

WELCOME TO THE FUTURE

First there were the electric and hybrid cars, Bluetooth technology, and smartphones. Then came the everyday touchscreen technology many of us now can't live without, not to mention wrist-ready wearable fitness trackers, DVR, robots that clean our homes, movies filmed and screened in 3D, and even 3D printing. There's no denying that our relationship with technology has both been shaped by our modern lifestyle needs, as well as helped to shape the way we now live—here, we share some of the coolest new tech creations we've recently come across, that can be put into practical use in improving your life today.

By Yi-Hwa Hanna

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→ When Marty McFly and the gang were on the scene, the concept of videophones, facial recognition software, 3D films, split screens and fingerprint scan access seemed like nothing but a far-flung dream. Fast forward to the present day, and they're all very much a part of our ordinary reality. Technology has come a long way in the past couple of decades, and nowadays there are more options than ever before when it comes to a way to incorporate this jaw-dropping stuff into

your daily life to make things just that little bit easier. The name of the game? Convenience, and boy do we need it. As the world gets busier and time seems to become an increasingly precious commodity—recent reports have shown that more people than ever before are claiming to be overworked and overstressed, with

commentators speculating that our increasingly individualistic societies are largely to blame for this growing emphasis on a “time is money” philosophy—we're more eager than ever before for anything that helps to make us faster, better and smarter.

While hoverboards are still a work in progress, we've even heard rumours of a mirror that can use light to scan your entire body for an instant health check, measuring everything from your heart rate to your breathing rate. Think of it like a healthy version of the Mirror of Erised from *Harry Potter*, except rather than telling you about your heart's true desires, it'll tell you how your heart is doing from a health perspective. There's no denying it—if people dream it, they can do it, and we can't wait to see what the tech geniuses come up with in the next decade. In the meantime, here are four of our favourite new pieces of life-improving technology...

The Superstar Laptop

To the untrained eye, this could look like just another laptop or a very well-kept MacBook Air. But look again—this is actually just a MacBook: A MacBook utterly redefined. Apple's latest offering in its beloved notebook line is enough to wow the socks off even the most die-hard PC lovers: At just 2lbs in weight and 13.1mm thin, and just one multi-function port that does it all, it's even lighter and thinner than a MacBook Air. Somehow, they've managed to work a full-sized keyboard into this beautifully elegant package by redesigning each key so that they're not only sleeker, but they're also more comfortable to type on. Next, of course, is that razor-sharp screen: The 12-inch Retina display is not only ridiculously thin (at 0.88mm), it's also even more deliciously bright and crisp than its predecessors. That cool click function on their beloved smart trackpads? It's even more tactile now, allowing you to click with an even deeper feel, and it's responsive just about anywhere you press on it. On the fashion front, aside from its usual silver and slate grey

options, it also comes in a beautiful new shade of gold that we suspect will be hugely popular in the Middle East. The battery life is second-to-none, enabling you to actually use it all day—this is a tool we can take with us on a long-haul flight and continue using in our hotel room for hours afterwards without a second thought—and the best part? It's not just the impeccable design that'll impress you—it's the fact that, after taking the device back to the drawing board and starting from scratch for a full refresh on an old favourite, they've fit such high performance processors into such an incredibly sleek device. In short, it's the ultimate do-anything, take-anywhere personal computer for the modern age. Find out more at www.apple.com/ae/macbook



The Life-Companion Watch

The Apple Watch has been the buzz on every tech geek's lips since news of it first broke, and for good reason: Finally, here was a smartwatch that not only had some seriously cool capabilities, it also looked pretty snazzy too. Made with polished stainless steel that snugly wraps around a sapphire crystal protected display, it also comes with several different options for the wristband, including a leather one, and is as customisable as possible with 11 different watch faces on offer as well. Why does this matter so much, you might wonder? Because aesthetics count for more than you realise when they concern a device that you're going to get the most out of when you're actually wearing it all day every day, or at least as often as possible.

And you're going to want to wear this one all day—much like many of the popular fitness trackers currently available on the market, the Apple Watch can measure your heart rate (you can even send it to a friend... or a personal trainer or doctor, if that's less weird), count calories burned, measure steps and measure general activity, as well as allow you to set workout goals in real-time stats, giving you reminders

where needed along with encouraging badges as rewards when you hit certain targets. All of this information is neatly relayed to the Apple Health app, making it even easier for you to seamlessly integrate its use into your iPhone 5 and up.

