



Eighteen leaders and luminaries share their thoughts on where we're headed and what we'll see when we get there.

The Future Is Now: In *Lessons From Our Future*, a brilliant history that's never been written, the authors conclude, "If the future teaches us anything, it's that it hasn't happened yet." That has held true throughout the years and helps explain why visions of the future—from home robots to hovercraft—have always looked so, well, futuristic. But lately something's changed. The present has started to look awfully futuristic. Which raises a question: Are we living in the future? It's not impossible. In 1972, Redskins coach George Allen took an ailing franchise to the Super Bowl by declaring, "The future is now"—a ruling that was overturned by the Miami Dolphins, 14-7. But the '72 Dolphins are history. Today you stroll into Circuit City and see two kids playing something that, from a distance, looks like an actual NFL game. It's clearly from the future. Then you fly to Shanghai on Google Earth, where a 101-story tower that *should* be a sci-fi rendering is really being built. You may not have an avatar in Second Life, the imaginary online world. But Reebok has a store there, built of pixels but charging real money for shoes that look great in Windows, Mac, or Linux. And we used to need Orson Welles to blow our minds! If the future is upon us, though, what's ahead? Our prediction: Hannah Montana (a.k.a. Miley Cyrus), the 14-year-old Disney star whose brand will extend from television, music, and Nintendo to the virtual realm Disney is building. The long-term outlook: more future. It's never in short supply. And it's coming at us ever faster, like the accelerating levels of a videogame. At these speeds, anticipating what lurks around the corner becomes a challenge of eyesight as much as insight. What's ahead in these pages is what 18 top leaders and thinkers (and one duck) see on their horizon, from 3-D printing to \$100 billion private-equity deals. And if cellulose ethanol (think cars powered by wood chips and weeds) sounds like the last scene of *Back to the Future*, remember Doc's words: "Roads? Where we're going, we don't need roads." —Jerry Useem