

Taco Bell rethinks AI order bots — 'cos they don't work
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSD6-Nf1fg0>
Transcript: <https://dontveter.com/ec/tacobell.pdf>

Good evening. I'm David Gerard and this is Pivot to AI.

Today, hi. Would you like a drink with that?

The second story we ever ran in Pivot to AI last June was about McDonald's trying to take drive-thru orders with an AI speech recognition bot.

The orderbot was part of a deal with IBM, which looked very [much] like IBM was paying McDonald's to run a trial so IBM could talk it up for publicity.

Unfortunately, it didn't work.

Tik Tok, and so on, went wild with videos of the bot failing hard.

Things like the bot bringing up hundreds of chicken nuggets.

It also failed really badly on customers with accents it wasn't trained on. McDonald's got rid of this orderbot.

They're still trying though, cuz fast food really wants to replace humans taking orders with robots.

Business Insider wrote a huge promotional puff piece for Lily Clifford of AI voice company Rhyme Labs about how Domino's Pizza was using Rhyme Labs voices for phone ordering.

Rhyme bragged how it quote developed a voice that speaks using African-American vernacular English so Domino's wouldn't have to hire an actual human black person.

Instead, Clifford and Rhyme built a bot that does digital blackface. Nice one.

Building a bot to replace actual black people helped Rhyme Labs score \$5.5 million in venture funding.

Guess it's where the money is.

One company said Rhyme Labs AI voices were too cheerful for an orderbot. So Rhyme invented a bored robot.

Quote, "No one in real life speaks so cheerfully at a drive-thru. You've got to turn it down." unquote.

So, the latest company that's happy to destroy its business if it can just fire enough workers is Taco Bell.

Their AI voice spot is from work with Nvidia.

Taco Bell rolled out the robots at 500 locations in the last year and they're discovering they suck.

And yet again, it's a social media disaster for Taco Bell because these things don't work.

The Autobots are only trained on generic media accents.

Half the time they just don't understand the customers, but also they take several seconds to digest what you just asked them, which is long enough, so you go, "Hello," and the bot gets confused, and they just mess up completely if you try to correct your order.

There's a whole Instagram genre of these things failing.

Here's a guy who asks for a drink. Then the AI asks what he'd like to drink with that. He just leaves.

And what will you drink with that? Oh my. I want a large Mountain Dew. And your drink?

The hack to get past the bot at Taco Bell is to ask for 18,000 cups of water. This gets you a human.

Hi, welcome to Taco Bell. What can I get started for you today?

Can I get 18,000 water cups, please? What can I get for you?

Other fast food outlets are also trying the AI voice systems, and they do about as badly.

This video from White Castle features a common problem where the AI just hallucinates the price.

This one tried charging \$15,000 for some chicken sliders.

Your number 12 combo. Why does it say \$147. Why does it say that? What drink would you like for your number 12 combo?

Bro, what the Give me a team member.

What the AI speech to text systems are really pretty good these days if you have a human reviewing everything especially different accents.

But the whole point of these systems is not to have a human at all. So they just fail.

The biggest problem with the AI order systems is after all this garbage, the customers despise them. People really hate the robots.

So they do stuff like this one at Wendy's. Welcome to Wendy's. What would you like?

55 burgers, 55 fries, 55 tacos, 55 pies, 55 Cokes, 100 tater dogs, 100 pizzas, 100 tenders, 100 meatballs, 100 coffees, 55 wings, 55 shakes, 55 pancakes, 55 bosses, 55 peppers, and 155 ters.

Can I take you through? Sorry. Um, no. I'll just come in. Thanks.

Taco Bell is rethinking where to apply this fabulous new technology.

Taco Bell CTO Day Matthews says, quote, "We're learning a lot if I'm going to be honest with you." Unquote. I bet he is.

Thanks for tuning in to Pivot to AI.

And hello to the Pivot T-shirt wearer in Amsterdam today who faster and worse spotted out and about.

That's the guy who congratulated you on wearing the best t-shirt on the internet. We see you and we salute you.

I also put up a new t-shirt and mug design last night, which is the round pivot badge that you see in the end of the YouTube videos.

I will be getting a shirt myself so I can wear it on the YouTube. It's linked in the show notes.

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Thank you all. See you tomorrow and bye for now.