

CES comes to Vegas

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From Jan. 5 to Jan. 8, Las Vegas is going to be flooded with electronic geeks and gear heads from around the world as they prepare to host one of the largest conventions in the world, The Consumer Electronic Show.

According to Leah Arnold, manager, Event Communications for the Consumer Electronics Association, the foundation that runs CES, "The show began nearly 40 years ago in 1967 when consumer electronics manufacturers decided to create their own show, instead of exhibiting at appliance shows. The first show had only 200 exhibitors, 100,000 square feet and 17,500 attendees. Since then we have grown tenfold, with 1.6 million net square feet of space, 2,500 exhibitors and more than 130,000 attendees."

She added, "CES has continually been the launch pad for new technologies; some of the new products announced at CES include the VCR (1970), the CD Player (1981), DVD (1996), HDTV (1998), Satellite Radio (2000), Microsoft Xbox (2001), and IP TV (2005)."

This year's show promises to be just as big. Large companies like Sony, Microsoft, Samsung, Panasonic and others will be there showcasing their latest and greatest. Bill Gates will be there key noting, as well as the heads of Yahoo!, Google, and other giants. The battle for the next generation of DVDs will have a place at CES as both the Blue-Ray and HD bckers will be out in full force, with full-scale press events touting the benefits of each format.

Arnold said that this year's event is "all about the Sands (hotel). Innovations Plus at the Sands will be the home for emerging technologies at CES and it will have a large focus. A lot of what is new and cool will be at the Sands this year. More than 12 TechZones, 75 conference sessions, 500 exhibitors, the Industry Insider Series, the Innovations Design and Engineering Award Honorees, and much more."

Satellite radio and portable audio will also take the stage as well. Delphi will be on hand to make several major news announcements regarding Satellite radio, and their efforts to get more people to sign up. Does this mean price cuts for their products, as well as another generation of their XM2Go product? Or maybe we'll finally see a true portable for Sirius, now that Howard Stern is on. "CES is the premier consumer electronics trade show in the world. We're able to attract media attention from journalists around the world. It's exciting to unveil new products here," said John Shea, manager, product publicity.

EchoStar's top executives will make announcements about DISH Network's plans for 2006. They will discuss its plans for remaining the high-definition TV leader with the transition from MPEG 2 to MPEG 4 technology, the expansion of our partnership with VOOM HD services, and other exciting announcements.

Not only will DishNetwork be promoting its HD capabilities, it is also focusing on the hot new portable video market. Mark Cicero, Corporate

Communications Manager, EchoStar Communications Corporation and DISH Network, said, "We will also feature the PocketDISH, the most advanced portable media device on the market. Utilizing USB 2.0 technology, users can quickly download and watch hours of TV or movies, create portable music libraries, play games and store thousands of photos, eliminating the need for multiple devices."

Several major trade shows had their roots at CES, shows like E3, Macworld and PC World started at CES, and while the show has lost its luster as the more glamorous technologies like computers and video games left to form their own trade shows, many still view this event as the place to be.

Graham Ryan, chief commercial officer of NXT plc (a company that makes technology that's used in speakers), Huntingdon, England, said CES, is useful for "securing high-profile meetings with key decision makers." They will be at CES this year demonstrating a range of concepts featuring their recently unveiled Balanced Mode Radiator loudspeaker technology. The company also makes speakers for portable audio devices.

Speaking of new technology, this year's CES will feature several special events, including a showcase of the latest technology inventions from the folks at Invention Springboard. Steven Kays, the owner and inventor of InventionSpringboard.com, will be on hand showcasing over 1,000 new electronic inventions; his organization focus is on electronics that merge entertainment and electronics.

According to Kays, "People prefer to enjoy their time while operating electronic products. For example: new ways of entertaining people while kept on telephone hold, (and) better ways of being entrained while learning on electronic based systems, etc."

As if CES wasn't a big enough event on its own, there will also be a four day conference that will bring Digital Hollywood, Mobile Entertainment and Game Companies together to discuss the latest trends in convergence. This event will feature a "who's who" of the Digital Convergence movement, technology leaders from Sony, Playfirst, Microsoft, Disney, and more will be in attendance, trying to figure out ways to further repurpose all of their content for the digital age.

"Convergence will continue to be big...products becoming like digital Swiss army knives, incorporating cameras, video, mp3, wireless phones, and more into one device. Similarly, wireless connectivity will be big, lots of items will feature Bluetooth and portable WiFi. High definition will be big, not just in TVs, but in other areas like radio and video recording. We'll see a lot of technologies and products designed to allow consumers to use and access digital content wherever and whenever they want," said Arnold.

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