

# Getting the Party Started: MediaLink & iHeartMedia Goes Virtual with CES 2021 Bash

Everyone is missing live events. The people missing them worst of all are those who are used to attending truly special annual bashes. Into this category fall attendees of the Consumer Electronics Show (CES). Usually, this is a true audiovisual bonanza, hosted in the one and only Las Vegas.

During the pandemic, MediaLink and iHeartMedia realized that they had to do better than a big Zoom call. They needed to replicate the real thing as best they possibly could, to continue to delight their attendees.



**We could create remote togetherness, at a time when actual in-person gathering is limited.**

— *Bob Pittman, Chairman  
and CEO at iHeartMedia*

## THE CHALLENGE

### of Vitrual Networking

Over the years, the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) has expanded beyond being only a showcase of the latest technological marvels. Media folks and marketers have been drawn to the event because of the opportunities it presents for networking and deal-making.

However, recreating this element of an event is very hard in a virtual space. The Interactive Advertising Bureau were tasked with staging a virtual CES, and as David Cohen, CEO of the company, put it:

*“One of the greatest challenges we face in the world of virtual events and conferences is the power of networking – the rush that you get when bumping into a colleague or friend that you haven’t seen in a long time. Or having an intellectual joust about a current industry.”*

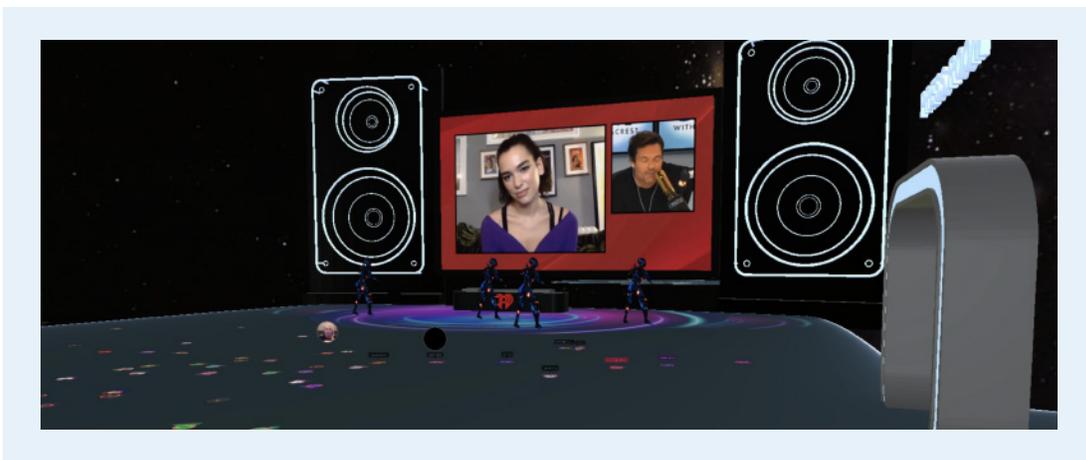
For example, MediaLink and iHeartMedia were very keen to recreate the atmosphere that the CES Afterparty had become famous for.

Michael Kassan, chairman and CEO at MediaLink, wanted to recreate “a bit of that serendipity... Given the hunger we've had from clients to find virtual avenues for networking at CES, our goal was to recapture that feeling.”

## Recreating Las Vegas

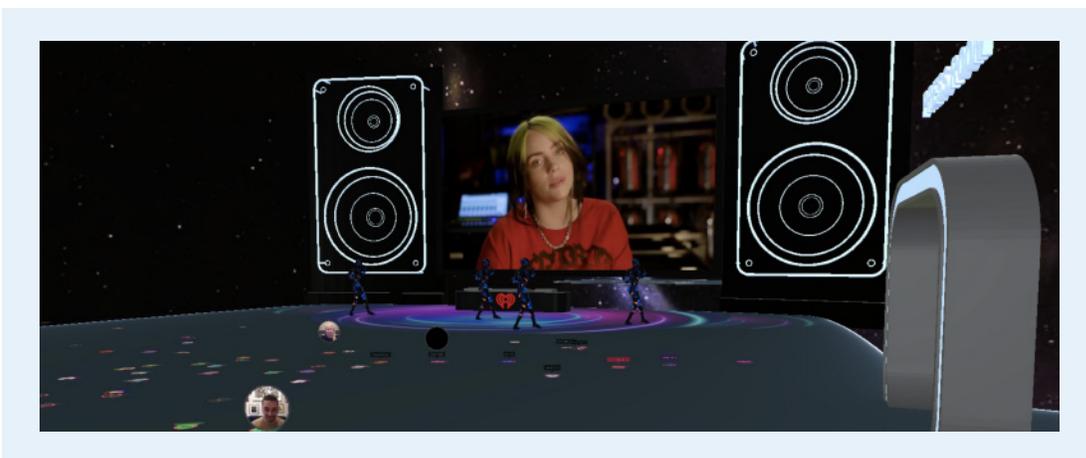
The conference organizers knew that they couldn't simply host a giant Zoom call. This wouldn't recreate the serendipitous networking mood in the slightest.

As a solution, MediaLink and iHeartMedia turned to the SpatialWeb, and created a virtual rendition of the Las Vegas Convention Center. The multi-room virtual venue had different lounges, where participants could do whatever they liked: network with industry professionals, play games, party, or listen to iHeartMedia's head-bobbing lineup of musicians.



Attendees could use their video avatars in the virtual space to mingle and catch up with friends and colleagues. They could just approach another attendee and strike up a conversation with hassle. Icons in the room were available to interact with and made navigating the space extremely easy.

The event, hosted by Ryan Seacrest, included appearances from Grammy-winning artists such as Chris Martin and Dua Lipa. The night wrapped with a performance from Billie Eilish.



# Unlocking Virtual Serendipity

Kassan, chairman and CEO at MediaLink, was really delighted with the result.

“The SpatialWeb really achieved what we hoped it would. It made it feel totally different from a Zoom. For MediaLink, it has never been about the food or the party; it is about the efficiency and the opportunity to interact.”

According to Bob Pittman, chairman and CEO of iHeartMedia, the SpatialWeb experience, said: “We could create remote togetherness, at a time where actual in-person gathering is limited.”

“It was the best example that I have seen of ‘virtual serendipity;” said Cohen, lead event organizer. “The platform did a great job of making those virtual connections, and after all of us living on screens for nearly a year, it was a refreshingly new take on virtual events.”



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