



## The NEAT Podcast, Episode Six

**[Podcast intro plays]**

**Adam**

Hello and welcome to the NEAT Podcast. I am Adam Kosakowski, one of the producers and today, Steve Famiglietti, the host is going to interview me about my experience at CES 2020. So, stay tuned.

**Steve**

Hello everyone, this is Steve Famiglietti, the host of the NEAT podcast. And I am joined by Adam Kosakowski.

**Adam**

Hey oh!

**Steve**

Also, by our producer Kris Thompson. You know, I guess he's such a great producer that I wasn't even gonna mention him.

Everyone

[Laughter]

**Adam**

Ookay!

**Steve**

He's been rather elusive lately, so...

**Adam**

It's okay Kris, I know you're important.

**Kris**

Thank you.

**Steve**

Well, anyway, we have a very exciting pod cast - I usually have no issue keeping it together. It's gonna be a long recording. It's gonna be a great podcast because we were fortunate enough to be able to have presence at CES or better known as the Consumer Electronics Show in Vegas!

**Kris**

Vegas, baby!

**Steve**

And Adam was lucky enough to attend the Consumer Electronics Show which from now on through this podcast, I will refer to as CES and he is going to share his exciting adventures and all other kinds of experiences that he had at-Wow, CES in Vegas! So why don't you go ahead and give us an overview of like, what is CES?

**Adam**

That's a big question.

**Steve**

I know.

**Adam**

So, CES: Consumer Electronics Show is HUGE. Like, before I left, I tried to wrap my head around how big it was by watching videos on YouTube. I tried to find videos that would help me understand and approach CES but also understand and approach Vegas. And there was a good amount of content I was wrapping my head around it, but none of it really hit home until I got there. CES is the biggest convention ever, as far as I know. It takes place all along the Las Vegas strip at three different locations. Each location has multiple buildings filled with spaces for sessions, you know presentations by exhibitors and important professionals, but also exhibitor space. For the show floors, there are multiple show floors. I believe there was something over 4,000 vendors?

Which is bananas, honestly, and I'm sure I didn't even see the tip of the iceberg. I think I just like got a drop of water from the tip of the iceberg [Laughing]. There was just too much to see, there's no way you're going to see it all. So, I tried to prioritize. And, you know, one day I'm going to focus on this centralized location. The next day, the next. Third, the next. So, I tried to spend some time at each of the three giant, giant areas to try to soak in as much as I could. And it was something else, Steve.

**Steve**

I can imagine that it was. And I'm thinking that perhaps also while you were at CES, maybe you had some time to take in Vegas, and I'm curious as to what your impressions of Vegas were now that you've been there and you're back.

**Adam**

So, this was my first time to Vegas, and it's something else. The videos I watched helped...also what really helped me was a very friendly Uber driver, who on the way to my hotel, from the airport, he was basically like, [in deep gruff voice] "Alright, let me tell you everything you need to know about Vegas."

**Steve**

Did he really sound like that too?

**Adam**

[Still in the deep gruff voice] "Kind of."

**Steve and Adam**

[Laughter]

**Adam**

He told me so much, he's like, "This is where you want to go to eat. You want to look for these kind of prices. You don't want to talk to these kind of people." Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Basically, it's the kind of place that when you're a tourist, if anyone asks you like, do you wanna...Do you want to see this show? We have this free deal. You know, if it sounds too good to be true, you should just say no, basically. You should just keep to yourself unless you want to ask someone for help. But then you should find like, a casino or hotel representative and ask for help. But even then, the Uber driver said, [Gruff Vegas voice] "If you need to know where to go, you ask them for help. But take what they say at face value, because they talk to a lot of people every day...and if they tell you where the exit is, or where the Uber pickup is, before you call your Uber, walk there and make sure he was telling you the truth." And I was like, "Why would he lie to me?" He's like, "You got to listen because they deal with people all day. And eventually they get sick and tired of it and they just want to mess people!" [Laughter]

**Steve**

Wow...

**Adam Kosakowski**

I was like, "Okay, good to know. I will take everything people say to me at face value and with a grain of salt, so to speak. And now, you know, check the area first before I commit to any plans." [Laughter] But he said I had to go to Fremont Street, because you just have to go there. It's an experience. I think it's in a part of Vegas, some people called Old Vegas, but they've updated it in recent years. And Fremont Street is epic.

**Adam**

The whole street like a fourth of a mile or something like that, above you, in like a canopy, are just screens that are always showing something. So, when I went there, I was basically in a tunnel of screens showing like space stations and stars and galaxies and stuff like that just for fun. And obviously, there's music playing and there's lights from all the casinos and it's just a sensory overload. But it was really cool. And also, on Fremont Street they have zip lining, and I did that the first day I was there. So, I zip lined along Fremont Street with the canopy of screens above me and people below me recording me as I'm flying by... music's blaring in my ears, it was it's pretty epic.

