

'Hi-tech robot' at Russia forum turns out to be man in suit

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A “hi-tech robot” shown on Russian state television has turned out to be a man in a suit.

Russia-24 [praised the ersatz android](#) during coverage of a youth forum dedicated to robotics, boasting that “Robot Boris has already learned to dance and he’s not that bad”.

But sharp-eyed bloggers were dubious. The [Russian website TJournal](#) listed questions about the robot’s performance: Where were Boris’s external sensors? Why did the robot make so many “unnecessary movements” while dancing?

And why did the robot look like a person would fit perfectly inside of it?

Later, photographs of the “robot” [posted on social media](#) showed the very visible neckline of the person in the suit.

Boris turned out to be an “Alyosha the Robot” costume made by a company called Show [Robots](#).

Photo purporting to show an actor in the robot suit. Photograph: MBKh Media

The £3,000 costume, equipped with microphone and tablet display, creates the “near total illusion that before you stands a real robot”.

A photograph published by MBKh Media, the news agency founded by the Vladimir Putin opponent [Mikhail Khodorkovsky](#), appeared to show the actor in the robot suit ahead of the forum on Tuesday in Yaroslavl, a city about 150 miles north-east of Moscow.

The organisers of the Proyektoria technology forum, held each year for the “future intellectual leaders of Russia”, did not try to pass off the robot as real, the website reported.

But whether by mistake or design, the state television footage did just that. “It’s

entirely possible one of these [students] could dedicate himself to robotics,” an anchor reported. “Especially as at the forum they have the opportunity to look at the most modern robots.”

Then, a very robotic voice rang out. “I know mathematics well but I also want to learn to draw,” Boris said, before dancing to the Little Big song Skibidi.

On Wednesday morning, the television report briefly disappeared from Russia-24’s YouTube channel but by early afternoon it was accessible again.

The state-run Channel One was forced to apologise last week for a fake report showing a young Ukrainian man complaining about progress since the country’s revolution five years ago. The man turned out to be Belarusian, and [told RFE/RL](#) he was “totally ashamed” for taking part in the report.