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Forty-Five Years

By Dónal Thompson



I was born 45 years ago today and many of the things I take for granted weren't even dreamed off back then in 1961.

I telecommute, possess an iPod, PDA and a wi-fi laptop. I watch digital TV, bank online and print my own airline tickets. So far, then, so good. But I want more. If I'm lucky enough to see another 45 years maybe all of the things I want, I will get. And a hundred other implausible things too.

I want to see 3DTV on a screen as thin as paper and with quadrophonic wireless speakers hidden in the walls. I want a HoloPod - an iPod that projects a hologram of the artist whose music is playing. I want the hologram to increase in size as you turn up the volume.

I want cars to run on a new fuel that is so cheap we can forget about aerodynamic designs and go back to the elegant forms of the 1940s. I want cars controlled by chips so that you can't crash on the motorway. And silent engines so we can hear the birds again in the big cities.

I want mobile phones replaced by technical telepathy. We should only have to think of someone to be able to communicate directly with

their own thoughts. *Telefonica* becomes *Telepathica* and *Vodafone* becomes *Vodathink*.

I want teleporting - the moving of things from one place to another without an intervening journey. Fridges should know when we need milk and teleport a tetrabrick from Carrefour. Christmas trees should just appear in the corner of our living rooms in December and then teleport back to the forest after Three Kings' Day.

Teleporting should end forever the nightly battle to get the kids to bed. You press that button, they vanish! They find themselves under a duvet which is locked for nine hours (another invention).

I want depressants. Instead of sending people to prison we should inject them with depressants so that they feel an unutterable sadness. In the absence of a conscience, it's the next best thing. When their sentence is complete, they come off the depressants and see how happy they can be by just staying out of trouble.

I want all books to weigh the same as a sheet of paper. We could have entire libraries condensed into a tiny chip and even incorporate newspapers too. The Amazon rain forests could breathe easier.

Forty-five years is, as my younger colleagues keep telling me, a very long time. Anything could happen in the next forty-five years. We might make tremendous breakthroughs in medical science and eradicate cancer and AIDS. We might fly to Mars and colonise the Moon. Maybe we'll find a way to irrigate the deserts and refreeze the polar caps. We might use a scrap of John Lennon's DNA and bring him back to play with Elvis and Hendrix.

We might even find a way to stop people feeling melancholy on their forty-fifth birthdays.