

The Wonderful Future That Never Was



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著者:GREGORY BENFORD

出版者:HEARST BOOKS

出版时间:2010-10-5

装帧:Hardcover

isbn:9781588168221

Between 1903 and 1969, scientists and other experts made hundreds of predictions in Popular Mechanics magazine about what the future would hold. Their forecasts ranged from ruefully funny to eerily prescient and optimistically utopian. Here are the very best of them, culled from hundreds of articles, complete with the original, visually stunning

retro art. They will capture the imagination of futurists in the same way Jules Verne's writing did a century earlier. Every chapter features an introduction by astrophysics professor, science-fiction author, and former NASA advisor Gregory Benford.

PAST PREDICTIoNS oF oUR FUTURE INCLUDE:

Skyscrapers so tall they'll have their own climate o Underground pneumatic tubes to replace garbage trucks o Rooftop lakes that serve as air conditioning systems o Clothes made from asbestos and aluminum o Mail sorted by robots and delivered by parachutes

作者介绍:

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Starred Review Benford, an astrophysicist and noted science-fiction author, teams up with the editors of Popular Mechanics to take readers on a tour through a future that (mostly) never happened. If the various predictions seen here—all taken from the magazine’ s archives—had come true, we’ d be living today in cities with multiple underground levels for pedestrians and traffic (predicted in 1928); or cities made of glass (1936). We’ d be living in homes with furniture you clean with a hose (1950) and wearing clothing made of aluminum (1929), or maybe asbestos (also 1929). Our cars would fly (1928, 1943), or maybe we’ d be driving Rotavions, personal vertical-takeoff-and-landing vehicles that can operate as an airfoil or a helicopter (1961). Despite the fact that many of the predictions discussed in the book seem laughably silly today, they’ re not played for laughs; they’ re presented as historical curiosities, examples of how predictions based on cutting-edge research and extrapolated from social trends can seem sensible when they’ re made but not so much later on. And it’ s worth noting, as the editors do, that some predictions did come true, like pocket-size computers (predicted in 1962) and mass-produced, prepackaged frozen dinners (1947). Profusely illustrated (there’ s something on nearly every page), the book is endlessly fascinating, a collage of snapshots of the present the way people saw it when it was still the distant future. --David Pitt
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THE_EDITORS_of_PopularMechanics

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