

MONTH DAY YEAR PM HOUR MIN
OCT 21 2015 04 29

DESTINATION TIME

Great Scott! It is Back To The Future Day next Wednesday. In the 1989 movie Back To The Future Part II – the second of the trilogy – Michael J. Fox's character, Marty McFly, travelled in a DeLorean time machine to Oct 21, 2015, from Oct 26, 1985. TOH YONG CHUAN discovers that much of what McFly saw has become a reality.

Handheld tablets

In the movie: A history buff used a handheld tablet to canvass for signatures in an attempt to save the city hall clock.

Now: The most popular tablet today, the iPad, was launched in 2010. More than 250 million iPads have been sold.

Videoconferencing

In the movie: McFly took a video telephone call from a colleague using his TV.

Now: Video calls can be made on smart TVs, laptops, tablets and mobile phones.

TV with multiple channels

In the movie: McFly's son watched six TV channels at the same time from a flatscreen TV measuring at least 50 inches diagonally across.

Now: The largest home TV today is more than double that size – the 110-inch high-definition TV launched by Samsung in 2013. Digital TVs can display multiple channels using spit screens.

Google Glass devices

In the movie: People entertained themselves by watching movies or TV programmes using spectacles-like devices.

Now: The Google Glass, which uses a head-mounted display, was sold in 2013. Google has stopped selling the device this year, but it has promised to continue developing the technology.

Computers taking food orders

In the movie: A computer took orders from diners in a cafe.

Now: Besides taking orders, robots also cook in the kitchen and deliver food to the table. There are drone waiters, too!

Drones shooting news footage

In the movie: Drones were used to film news events.

Now: This is a common practice in news organisations.

Dehydrated food

In the movie: A dehydrated pizza about the size of a coaster was thrown into a "Black and Decker Hydrator" machine, and a 12-inch pizza popped out.

Now: We already have the technology to freeze and dry food, but none to shrink its size so dramatically.

LEGEND:

THE HITS

Tech that the 1989 movie predicted correctly

GETTING THERE

Movie predictions that are on their way to becoming a reality

BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD

Tech that the 1989 movie got it totally wrong, or is hardly even practical



Portable credit-card readers

In the movie: McFly used a portable credit-card device to make a payment. Taxi fares were paid using thumbprints.

Now: Besides such portable credit-card readers, there are other ways of making off-site payments, such as Internet banking and PayPal. iPhone users can also use their thumbprints to access their phones and use them to make payments, turning them into instant credit cards.



Biometric identity scanners

In the movie: Police used fingerprints to determine a person's identity instantly. Doors were also unlocked using fingerprints.

Now: In Singapore, the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority rolled out a handheld device in 2009 that allows its officers to take fingerprints and facial photos of a person and match them against its records in a matter of seconds. Local hardware store HomeFix is selling door locks with fingerprint verification for \$1,199 each.

Hands-free video games

In the movie: Children did not have to use their hands to play video games.

Now: In 2010, Xbox launched the Kinect motion-sensing device, which allows gamers to play without holding on to anything. It popularised games featuring dancing and tennis.



"That's like a baby's toy!"

