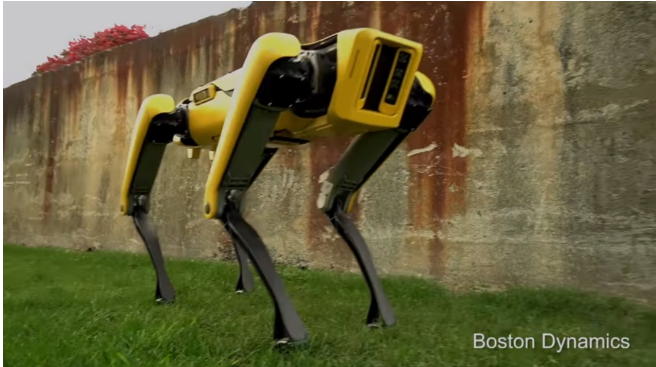


New-look robot from Boston Dynamics is more sleek than 'Eek'

15 November 2017, by Nancy Owano



(Tech Xplore)—Freaky. Creepy. Terrifying. Nightmares on four legs. Those are just a few of the one-liners that would pour into web sites from readers after viewing all those big-dog and other clanking machines coming out of Boston Dynamics' labs and on to grassy and rocky terrain to test their mettle in walking and running around.

The latest video, posted on Monday, has fetched generous number of views and it is easy to see why. Curiosity. What's happening over at Boston Dynamics?

Will our sleep still be challenged by nagging visions of machine monsters out to make minced pie out of human adversaries?

The [four-legged](#) robot is SpotMini.

It's a very short clip but enough to tell us a few things, and leave us eager for more on the video's parting message, Coming Soon. (How soon? Will the new information be about new developments only or actual finished product ready for use? Who would use it and how?)

While there are no hard answers yet, tech watchers wasted no time in registering comments and observations thus far. The reactions fell into three categories. (1) Yellow plates (2) Gait (3) Lifelike gaze, even as a headless machine.

The yellow plates give the robot a spiffy look in contrast to past Boston Dynamics showings of machines that look rugged and raw. It is now looking less like a monster machine out to terminate humans. With bright yellow plates on its legs and body it looks more like, as Andrew Liszewski, *Gizmodo*, said, "man's best battery-powered [friend](#)."

The robot can run with a gait nearly lifelike. Liszewski referred to "amazingly fluid motions" in the new SpotMini.

As important, called out by Brittany Roston in *SlashGear*, is that SpotMini behaves lifelike, in that it is capable of what Roston called "complex [poses](#)."

The video shows how SpotMini moves its top part, the "head."

While it is headless, if you watch the video, you see how much it appears to be a pet not a predator, as you see it walk over and move as if staring right back into the camera, and as if asking a question, "You looking at me? Why?"

Brian Heater in *TechCrunch*: "Spot's quick glance at the camera also reveals what appear to be a pair of Kinect-style 3-D cameras sitting in for its eyes. The company recently posted a listing for a "Senior Perception Software Engineer" with experience in stereo [cameras](#) and LIDAR, which could go a ways toward highlighting more autonomous versions of its robots moving forward."

Robotics Trends concluded after seeing the video that, compared with pictures of the 2016 debut,

"The new SpotMini has a whole [new](#) look, ditched the manipulator robot arm and added 3-D vision cameras for obstacle avoidance."

This marks the new version of the robot the company introduced in 2016.

[Mike](#) Murphy in *Quartz*: "The new version is the most compact yet, with all the sensors the [robot](#) uses to experience the world housed in what might be considered its 'face' and 'body.'"

"In their early days—that is, just a few years ago—these robots were big, clumsy, moving in rigid, comical ways," commented Brittany Roston in *SlashGear*. "Progress has moved quickly, though, and the modern day versions of these same robots are far more capable."

Nonetheless, you cannot deny some may feel true nostalgia for the old-day robots trotting in and out of the Boston Dynamics labs' doors and never cursing back as their human staffers kicked them, poked them and knocked them over.

One video viewer comment said, "not buying this until somebody shows me it can be kicked, hit with hockey sticks, and walk on snow."

More information:

www.bostondynamics.com/spot-mini

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