

Best of Last Week: An ice-covered early Mars, a robot writing plays, and using home cookers to sanitize face masks

August 10 2020, by Bob Yirka

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It was a good week for space science as a team at the University of British Columbia found evidence suggesting that [early Mars was covered in ice sheets, not flowing rivers](#)—valley networks on the red planet's

surface showed evidence that they were carved by glaciers rather than moving water. And an international team of researchers found out [what happens when a giant black hole does not interfere with a galaxy](#): stars form at a faster rate.

In technology news, Microsoft [began tagging the popular Avast CCleaner as a "potentially unwanted application"](#)—making it more difficult for users to apply the third-party computer cleaning tool. Also, former NSA security specialist Patrick Wardle reported that [an exploit used against Windows users who also run Microsoft Office can also be used to exploit MacOS systems, as well](#). He also reported that the exploit has been used by hackers in North Korea to infect cryptocurrency exchanges. And chip maker Intel was caught off guard when Swiss software engineer Till Kottmann [posted confidential Intel specs online](#). Also, a team at Charles University, Švanda Theater and the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague used artificial intelligence to program [a robot to create a theater play written entirely by machines](#)—called THEaiTRE, the robot is still a work in progress, though the team expects to debut a performance of its output sometime next year.

In other news, a team led by a group at the University of Utah showed that [your hair knows what you eat and how much your haircut costs](#)—amino acids in hair carry chemical traces of the proteins in food. Also, in a study led by a team at La Jolla Institute for Immunology, researchers found that [exposure to common cold coronaviruses can teach the immune system to recognize SARS-CoV-2](#)—perhaps giving the immune system a head start in battling the virus. And a team at MIT solved the mystery of [why shaving dulls even the sharpest of razors](#).

And finally, if you are looking for ways to reduce your chances of being infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus, you might want to check out the results of a study conducted by a team at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign: they found that [a home electric cooker can be used](#)

[as an easy and efficient way to sanitize N95 masks.](#)

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Citation: Best of Last Week: An ice-covered early Mars, a robot writing plays, and using home cookers to sanitize face masks (2020, August 10) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://sciencex.com/news/2020-08-week-ice-covered-early-mars-robot.html>

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