

CES 2019: "Alexa, I'm still waiting for you to flush the potty"

8 January 2019, by Jefferson Graham, Usa Today

The Numi toilet from Kohler was impossible to ignore.

Announced at the Consumer Electronics Show in January, 2018, the new \$8,000+ toilet was not just touted to "bring you the finest in personal comfort and cleansing," but it also had voice commands via Alexa. Ready to flush or want to heat up the seat? Just ask Amazon's Alexa personal assistant to do it for you.

Engadget enthusiastically exclaimed that it was more "tricked out" than any John ever seen, while Architectural Digest called it simply the "craziest" launch at CES.

Only one problem: The loo never did leave the Kohler warehouses for retail stores. It was never released as touted in 2018.

And that's the problem with CES, which unofficially opens Sunday with press previews. Some 4,500 exhibitors come to Las Vegas, roll the dice and hope that something magical will happen—that the press will gush over the product, dealers will respond with orders and the public will jam stores to buy.

But that, indeed, rarely happens. New products like a self-contained [virtual reality headset](#) from Lenovo (Mirage Solo) and super light Dell XPS 13 laptop actually get released. But they're the exception to the rule. Here's a look at some of the hits from last year's CES:

—The Samsung Wall got a lot of oohs and ahhs when it unveiled "the world's first consumer modular MicroLED 146-inch TV." The set is "bound to be insanely expensive, but it's also incredibly cool," noted USA TODAY sister division Reviewed.com, in deeming the Wall with one of its Editor's Choice Awards. The Wall has yet to be released for consumers.

—Buddy the Robot. The little personal friend with an iPad-like screen for eyes and nose made a splash at CES, but, sadly, the French company behind it never ended up releasing Buddy. Kuri, another consumer robot announced at CES 2017, and promised for retail delivery in 2018, never got to market and announced it was shutting its doors in July.

—Razer Project Linda. An Android Razer phone slips into a laptop and acts as a touchpad for a cool gaming device. Shown at CES 2018, but no update on release.

—Finally, some good news. The Tetra Countertop dishwasher got lots of attention at CES 2018 for a plumbing-free solution to washing dishes. Just pour in a gallon of water and wash dishes anywhere. The \$299 device never was released—but CES just gave the product a 2019 Innovation Award, and the rules are that the product must be released between April 2018 and April 2019. So look for the product soon.

And while succeeding at CES is rare, so are winners at the blackjack table. But some pull it off, big time. The Ring video doorbell opened for business by spending \$2,000 to put a card table at CES in 2011 and ended up making enough contacts to begin selling its new product, eventually getting into Walmart, Home Depot and other major retailers.

Sales started to take off. Company founder Jamie Siminoff became a regular fixture on home shopping channels and TV commercials. In February 2018, Ring had become so successful that it was acquired by Amazon for just over \$1 billion.

"There's a lot of carnage," Siminoff told us recently about his early years at CES. "It's like the gold rush. Of the people who were around us, maybe only about 10 percent are still around. Most are

probably dead at this point."

And as for that Kohler Numi toilet, it's returning to CES again, but this time with a twist. The company, which initially said it would be available in the fourth quarter of 2018, has a new date: fourth quarter, 2019.

Get your bathroom speaking voice ready!

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