Tech expert Pogue says wearable computers have a ways to go

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"Wearable" devices like smartwatches and Google Glass may indeed become the next big trend in consumer electronics, but David Pogue, the multi-faceted, multi-platform technology writer and TV science presenter, thinks we're just not there yet.

"I think we're in the Commodore 64 stage right now," said Pogue, 50, referring to the early, crude home computer. "We're fumbling, figuring out what makes sense, what can be shrunk down and work well. For sure, no one has found it yet."

In Fort Worth last week to discuss the "tsunami" of technology advances to an audience at the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History, Pogue - who announced last week that he's leaving The New York Times to join Yahoo - made clear his view that the current version of Google Glass is not a winner.

"I can practically guarantee you that Google Glass will not show up on everybody's faces next year," he told the Star-Telegram. "There's just too many social issues."

People know that someone wearing Google Glass could be recording them, which makes them acutely uncomfortable. "It's just not fair to take pictures secretly, to film secretly," he said.

Pogue predicted the device will be banned in courtrooms, restaurants, banks, movie theaters and locker rooms. He did give Google kudos for

design advances, but said they're more than offset by its hefty $1,500 price and the lack of ordinary hinges to fold the glasses.

Also not ready for prime time is the Samsung Galaxy Gear smart watch, which requires a particular model Samsung tablet or phone to function, he said.

"It has a camera lens in the watchband, so it's primarily designed for creepy, stalker pictures," Pogue went on. "Is that what the world's been waiting for?"

Apple has not yet released its own smart watch. But with the wearables now on the market, he said, "no one's found the right balance and the right package."

That said, "they will evolve," he said. "I am sure they will become a 'thing' just as the smartphone became a 'thing' and tablets became a 'thing.' I am not saying everybody in the world will have a wearable computer but lots of people will."

He cautioned against thinking, as many people do when dealing psychologically with technological change, that they will replace another device. Tablets and e-books have not replaced printed books, he noted.

Pogue himself is abandoning one print medium - The New York Times, where he has been a personal technology columnist - and signed on with Yahoo. (He will continue as tech correspondent for "CBS Sunday Morning," will do a monthly column for Scientific American, and won't stop issuing new how-to books in the Missing Manual series that he created.)

Asked about his most recent move, he said: "Yahoo came to me this summer and told me, 'We want to be your playground.' "

Unlike at the Times, he will be able to "mix prose and video and audio and pictures and have two-way interactions with my readership. I could do crowd-sourcing things and contests, live Q-and-A events. I could do apps. Just so many possibilities when you are digital."

How does Pogue juggle all his media commitments?

"I never have writer's block," he said. Yet he claims he doesn't work that hard, except when he's flying between appearances. He tries to have dinner with his wife and three children when at home, then puts in a few hours writing afterward.

Pogue studied music at Yale, not computer science, and later worked on Broadway. And for years he has been attacked by the techie world for never having assembled his own computer or written code. But that's what his various employers want, an everyman who can explain newly introduced consumer gadgetry, he said.

As for his natural stage presence before PBS and CBS cameras and in person, Pogue said it was honed during 450 performances he gave as a teenage magician at children's birthday parties in his native Shaker Heights, Ohio, a leafy Cleveland suburb.

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