



## Tech Talk

### Predictions for 2016 ©

by John McCarthy

Hi and welcome to Tech Talk. No need to remind you the New Year is now well and truly under way, and of course it means that many hi-tech predictions have been flourishing in the press recently – it's a favourite hobby of many journalists at the start of every year – ranging from the risible and ridiculous to the potentially sublime.

2016 is expected to be a huge, possibly record-breaking year in consumer technology, and I think it's a fairly safe bet to wager that as early as next spring, Apple will be unveiling their Watch Mk 2. This next model will undoubtedly be thinner, lighter and perhaps even incorporate new features such as the capability of taking pictures and shooting video right from the watch itself. Many users are hoping that it will include space for a SIM card, which will symbolically cut the umbilical cord keeping it frustratingly attached to the iPhone and allow the user to enjoy a greater sense of freedom. 2016 should also witness the introduction of a totally new, radically designed iPhone 7, and no doubt that'll feature in a future Tech Talk.

For all those of you who love watching movies on the best high-definition screens, 4K TVs will undoubtedly become the rage over the coming months and attract many new customers. My faltering eyes have enjoyed the pleasure of seeing them in person, and the picture quality really is pin-sharp and visually jaw-dropping. They've been around for a while, but prices were prohibitively high – however, the good news is that they're falling all the time, and I've seen some 28" models available on Amazon for less than €500.

Drones featured prominently in the headlines throughout 2015, and this year could witness a plague-like proliferation of these flying beasts. The odds are that you'll either join the ever-increasing club of drone enthusiasts or else will probably wish that you owned a 12-bore shotgun to blast the pesky things out of the skies. Prices are now ridiculously low for the entry models, and having made these consumer products so easy to use means they've become child's play. On a more serious business note, Amazon's drone delivery service – Amazon Prime Air – is scheduled to launch in the UK

in 2016. Very recently, they showed off a very accomplished prototype drone, an autonomous flying vehicle which allegedly can get packages to customers within 30 minutes. It's no secret that Amazon is designing a whole family of drones, and these are being developed in its Cambridge labs.

In the world of transport, the world's first electric plane to receive an airworthiness certificate, China's RX1E Ruixiang, was recently given a license for production. Powered by rechargeable lithium batteries, one 90-minute charge can guarantee operation for around 45 to 60 minutes. With a maximum speed of 160 km an hour, it can fly at an altitude of 10,000 feet, and according to one of the designers, each hour of flight will only cost about €3. You don't need to be a rocket scientist to see the attraction of this machine: convenience of use, easy maintenance, low operating costs, high safety levels and a non-existent carbon footprint. One can easily predict that other actors will emerge in this new market which has such high potential due to the fact that it's so environmentally friendly, and with new battery technology but a stone's throw away, soon the endurance will be tenfold, thereby eliminating its one current serious flaw.

2016 could also be a watershed year for virtual reality. This has been the subject of intense speculation for a long time, but the last couple of years has seen unprecedented investment. Virtual reality headsets literally envelop users into three-dimensional worlds. During this year, its primary target will undoubtedly be video games and all the Big Berthas of this industry want their slice of the pie: Facebook, which recently acquired Oculus (Oculus Rift), Sony Morpheus, Samsung Gear VR, and even tech giant Microsoft will get in on the act with their HoloLens. Estimates for 2016 indicate potential sale figures of 14 million, and after that it's anyone's guess, as virtual reality will surely stretch its tentacles into the environment of films and immersive applications, whilst offering the lucrative potential of expanding to businesses, industry and private healthcare. The general consensus of opinion among the experts is that the development and ensuing adoption of VR is possibly one of the most intoxicating areas in technology at this moment in time. It opens up extraordinary advances in gaming, education, military and medical training, total immersion... Imagine what it might be like to live the experience of actually being Bonaparte instead of just reading about him. At the moment, it's the tip of a virtual iceberg, but VR will surely change our lives and 2016 is just a starting point.

That's it for today— join me next time when we'll be taking a look at some of the star products showcased in this year's CES – that's the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas held earlier this month. Look forward to seeing you then. You've been listening to Tech Talk, brought to you by EnglishWaves.fr.