

B3 and the Robot Group Charter

Appendix to the B3 Sponsorship Proposal

11 May 2000

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The Robot Group blends science and art in order to make the world of high technology accessible to the public.

How could a 1,000 pound combat robot possibly fit in with this goal?

Amazingly, there are several key ways the B3 robot project supports the mission of the Robot Group, both directly and indirectly.

Robot Group Charter

The Robot Group Articles of Incorporation, Item 4, reads as follows:

4. The purpose of THE ROBOT GROUP shall be;
 - * to promote excellence and innovation in the integration of advanced technology with the arts;
 - * to provide a forum for interaction between artists and technologists;
 - * to serve as a non-profit umbrella for and to secure funding for projects which explore the relationship between arts and technology;
 - * to combat technophobia through educational outreach by staging public events and by involving youth in Robot Group projects as defined above.

To promote excellence and innovation in the integration of advanced technology with the arts

B3 may be a combat robot with a specific design mission, but it is also in a sense a performing artist. The Sci Fi Channel competition is designed to provide a dramatic and engrossing show for its audience. The rules and structure of the competition are specifically organized to promote exciting and aggressive robot designs. B3 itself has been designed with stage presence in mind, as much as it has been designed for effectiveness.

Survival Research Labs demonstrates the artistic appeal of creative destruction. Just as SRL puts on shows with their machines, we can have similar demonstrations with B3. B3 vs. Cars in the Junkyard. B3 vs. 55-Gallon Barrels. B3 vs. Trees in Alex's Property. And of course, B3 vs. All Comers at the Competition.

Robotic Combat competitions have a broad public appeal. Robot Wars has been playing in the UK for several years now, with ever-rising ratings. BattleBots in June 2000 will be

broadcast as a weekly serial by Fox. The Comedy Channel has also arranged to re-broadcast parts of BattleBots, from their own unique perspective.

Robots from these competitions have gone on to further creative endeavors. BattleBots machines have had roles in recent episodes of *Friends* and *GrownUps*. *Malcom in the Middle* also featured BattleBots and robot construction. More bit-parts for robots are reputed to be in the making.

Whether B3 really is art can be a question left for the historians. Whether B3 and the events it is designed to compete in can bring attention, money, and celebrity to the Robot Group seems fairly clear. And there is no doubt that B3 will involve high-technology; we are able to explore several new mediums because of this project, including new radio-control systems, large-scale frameworks, and hydraulics.

To provide a forum for interaction between artists and technologists

The excitement and attention that B3 can bring to the Robot Group will help us perpetuate our cause.

Once B3 has performed and, better still, won, the Sci Fi Channel competition, it will be something of a celebrity. There are only a few robots expected to compete in this show, so each of them will garner a significant amount of attention. B3 will not be lost in a flood of competitors.

B3 can then, as celebrities have done for decades, act as an attention-getter and publicity draw for future events that the Robot Group attends or promotes.

To serve as a non-profit umbrella for and to secure funding for projects which explore the relationship between arts and technology

The Robot Group non-profit umbrella is key to raising funds to complete the B3 project. B3 gives the group a project focus for this year, and during the fundraising process it serves to raise community awareness of the Robot Group itself.

As we continue to show success in the B3 project, the Group is put on a stronger footing in its community. Future projects should be easier to fund and develop because of this success.

Any excess funds generated during the B3 project become a part of the Robot Group's assets. If, for example, B3 should win the event (or even place in the money), the Robot Group will be sufficiently enriched to allow them to carry out a number of future projects.

To combat technophobia through educational outreach by staging public events and by involving youth in Robot Group projects as defined above

B3 is being thoroughly documented during its creation process. For most of what you see on television, you are only aware of the end product and it's performance on the show. With B3 it will be possible to learn about the process behind the project; the struggles, decisions, and setbacks. The technology inside of B3 will also be thoroughly documented on the B3 website. This website will be made public at an opportune time.

This type of web-based documentation project has been shown in the past* to be effective at inspiring new people into the technology arena. It de-mystifies the process of creation, and at the same time provides an education into how they can duplicate the techniques for themselves.

**"Project: Boris" was documented in this fashion and a number of e-mails attest to the inspirational and educational benefits of the Boris website. Other robot projects from different teams around the country have also received similar feedback.*

Vespid Media is documenting the B3 project and their film will culminate in B3's victory or defeat at the competition. This documentary will make excellent outreach material as we visit schools and events in the future.

Finally, B3 has the opportunity to reach entirely new audiences. Many "club" robots around the country today are small machines driven by toy motors or, at best, wheelchair motors. These robots can be found at any robot club, and are the staple of the robotics community. Many of them demonstrate great technical enhancements, such as Kevan's vision system. Others show wonderful artistry and craftsmanship, such as David's many creations.

B3, however, is entirely different in scope and appeal than these traditional projects. I believe it may even have the power to appeal to a new group of people – the gearheads.

Gearheads work on cars, not computers; they are more comfortable with a socket wrench than a soldering iron. B3 is not unlike a car in its scale and power. And still, B3 is so much different. B3 could draw this audience in and then open up new horizons of technology and control systems to them.

B3. Not just a good idea.