**Steve**

Wow, it sounds like it would be and I'm sure overwhelming too?

**Adam**

A little bit. Yeah, the whole experience was as awesome as it was overwhelming. I definitely needed time to just go back to my hotel or just like sit. [Laughter] And just kind of like decompress a bit and that kind of thing. But I think that was mostly because I was there by my lonesome. If I was there with someone else, I tend to have more energy and be more extroverted, but I think I handled it fine. It was still a lot of fun. And I would definitely go back.

**Steve**

I was gonna ask you if you had to pick one thing that you would say absolutely blew your mind. What would that thing be?

**Adam**

Jeez, one thing?

**Steve**

Yeah, we're gonna go like if someone said to you, say you saw 20 things at CES, and you had to put them in order from like the best to the worst. What would be like in your top, like one?

**Adam**

I think one of the things that blew my mind wouldn't necessarily fall under assistive technology but: wireless charging using light?! There was this booth that had these lights like in the would-be ceiling of this booth and it was giving off light. And there was a model train going around on a track on a glass table so that you could see that the track and the train was not plugged into any wired power source. So, what was powering it? The light! True wireless power source from 10 feet away? And the train had a little module like plugged into where the power would be, this little dongle, so to speak. It was able to receive the power from the light. It was nuts! If you put your hand between the light and the train to make a shadow, after a couple of seconds the train would lose power until you move the light away...until you move the hand away, sorry, and then the light would, you know, shine again on it, received the power, and then it would go. You could get, according to this booth, this vendor, who of course now I don't remember the name, you can get these little dongles that you plug into your phone that is designed to receive the energy from the special lights and you could have wireless charging, like my phone right now could be charging on this table without being plugged in to anything! That's probably the biggest thing that blew my mind. But again, I saw like, not even 1% of everything. I was trying to focus on finding AT related things, or things that could be used in an AT manner. And I found a bunch of stuff!

**Steve**

So why don't you go ahead and tell us about some of the things that you found?

**Adam**

Happily! So, I'm literally bringing up my Twitter feed because I was live tweeting like all the cool things I saw.

**Steve**

I know, I saw!

**Adam**

[Laughing] The first? - Yes! The first day I was there. Or was it the second, I don't remember. Either I was going to the sessions live or I was watching them live via streaming broadcast, or what have you, while I was waiting in line for other sessions, and I watched the Samsung presentation and one of the first things thing that they showed was something called Ballie. B-A-L-L-I-E. It's this little yellow ball. That's like, I don't know, five inches tall. And it's a robot. And it can just roll around your house. Like a little robot pet. But the reason I think it's really cool, potentially for people with disabilities is that it's like a home manager. It can roam around your house, and it can detect things like spills, or messes. And then it can communicate wirelessly to a smart vacuum, like a Roomba or whatever, and tell it to clean, and you don't have to do anything as the house owner.

**Steve**

Wow! So, the housekeeper is going to disappear. There'll be no more Alex...

**Adam** Kosakowski

[Laughing] Except you forget that at my house, I do all the cleaning!

**Steve**

Right.

**Adam**

[Laughing] Because I'm awesome! But, yeah, I was thinking about people with disabilities who are trying to age in place and be more independent. You know, spills could be a dangerous thing. It could be a slipping hazard, that kind of thing. This little robot can pick that kind of stuff up and tell the house to take care of it. When I saw that I was live tweeting, and I had to tag Kris, our producer, but also our Smart Home Technologist. In the tweets, I was like, oh my God, he has to see this. I'm sure there are other things this Ballie can do. But yeah, CES had, there were robots everywhere. Like every other booth had some sort of robot. Robots was a big thing there.

Another big thing was 5G. It's coming and it's gonna flip everything we know about wireless communication on its head because it's gonna have so much potential and so much power. It's ridiculous. Also, everything there had AI, just EVERYTHING. When you think AI, AI is not just like a robot that can talk with you, no. AI are like these fancy algorithms that they put into every piece of technology so that it can learn your habits, learn your needs, and then react more efficiently to what those needs are and just makes the technology smarter, essentially. It was used in so many different ways!

**Steve**

What would you say surprised you the most? I don't know like some really odd moment...

**Adam**

Everything? [Steve and Adam laughing] The whole experience...was nuts!

All right, here's a good wow. iLivingUSA makes a foldable mobility scooter. And their booth had the scooter set up in such a way that they had a little motor running, constantly unfolding it and folding it so people could walk by and see it in action. And the reason a foldable scooter is really cool...This scooter is fully usable as a mobility assistant, basically, for people with physical disabilities that need a scooter. It's only 38 pounds.

