

Sony's Aibo seemed tough act to follow but stay tuned

October 25 2017, by Nancy Owano



Remember [Aibo](#)? This was Sony's iconic robot dog that it started selling in 1999. And look who is jumping back into robotics. Sony. With all the advances in artificial intelligence since then, their new entry will be interesting.

Takashi Mochizuki and Yoko Kubota reported Tuesday in *The Wall Street Journal* that "Sony Corp. is planning next spring to roll out a dog-shaped pet [robot](#) similar to its discontinued Aibo with updated [components](#) that could allow it to control home appliances." They named as their sources "people familiar with the company's plans."

Sony next month plans a media event, they said, to show it off.

Aibo was a 1999-2006 happening, but what is anticipated now? For one, said reports, it can learn new tricks, like a real pet dog. It can also respond to commands.

"Its headline feature, however, will be the [ability](#) to control smart appliances and other electronics around your home, such as washing machines, lights and thermostats," said the *Independent*.

Further descriptions of the new canine machine from *Nikkei Asia Review*: "The robotic pet will be controlling [home appliances](#) at voice commands." Like smart speakers equipped with AI and internet connectivity, such as those offered by Amazon.com and Google, the newbie "will look and, to some extent, act like a dog."

Rei Nakafuji in *Nikkei Asia Review* said technologies had already been mapped that enable the robot to mimic canine behavior "using advanced

electronics." Nakafuji also said that Sony was "reuniting engineers who were involved with the Aibo project including AI expert Masahiro Fujita."

Now they can leverage advancements in AI, so Sony "hopes to elevate its new robot business" beyond "merely controlling household [electronics](#)."

At the time of this writing, the new robotic dog's name and price were not known.

In the bigger picture, *Nikkei Asian Review* suggested the time is ripe for Sony to launch another robotic dog, as AI has advanced to a level where the technology offers fresh stimuli for the robotics field.

Back in 2015, Evan Ackerman in *IEEE Spectrum* was prophetic. He remarked back then that "we'd love to see Sony return to the consumer robotics market—maybe even revive Aibo some day."

He also commented then that "Aibos are complicated, expensive robots" and that even though it had been some years since they were killed off, "many robot enthusiasts would agree that these little robotic pets remain one of the most sophisticated [consumer](#) robot toys that you can ever hope to own."

Sam Byford in *The Verge* said, "Sony has recognized it as an iconic [chapter](#) in the company's history."

[Aatif](#) Sulleyman in *The Independent* said was not yet clear if the Aibo brand name would be resurrected with a new arrival.

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