Boston Dynamics robots can now hold the door for its friends



The most rewarding YouTube upload notification I ever opted into, without exception, is for the Boston Dynamics channel. With each semi-monthly notification ping comes a video of some new way that the SoftBank-owned company's robots can either terrify or delight the masses. Today's upload is a mix of both because the adorable version of the SpotMini — the updated dog-like quadruped unveiled in November — is back, and this time around it's learned how to open (and hold!) doors.

We've seen Boston Dynamics robots open doors before, but this egress is different. Outfitted with an articulating arm and clamp similar to the one it used to wash dishes in the original video, we see the new SpotMini locate, recognize, and deftly operate a door handle, and then hold the door to let its arm-less sibling march through. It's a more delicate operation than when the Atlas robot brutishly muscled its way through a push-bar door in 2016, which means we might have to reevaluate our original assessment of the new SpotMini as "slightly less terrifying." Like Doctors Grant and Sadler, we may have overestimated these bad boys.

Of course, while our base inclination is to be afraid of robots the more they closely resemble humans and animals, there is obvious value in one that is dexterous enough to navigate complex situations like operating a door handle. (There's a reason SoftBank bought the company from Alphabet for around $100 million.)

But if you're still terrified, take solace in the fact that, in the real world, bad doors are everywhere.

https://www.theverge.com/tldr/2018/2/12/17005060/boston-dynamics-robot-dog-open-door