



Video image from a robot probe sent to explore the sewers beneath the corner of Franklin Street and West Broadway in New York City.

In the U.S., we throw away enough glass bottles to fill the two towers of the World Trade Center every two weeks.

robot. That's when you get the stray, solitary rat coming out to check out what all the light and whirring is about. Invariably, the rat just watches disdainfully, like your garden variety coot sitting on his porch eyeing a newfangled roadster motor up the lane. At a recent taping, one of the little darlings was dining on the leftovers from TriBeCa Grill. The robot's approach didn't chase him from his salmon carpaccio. In fact, he deserted his meal to inspect the probe, smearing his cute, little, wuffling whiskered nose on the lens, sitting up on his haunches, sniffing at the lights, and scampering in circles around the camera. Not exactly the nasty *Ben*-type encounter you'd expect.

Frankly, as long as I don't have to get close and personal with them, rats don't bother me just to look at. Roaches are another matter. Not the little guys, but the greasy bruisers some lame-brain tagged with the euphemism *water bugs*. And as if the regulation black models weren't bad