Ok, so it's great for fitness and it's a pretty piece of work—but what makes it better than a regular stylish tracker, you might wonder? The App usage is, simply, awesome. Straight from the watch, you can access your iTunes library as well as iTunes radio, and you can even access Apple TV if that's your jam. Maps functionality is also enabled on the watch, meaning the next time you're out on a run and are in need of directions, there's no need for extra awkward fiddling with separate interfaces. It's linked up to WiFi, and you can also communicate from the watch itself. The snazzy digital touch aspect means that you can flick and swipe across the screen to send "tap" messages to your friends, or if emoji is more your thing you can send those too—you can even animate them, and its own emoji set is in the works. Last but certainly not least, you can also accept texts and receive calls—and it'll anticipate replies you can easily send straight from the watch, meaning even less fiddling while you're on the go. Apple has already announced exciting plans for the next one. Find out more at apple.com/watch



The Digital Home

Picture this scene: It's a groggy morning, and you drag yourself out of bed. The smell of freshly brewed coffee greets you—no, it isn't your other half making you a cuppa for extra brownie points, it was your machine anticipating that you'd be ready for that soothing, caffeine-fuelled wake-up call by now. As you pick the cup up off the counter, your TV flicks on to your favourite news channel, while also telling you what the weather is like outside. Sound too good to be true? Well, it's not any more, thanks to smart home technology that helps improve your life by making it more streamlined in every sense. That's precisely the goal of Makook Smart Living—developed by a team that includes Anousheh Ansari, the first Iranian astronaut and female space explorer (and a renowned space innovator), this smart living platform is designed to seamlessly integrate technology into your daily personal life. The Makook box, when paired with all of the right devices, can switch on your lights for you when you get home, know when your gardener opens the front gate, lock up after you when you leave each day, and yes, even

make your coffee for you in the morning. It can power down your energy sources while you're on vacation, helping you save on consumption, raise and lower your curtains or blinds, automatically handle security and alarm systems for you, switch lights on and off based on when you tend to enter certain rooms in the house, and it's even handy when you're not home: If you'd like to keep an eye on the kids while you're at work, easy—just check out the live video stream from your smartphone. Think you might have forgotten to turn off your hair straightener when you're already halfway to the office and stuck in heavy traffic on Sheikh Zayed Road? No problem, just switch it off from your smartphone. It also allows you to save all of your photos, documents, TV shows and more in a comprehensive and clever solution that acts like your own personal cloud system. Sure, it takes a fair bit of time to pre-programme the device once you've received it, and you will have to invest in the compatible devices that work with it, but once you've done that, you can sit back and relax and let Makook take care of the rest. Find out more at MakookSL.com.



The Ultimate Tracker

While we're avid fans of many a great fitness tracker, there's still only so far they can take us. Enter the Hexoskin, the next step in fitness tracking. People call it a biometric smart shirt, we call it a superhero vest—either way, this is a tool that will help you understand your body to a degree that you've never been able to before, at least not around-the-clock and in such an affordable, stylish package. Sure, it isn't cheap, but it won't break the bank either. Unlike previous incarnations of wearable tech, one of our favourite things about the Hexoskin has got to be the design—it really just looks like a regular, even chic, workout top. In fact, when we tried it, we didn't always try to hide it under clothing, sometimes even rocking it openly like a normal black tank. Little did our peers know that snugly hidden in the top was the heart of the device, measuring our vital stats and feeding them to our smartphones. So what exactly does it measure? Everything from your heart rate (as well as its recovery and variability), breathing rate, VO2 Max, minute ventilation, activity level and acceleration, to calories burned, cadence, step count and sleep—making it one of the most thorough we've yet seen on the market. All of the information is sent through to its phone app, in a clean yet detailed interface that displays everything from your run, swim and dog walk to your



GPS location, all neatly lined up next to your live metrics. Just one caveat—in order for it to work at its best the shirt is meant to be fitted, which means it can be a little snug. It is still comfortable enough to wear at night, though, and you soon get used to it—just think of it as your second skin. Our only other qualm? What it can tell you about your body is so addictive that you will, most likely, want to wear this all day, every day—which means you'll have to invest in more than one of these tops. While, fortunately, it's machine-washable, there's only so many times a week (or per day) we can do our laundry and this just

means that for regular long-term wear, keen users would need to purchase a number of additional vests depending on their needs. The device itself is a one-time purchase. Hexoskin also has huge—and potentially life-saving—rewards when it comes to your health. Those with certain health conditions will be able to easily track how their body is responding and even have this information regularly sent or streamed to their doctors, possibly helping to prevent situations like hyperventilation or heart attacks, and ensuring that they're always kept safe and on alert. Like any great fitness tracker, being able to analyse the way your body moves, breathes, sleeps, and generally lives, is an essential tool in learning where our strengths and weaknesses are, and, in turn, figuring out where and how we need to improve—as well as being able to follow our progress. And if constantly challenging your body to perform at its best isn't the real-life equivalent of becoming a superhero, we don't know what is. For anyone looking to seriously improve their fitness, health and general performance, it's a truly worthy investment. Find out more at www.hexoskin.com



Even our earphones have come a long way, with pesky cords now a thing of the past as many specially-designed sport audio devices now come with wireless capability. One of our favourites? The Jabra Sport Rox Wireless. Not only do they feature crisp, booming enhanced Dolby sound so you can blast the bass and get your heart pumping, they link up to your phone so you can stream your favourite tunes with ease and control everything from volume and playback (and even take phone calls) with nothing more than a tap, for truly hands-free bliss. Dhs599 at Virgin Megastore.