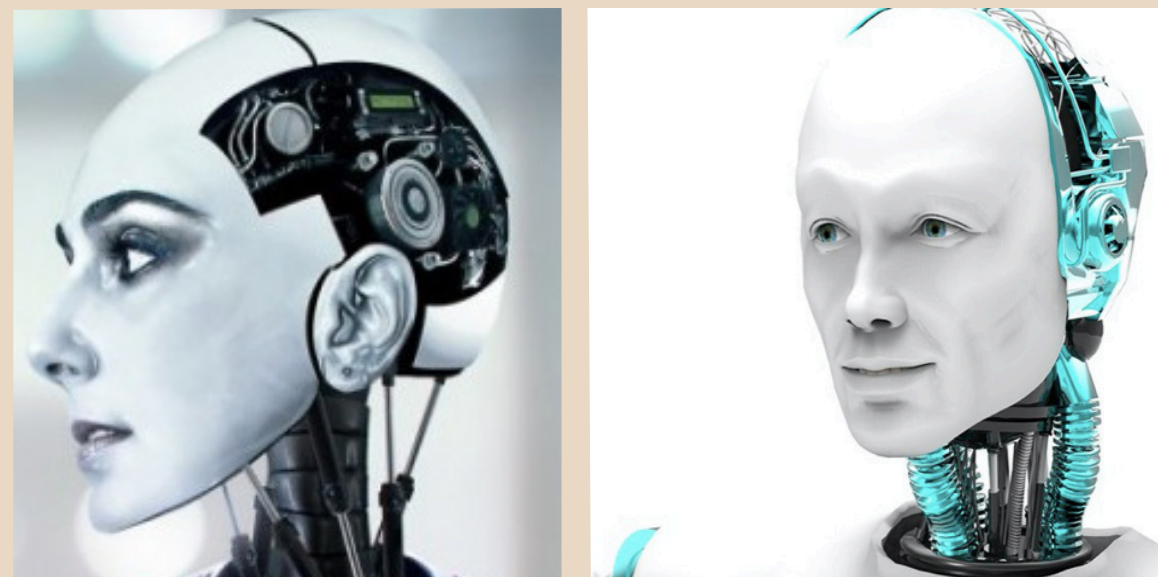


These 'uncanny valley' robots will really creep you out

Japanese robotics professor Masahiro Mori devised the concept of the 'uncanny valley' in 1970. It's the point at which a robot is made to appear so human-like -- if not quite human enough -- that it inspires feelings of uneasiness and revulsion in we mere mortals. In other words, humanoid robots really give us the creeps.

But as androids are being developed to be more and more lifelike, copying human gestures, body language and even speech, our simultaneous fascination/horror at the world of uncannily human-like robotics shows no signs of slowing down.

So sit back and try to relax (or, at least, not squirm in too much horror) as you watch our round up of these mesmerisingly uncanny androids.



JULES

Designed and built by Hanson Robotics Inc., Jules is a conversational character robot with a gleamingly bald head and the stilted voice of an English gentleman. A sophisticated AI creation, he's made from a pliable, lightweight material called Frubber, which enables him to expressively move his face just like a real human. Jules can also boast of having a "statistically perfect face" -- which not many of us mere mortals can lay claim to. He's also capable of having a "natural, interactive" conversation.

Robots can kill but they do not understand us

"I've seen things you people wouldn't believe," the villain played by Rutger Hauer reminisces at the end of the film Blade Runner after hauling Harrison Ford's character on to a roof top and sparing his life. "People" is the operative word since Roy Batty is not a person but an android who escapes to earth from a space colony and takes revenge on the Tyrell Corporation, his creator.

That is what I call a killer robot — a being that can hold an intelligent conversation with you before wiping you out.



It was science fiction in 1982, when Blade Runner came out. It is now faintly plausible — sufficiently for artificial intelligence researchers to warn this week of the dangers of an autonomous arms race.

Robots can murder us but they cannot understand us. Autonomous killing machines are becoming reality — Israel already has its Harpy anti-radar drone, which loiters in the sky before choosing and destroying targets itself. But a sentient, sophisticated machine with common sense and the capacity to grasp people's moods and predict behaviour is still a distant prospect.



SimMan 3G Patient Simulator

The SimMan 3G might be a great way for medical professionals to practice, but that doesn't make it any less disturbing to look at, especially when it starts bleeding, convulsing, crying or foaming at its gaping mouth. It's designed to simulate virtually every emergency medical situation in the book.