

Great Scott! Flying cars arrive in Perth

October 21 2015, by Cristy Burne, Sciencenetwork Wa



A rendering of the YouFly vehicle in motion. Credit: Entecho

The creators of *Back to the Future II* had us believe flying cars, anti-gravity hoverboards and fax machines would be ubiquitous in the early 21st Century.

The iconic movie, which saw Doc Brown and Marty McFly travel forward in time to October 21, 2015,—today's date—may have been wrong about the fax machines but it is close to having the flying car part

right.

Engineer Kim Schlunke is the director of local company Entecho, and inventor of WA's very own flying-car technology.

If Mr Schlunke has his way, instead of bumper-to-bumper commuting, "you'll jump in your car, dial an address, then sit back and read the morning paper," he says.

"The car will find the nearest landing site, steer around mountains and towers using GPS, and avoid things you can't predict, like seagulls and other craft, using collision avoidance radar."

The flying saucer-like vehicle known as YouFly is not quite a DeLorean nor is it powered by the mysterious Mr Fusion but it is able to fit in an ordinary garage and runs entirely on electricity.

YouFly is capable of vertical take-off and landing (VTOL), and operated with just two joysticks—one for height, the other for direction.

"You sit in the middle of a 2m diameter fan, in a nice cockpit," Mr Schlunke says.

"You can't touch the fan or reach it, and when it starts, it becomes transparent, so you can look through it."



The YouFly vehicle. Credit: Entecho

The enclosed fan pumps air from the top to the bottom of the car, generating lift that is controlled by a flexible skirt around the car's body.

Mr Schlunke has test-driven YouFly "at very low altitudes" and says the most recent tests are exciting.

"It's flown with enough weight to fly a person...it flies around very stably and parks in car parks and things like that," he says.

"When a vehicle is as small as a car, the physics of flight are quite difficult, but we've been able to achieve efficiency through careful aeronautical engineering."



The YouFly hoverpod being tested in a carpark. Credit: Entecho

Mr Schlunke admits Entecho isn't pursuing time travel as one of YouFly's capabilities, but says the craft will still provide a whole lot of fun.

"Hopefully it's the [car](#) of tomorrow, but that's a long way off," he says.

In developing YouFly, Entecho collaborated with the University of Western Australia and WA companies Strike Products and Composite Design.

"Pretty unique skills are needed to make the craft...Perth had the skill

base I needed," Mr Schlunke says.

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