I’ve always had a soft spot for the 1995 movie “The Net” starring Sandra Bullock and directed by Irwin Winkler. In that film, a gorgeous young computer programmer falls afoul of an evil corporation which arranges to destroy her identity. At various points, she loses her identification papers, has someone else take her name and her job, and finds herself in mortal peril. She fights back, though, and eventually wins back her identity.

In the 2006 movie “The Net 2.0” starring Nikki Deloach and directed by Charles Winkler (son of Irwin Winkler), a gorgeous young computer programmer falls afoul of an evil criminal gang which arranges to destroy her identity. At various points, she loses her identification papers, has someone else take her name and her job, and finds herself in mortal peril. She fights back, though, and eventually wins back an identity.

The movie is great fun, and I am making sure that I don’t spoil it for anyone by revealing any significant plot elements. If you dislike knowing anything at all about a movie you intend to see, stop reading now.

The technical aspects of the movie will be fun (and sometimes funny) for readers of this column. For example, the computer display for the security system of a banking system is an absolute hoot. It is a floating holographic device 6 feet wide by 4 feet high. Using such a huge display forces the computer expert to scan the images by turning her head from side to side – surely a non-ergonomic design that would lead to torticollis faster than a computer mouse leads to carpal-tunnel irritation (I much prefer trackballs to mouses).

The giant display pops up big bubbles every fraction of a second with completely useless information of a level of detail completely inappropriate for a dashboard system; for example, one bubble which I froze on screen displays “[64.141.243.26] -> [64.185.9.137] $525,000.00 COMPLETED” and disappears within a second. If those are IP addresses, then half a million dollars has been transferred from Mercedes Benz in Stuttgart to a small company in Lubbock, Texas (I used a reverse IP block lookup). Another larger bubble includes absurd details such as “TNS 6200-LWF > Transaction started: $3,980,000.00 from Cayman Bank – Cayman Islands > Banque Swiss at Swiss // Transfer authorized.” Ahem: quite aside from the total pointlessness of flashing individual transaction records for a second on any screen, giant and holographic or not, the French name of that bank is “Banque Suisse” not “Banque Swiss.” Another typo is “Banqué du Brugge – Spain” which has to be “Banque de Bruges.”

As for the security management functions of this display, they are represented by giant counter-rotating circles (some of them with gear teeth) with flashes of colored light passing across the circles. A complicated globular shape in the middle with parts that move in an out seems to represent something important. The security expert discusses the security by saying, “You’ve got firewalls tripping all over each other; routers heading back to Constantine – also you see that, what’s going on over there [a corner of the ball flashes yellow and a big display bubble reads
“SECURITY UPDATE COMPLETED” followed by “SECURITY BREACH FOUND / Memory area 0034 – 0534”), you are about one broken security key away from someone having complete access to every dollar going through here.” Yep—don’t we wish we had systems that magically displayed poorly-defined security breaches in a way that makes it impossible to figure out what’s happening or what to do?

At one point, the hero records a person’s voice on a cell phone that, at a guess, manages a sound range from around 100 Hz to maybe 3 KHz—roughly phone quality; nevertheless, the tinny recording manages to trigger the biometric voice-recognition system for a high-security authentication system (yeah, right).

Speaking of security, in two places in the movie, the hero gets through physical security without proper identification; in one case, she’s whisked by a bewildered security guard because an executive airily sweeps her through without letting her show her (nonexistent) identity papers. In another case, she gets special bank privileges by showing a bank agent a digitally-altered photograph of the bank’s director with his arm around what looks like her.

The cinematography is very interesting, with lots of stop action and odd camera angles. The scenery in Istanbul is wonderful, the Turkish people speak Turkish to each other (there are English subtitles)(or if you prefer, Chinese, French, Korean, Portuguese or Spanish) instead of broken English (what kind of nut believes that foreign people speak broken English to each other??) and there are some interesting-looking people who turn out to be surprising characters throughout the film.

I had a great time watching the movie and I hope you will too.

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M. E. Kabay, PhD, CISSP-ISSMP is Program Director of the Master of Science in Information Assurance <http://www.msia.norwich.edu> at Norwich University in Northfield, VT. Mich can be reached by e-mail at <mailto:mekabay@gmail.com>; Web site at <http://www.mekabay.com/index.htm>.

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