

Gatebox virtual home robot offers life with enclosed companion

December 18 2016, by Nancy Owano



(Tech Xplore)—We are getting quite accustomed to news items about home companion robots. They are targeted primarily as assistive devices for the elderly, children, and people confined to home because of illness or physical difficulties.

Assistance may include both physical tasks and simple companionship,

delivered through responsive eyes and words.

They are cute and easily accepted. They blur the line between human and cartoonish or animal toys.

Oh boy. Get ready for a new kind of home companion [robot](#). Gatebox. It is promoted as the world's virtual home robot with which you can spend your everyday life with your favorite characters.

Shane McGlaun in *SlashGear* said the Gatebox device was "a [projection](#) tube and the character is projected inside the tube and you can talk to it."

Engadget's Mat Smith described it as "a projected CGI [character](#) kind-of trapped in a jar—with voice controls!"

Dominik Bosnjak, *Android Headlines*, said Gatebox was "a recently announced digital assistant which puts a [tiny](#) holographic girlfriend inside of what looks like an expensive coffeemaker."

So what is one's perception, a cute young woman character who looks half cherub, half fashion model, housed in a tube—or trapped in a tube? And what is one's tolerance for the role, where an able-bodied worker finds comfort and companionship with an anime character in a cylinder shaped enclosure?

The tiny trapped anime character is called Azuma Hikari. "She is a comforting character that is great to those living alone. She will always do all she can just for the owner."

The male worker in the video lives alone and wakes up and goes to work but not before bidding bye to the little character with her shy pose and chunky shoes. He messages the character that he is on the way home after work.

The character proceeds to turn on the lights for his arrival. *Engadget* said it can switch on your lights and other home appliances based on your movement or orders.

As Smith also noted, the character has blue hair and an "excessively submissive temperament."

For those who are interested, the Gatebox has a pre-order thing going on and the sale period is given as from December 14th, 2016 - January 31st, 2017, with shipping in order as of December 2017.

Thus far, Japan and the US are the target countries. The team said that for delivery to other countries, "we are still studying it based on the status of the current [pre-order](#)." The price is about \$2500.

The "she" in the enclosure speaks and recognizes Japanese.

Some technical details: When it comes to interacting with users, the Gatebox has a camera and other sensors to detect movement and even the owner's face, said *Engadget*.

The company site said Gearbox is equipped with Bluetooth and infra-red data communication technology, and can connect to [forms](#) of information including electronics, Internet and smart phones.

They said they are using "small scale projection technology and a diverse range of sensors." They said a simple touch button interface is centered around communication with the character. As for voice, the company said, the Gatebox "moves upon voice recognition. The character understands words spoken, and responds accordingly."

As for OS support, they said that "Currently we have plans to support the latest iOS and Android operating systems."

More information: gatebox.ai/

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