

Cozmo is little in size, bigger in brains and social skills

June 28 2016, by Nancy Owano



(Tech Xplore)—Coolest toy since Furby? That was the headline of a tech site on Monday. Reviews Editor Alex Cranz, *Gizmodo*, was looking at the new Cozmo, a tiny robot that fits in the palm of your hand. Cranz called it "one of the coolest leaps in toy technology since baby dolls starting soiling their own [diapers](#)."

Cozmo has a round head and forklift arms, and a screen is embedded in its face. A small camera is used by the [robot](#) to stay spatially aware. The robot is cute and has a simple, uncluttered design but

Cozmo under its skin is not simple; the little toy is quite complex.

The company has no reason to apologize for its complexity; in fact, that is the calling card of the robot's makers, San Francisco-based Anki.

"Robots with comparable capabilities are found in labs for thousands of dollars and stand several feet tall. More than three-hundred parts make up this robot that fits in the palm of your hand," said the company site. The Anki team also calls it a "supercomputer on treads."

The whole point in working up its complexity has been to give Cozmo a winning dose of artificial intelligence capabilities that in turn contribute to its having a "personality." And there is its edge among little robots designed as home companions which the family can enjoy.

The Wall Street Journal called it out: here is a robot with personality. The WSJ noted that the [toy](#) robot will not only play games but express a range of emotions. Nathan Olivarez-Giles, who covers consumer technology, wrote that "Those emotions are key to Cozmo's appeal. When it recognizes a new person, Cozmo is social and curious. When ignored, it gets sad or plays on its own. It's frustrated when it loses games, and celebrates when it wins."

The company meanwhile touts Cozmo as "the little robot with a big brain and even bigger personality." The [robot](#) is further described as "charming, a bit mischievous, and unpredictable."

Hanns Tappeiner, an Anki co-founder, was quoted in *The Wall Street Journal*: "It's taken years but our technology is finally to a point where

we can build a robot with personality."

Playing with Cozmo gives the person an added advantage of hearing a soundtrack which matches the robot's mood and corresponds with the games and activities. The team makes reference to Cozmo's "emotion engine." The engine, they said, evolves as you develop a [bond](#).

Cranz told readers about her first excursion with Cozmo. You set the robot in a power cradle, pair the robot with the phone, and Cozmo comes to life. "The phone prompts me for my name, which Cozmo utters with a gremlin-like gurgle. Then we play games."

Anki is a company which is dedicated to bringing AI out of the labs and into everyday life, they said. Anki's three founders got their start at Carnegie Mellon's Robotic Institute, said Cranz.

The impact of robots in cinema was not lost on them, back in school days. They knew audiences connected with robots because the on-screen robots could not only move and make sounds but had personality. For a home-based robot they harnessed the skills of people with backgrounds in robotics, AI, sound engineers, and game designers.

Cozmo goes on sale in October for \$179.99 in the U.S., and Anki is taking pre-orders now on its website.

More information: anki.com/en-us/company/blog/introducing-cozmo

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