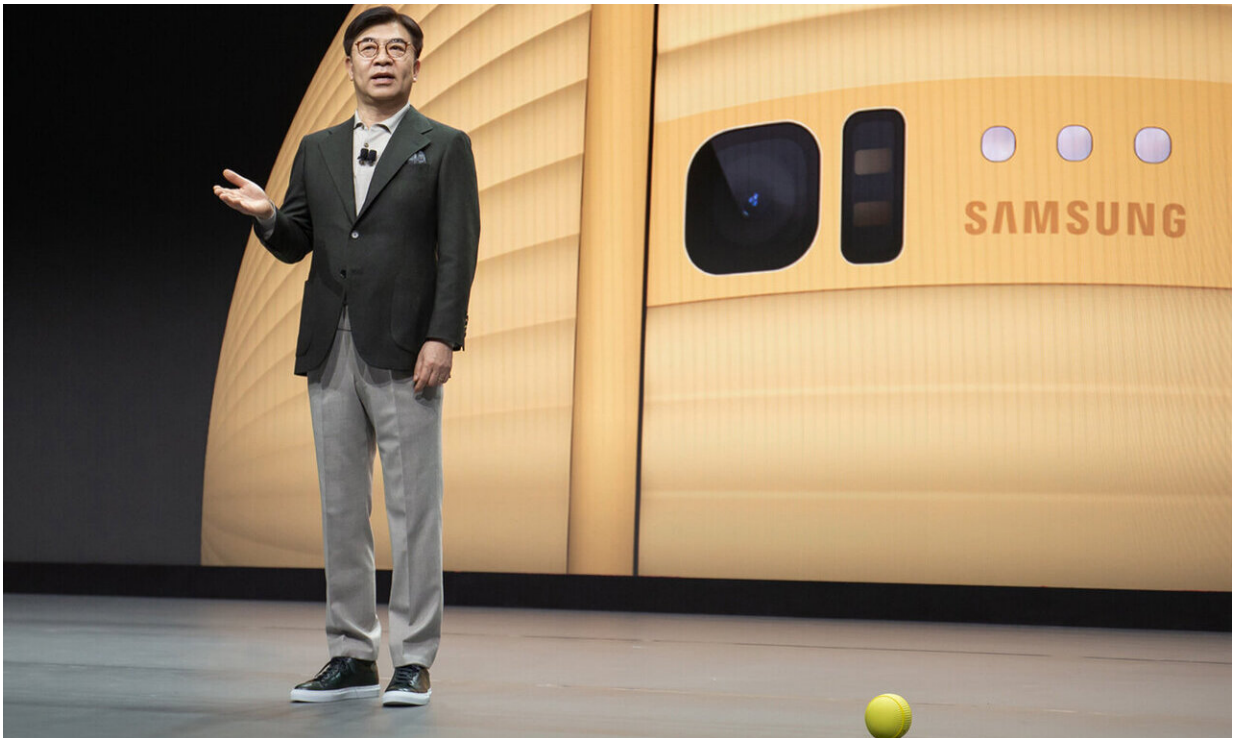


Samsung's home helper shaped like ball and rolled to CES

January 12 2020, by Nancy Cohen



Credit: Samsung

Samsung at CES showed its ball-shaped rolling robot that follows you around, beeps and performs tasks as your personal assistant. The company posted a video showing just how [Ballie](#) would help out in your home.

Ballie performs tasks, as shown in the [video](#), like connecting with other [smart home devices](#) such as vacuum cleaners, turning on the tv and keeping real pets amused. We see that it can manage smart devices in the home—like starting the vacuum after a spill occurs.

Tech-watching reporters had a look and listened to the intro. According to reports, HS Kim, President and CEO of Consumer Electronics Division, Samsung Electronics, joined Ballie around the stage; the little yellow roller has voice recognition capabilities. "During his CES keynote, Kim addressed the robot like a pet dog, controlling it with commands like "come here Ballie", "good boy" and "say hi," [reported Dezeen's](#) Natashah Hitti.

Ballie followed him around the stage, too, speeding up and slowing down to keep an appropriate distance.

According to *Dezeen*, the Samsung CEO said during the speech that "I love this guy. He even knows to give me a little space."

The one aspect of the video that raised eyebrows was that of the Ballie's interactions with the household pet dog. Playful companion? Jasmine Cameron-Chileshe in [The Telegraph](#) weighed in with another hunch. "It is an invention which is likely to prompt a few raised eyebrows from pet owners—a [tennis ball](#) shaped device that they'll be begging their dogs not to fetch."

A viewer's comment on the video, meanwhile, was that "It's only a matter of time until the dog uses the ball as a chew toy." Comments on other sites ranged from finding Ballie to be cute and adorable to "intrusive tosh." In the [BBC News](#) report, an observer said that the robot might struggle with stairs. Simon Bryant, Futuresource, said, "How practical it is when it can't go up stairs, I'm not sure."

Reports at the time of this writing said they had no idea when the device would be available to buy, or what it will cost. [VentureBeat](#): "It's unclear whether there's much to Ballie beyond a few canned demos."

A little robot ball—it cannot make sandwiches, bring you your hat, dry fresh laundry on a rack—is it a fun item for event showrooms? Is it to plant a Samsung brand perception of making more of a 'human-centric' approach to innovation?

Bret Kinsella [explored](#) the question in *voicebot.AI*: "It's easy to look at Ballie, a cute little pastel-colored [social robot](#) demonstrated by Samsung Monday night at a CES keynote, and wonder if it is just another gadget with no better purpose than other social robots that have come and gone."

But Kinsella did really wonder, and he thought about what the video showed for tasks.



Credit: Samsung

He said that Samsung was looking beyond "simple request-and-response interactions of earlier social robots and smart speakers. Demonstrations of Ballie show it identifying problems in the home such as spilled food and a tipped over plant. In both cases, Ballie proactively called a robot vacuum or air purifying system to the location of the problem. There was no requirement for the homeowner to take action or even know an issue had taken place."

Kyle Wiggers, *VentureBeat*: "Ballie's on-device AI enables it to serve as a fitness assistant, as well as a sort of interface that seeks solutions to various wants. It acts as a security robot, patrolling rooms at night and when folks are away during the day, and it can follow an elderly member of the family around and call for help if they suffer a fall."

Kinsella talked about "virtual assistants with agency. That means they are granted authority to take actions on behalf of the user even without an explicit command...This is clearly a feature set that the leading voice assistant providers assume will be important and beneficial to users."

Wiggers: "But assuming the grapefruit-sized ball eventually rolls its way from the skunkworks to store shelves, it could be one of the more capable home [robot](#) products to come to market in recent years."

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