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Long-Dead Inventor Tesla Electrifies Hip Techies

His Name Is Branding Magic;
Thomas Edison Is 'So 20th Century'

By DANIEL MICHAELS

Decades after he died penniless, Nikola Tesla is elbowing aside his old adversary Thomas Edison in the pantheon of geek gods.

When California engineers wanted to brand their new \$100,000 electric sports car, one name stood out: Tesla. When circuit designers at microchip producer Nvidia Corp. in 2007 launched a new line of advanced processors, they called them Tesla. And when videogame writers at Capcom Entertainment in Silicon Valley needed a character who could understand alien spaceships for their new Dark Void saga, they found him in Nikola Tesla.

Tesla was a scientist and in-

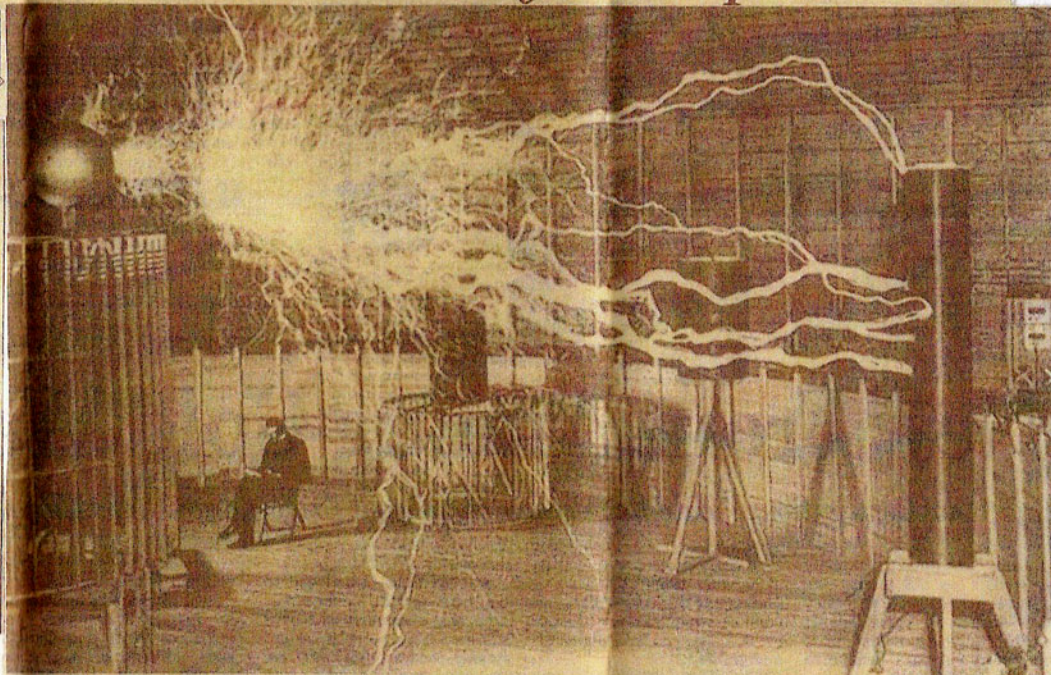


Bowie as Tesla

ventor who achieved fame and fortune in the 1880s for figuring out how to make alternating current work on a grand scale, electrifying the world. He created the first major hydroelectric dam, at Niagara Falls. He thrilled packed theaters with presentations in which he ran high voltage through his body to illuminate a fluorescent light in his hand. His inventions helped Guglielmo Marconi develop radio.

And his rivalry with Edison—called the Battle of the Currents because Edison had bet on direct current—was legendary. Tesla won the contest, when his AC equipment powered an unprecedented display of electric light at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair.

Fifty years later, the 86-year-



inventor Nikola Tesla, above, pictured in Colorado, achieved fame and fortune in the 1880s for figuring out how to make alternating current on a huge scale. A contemporary of Edison, Tesla died in obscurity but is now being rediscovered and hailed by technophiles, such as Google co-founder Larry Page. Below, the electric Tesla Roadster Sport, which boasts a top speed of 125 mph and a range of 244 miles on a single charge.

