

Universal Robots: Channel Your Sci-Fi Nerd



Ben Sulzback and Jason Howard

Did you ever wonder where the word “Robot” comes from? Or what about the whole “Robots taking over the world” story that’s been used in recent movies like [I, Robot](#)?

I hadn’t put much thought to any of this when I caught up with playwright Mac Rogers a few weeks ago to discuss his upcoming project [Universal Robots](#), but sitting with him for a few minutes I was overwhelmed with the desire to (a) see his play and (b) read up about the lineage of robots on the Internet. Seriously, seeing and talking about *Universal Robots* can bring out your inner sci-fi dork – but in a good way.

After picking up a copy of Karl Capek’s seminal 1921 play [R.U.R \(Rossum’s Universal Robots\)](#), Rogers became consumed with knowing more about the playwright and began his quest of humanizing the play.

“The play introduced the world to the word robot, and the concept of robots to the world, but I wanted to make it more human.”

I haven’t read Capek’s original, but Rogers re-imagined version is smart, scary at times and theatrical. Kudos to an excellent cast, that includes Jason Howard as Radius, the hard-working robot who learns how to take over the world.

The minuscule stage decor and theater in the round immerses the audience in a very intimate, dungeon-like atmosphere with only the sounds of more robots being manufactured above.