**Steve**

Wow.

**Adam**

You can fold it up. And then you can treat it like a luggage at the airport where you like, rise up a little handle and then you can like drag it behind you. So, if you need to get out and fold it up, then easily carry on with you onto a plane, you totally can. And that's why they made it. They made it that way so that it's not just something that you're going to use locally. You can bring it with you and use it in any setting.

**Steve**

That's nice.

**Adam**

Yeah, that was a wild moment, for me, I really liked that.

There was this portable charger. That I really, really liked. It was so simple. And things that are simple tend to wow me. When things are elegantly simple, quote unquote, those are my favorite.

**Steve**

Right?

**Adam**

This portable charger is meant to be used for people with visual impairments or blindness. Because not only does it light up to tell you the current battery level, it vibrates for each input, I think, but like there's four battery lights, so if it's fully charged, all four lights are lit. If it's fully charged, it vibrates four times when you press the little button, asking it to tell you how charged it is. And the USB port is not picky. You can plug it in right side up or even upside down. And then I asked myself, "Why, oh why, aren't every single USB made this way?"

**Steve**

Exactly!

**Adam**

Because, that's ridiculous. So, it's not just good for people with blindness or low vision, I would say this is great for anyone because it's just easier to use.

**Steve**

Did you see a lot of items like that, and what I mean is like, I would be so thrilled if more and more technology came out that was universally designed. Do you feel like you were seeing a lot of that there?

**Adam**

Yes. Because CES isn't necessarily focused on accessibility, although they do have a whole section. And that's where I was where I saw this, the portable charger, that's focused on accessibility. But when I go there wearing my assistive Assistive Technology Specialist eyes, I'm looking for things that are universally designed that have an assistive technology like feature to them, and there was a good amount of that.

For example, Samsung is releasing a QLED 8K TV, which is has all the bells and whistles. It's brand new. It's gorgeous. But it had an assistive technology feature to it from my point of view, this TV changes its brightness and contrast settings dependent on the amount of lighting in the room that it is sitting in. If you lower the shades, turn on or off the light in the room, it changes the settings of the TV, so that it's easier to see. The contrast was really, really impressive. They had a picture that they were showing off the features of an all-black cat and like a really black room with a black rug. [Laughter] Just to show off what happens when the settings change when they turn on and off the light in the room where the TV was. And I could see the cat being picked out of the darkness because they change the contrast settings to make it fit perfectly with the room. So, if you're someone with low vision, and you have some usable vision and you want to enjoy TV, maybe picking the perfect settings is tricky, depending on the room configuration and stuff. This TV does the thinking for you.

**Steve**

You know, it's interesting that you bring that up because I can remember being a kid and like always having an issue with the TV at nighttime, when the room was dark and just saying the TV's too bright. The TVs too bright.

**Adam**

Yeah!

**Steve**

And I'm surprised that nobody came up with this before now.

**Adam**

This is AI technology right there. Like I said earlier, everything at CES had AI and this is an example of that has an AI chip in the TV that takes into account all this information and changes the settings accordingly.

**Steve**

Wow.

**Adam**

Crazy, right?

**Steve**

Yeah!

**Adam**

That's just the tip of the iceberg. There was so much stuff I saw. But to answer your question, a lot of stuff there that is aiming to make life easier is being built with Universal Design in mind. Meaning, it could totally be usable for people with certain disabilities!

**Steve**

Right. Anything else that you feel like the listeners would want to know about from CES?

**Adam**

My takeaway would be if you have the opportunity to go to CES, if you're in the technology field, and you can go, you totally should. You have the opportunity to see things there that you just wouldn't otherwise see. You can do it in a small span of time. You can essentially catch up on everything electronics that's important. In just like in a couple of days.

**Steve**

Wow. And I think, for us, as the NEAT staff, we are always trying so hard to stay up on the latest technology. And it may sound easy, but it's actually very time consuming to do because everything is changing very, very rapidly these days. I think every one of us on our team would say, we have to devote time every week to kind of looking at what's out there. Because if too much time goes by then we're behind, right?

**Adam Kosakowski**

Mm hmm. And like I was saying, this is the tip of the iceberg. There was a lot of other stuff that I checked out. If you want to read up and see some other cool things that I saw there, check out my Twitter feed @NEATWithAdam. All around beginning of January, I was live tweeting left and right for every cool device that I saw.

**Steve**

That is awesome. Well, I appreciate you, taking time. Have your very busy schedule to stop by the NEAT podcast and tell all of our wonderful listeners about your experience at CES.

**Adam**

Well I kind of work here so...

**Steve and Adam**



[Laughter]

**Adam**

**[Podcast outro music plays]**

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