

# Transparent TVs, AI catflaps: what were the tech standouts at CES 2024?

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The next year in technology is to be dominated by upgrades for everything from catflaps to binoculars to cars, devices that disappear in your home including transparent televisions, plus a new era of spatial computing brought in by some very expensive goggles. Those are the predictions from the annual CES tech show in Las Vegas that drew to a close this week. Unlike previous years, the event was not dominated by the big technology and car firms but rather a record-breaking 1,400 startups displaying their prototypes in hopes of catching the eyes of consumers and investors alike. Despite myriad promises to the contrary, many of these novel gadgets may never make it to the shops. But all of them show how technology is progressing and give a glimpse of what's next.

**Disappearing devices** After many years of showing prototype see-through displays, LG is finally turning one into a television. The Signature OLED T is a 77in (196cm) transparent TV that looks like a sheet of glass. A black film can be raised at the push of a button to block out what's behind the TV for movie night. LG said it would ship the TV this year, but would not confirm a price, which is expected to be in the multiple thousands of dollars. South Korean rival Samsung also had transparent microLED panels on show but only in prototype form, plus a different kind of disappearing tech with its new Music Frame that hides a speaker behind a painting, similar to Ikea and Sonos's Symfonisk frame speaker from 2021. Meanwhile, the new GL.iNet Marble hides the necessary but unsightly internet router in plain sight. The Marble hides behind a photo frame that you can place on your desk or the wall, beaming your broadband around the home without standing out. AI-powered everyday items While 2023 might have been the year of AI chatbots, 2024 looks like it is going to be the year of AI in everything else. The appropriately named Swiss startup Flappie has an AI-powered catflap that can detect if your furry friend is trying to bring some unfortunate prey into the house. If the camera spots a mouse in the cat's mouth it blocks the door until your feline friend drops it. There is an app so you can remotely control the catflap and track your pet's comings and goings. It costs 449 Swiss francs (£414) and ships in the spring. AI also found its way into a set of binoculars that can identify more than 9,000 species of birds when pointed at them. The £3,820 (\$4,799) Swarovski Optic AX Visio has an integrated 13MP camera that can shoot HD videos too. One of the most intriguing gadgets was the Rabbit r1: a \$199 orange rectangle with a screen, camera and a scroll wheel that can control your phone remotely to take the tedium out of your doom-scrolling. Rabbit says its AI understands how apps and websites work so you can command it to buy something, order a taxi or edit a photo and it will do it for you, including launching the right app and pressing all the right buttons. You can even teach it how you do things so it can repeat the process hands-free. Mixed-reality goggles and smart glasses Apple may have tried to steal some of the CES limelight with a rival announcement that its Vision Pro headset would go on sale in the US on the 19 January for \$3,499, but it was not the only firm offering goggles this year.

Sony announced it was working on a “spatial content creation system”, a mixed-reality headset with fancy hand controllers for 3D content creation. Unlike Meta and Apple’s attempts, Sony is partnering with Siemens to court other industries such as engineering design firms for the “industrial metaverse”. For consumers, Xreal unveiled its latest mixed-reality glasses as something slightly more attainable for consumers. The £699 Air 2 Ultra, which goes on sale in April, are smart sunglasses with displays, speakers and 3D cameras for hand-tracking and other augmented reality features. The glasses plug into phones and computers via cable for power and processing, aiming to compete with Apple’s spatial headset but at a fraction of the price. Cars with AI DJs and chatbots Cars have been stealing the show at CES for the last few years. Honda showed off two concepts as part of a preview of its 0 Series of new electric cars that are scheduled to go on sale in 2026. The Saloon is a low, wide and spacious car with sleek retro-futuristic styling, while the Space-Hub looks more like a minivan inside which passengers sit facing each other. Hyundai showed a concept version of its Ioniq 5 called the Mobion, which has wheels that can turn outwards to 90-degrees so the car can make pivot turns and drive sideways like a crab for easy parallel parking. Hyundai expects the technology to reach consumers by 2028. South Korean stablemate Kia showed off its Platform Beyond Vehicle (PBV) in three different lengths. Everything behind the fixed driving compartment the modular electric PBV can be swapped out so that one vehicle could be a van by day and a taxi by night. Kia said it expects to start making the car-sized PV5 in 2025. AI made its way to cars too. VW demonstrated its ChatGPT integration with voice assistant, so drivers can talk to the chatbot and have it read out summarised articles and similar. Meanwhile, Mercedes partnered with the musician and producer will.i.am to put his new company’s AI DJ tech in its cars. Mbox Sound Drive creates an in-car soundscape that reacts to what is happening such as accelerating, braking, turning and idling, bringing in the lyrics to familiar songs when you hit the accelerator. Attendees described it sounding like they were driving through a film soundtrack. Other grabby gadgets There were plenty of smaller gadgets generating buzz at the show this year. The Clicks creator keyboard adds a Blackberry-style physical keyboard to the bottom of an iPhone and costs \$139 for those who hate touch-screen typing. The French health-tech firm Withings was back with the BeamO, which combines a thermometer, blood oxygen monitor, ECG and stethoscope into one small stick. Designed to be an app-connected health check system, the gadget will cost £220 but is awaiting clinical validation and regulatory clearance. Meanwhile, L’Oreal launched a smart hair dryer that uses infrared heat and fan to save energy and dry hair faster. The AirLight Pro has a connected app and will hit salons in April before a summer launch for consumers at an undisclosed price, It is likely to compete with Dyson’s £280-plus Supersonic. LG showed off its “AI agent” bipedal robot, with wheels, which can autonomously patrol the home, greet people at the door and generally function as a roving smart home hub. It looks like something out of the Jetsons. Samsung’s version was the second-generation Ballie robotic ball with an in-built projector for instant TV anywhere. Meanwhile, HL Mando’s Parkie is a robot that promises to slide under your car, pick it up and park it for you, which could be the saviour of parallel parkers everywhere.