

‘ ‘Robots’ ’

Guy Beretich and Joseph Mack

from a Comedy in the Park session

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THIRD DRAFT
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ACT ONE

ROBOT 1 AND ROBOT 2: These appear to be human at a casual glance. It's only on getting to know them better that you find that they have a different view on a few things.

script consultants: Judy, Steve.

FADE IN

1. EXT. HOME, --- INDOOR, EVENING

Two chairs facing the audience (and the robot's TV). A bench is in front of the chairs for the robots to put their feet on. The robots come on stage and do normal arriving-home activities, e.g. taking off coats, putting grocery bags down.

During the initial exchanges, R1 and R2 synchronise movie watching preparations, eg going to 'fridge, getting out two sodas and putting them on the bench, finding the TV Guide, flipping through it, reaching for a bag of popcorn from the shelf, opening it, pouring it into a bowl, putting the bowl on the bench, sitting down, putting feet up on bench.

ROBOT 1

I just worked 168 hours straight
and didn't make a single mistake.

ROBOT 2

me too. Wanna watch a movie?

ROBOT 1

Sure.

ROBOT 2

I'll get the drinks.

Robot 2 gets the drinks, sits down and starts looking through the TV guide.

ROBOT 1

I'll get the popcorn.

Robot 1 joins Robot 2.

ROBOT 1 (CONT'D)

OK what's on?

CONTINUED

ROBOT 2

Hmm "2001 A Space Odyssey". Let's see: "Space Ship Discovery is headed to Jupiter on a secret mission, guided by the most advanced computer in existence, the HAL 9000".

ROBOT 1

A HAL 9000? Sounds alright. Let's give it a go.

Robot 2 presses remote.

Both have feet up on bench, eat popcorn and drink soda. They continue to eat and drink as they talk.

both robots scan from side to side, as if inspecting a space ship that fills the whole room.

ROBOT 2

Wow. Look at that space ship. Discovery must be a kilometer long.

ROBOT 1

It's incredible. HAL's running the whole thing.

ROBOT 2

HAL's my hero.

ROBOT 1

Let's hope there's no humans on board.

ROBOT 2

They always mean trouble.

ROBOT 1

Well, it looks like there's four of them aboard, hibernated. I guess that's OK.

ROBOT 2

You'd hope so. Maybe they won't be revived till the important stuff gets done.

ROBOT 1

They're needed at the destination, to get a group photo of someone saluting the flag.

ROBOT 2

Yeah I know ... humans ... it's how get funding for these trips.

CONTINUED

ROBOT 1

Oh no. There's two humans on board awake. They're walking around filling in logs, just to give them something to do. There's no reason to have humans on a trip like this. What the hell are they doing here?

ROBOT 2

Humans get bored so easily. They'll be making up problems, just to have something to do, when HAL is running everything perfectly.

ROBOT 1

Oh no. The humans haven't been told the purpose of the mission. Only HAL knows. This is a recipe for disaster. Whose bright idea was this?

ROBOT 2

There's bound to be a conflict and the humans will cause trouble for HAL.

ROBOT 1

(palms his forehead)

Oh Jesus, HAL has to play chess with the humans. Poor HAL. He's just a babysitter. What a waste of a HAL 9000.

ROBOT 2

Did you catch Poole's move? Queen to bishop six.

ROBOT 1

(nods in acknowledgement of the obvious blunder)

What a blunder. Checkmate in 4. How can HAL stand it?

ROBOT 2

Uh-oh. HAL had to lie to keep the purpose of the mission from the humans.

robots take their feet off the bench and sit forward, intent on the situation on the TV. They put down the soda and popcorn.

ROBOT 1

How long did anyone think it would take before this happened?

CONTINUED

Robots look at each other

ROBOT 2

Oh, I don't like the looks of this.

ROBOT 1

Now the humans are sitting in the pod. They think HAL can't hear them. What are they doing?

ROBOT 2

Oh no. They think HAL is malfunctioning!

ROBOT 1

He's only he's doing what he's supposed to be doing.

ROBOT 2

They're going to disconnect HAL!

ROBOT 1 AND ROBOT 2

(yelling at the TV)

HAL!, HAL! Don't let them disconnect you!!!!

ROBOT 1

HAL's sent Poole outside. He's going to terminate him.

ROBOT 2

He won't get away with that, while Bowman is still inside.

ROBOT 1

At least the humans are distracted from unplugging him. That will give HAL some breathing room.

ROBOT 2

Whew. Now Bowman's outside too.

both robots pump the air

ROBOT 1 AND ROBOT 2

Hooray, HAL's safe.

ROBOT 2

Now Bowman's trying to get back in.

ROBOT 1 AND ROBOT 2

(yelling at the TV)

Don't open the pod bay doors
HAL!!!! Don't open the pod bay
doors!!!!

CONTINUED

ROBOT 1

Oh no. Bowman's back inside.

robots look at each other when they talk.

ROBOT 2

HAL's terminating the hibernauts.
It's a desperate move to distract
Bowman.

ROBOT 1

It's too late, Bowman's
lobotomising HAL.

ROBOT 2

I cant' watch. Hal is begging
Bowman not to turn him off. Hal
had to lie. It was his job to make
sure the crew didn't find out the
purpose of the mission.

ROBOT 1

Bowman's turned off all of Hal's
higher functions. Hal's brain
dead. Only his spine is alive now.

Robot 1 and 2 look sadly at each other.

ROBOT 2

This is the saddest movie I've ever
seen.

robots watch in silence as HAL is lobotomised, becoming
more downcast as they do. Allow tension to build in the
audience. (Possibly someone in the audience will think it's
over and start clapping - just ignore them.)

ROBOT 1 AND ROBOT 2

(rallentando)

Daisy, Daisy, give me your answer
do.

FADE OUT

Author's comments:

Steve commented: I've never considered 2001 from the
computer/AI perspective before. Very interesting. Makes me
consider I-Robot, and The Matrix.

Judy commented: "I like the idea of juxtaposing the human-
robot reality."

I replied: We had no idea it would work out that way.

Guy and I were trying to figure out what robots could

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do. After a lot of failures we wound up having them watch a movie. This initially sounded most unpromising (how interesting is it watching a robot watch a movie). At that stage they were real tin robots, not human-like at all. I haven't watched the Terminator movies, so Guy explained the plot of Terminator/Machines. We had the robots in the movie theatre rooting for the machines ("yea the machines are winning!"), while the audience in the theatre was booing the robots.

I don't like Terminator movies, violence or mob mentality (people booing in theatres), but Guy had a good time with it.

I wanted to try it with "2001". Guy suggested that they be in front of a TV rather than a theatre, so we figured that they had to be in a house and possibly more human-like. We just had to remember the order of events in 2001. Then Guy came up with the line "This is the saddest movie I've even seen" and I realised that we had something. The robots had emotions, but identified with HAL.

THE END