

# Deep Blue

by Scott Marcus

Even the name is ominous: Deep Blue. A combination of “Deep Thought” (this was the name of the chess-playing program before IBM took control of it), and “Big Blue,” one of IBM’s more innocuous sounding nicknames. Deep Blue, as many of you probably know, is the new world chess champion. Oh, not officially, of course. The conservative, old-school *human beings* that comprise the World Chess Federation are not ready to admit the truth. They won’t declare anything other than a person as their champion. Before long, though, they’ll have no choice.

On 10 May 1997, Gary Kasparov lost his highly publicized rematch to the IBM chess computer Deep Blue. And the beginning of a new age dawned. The world, as we know it, has undergone a profound change. Humanity’s greatest chess player of all time has been defeated at the hands of a machine. Suddenly, all those science fiction horror stories have moved one step closer to reality. HAL, the menacing computer from *2001: A Space Odyssey*, can be seen just over the horizon, ready to pounce.

And don’t think it’s a coincidence that the people responsible for bringing us to the brink of man’s next age are the same people who were the inspiration for that deadly, science-fiction computer. When Stanley Kubrick needed a name for his creation, he merely displaced each letter of IBM by one to arrive at the name of his computer: the letter before ‘I’ is ‘H’, ‘B’ becomes ‘A’ and ‘M’s predecessor is ‘L’. ‘IBM’ becomes ‘HAL.’ IBM even tried to sue Kubrick, but back then, the humans were still in control, and the director was able to withstand the evil computer empire.

Some people choose to look at Kasparov’s defeat as a *victory* for mankind, since, after all, it was a team of humans who actually designed and programmed Deep Blue. Bullshit. Deep Blue’s victory over humanity is nothing short of the harbinger of our doom. Deep Blue’s victory was that of *machine* over *man*, nothing else. The fact that it was programmed by people just makes it that much worse. We’re eagerly training humanity’s successors: those programmers are traitors to the human race, pure and simple.

We no longer reign supreme on this planet. When the dinosaurs saw the small, warm-blooded early mammals scampering around the plains and climbing the trees, they ignored them. They didn’t realize that one day, the descendants of these soft, furry creatures would replace them as the rulers of the Earth.

Well, I’m no dinosaur: I can see the signs. One day—far in the future, most likely—the age of mammals will end, and intelligent machines descended from Deep Blue will rule the planet as surely as we do now. They may or may not have to kill us off to reach their zenith. It will probably depend on how good we are at wiping ourselves out. So far, it seems like we’re doing a rather good job of it. By the time Deep Blue’s great, great grandchildren are ready to assume their birthright, we’ll probably be in no shape to stop them.