know that he can write some incredible dialogs; see numerous examples from "The West Wing", "The American President", "A Few Good Men", or even "Sports Night" or "Charlie Wilson's War". But this opening salvo sets the stage for the entire movie.

Zuckerberg is a mile-a-minute talker and genius nerd sophomore at Harvard University, obsessed with getting into one of the elitist clubs at that august school. But he is so smart that he is socially stunted, with a mind that runs off at a thousand miles an hour, in twenty different directions. He has total understanding of each direction he's going, but that's of no help to his girlfriend, who he keeps unintentionally insulting, so she dumps him.

Zuckerberg then does what most people seem to be inclined to do now a days after being hurt by someone; he goes home, gets drunk, and blogs about how horrible Erica is (check out the rantings on the football boards after any Browns loss, and you'll know what I am talking about here). But being a gifted hacker and genius programmer, Mark has more in mind than just voicing his frustrations; he hacks into as many of the Harvard housing records as he can, and then posts a website he calls "facesmash", where he puts up pictures of two Harvard girls, and asks people to vote on "who is hotter". He gets 22,000 hits in an hour, and crashes the Harvard network. His hearing in front of the disciplinary board is the first of many scenes that THIS

computer geek found hysterical.

Inspired by Mark's escapades and obvious computer skills, three preppies recruit Mark to help them create a Harvard web based dating site. Mark agrees, but then gets to thinking, and decides to start out on his own with something bigger; something the entire planet now knows as Facebook.

The movie follows the actual, documented facts about the founding of Facebook, how it grew to be the behemoth that is now valued conservatively at $15 billion. Along the way, Zuckerberg has been vilified, sued by both his former friends and the original partners in the Harvard dating site, praised as the face of the online generation, and attacked as the root of all evil. Love him or hate him (or don't care), there are still 500 million people with Facebook accounts.

Those are the facts, as are now general accepted, and Sorkin and director David Fincher do not dilute, change, or hide them in any way, much to my relief.

What they do is to fill in those facts with a witty, sharp, unblinkingly and brutally honest look at these young men, and the entire culture we now have, where we connect more through our computers than in real life.

Wisely, this is not a biography of Mark Zuckerberg, his best friend and initial Facebook CFO Eduardo Saverin , and advisor (and later Facebook president) Sean Parker (the founder of Napster). These are the key characters, and one of them is in almost every single scene. But there is no real attempt to get into their back history, nor to learn about "why" they behave that way. I left with no idea of where Mark is from, his family, or much of his life prior to Harvard, and I really didn't care to know these things either. Fincher and Sorkin aren't much concerned on the "why" at all; they just let the tale unfold, filling in the facts of the events with a marvelous script that shows how the trio changed as the fame, money, prestige, and pressure grew to a size that no one could ever have imagined.

Betrayal is a big theme of this movie…but it's done in such a way as you don't really see it coming, even if you know from the scenes jumping forward in time to the depositions of the lawsuits that it surely is on the horizon. Even so, there is no dramatic villain here, and Sorkin and Fincher do what I would have thought to have been the impossible; make it so that there is

no true bad guy and no true “hero”.

Zuckerberg is shown to be socially inept, unintentionally cruel at times due to the blunt honesty in him that makes it nearly impossible for him to be politically correct, but still brilliant and intensely driven to succeed. Which makes him not much different from any other successful billionaire such as Donald Trump, Mark Cuban, or Bill Gates himself. Saverin and Parker are also shown to have many facets to their lives; both good and bad. Saverin is probably the most sympathetic and well intentioned, but he has his problems as well. It’s not Zuckerberg’s problem that Saverin seems to lack the vision and definitely lacks the technical skills to see the potential for Facebook, but Mark keeps him around anyway out of friendship (until he decides that he has to go a different direction).

As great as the script and direction is to this film, it would be all for naught without the actors, and Fincher has hit a home run with his casting. I previously just thought of Jesse Eisenberg as a slightly older version of Michael Cera. He was fine in “Zombieland”, but all he seemed to do was a rift off from Cera’s nervous teen shtick. But in “The Social Network”, Eisenberg is excellent as the extremely complex Zuckerberg, creating an absolutely riveting character who you don’t know if you should root for or root against. Often, you’ll find yourself doing both in a matter of ten minutes.

There are three different actors whose names will be mentioned for Best Supporting Actor Oscar nominations. First is Andrew Garfield as Eduardo Saverin. Garfield is going to be Spider-Man when the series reboots in the next two years, and although I’m not sure I buy the tall, lanky American born/England raised young man for that, he certainly delivered in this breakout performance. Saverin has to be simultaneously the Voice of Reason for the Facebook team and the Fish-Out-of-Water amongst all of the geeks. Not an easy task at all, but Saverin nails it.

As much as this pains me to say, Justin Timberlake is a very good actor now. Sean Parker is the most fascinating character in the film; half geek/half huckster. We first see him crashing over at the house of a Stanford co-ed he seduced the night before. Seems that this is his pattern, and he doesn’t have an actual residence, saying that he is near broke. But he has enough money to woo Mark, selling his vision of Facebook being worth billions to him at a swank New York restaurant where he picks up what was certainly a very large check. Timberlake is simply great in the part, showing both the brashness that gets them the investment capital that leads to their success, as well as the weaknesses that could bring them all down.

Rounding out the supporting actors is (are?) Armie Hammer playing the uber preppie twins Cameron and Tyler Winklevoss, over-pampered muscle bound entrepreneur wannabees stunned by Zuckerberg's "betrayal" and hell bent to make him pay for it. But here again, they aren't stereotypical revenge minded lunk-heads. Yes, they get some really funny lines in both their obsession for revenge, and their over-inflated views of themselves, but Sorkin still shows that there is some legitimacy behind their anger. Most amazing is the technology used to have "them" in the room at the same time; it is so flawless that if you didn't know better going in, you would swear that there were two twins there, and that there is no way it could be the same actor. But it is, and Hammer shows that he has a bright future in front of him.

All in all, this is a movie I want to see again soon. It simply works on every level; funny, moving, and immensely interesting both as a depiction of how the Phenomenon that is Facebook came into existence, as well as a human interest story of the people involved, the entire culture's ravenous appetite for what they created, and the ramifications of "too much, too soon" for young men not even of legal drinking age when they got the whole thing started.

Maybe the fact that this movie is going to be so successful is just another sign that the Geeks will inherit the Earth. After all, look at all the young billionaires; most are in technology. Popular culture now has them getting respect as well, as witnessed by the most popular television comedy being Sheldon and Leonard's escapades in "The Big Bang Theory" and now this film.

As much as I wish I could have disliked it going in; I have no choice but to join my snobbier cohorts at the elitist institutes of film criticism and give this sure Oscar Nominated movie -

Bernie Kosar – Four Footballs