

Sex toys all the buzz at Vegas tech show

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The adult film group Naughty America offered an augmented reality experience in a room tucked in the back of the CES show floor at the Las Vegas Convention Center

From the printing press and the VCR to virtual reality sex, adult entertainment has always been a major catalyst driving innovation and reshaping technology for the benefit of the porn pioneer.

And for the thousands of tech nerds at the annual Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, that means the intelligent toasters and AI vacuum cleaners are having to make room for the sex toys of the future.

Among the innovations at this year's get-together, run by the Consumer Technology Association (CTA), are an augmented strip club complete with virtual pole dancers and a "personal massager" you can operate from your smart watch.

The market for sex products such as vibrators and lubricant is projected to grow to \$37.2 billion globally by the year 2022, according to British sex toy retailer MysteryVibe.

"It's not strange to want a more satisfying sex life, and there's nothing wrong with you if you need technology to help you achieve that," the company's co-founder Stephanie Alys told AFP.

The firm was at CES to show off a product designed for the discerning gentleman—a snug, collar-like device named "Tenuto" which, in musical notation, refers to holding on slightly longer than you normally would.

Meanwhile startup OhMiBod was showing off a vibrator operated via an app on Apple smart watches.

The less uninhibited, or those on sufficiently noisy public transport, can simply turn it up or down by yelling at an Alexa-style voice-activated assistant.

'Mind-blowing'

Naughty America's "Strip Club" taps into capabilities on smartphones or tablets to let people overlay virtual male or female stripper holograms on the world around them.

"It's mind-blowing," Naughty America chief executive Andreas Hronopoulos told AFP. "You can bring a full stripper into a room, on a pole, and she is there. No tipping necessary."

Once a virtual performer is anchored in place, viewers can move around them as though the dancer were actually there.



Organizers of the 2019 Consumer Electronics Show said they took back an innovation award from a sexual stimulator because there was no category for sex toys

A virtual reality option lets people use the headgear to visit faux strip joints from a first-person perspective.

"I think of this more as a leisure product, where magazines are going to go—you sit back, relax, drop the holograms in place and play with them," Hronopoulos said.

The [adult entertainment](#) industry has a history of boldly pursuing new technologies that promise to improve their products or profits, taking credit for everything from e-commerce, streaming video and webcams to cable TV and subtitles.

"I think they can teach the (tech) industry a few things," Gartner principal analyst Tuong Nguyen told AFP.

Hands-free

With the technology developing so quickly, one challenge for an industry used to marketing family-friendly gadgets is how far into the sometimes sticky world of adult entertainment it is prepared to wade.

A robotic, hands-free vibrator named Ose that uses micro-robotic technology to mimic the sensation of a human mouth won a CES Innovation Award this year.

But it had the honor stripped and found itself controversially banned from the exhibition floor after it was deemed to have broken the rules.

It might not be clear to everyone why a nude pole-dancer is deemed more acceptable than a high-tech vibrator, but the CTA said the Ose, made by the startup Lora DiCarlo, "does not fit into any of our existing product categories" and thus should not have been eligible.

"Society needs to drop the taboo around sex and sexuality—it's a part of life and health that absolutely should be part of mainstream discourse," Lora DiCarlo founder Lora Haddock said in an open letter to the CTA.

"You never know how [technology](#) can be used, the future of healthcare might well be in the patent for a sex toy."

Douglas Layman, a general partner for the partnership backing Lora DiCarlo, said in a statement the startup was taking aim at a market that is poised to boom.

"Society is changing to accept a broader discussion about sexual health, leading to explosive growth for sex tech products in the consumer market," he said.

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