



Futureshock

Back to the Future part II prophesied a 2015 we all couldn't wait to see. Now that director Robert Zemeckis' vision of the future is almost now, **Brogen Hayes** examines how close we are to getting our hands on those groovy gadgets.

Back to the Future Part II celebrates its twenty-first birthday this year and in true sci-fi fashion the 2015 that the film predicts seems to be far removed from the one we are headed towards. "I never really wanted to go to the future in the *Back to the Future* movies, because I don't like seeing the future in any movie," said director Robert Zemeckis. "The only kind of future that the audience accepts is an Orwellian, dark future. So the problem with doing movies

in the future is that you always are wrong. You underestimate it. You can't be right."

It probably wasn't Zemeckis' intention to accurately predict the future, but his vision of 2015 sported some of the coolest "wish they existed" gadgets ever committed to film. We may still be a long way off from developing some of the great inventions the *BTTF2* supposes we will have, but they haven't lost their awesome factor two decades on.

Flying DeLorean DMC-12

"The way I see it, if you're gonna build a time machine into a car, why not do it with some style?" - Doc Brown

We all wanted a DeLorean DMC-12 after the first *Back to the Future*. Who wouldn't? Stainless steel body panels, gullwing doors, leather interior, rear engine, an all aluminium V-6: truly a timeless design. Well, maybe not timeless, but time travel worthy. Then came the flying DeLorean in *Back to the Future part II* and suddenly the car was even cooler than ever. This new souped-up version had wheels that rotated to become hover pads and allowed it to fly. The epitome of 80s cool.

DeLoreans were actually built in Northern Ireland, but the Company went bankrupt in late 1982 when owner John DeLorean was arrested on drug trafficking charges. James Espey, vice president of DeLorean Motors is continually threatening to start making the cars from scratch again, but until then, the DeLorean DMC-12 can still be bought second hand for about \$30,000. Sadly, they do not fly.

To make the DeLorean fly and travel through time, we would have also needed the Mr Fusion Home Energy Reactor, which turned rubbish into nuclear energy. There is no sign of that as yet. Come on Mr Fusion, you have five years! Get cracking!

The Nike McFly

"Power laces! Alright!" - Marty McFly

Remember Marty McFly's amazing Nike runners? The ones with the light-up logo and self-fastening laces? How could you not want a pair? Not only were they an upgrade from the iconic white with red Swoosh runner that Marty wore in the first

Back to the Future, but they fastened themselves. The perfect shoe for the busy teen in 2015 who is always on the go.

It turns out that Nike not only made the runners for Michael J. Fox to wear in the movie, but they patented the design. In 2008, Nike brought out the Hyperdunk, which was debuted on the feet of NBA star Kobe Bryant and immediately caused a stir among *Back to the Future* fans. Yes, the runners finally existed, but they were in short supply, which means that a lot of *BTTF* fans didn't manage to get their feet into a pair. It was some consolation then that the laces were the regular kind and needed to be tied by hand.

The Hoverboard

"Little girl! I need to borrow your... hoverboard!?" - Marty

Ah, the hoverboard. The 2015 version of the skateboard. Instead of wheels, the hoverboard, well, hovers. But passengers still needed to push off from the ground with their feet in order to make it move. This caused Marty McFly some problems when he got stuck over a pond with an angry Griff Tannen approaching, but we'd never make that same mistake, would we?

Well it seems that we will never know. Zemeckis claimed in an interview that hoverboards were real, but were never released due to concerns about safety. This led to Mattel, the manufacturer of the fictional hoverboard in *Back to the Future part II*, being inundated with demands for the hoverboard to be released.

It didn't stop young kids and big kids alike from wishing for the day hoverboards would be released to the public. Their hopes were fuelled by that one kid. You know the one. He seemed to have this amazing life, but now that you are an adult, you

realise he was nothing more than a pathological liar. This kid claimed to have an uncle at Mattel who had been involved with making the hoverboard ("Look closely in the movie and you can see the Mattel logo on the hoverboard in the movie") and you hoped and dreamed he wasn't lying this time. Sadly for all of our inner children, he was.

Voice and thumb print activated... Everything

"Fruit please" - Marty

When Marty's squeeze Jennifer is found by the police, they run a thumb print scan to identify her. When they get her home, Jennifer's thumb print is again used to open the front door. Handy, no? Would make a change from fumbling for keys outside our doors in the dark, especially when inebriated. Not that us innocent big kids who believe the hoverboard is real drink, but you get the idea. On the down side, thumb bandits were prevalent in 2015 - they removed people's thumbs to gain access to high security or restricted access areas.

Of course, anyone who has flown to the US recently could argue that this technology is already in place and being used. It's not yet the key to our homes, but considering the risks maybe it is best to leave that one in the future for now.

On the other hand, the voice activated stuff is pretty cool. When Marty and Marlene McFly want fruit, all they have to do is ask for it and the Garden Center Fruit Dispenser is lowered from the ceiling in their home. Nifty. The TV, phone and fax are also voice activated.

There are obvious problems with the voice activated product as we have learned through our voice command enabled mobile phones - if you do not say the same thing in the same tone of voice, or are suffering

from a cold, you could end up phoning your boss instead of your brother. But the idea is still a good one. And we still have five years to get it right before the deadline of 2015.

Bionic Implants

"Oh, Marty, be careful around that Griff character. He's got a few short circuits in his bionic implants." - Doc Brown

A bionic implant, in *Back to the Future Part II*, is used to modify the human body by replacing certain parts with robotic upgrades. Implants could enhance strength, modify height and, in Griff Tannen's case, enable a self protection system that allows him to block punches automatically. A newspaper seen in the film implies that these implants were illegal, although proposals were around to legalise them. Some posters in 2015 urged voters to "Vote Yes on Proposition 237" in order to "Legalize Bionics".

Thankfully, as far as we know, we are far away from these bionic implants becoming a reality. We have enough problems with cosmetic enhancement as it is without the added pressure of bionic enhancement. Hollywood stars would be even more removed from the ordinary Joe on the street, and there sure would be a lot of stuntmen out of work. Maybe this, as well as the constant problem of bullies like Griff Tannen, is the reason that they were illegal in the future that Marty and the Doc visit.

With this in mind, it might be best to leave the bionic technology to the action movies and the distant future. Someone send a memo to the nerds and tell them to lay off the bionic technology. But remind them that we are still waiting for our hoverboards.