



**Mark Twain
was the first
to conceive
of the Web.**



WE CAN'T BELIEVE



THEY KNEW THAT!

**Nine soothsayers
who saw the future
far before we did**

BY ALISON CAPORIMO

1898 Mark Twain Predicted the **Internet**

The sardonic scribe forecast the Internet a century before its birth. In his short story “From the ‘London Times’ of 1904,” Twain described an invention based on the telectroscope, a never-produced 19th-century device that was intended to use an enormous network of phone lines to connect the world.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SEAN MCCABE

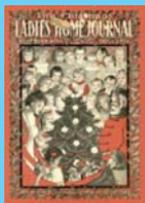
1865 Jules Verne Predicted the Moon Landing

Verne's prescient novels *From the Earth to the Moon* and *Around the Moon* featured a spaceship called the *Columbiad*, which blasted off from a launchpad in Florida and carried three astronauts into space. After impressively completing a trip to the moon, the ship crash-landed in the Pacific Ocean. Sound familiar? That's because it almost precisely describes the first U.S. moon mission, Apollo 8, which took place more than 100 years later, in 1968. Interestingly, NASA named its Apollo 11 command module the *Columbia*, inspired by Verne's famous fictional vessel.

1953 Ray Bradbury Predicted Flat-Screen TVs

In his novel *Fahrenheit 451*, the science-fiction master writes that members of his futuristic society are obsessed with large, flat-screen televisions (which didn't hit the market until 1997): "How long you figure before we save up and get the fourth wall torn out and a fourth-wall TV put in? It's only two thousand dollars," says character Mildred to her husband. Unfortunately, Bradbury wasn't too far off on the price tag either.

We Can't Believe He Knew That!



"These prophecies will seem strange, almost impossible," asserted civil engineer John Elfreth Watkins in "What May Happen in the Next

Hundred Years," an article in the **December 1900** issue of *Ladies' Home Journal*. Little did Watkins know that his predictions were neither strange nor impossible—most of them came true.

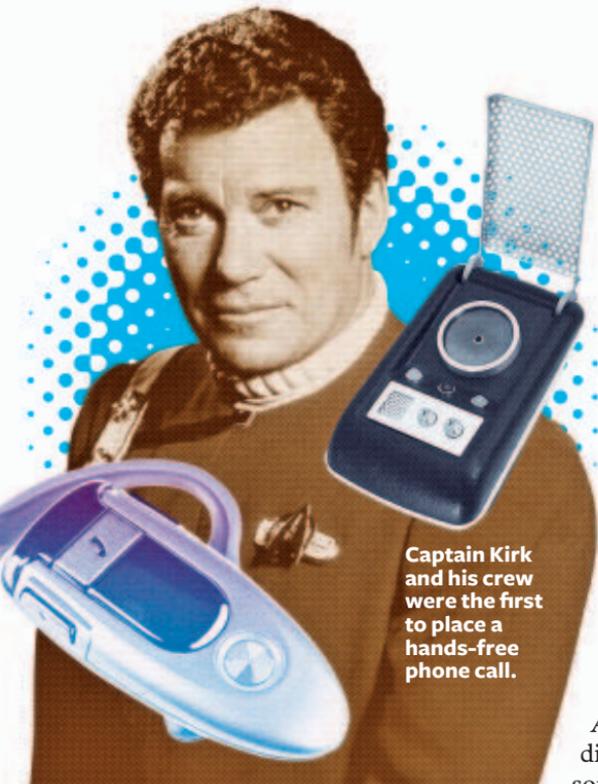
TELEVISION

Watkins said, "Man will see around the world. Persons of all kinds will be brought within focus of cameras connected electrically with screens at opposite ends of circuits, thousands of miles at a span."

DEBUTED: 1927

DIGITAL COLOR PHOTOGRAPHY

Watkins said, "Photographs will be telegraphed from any distance. If there be a battle in China a hundred years hence, snapshots of its most striking events will be published in the newspapers an hour



Captain Kirk and his crew were the first to place a hands-free phone call.

1966 *Star Trek* Predicted Bluetooth

Crew members of the starship *Enterprise* were the first to use a Bluetooth-like device, a hands-free communication tool that wouldn't be created until 1994, when it paved the way for mobile phones. Thankfully, the crew was exempt from roaming fees.

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1991 Francis Ford Coppola Predicted YouTube

In an interview for the documentary *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse*, the director says, "Suddenly, one day some little girl in Ohio is gonna be the new Mozart ... and make a beautiful film with her father's little camera-corder, and for once, this whole professionalism about movies will be destroyed, forever, and it will really become an art form." Cue YouTube 14 years later.