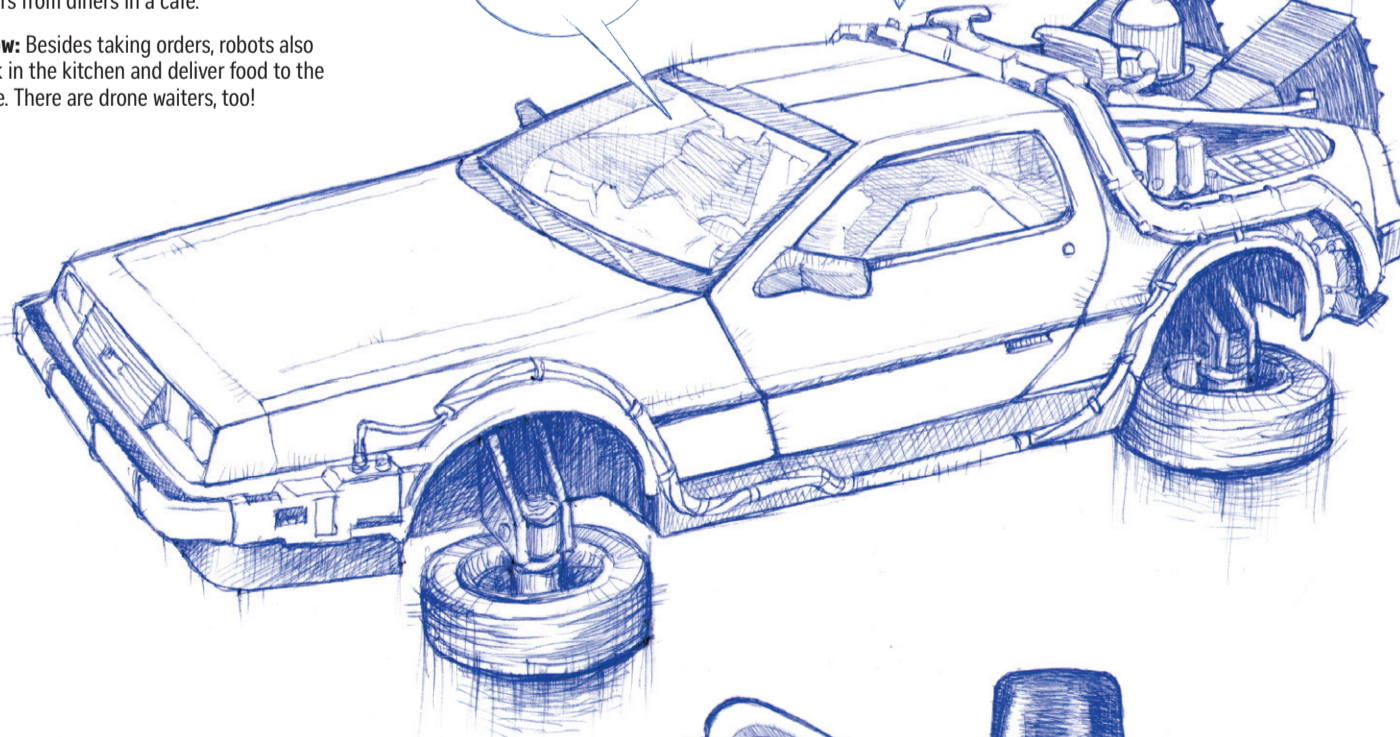
"You mean you have to use your hands??"

Flying cars

In the movie: Flying cars were a common mode of transport.

Now: Several companies are competing to be the first to do this. Two – PAL-V from the Netherlands and American firm Terrafugia – reportedly said that production and delivery can be expected in 2017.

"Roads? Where we're going we don't need roads."



Hoverboard

In the movie: McFly used a pink levitating hoverboard to escape from bullies.

Now: Start-up firm Arx Pax launched a Kickstarter drive last year to produce the Hendo Hoverboard. It reportedly raised more than US\$500,000 (\$\$700,000). The device uses magnetic technology to hover without contact over an opposing magnetic field, such as how magnets of like poles repel each other. This is similar to how bullet trains use magnetic levitation when travelling. The company said that the same technology can be used to make buildings safer, allowing them to hover during earthquakes.

Fax machines in homes



In the movie: Fax machines were a common communication tool used in homes to send and receive information, like this message (left) from McFly Sr's boss.

Now: While fax machines are still used by companies, it is uncommon to find them in homes because there is an easier way of communicating – e-mail. There was no reference to e-mail in the movie when it was released in 1989. E-mail became popular only in the early 1990s.

EVENTS

Events: Legions of Back To The Future fans are celebrating next Wednesday with retro movie screenings, when the trilogy is set for theatrical re-release in the US. It is unclear whether the trilogy will make it to cinema screens here.

But local fans can still celebrate Back To The Future Day by trying to find the only DeLorean DMC-12 in Singapore. The ownership of the 1982-registered car is currently unknown.

PROMOTIONAL GIMMICKS

Companies cashing in on Back To The Future Day

Self-lacing shoes: Nike announced in January that it is planning to produce a line of self-lacing, light-up shoes like those worn by McFly. When someone steps into the shoes, weight sensors in the soles will activate laces powered by motorised rollers. There is no confirmed date as to when the shoes will be in stores.



Limited-edition Pepsi: Pepsi announced last week that it will launch a limited-edition line of "Pepsi Perfect" bottles, like those featured in the movie. Just 6,500 of them will be sold online from Oct 21.