

COVID-19 Claims CES 2021

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Abstract—CES is the world's largest consumer electronics exhibition. Throughout its decades-long history, various iconic technologies have made their debut at CES. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, CES 2021 will be a virtual event. While there will be no in-person gathering in Las Vegas, NV, USA (the show's typical venue), CES will continue to be the center of the world's technological innovation that sets the tone for the year.

■ **CES, FORMERLY THE** Consumer Electronics Show, is the world's largest consumer electronics exhibition. Every year for the last 53 years over 170,000 industry attendees from over 160 countries converge on Las Vegas, NV, USA to showcase and explore the latest technology as well as meet with clients, customers, and business partners. Some of the world's most iconic consumer technologies have made their debut at CES such as the videocassette recorder in 1970, the Nintendo Entertainment System in 1985, the Microsoft Xbox in 2001, the Blu-Ray Disc in 2003, Intel Wireless Display in 2010, and, this year at CES 2020, the Advanced Micro Devices (AMD) Ryzen 4000 mobile accelerated processing units.

CES is a time-honored tradition, a rite of passage for those in the consumer electronics industry. As a CES veteran, having attended for

the last several years, it is the most exciting yet dreadful event of the year. Everywhere you look, from the Las Vegas Convention Center (LVCC) to the Sands Expo to the hotel meeting rooms to the Las Vegas Strip is cutting-edge technology. Autonomous vehicles, drones, robots, laptops, desktops, phones, displays, smart home tech, augmented reality, virtual reality, fitness and health tech, video games, wireless tech - CES has it all. Your feet ache after walking for miles and miles throughout the nearly 3 million square feet of exhibition space. Your skin feels like it is going to crack off from the combination of dry desert air and gallons of hand sanitizer. From early in the morning until late in the evening, you are frantically rushing from meeting to meeting while navigating jam-packed hallways and avoiding tripping over people and gadgets. Traffic is abysmal during the week of the event; driving is futile. CES is daunting, overwhelming, and exhausting—and I absolutely love every second of it.

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Figure 1. Central Hall of the LVCC at CES 2019.



Figure 2. AMD's Dr. Lisa Su holding the newly announced Ryzen Threadripper 3990X at CES 2020.

This past July, the Consumer Technology Association announced that CES 2021, to be held Monday January 11 to Thursday January 14, 2021, will be a virtual event due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic¹. Yes, even the mighty CES has fallen victim to COVID-19. Given the number of people that pack themselves into the event space to shake hands and demo new devices, this announcement is not wildly surprising. This will be the first time in the show's decades-long history that there will not be an in-person event. Exhibitors will have to change things up to showcase their latest innovations in a virtual forum. Despite the lack of a physical venue, CES will still be the center of technological innovation, which will set the tone for the rest of the year. Amidst uncertainty surrounding the logistics and planning of the event, one thing that has been confirmed is the CES 2021 keynote speakers: Verizon's Hans Vestberg, General Motors' Mary Barra, and AMD's Dr. Lisa Su.

While I am excited to see what CES 2021 brings, I eagerly await CES 2022 when the show will, presumably, make a triumphant return to Las Vegas. By then, I will have had two whole years to recover.

■ REFERENCES

1. Consumer Technology Association, "CES 2021 is all-digital," Sep. 2020. [Online]. Available: <https://www.ces.tech/planning-for-ces-2021.aspx>. Accessed on: Oct. 15, 2020.

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