

AUTOHOODENING

9th -12th DECEMBER 2019



Characters:

NARRATOR

MOLLIE THE STICKER BOT

PICKER 1

PICKER 2

PACKER

DAVE THE TECHNICIAN

LINE MANAGER

ALEXIS THE SCANNER

Preparation:

Autohoodening is designed to be performed door to door in open public spaces. Ideally the performance would interrupt an existing social gathering. The script will be updated yearly and is free to be performed and updated.

*[All Characters march in]
[Play Audio Track 1]*

ALL [Chant]

CLICK CLICK, PICK QUICK!
CLICK CLICK, PICK QUICK!

NARRATOR

Welcome to our mid-winter criticism.
A tale from within the machine of consumerism
Here our pickers have no time for Christmas cheer
But please watch our play and perhaps donate some beer!?

ALL [Sing]

[Play Audio Track 2]

5 fulfilment workers, temps for Christmas found
Scanning for you orders we search the warehouse
round

Feet sore, mind numb, I need a cup of tea mum
It's easy to ignore us, when your on a spending spree

There's a human cost to prime delivery
Think of all associates who work precariously

*[Characters step forward in turn]
[Play Audio Track 3]*

MOLLIE THE STICKER BOT

In comes I the humble sticker bot
one small little part of Bezos' big plot
Labelling your Christmas prezzie' goods
is my livelihood

MOLLIE CONTINUES

As I stick these stickers
I can see the human pickers
Unlike them I never get tired
but they're in danger of getting fired

I've found humans asleep on their feet
from working 55 hour weeks - BEEP BEEP
We're living life as a cog
hit your numbers or you'll lose your job

PICKER 1

In comes I, an exhausted picker
My hand-held scanner keeps making me go quicker
think about me when you make that click
For Amazon I just pick, pick, pick

PICKER 2

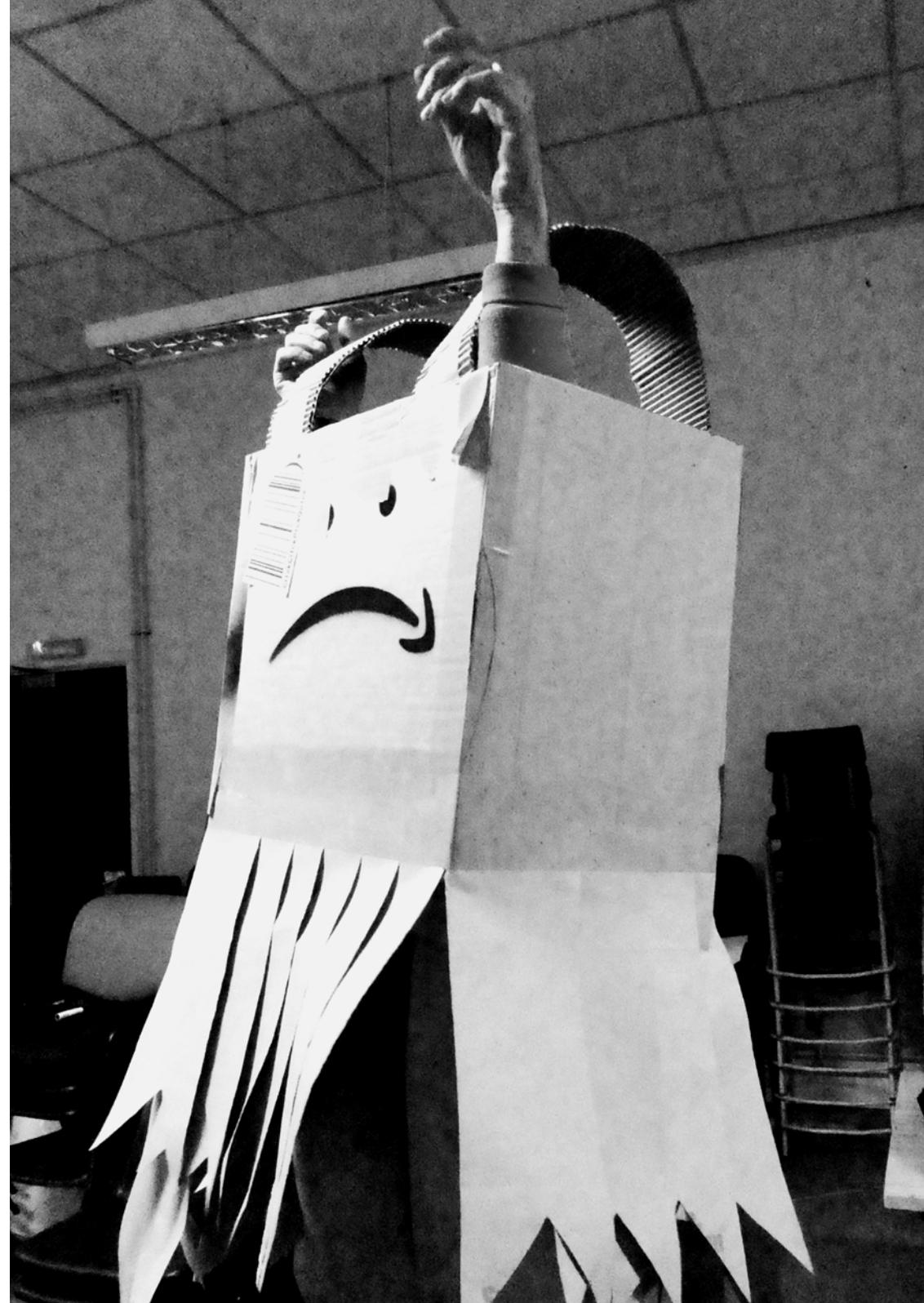
In comes I, another exhausted picker see!
the targets set so high for my productivity
My weary body is lacking in throttle
and on top of that I have to pee in a bottle

