

News Clips 1986-1988

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In going over my back pages as a retiring, --but not shy person, I found some surveillance news clips that seem quaint, even shocking in their naivety, given developments of the last three decades. Can you believe that in 1986 it was worth national news that computers would someday be networked in constant communication, fingerprints, retinas and brainwaves scanned, hair tested for drugs and so much more per the CBS series attached above? The series was called "The wonders of life in the year 2001." The program explores "how the computers of the future may entertain and spy on us" in 2001. "Wonder," of course, from whose point of view?

"Prediction: in the year 2001 the computer will give you undreamed of power --you pick the program you pick the time." "...Within 10 years we may be transmitting alpha, beta, and sundry waves into your brain so that you can experience what is being taped" [as well measuring the brain waves workers transmit.]

"Another direction is simulating reality, the computer is the tool, the reality whatever the imagination dictates....human appearance and movement created by computer, [are] a process taking baby steps right now."

"Prediction: by the year 2001 a computer created actor will star in a movie." "Enormous possibilities in the year 2001 to entertain, inform or manipulate, enormous ethical questions too. If Hollywood can alter reality, simulate reality, what is to stop the politician, the journalist, a government? Technology is the wonder tool taking us to 2001 and technology has no conscience."

How quickly consciousness can shift and what seemed to reflect only the fevered imaginations of the sky-is falling, supposedly out-of-touch academics, and the "gee-whiz" responses of a surprised audience become taken-for-granted, even unproblematic aspects of reality. What is there in the news today that is shock-worthy, but will simply be the expected normal for those younger cohorts who have never known anything else? In 2040 will 2025's concerns be deemed as quaint and dated as these from 1986? What are the lessons here?