



Tomorrowland: Our Journey from Science Fiction to Science Fact

By Steven Kotler

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New York Times, *Wired*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Discover* bestselling author Steven Kotler has written extensively about those pivotal moments when science fiction became science fact...and fundamentally reshaped the world. Now he gathers the best of his best, updated and expanded upon, to guide readers on a mind-bending tour of the far frontier, and how these advances are radically transforming our lives. From the ways science and technology are fundamentally altering our bodies and our world (the world's first bionic soldier, the future of evolution) to those explosive collisions between science and culture (life extension and bioweapons), we're crossing moral and ethical lines we've never faced before.

As Kotler writes, "Life is tricky sport—and that's the emotional core of this story, the real reason we can't put Pandora back in the box. When you strip everything else away, technology is nothing more than the promise of an easier tomorrow. It's the promise of hope. And how do you stop hope?"

Join Kotler in this fascinating exploration of our incredible next: a deep dive into those future technologies happening now—and what it means to be a part of this brave new world.

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Editorial Review

Review

“An insightful overview of the many ways technology has caught, if not surpassed, our wildest dreams—and it shows no signs of stopping.” —*Kirkus Reviews*

“It’s difficult to think of a writer more invigorating and tuned-in than Kotler. *Tomorrowland* is like taking a shot of caffeine. It allows you to see into the future and to realize that you’re already there.” —David Eagleman, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Incognito*

“Steven Kotler finds the bubbling edge where techno-exuberance hauls the impossible into the realm of the real. A thrilling and important read!” —Howard Bloom, author of *The Lucifer Principle* and *Global Brain*

“Kotler is a generous and wise tour guide...He’s a gifted journalist, and his enthusiasm for his subjects is infectious.” —Re/Code

About the Author

Steven Kotler is a *New York Times* bestselling author, award-winning journalist, and cofounder and director of research for the Flow Genome Project. His books include the nonfiction works *The Rise of Superman*, *Abundance*, *A Small Furry Prayer*, and *West of Jesus*, as well as the novel *The Angle Quickest for Flight*. His work has been translated into more than thirty languages. His articles have appeared in more than sixty publications, including the *New York Times Magazine*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Wired*, *GQ*, *Outside*, *Popular Science*, *Men's Journal*, and *Discover*. He also writes *Far Frontiers*, a blog about technology and innovation for *Forbes.com*, and *The Playing Field*, a blog about the science of sport and culture for *PsychologyToday.com*. He lives in New Mexico with his wife, the author Joy Nicholson.

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The Future Is Here: An Introduction

It was early spring of 1997, about five years into my career as a journalist, a day of dark skies and cold rain. Peter Diamandis and I had gotten together for the very first time at a rundown diner on the outskirts of Chinatown, San Francisco. The diner was long and narrow, and we were seated toward the rear of the room. I was sitting with my back to the building’s far corner, Peter with his back to the rest of the restaurant. And the rest of the restaurant was staring at him.

For twenty minutes, Peter had been getting more and more excited while telling me about his newly launched endeavor: the XPRIZE, a ten-million-dollar competition for the first team to build a private spaceship capable of taking three people into space twice in two weeks. Already, the Sharpie had come out. There were charts on napkins, graphs on placemats, a healthy rearrangement of condiments—the ketchup marking the end of the troposphere, the mustard the beginning of the mesosphere. About the time he got loud about how some maverick innovator working out of a garage somewhere was going to “take down NASA,” people began to stare. Peter couldn’t see them; I could. Twenty folks in the restaurant, all looking at him like he was stark raving mad. And I remember this: I remember thinking they were wrong.

It's hard to put my finger on why. Part of it was a strange hunch. Journalists tend to be cynical by nature and disbelieving by necessity. The job requires a fairly healthy bullshit detector, and that was the thing—mine wasn't going off.

More of it was that I had just come from a month in the Black Rock Desert, outside of Gerlach, Nevada, watching Craig Breedlove try to drive a car through the sound barrier. Breedlove's effort was terrestrial-bound rocket science, for sure. The *Spirit of America*, his vehicle, was pretty much a miniature *Saturn V*—40 feet long, 8 feet wide, 6 feet high, and powered by a turbojet engine that burned, well, rocket fuel.

During those long days in the desert, I spent a lot of time talking to aerospace engineers. They all made one thing clear: Driving a car through the sound barrier was a lot harder than sending a rocket ship into low-earth orbit. In fact, when I asked Breedlove's crew chief, former Air Force pilot turned aerospace engineer Dezo Molnar—who we'll meet again later as the inventor of the world's first flying motorcycle—what he was going to work on when all this was over, he said, "I want to do something easy, something relaxing. I think I'm going to build a spaceship."

He wasn't kidding.

Plus, Breedlove's effort was exactly the kind of big-budget project you would expect an agency like NASA to get behind. Except there was no budget. And no NASA. The *Spirit of America* had a crew of seven working out of an oversized tool shed. And while they never did break the sound barrier, they got really close—670 mph (700 was the barrier)—and then ran out of cash. They were literally one sponsorship check away from making history.