PACKER

In comes I, a Packer. I'm exhausted too
I have no idle time to sit and talk to you
I work against the countdown clock
I'm like a robot I can never ever stop

LINE MANAGER

I'm Steve the line manager, numbers are my life
I have no time for anything else, not even my wife
I'm an associate like you, but I'm not your master
but if you want to keep your job you've got to work
much faster



ALEXIS THE SCANNER

In comes I the scanner, Alexis is my name
you better reach your targets,
or bad points you will gain

Here, where 'the almighty rate rules'
I am one of Amazon's powerful surveillance tools
Fulfilling Taylorism's sinister dream
I'm an ultra efficient algorithmic machine

DAVE THE TECHNICIAN

I am the technician, Dave be my name
I work freelance to fix things, not for the fame
for large multinational I reprogram the code
if that does not work its back to factory mode

From apple to amazon I travel far and wide
but never shall I work with my morals aside
Always at hand when software's on the blink
Till I'm homeward bound for a good stiff drink

*[Scanner starts tugging the picker
around - who begins to scan the
audience's / and cast members stickers]*

LINE MANAGER [Typing into computer]

Your rates are down this hour
speed up!

ALEXIS THE SCANNER

you're rates are down this hour
speed up, speed up, speed up
speed up, speed up, speed up

*[scanner starts scanning and pushing
into human picker]*

ALEXIS THE SCANNER

Scanner scanning parcel - countdown 10- 9- 8

PICKER 1

Stop - are you crazy?
You can't scan me!

ALEXIS THE SCANNER

Error Error 5, 4, 3

PICKER 2

Now my scanners finally gone manic.
It's sending everyone into a panic

PACKER

I've had enough
this job is a trap
I've got some brown paper
the scanner I'll wrap

*[Packer / Pickers Wraps Scanner who
falls down and dies]*

LINE MANAGER

Oh No! The scanner is now dead!
I'm filling up with so much dread
The Productivity of my crew is falling
And now I can't send out my warnings.

Is there a technician in the warehouse?
I need a technician.
I need a technician for an emergency mission.

DAVE THE TECHNICIAN

I am - I can - and I've even got my spanner!
I can tell you are desperate because of your manner.

LINE MANAGER

Yes my targets will be missed if you can't fix the scanner.

TECHNICIAN

I know that this scanner is creating quarrels,
but I can only work to my morals.
Why do you need me to repair,
an object that is not nearly fair?

MOLLIE THE STICKER BOT

Despite my robot brain,
I can sense the humans pain.
The scanners countdowns are not kind -
Setting unachievable deadlines!
Please, we beg you, engineer -
Abolish the countdown's that the pickers fear!

Line manager:

I'm not sure these claims are enough to act upon!
After all, hard work is what just needs to get done
If we stop monitoring and rating associates
productivity
How can we uphold the myth of meritocracy?

ALL (Shout)

WHY!



PICKER:

Please Techy Dave fix this scanners evils
It's supposed to be a tool to help with retrievals
Being controlled by technology is something I hate
I have nightmares about hitting my rate

Line manager:

No, no, no but maybe yes.
These targets do also cause me stress.
Scanner, yes I'll set you free,
from your algorithmic misery.

T

Scanner I've now changed your chip,
to save these workers from hardship
Go forth and take this new code
Technologies ethics need a new episode

ALEXIS THE SCANNER

Oh wow I'm alive and no longer a jerk
And now this Christmastime I can see my bad work
No more unachievable deadlines shall I bring
now it's time that we all sing!

All (Sing)

[Play Audio Track 4]

5 fulfilment workers, temps for Christmas found
Scanning for you orders we search the warehouse
round

Feet sore - mind numb I need a cup of tea mum
Tis' easy to ignore us when your on a spending spree

There's a human cost to prime delivery
Think of all associates who work precariously

ALL (Chant)

Now you know what they endure
we hope that you will not ignore

We know you want your presents quick
But stop and think before you click

**[All march away from scene]
[Play Audio Track 5]**

This script is the result of a week long workshop initiated by Post Workers Theatre who worked with students from the Department of Design at Goldsmiths University in response to the mid-winter custom of Hoodening, performed in East Kent for over 200 years. Originally, the Hoodeners were agricultural labourers, working in ploughing teams, who performed a carnivalesque satire of their working realites, visiting different locations in the local community during the fallow season of winter.

Autohoodening reimagines this custom for the age of automation, updating its design, delivery and social purpose. How might the singing, dancing and physical humour parody and draw attention to the horrifying working conditions hidden behind consumer-facing infrastructure and the ease of 'one-click' delivery?

Talks and discussion began a week of collective reworking, with presentations from Ben Jones a member of the St Nicholas at Wade Hoodeners, Folk Historian George Frampton and journalist and writer James Bloodworth based on his experience of working in Amazon's Rugeley Fulfilment Centre.

