

'Shakr' Not Stirred

Human/robot collaboration moves from factory floor to behind the bar

Matthew Jaster, Senior Editor

Toni has mastered the art of mixing cocktails—swirling high-proof liquor through the air and elegantly swinging the shaker. Unlike most bartenders, Toni is mounted on the counter and boasts two mechanical arms (KUKA KR Agilus robots). This fully automated robotic bartender—from Italian company Makr Shakr—serves fresh drinks via an app.

“Making the perfect cocktail is as much about technical skills as it is about ingenuity. Our robotic bartending unit Toni excels on the former. But inventiveness remains a fundamentally human prerogative,” said Emanuele Rossetti, CEO at Makr Shakr.

Now the engineers at Makr Shakr have further developed the bartending robot, with new movements and features that have been put to test for the first time during a duel with world class flair bartender, Silvia Daniela Istrate.

“For this challenge, we accomplished our most ambitious research and development leap in acrobatics ever,” said Alessandro Incisa, chief technology officer at Makr Shakr: “Our Toni robotic unit can perform an unprecedented sequence of spiral pouring, vertical and horizontal throwing, while deftly handling more than 150 bottles and virtually endless cocktail combinations. Soon, these movements will be performed by Makr Shakr’s robotic bartenders in our bars all around the world. Even before that, you can discover the acrobatics in our video, where everything is real—no computer graphics whatsoever.”

No matter where in the world guests visit a Makr Shakr bar, ordering a drink is always very simple: They select their drink via an app and the info is transmitted to the barkeeper robot. As soon as the drink is ready for pickup, the guest is notified via push message. There is also an option for customers to create their own drinks.

“It’s fascinating what our machines are capable of and where they are used around the world. This duel between

robots and bartender shows once again that the best result is achieved when the strengths of man and machine complement each other,” says Michael Otto, chief sales officer of KUKA Robotics.

The bar system has demonstrated its brand-new skills in front of an equally extraordinary opponent. Istrate has participated in international competitions and won several prizes, including best female bartender at the Roadhouse World Final 2018 and 2019.

A competition putting her shaker skills against a robot was also a new experience:

“Working with Toni was unbelievable. I wasn’t expecting



Bartender “Toni” has mastered the art of mixing cocktails—and competes in a new video with world-class flair bartender Silvia Daniela Istrate.

to feel comfortable working with a robot, and it’s more than that. It’s definitely a real collaboration between colleagues,” said Istrate.

The collaboration between human and machine continues to produce fascinating results. How long, however, will it take before Toni can pour us a drink AND solve our personal problems?

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