

Makr Shakr: World's first crowd-controlled robotic bar makes debut

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Makr Shakr made its debut at Google I/O

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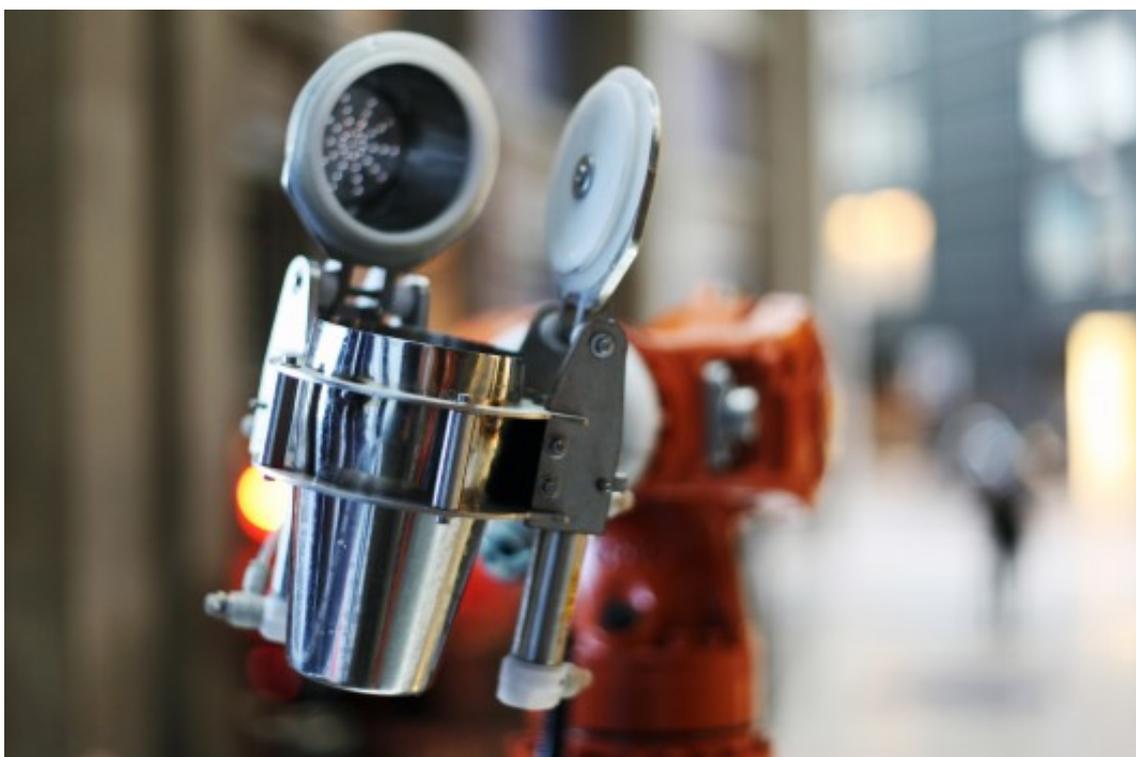
[Robot bartenders](#) aren't new, but they tend to be more drink vending machine than cool mixologist. To inject a little panache, researchers at the MIT Senseable City Lab in collaboration with Coca-Cola and Bacardi Rum have developed Makr Shakr – a robot drink-mixing system that made its debut at the Google I/O annual developer conference in San Francisco on Wednesday as the world's first crowd-controlled robotic bar.

