



## Tech Talk

**CES 2017** ©

*by John McCarthy*

Hi and a very warm welcome to Tech Talk. Today, we're off to Las Vegas, which deservedly or not enjoys the reputation of being one of the world's major dens of vice and iniquity, offering for the most debauched of reprobates, a vast array of licentious possibilities of which the gleaming casinos are just the visible part of the iceberg. For our own purposes, however, once a year Sin City sheds its sleazy image and becomes the tech centre of the entire world, a nerd's nirvana where gaggles of geeks gather on a spiritual annual pilgrimage to the CES – that's the Consumer Electronics Show – an exposition which now has the reputation as the place to see what's next in tech, showcasing in the process innovations that will set the tone for the rest of the year and beyond.

This year marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and closed its doors just a few weeks ago. It featured the usual cornucopia of smartwatches, laptops, tablets, mobile phones – even from the supposedly defunct Blackberry – drones, self-drive automobiles, 3D and virtual reality headsets; all in all, there were thousands of products on display giving an insight into what our homes and the world at large will probably be like in the not-so-distant future. Approximately 240 French start-ups were present – so a well-deserved cocorico there – and we'll be looking at some of their products next week.

For the moment, and as time is always limited, I thought we could have a look at three innovations which will almost certainly be part and parcel of the domotics landscape in the coming years. Firstly, the smartbed. We've already dedicated one Tech Talk to gadgets that help you to sleep, and perhaps the ultimate of these is the brand new Sleep Number 360 smartbed. In a nutshell, this is a multiple-layer bed with mechanics at the bottom enabling it to move up and down. On top of that, there's an air chamber with 'responsive air technology' which senses movement and then changes its firmness, comfort and support to espouse the contours of your body in order to ensure better sleep. Research has shown that people fall asleep faster if their feet are gently warmed, so naturally the Sleep Number 360 is equipped with a foot warmer. For those of you who regularly suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous snoring from your partner, the bed also comes with a snore detector which elevates the head to the appropriate angle in order to ensure cessation of unwelcome nocturnal racket. That's the hardware, which also comes with an app that will provide you with all the relevant sleep data: how much you've snored, tossed and turned, whether you've indulged in any somnambulism and then inform you whether you've had a good night's sleep ... or not. Some might say this is Tech overkill.

Most of us have at least one TV set in the house. At the CES this year there were many models from all the big names in the business, many with 4K and curved screens. One of the most interesting was the LG Signature Oled W – as in W for Wallpaper, which at 2.6 mm takes thinness to a new extreme and would have Apple's Jony Ive salivating with admiration. It's a completely unique design as the TV display is a stand-alone screen which attaches via the one cable to a compact speaker/hardware bar. As such, it's ridiculously light, the 65-inch version weighing in at just under 8 kilos. All the external paraphernalia, as for instance HDMI cable, USB and other connectivity cables can be plugged into the external bar, which also contains a couple of cylindrical self-retracting/rising speakers which will keep your friends amused for hours on end. State of the art design, with of course a price to match: approximately \$8,000 in the States although of course the cost will probably come down once the economies of scale kick in.

Finally, and for those considering the possibility of purchasing a smart fridge – they're still very expensive and there are cheaper solutions, such as the Smarter FridgeCam. This gadget, as its name would suggest, is a small camera which you can place inside your existing fridge and takes pictures whenever the door is open or shut. The images are sent into the cloud, and hence available on your smartphone; it also uses object recognition technology to scan what's in the fridge and will send notifications when the user is running low on stock or when their food is about to expire. The makers claim it will save the average family hundreds of Euros a year by eliminating food waste. It comes with an app which uses geolocation technology to send notifications when you're near a shop and need to pick up items, and can even recommend recipes based on what ingredients you have in the fridge. And before you all get too excited, I hasten to add that it won't actually cook your meals.

That's it for today, join me for more Tech Talk next time when we'll be taking a look at some of the French Tech on show at this year's CES. Until then, bye for now .