

Damning Bio-pic recounts rise of ruthless Facebook founder

Written by Film Review by Kam Williams



The Social Network

In case you're wondering what inspired camera shy Mark Zuckerberg (Jesse Eisenberg) to make a rare public appearance on Oprah last week to give a \$100 million charitable donation to the City of Newark, you need to look no further than *The Social Network* to find a plausible answer. For this damning bio-pic portrays the reclusive Facebook founder as less a computer genius than a ruthless fraud who deliberately stabbed everyone close to him in the back en route to becoming the world's youngest billionaire.

The seeds of Zuckerberg's phenomenal success were sown back in 2003 when the internet wunderkind was still an undergraduate at Harvard University. That Fall, after hacking into the school's database for photos of coeds, he relied on an algorithm developed by his best friend, Eduardo Saverin (Andrew Garfield), to run a website called Face Mash where guys could rate female classmates based on their looks.

At 10,000 hits per hour, the misogynistic blog generated enough traffic to cause Harvard's server to crash. And while the sexist stunt landed the sophomore on academic probation, it also attracted the attention of a trio of upperclassmen who had already been developing a social networking website of their own.

Identical twins Tyler and Cameron Winklevoss (Armie Hammer), along with Divya Narendra (Max Minghella), enlisted the assistance of the disgraced Face Mash creator for his expertise as a programmer, suggesting that he might simultaneously repair his reputation on campus by being associated with their relatively-benign project. Zuckerberg agreed verbally, but instead secretly proceeded to steal their idea, giving his partners the shock of their lives a few months later when he not only launched Facebook but excluded them from ownership.

Directed by David Fincher (*Panic Room*), *The Social Network* chronicles the site's meteoric rise from an exclusively Ivy League diversion to the daily online destination of over a half-billion users. Thanks to a nonpareil performance by Jesse Eisenberg as the paranoid Mark Zuckerberg, the character-driven drama remains relentlessly-riveting for the duration.

Again and again, this despicable misanthrope exhibits a chilling malevolence in his quest for

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control of the burgeoning internet empire, subtly resorting to chicanery and criminal behavior to eliminate anyone he perceives as a threat, his collaborators, investors, friends and foes alike. The scariest screen villain in a half century, since Psycho's Norman Bates, given that this inscrutable creep actually exists in real life.

Excellent (4 stars)

Rated PG-13 for sexuality, profanity, and drug and alcohol use.

Running time: 121 Minutes

Studio: Columbia Pictures

To see a trailer for The Social Network, visit:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IB95KLmpLR4>