



Tech Talk

Las Vegas CES 2016 ©

by John McCarthy

Hi and a warm welcome once again to Tech Talk.

Las Vegas very recently hosted the CES – The Consumer Electronics Show – where large and small tech companies present their best ideas and products for the upcoming year. 2016 witnessed some really interesting products.

For the first time ever, transport was very much one of the highlights, and emissions bad boy VW introduced a couple of brand new electric models: an e-Golf Touch and a Budd-E: a futuristic electric Microbus concept which could well sell millions on release. The e-Golf Touch has no buttons and has been described as a ‘smartphone on wheels’. It’s operated on voice control, almost along the lines of ‘Hey Siri’, except that probably it will be ‘Hey Volkswagen’, and hand gestures. The digital dashboard is a large touchscreen and will be integrated with Apple CarPlay and Android auto. The home screen will be similar to a smartphone’s, and a suite of apps will be able to make calls, navigate, and indeed play music. According to VW, the e-Golf Touch will be on sale later this year. Other automobile manufacturers are coming up with similar ideas, so we can expect considerably more electric vehicles in the not-too-distant future (although this is, of course, a short-term solution), autonomous tech, increasing smartphone connectivity, and incredibly sophisticated, game-changing interfaces.

In aviation, a Chinese company unveiled a drone capable of carrying a human passenger. In videos somewhat reminiscent of *The Fifth Element*, the Ehang 184 resembles a small helicopter with propellers spinning parallel to the ground. The machine can be fully charged in two hours, carry up to 100 kilos (so I just about make it) and fly for a mind-boggling 23 minutes. There are no controls, as in a traditional aircraft, and the pilot need only give ‘take off’ and ‘land’ commands with a couple of clicks on a tablet. Countries throughout the world are currently laying out guidelines and regulations for drone use, but despite scrutiny this could well be the future of commuting. No traffic jams... bliss! Check out the videos on YouTube.

But what about the French contingent at this year's CES?

I think it's time for some thoroughly well-deserved 'Cock-a-doodle-do'! 190 start-ups were present (second only to the USA), Emmanuel Macron was there and did his best to promote French technology, and indeed he's been pushing La French Tech throughout the world since he assumed the mantle of his ministerial post. France is arguably the most promising country when it comes to start-ups, and although in the limited time we have there's no conceivable way we can do justice to all those who were present at CES, here are two or three products which I think may prove to be very successful.

Withings featured a Wi-Fi connected thermometer which can be used by lightly touching the skin over the temple to measure temperature. Immediate impressions are that it's mainly designed for babies, as this enables parents to take readings while their prized-possession is asleep and without waking him or her up. It's less invasive than traditional methods, obviously more hygienic, and experts maintain that it's considerably more accurate than previously well-tried instruments. Furthermore, it comes with an app where you get a temperature diary and can include all kinds of relevant information, which allows you to share with your doctor via a simple click.

Hydrao has invented a new smart shower. On average, I was surprised to discover that we use approximately 80 litres of water for a single shower. Hydrao features built-in LED lights that change depending on the amount of water used. A green light means you've used 10 litres of water, if it starts flashing red approximately 50 litres have been used. The showerhead is Bluetooth-linked to an app on your IOS or Android device, so this enables you to choose your water limit and colours, pre-programme, and potentially save you hundreds of Euros every year. Water is a precious resource and will be increasingly scarce over the coming years.

My own favourite, however, is a machine that uses individual doses to serve the perfect, most sublime glass of wine. This has been named as 'Dix-Vins', pun obviously intended, created by a start-up in Nantes. It uses flasks which are equivalent to one glass of wine, is properly decanted to the point where it's almost spent a few hours in a carafe and then pours it into a glass either heated or cooled depending on the wine you wish to savour. An accompanying app will provide you with further information on the flavours and vintage.

That's it for now; do join me for another edition of TechTalk on Englishwaves.fr next week.