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Local robot lands in Wall-E territory

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WHEN Andrew Nowrojee was busy making his post-apocalyptic robot film, little did he know that film giant Pixar was coming up with a lookalike creature.

VCA graduate Nowrojee finished his 17-minute film *Lone* in 2007; Pixar's blockbuster *Wall-E* hit the screens in 2008.

The first Nowrojee knew about *Wall-E* was when he saw a promotional picture towards the end of his six-month project.

"My initial reaction was a little bit of 'oh no' but also 'wow I really want to see that'," says the 29-year-old.

"At first I thought it was a drawback because people might think I ripped it off, but then I thought it's good if people make a connection with *Wall-E*.

"If mine were a feature, I'd be more worried. Mine is a little short

film and theirs is big budget, and amazing. It's how you express the idea that gives you the signature."

Nowrojee's *Lone* has landed among Australia's 100 top short films for the St Kilda Film Festival.

It tells the story of a man (Radek Jonak), in a post-apocalyptic landscape similar to *Wall-E*, who seeks connection much like *Wall-E* does.

The man creates a companion, Shoey, out of scrap.

Nowrojee bravely took his creation to the Imagined Science Film Festival in New York just a few months after *Wall-E* came out.

Shoey wasn't made to feel like a shoo-in. Responses flooded in on the internet. One said it was a film showing how *Wall-E* came about.

Shoey is an animatronic robot which took three months to build for the VCA, Melbourne University and Intelligence Systems Research at Deakin

University. Nowrojee wrote and directed the show, came up with the original concept for his robot and also voiced it.

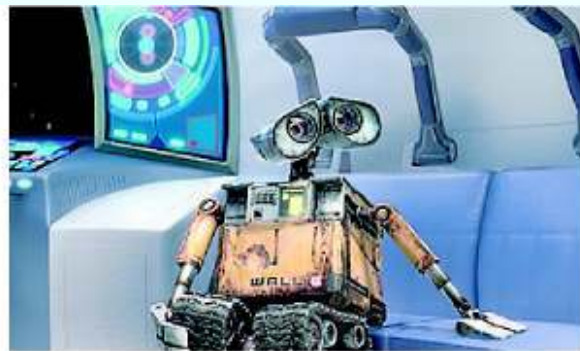
He is working on his debut feature, and a short film set in 2020.

"I watched *Wall-E* again just the other day. I still have a laugh and a cry," he says.

"My film is more atmospheric, visual, and doesn't dot all the Is and cross the Ts. It's darker and brooding.

"It's nice to be compared to *Wall-E* but it's in a league of its own."

see > *Lone* screens on May 30 at 10.30 pm at the George Palace Cinema, St Kilda. St Kilda Film Festival runs May 26-31. Festival hotline: 9209 6711 or www.stkildafilmmfestival.com.au



Spot the difference: (left) a robot character from the local film *Lone* and (right) a similar character from the hit *Wall-E*.