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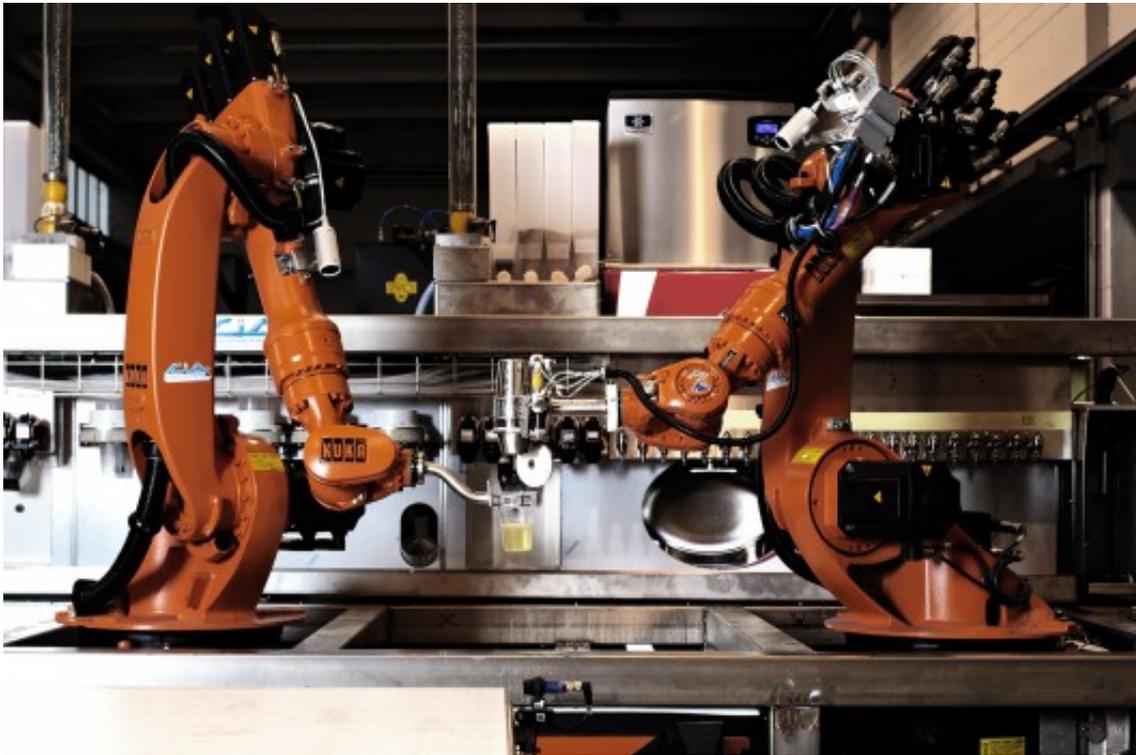
Makr Shkr doesn't flip bottles like Patrick Swayze, more's the pity. Even with recent advances in robotics, that sort of thing generally ends in broken glass and people running for cover. Instead, it uses three robot arms with special attachments and a programmable mixing system. Working in concert, they make drinks and hand them out by means of a set of conveyor belts.



One of the Makr Shkr shaker manipulators

That doesn't sound like much to write home about, but the developers at MIT and the design firm Carlo Ratti Associati in Turin put a few moves on the robots by using motion capture to reproduce the gestures of Roberto Bolle, étoile dancer at the La Scala opera house in Milan and Principal Dancer with the American Ballet Theater, along with Italian director and choreographer Marco Pelle. They may not juggle the Vermouth, but they do try for a dash of style.

It's also rather a social system. Users order drinks using a smartphone app, but it isn't simply a matter of selecting from a pre-determined list. The Makr Shkr uses technology from Coca Cola's Freestyle beverage dispenser, which can dispense over a hundred different mixtures of sodas. Using the app, the users can order their own alcoholic and nonalcoholic bespoke drinks complete with suitable garnishes, which the robots will produce with a bit of standard shaker work using specially designed manipulators and then serve it up while a screen behind them keeps track of the action.



“The number of drink combinations is almost limitless,” says Yaniv Turgeman, project leader from MIT Senseable City Lab. “The magic moment will be watching the formation of a bottom-up bar culture, as we close the loop between ‘co-curating’ and ‘co-producing,’ in real time.”

The app also allows users to share connections, recipes and photos on various social networks. “Makr Shagr is a great example of how digital technologies are changing the interaction between people and products - a topic that our laboratory has been exploring in great depth,” said Carlo Ratti, director of the MIT Senseable City Lab. “The system explores the new dynamics of social creation and consumption - ‘design, make and enjoy’ - allowing users to design their own cocktail creations, while digitally controlled machines transform these designs into reality. Digital connectivity is not replacing physical interactions, but rather reinforcing them.”

The Makr Shagr won’t listen to your problems or offer its thoughts on last night’s game, but it can monitor alcohol consumption and blood alcohol levels (though we’re not exactly clear on how at this point), so it does aim at promoting responsible drinking.

The video below shows the Makr Shagr robot system in action.

Source: [Makr Shagr](#) via [GigaOM](#)