



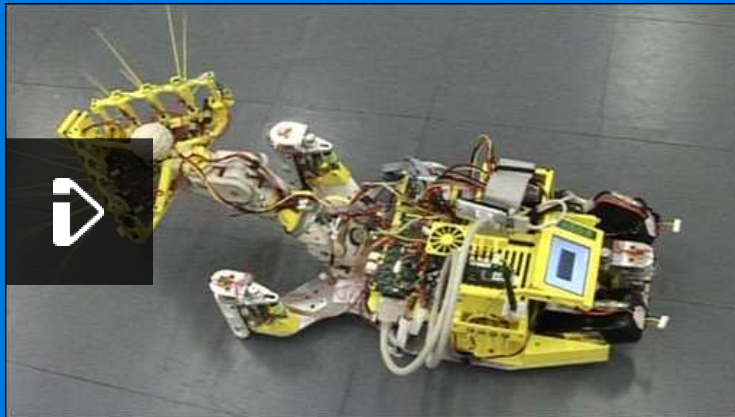
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Maddy meets a new robotic rat



Maddy finds out what the robotic rat can do

This robotic rat might look like something from a sci-fi movie but scientists reckon it could eventually help save lives.

Maddy went to check out the lab where it was designed...

"When you walk into the lab I felt like I was 20 years in the future. There are robotic arms balanced on desks, a room where flies are being used to make electricity and a computer that can smile, frown or look like it's had a fright!

But we were there to see the robotic rats that could one day be used to search for people trapped in disaster zones or under the sea.

Differences

Scientists at the Bristol Robotic Laboratory developed the robots after four years studying real animals.

Their original task was to find out more about their brains.

Rats are similar to people in



many ways so they were hoping the research could improve our understanding of humans too.

One of the main differences between rats and humans is that the rodents barely use their eyes. They usually hunt in the dark and it's their whiskers that act as sensors to help them find food or stay away from enemies!

The team decided to develop robotic rats that work in a

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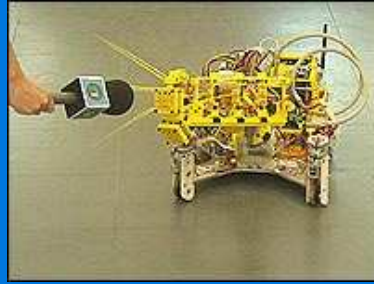


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similar way. Their plastic whiskers detect people or objects that are close by.

999 heroes?

And scientists reckon that one day they could be used to search for people in places where humans find it difficult to see. For example underground, in the sea or in smoky or dusty rooms.



It will take around 10 years for the technology to be fully developed for these kinds of missions. For example, at the moment the rats get around on wheels, but that wouldn't be very useful in water or on rocky ground!

So experts say we shouldn't get too excited about robotic rats becoming 999 heroes just yet. But there is a chance that they could help save lives in the future!"

Maddy