So, that day in the diner—despite Peter's exuberance, despite the fact that, back then, the XPRIZE had no major sponsors and no money in the bank, and despite the fact that NASA had called his idea utterly impossible and the entire aerospace industry had agreed—from where I was sitting, some maverick opening the space frontier didn't seem too outlandish.

Of course, today, with the XPRIZE won, with the private space industry worth more than a billion dollars, and with Richard Branson's *SpaceShipTwo* slated to begin taking paying customers into low-earth orbit over the next twelve months, none of this may seem incredibly shocking. But it was. In 1997, space was off-limits to anyone but big government. This much was gospel. Yet, I left that diner absolutely certain that sometime in the next decade, the far frontier would open for business.

I also left the diner a little gobsmacked. In less time than it took to drink a cup of coffee, a paradigm had shattered—science fiction had become science fact. On the way home, I started to wonder about other paradigms. After all, if private spaceships were possible, what about all the other sci-fi mainstays? What about bionics? Robotics? Flying cars? Artificial life? Life extension? Asteroid mining? What about those more ephemeral topics: the future of human evolution, the possibilities of downloadable consciousness? I made a long list—and that list defined large parts of the next two decades of my career.

Tomorrowland is the result of that journey. The pieces in this book come from an assortment of major publications—the *New York Times*, *Wired*, *Atlantic Monthly*, to name a few—and all were penned between 2000 and 2014. They are all investigations into those moments when science fiction became science fact and the massively disruptive impact these moments have on culture. Because of the blitzkrieg rate of change in today's world, few of these stories appear exactly as they ran. Instead, I've updated the science and technology so—unless the tale is historical in nature—the information contained in this book is as current as possible.

Furthermore, to help make better sense of things, I've also broken these stories into three categories. The first grouping—The Future In Here—is about us, an examination of the ways science and technology are fundamentally altering you and me. Here we'll explore artificial senses (the world's first artificial vision implant), bionic limbs (the world's first bionic soldier), and evolution's future (say good-bye to *Homo sapiens*), among other seismic shifts in what it means to be human. The second section—The Future Out There—is about the ways science and technology are radically reshaping our world. Here we'll cover everything from on-world paradigm shifts, like the birth of the world's first genetically engineered insect, to off-world paradigm shifts, like the birth of the asteroid mining industry. Finally, in The Future Uncertain,

we'll examine the gray areas, those explosive collisions between science and culture—for example, the use of steroids for life extension or the use of synthetic biology for the creation of bioweapons—where lines are being crossed and controversy reigns, and no one is certain what tomorrow brings.

This last bit is no small thing. All of the technologies described in this book are disruptive technologies, though not as we traditionally define the word. Typically, disruptive technologies are those that displace an existing technology and disrupt an existing market, but the breakthroughs described herein do more than dismantle value chains—they destroy longstanding beliefs. You will, for example, come across an article about William Dobbie, inventor of the world's first artificial vision implant. Dobbie was extremely paranoid about talking to the press. This isn't that uncommon, but it's usually about protecting intellectual property. That wasn't Dobbie's problem. When I asked him about his reticence, his answer surprised me: "Jesus cured blindness. People don't like it when mortals perform miracles."

It was an offhand comment, but one that stayed with me. Consider the enormous influence that our spiritual traditions exert in today's world. Think about the blood that has been spilled in the name of religion in just these past hundred years. Think about the ongoing hubbub surrounding the—shall we say—"philosophical question" of millions of years of evolution, versus the more economic six-day approach. Now, think about what's coming.

Right now, researchers are storming heaven from every direction. In "Extreme States," we'll see how things like trance states, out-of-body experiences, and cosmic unity—all core mystical experiences that underpin our spiritual traditions—are now understood as the product of measurable biology. The hard science has been done; the disruptive technologies are what come next. So forget about science putting something as flimsy as "philosophical" pressure on religion—pretty soon the direct experience of the numinous is going to be available via video game.

And that's just the beginning of the storm. How many spiritual traditions rely on the premise of the hereafter to steer morality? Yet, as you'll see in "The Genius Who Sticks Around Forever," we are already poking at the possibility of downloadable consciousness—the idea that we can store self in silicon, loading consciousness onto a chip and loading that chip onto a computer, allowing us to hang on to our personalities forever—so what happens to morality in the face of immortality?

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Hae Hughes:

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James Williams:

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Lisa Mercado:

A lot of people always spent their own free time to vacation or go to the outside with them household or their friend. Were you aware? Many a lot of people spent they free time just watching TV, or even playing video games all day long. If you would like try to find a new activity that is look different you can read some sort of book. It is really fun in your case. If you enjoy the book which you read you can spent the entire day to reading a book. The book Tomorrowland: Our Journey from Science Fiction to Science Fact it is very good to read. There are a lot of those who recommended this book. They were enjoying reading this book. Should you did not have enough space bringing this book you can buy the particular e-book. You can m0ore very easily to read this book through your smart phone. The price is not to cover but this book provides high quality.

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