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1995 *The Simpsons* Predicted a Food-Processing Trend

Soy food sales quintupled between 1996 and 2011. But who could have known about

later ... photographs will reproduce all of nature's colors." **DEBUTED:** 1957

EXPRESS TRAINS

Watkins said, "Trains will run two miles a minute. Express trains, one hundred and fifty miles per hour." **DEBUTED:** 1960s

MILITARY TANKS

Watkins said, "Huge forts on wheels will dash across open spaces at the speed of express trains of today." **DEBUTED:** 1916

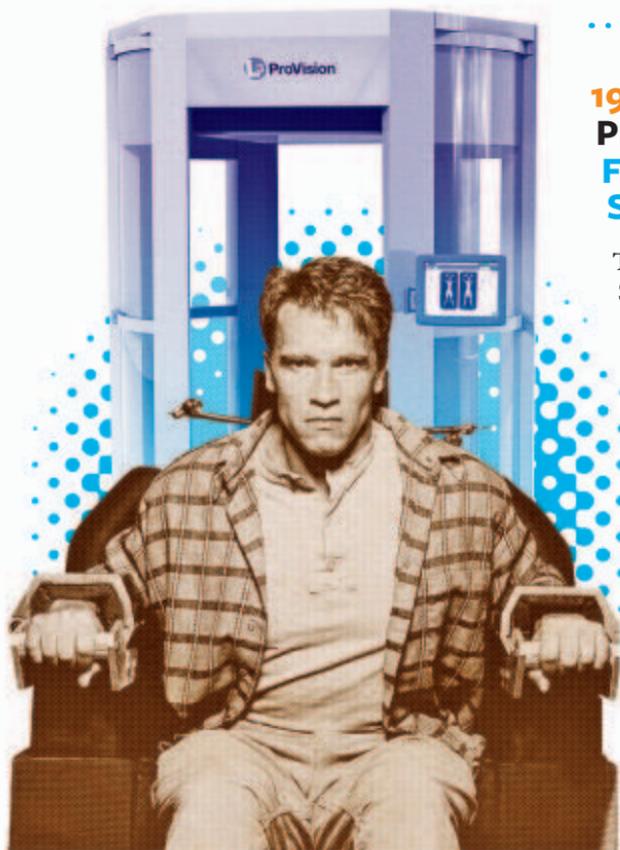
PREPACKAGED MEALS

Watkins said, "Ready-cooked meals will be bought from establishments similar to our bakeries of today." **DEBUTED:** 1945

their jump in popularity in 1995? In the sixth season of *The Simpsons*, an episode called “Lisa’s Wedding” flash-forwards to the far-off year of 2010, where no home could be complete without satellite dishes, motion-controlled video games ... and stacks of soy snacks.

1968 James Berry Predicted Online Shopping

This sci-fi writer described click-and-buy home shopping in the November issue of *Mechanix Illustrated*. “Instead of being jostled by crowds, shoppers electronically browse through the merchandise of any number of stores,” he speculated about today’s consumer trend, which debuted in 1995.



1990 Total Recall Predicted Full-Body Scanners

The Transportation Security Administration captured headlines in 2010 with airports’ controversial use of full-body scanners, which are eerily similar to the one that sees through Arnold Schwarzenegger’s skin in this futuristic flick.

◀ **Arnold’s skeleton made a cameo appearance during his onscreen body scan.**

The same James Berry who predicted online shopping (left) also had a few failures of imagination (hey, we can't win 'em all!). Here, goofy predictions from 1968 that we wish would come true:

CLIMATE-CONTROLLED CITIES

PREDICTION: "You whiz past a string of cities, many of them covered by the new domes that keep them evenly climatized year-round."

REALITY: Global warming has caused earth's temperature and sea levels to rise, resulting in extreme weather conditions and more severe storms. Dome-enclosed cities? Let's hope they're on the horizon.

AUTOMATED DOCTORS' VISITS

PREDICTION: "Medical examinations are a matter of sitting in a diagnostic chair for a minute or two, then receiv-

We
Can't
Believe
He
Blew
That!

ing a full health report."

REALITY: We wish it were that easy. The average wait time in doctors' offices in the United States is 22 minutes, according to a report released in 2011 by Press Ganey, a group that researches health-care performance. And that's not even factoring in exam time!

A SHORTENED WORKDAY

PREDICTION: "The average workday is about four hours. But the extra time isn't totally free ... A jobholder's spare time is used in keeping up with the new developments—on the average, about two hours of home study a day."

REALITY: About 80 percent of Americans spend an extra day a week working after hours. Worse, about 34 percent of Americans regularly check their e-mail and do work while on vacation.

I'M READY FOR MY CLOSE-UP

Looking at the proliferation of personal Web pages on the Net, it looks like very soon everyone on earth will have 15 megabytes of fame.

M. G. Sriram, professor and author