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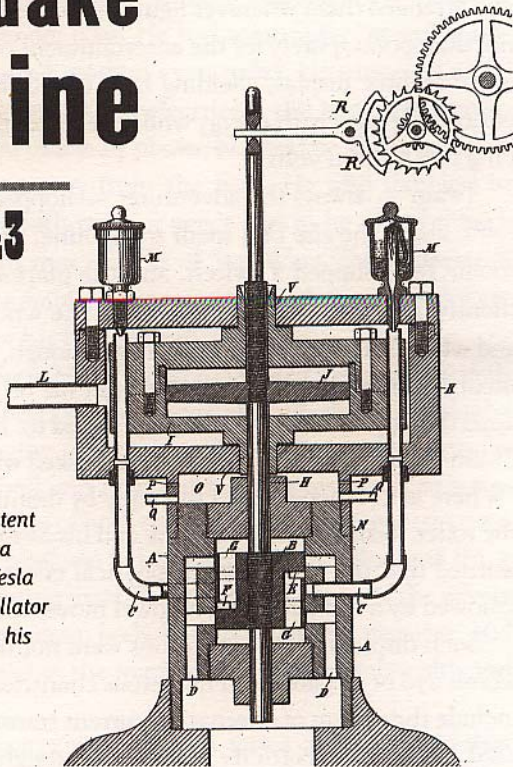
TRY NOT TO BE TOO WEIRD

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# NIKOLA TESLA'S Earthquake Machine

1856—1943



*This illustration, for a patent granted in 1894, depicts a "reciprocating engine." Tesla used his mechanical oscillator to start an earthquake in his Manhattan laboratory.*

tion to the above, he also discovered, described, and demonstrated the fundamental concepts of some major scientific discoveries, including cosmic rays, artificial radioactivity, X-rays, robotics, and the electron microscope. Several of the scientists who later rediscovered these technologies went on to win Nobel Prizes. Many of Tesla's discoveries and inventions revolve around his understanding of matter and the existence of waves — visible light, sound, cosmic rays, and his “very special radiation” (X-rays). At the time, his ideas were leaps and bounds ahead of accepted explanations of how the world works. He developed a forerunner of fluorescent lights, drove an electric car, and publicly demonstrated a remote control device for a model boat. He had some fairly “green” innovations too, which sound modern even today. He proposed a fertilizer system that converted, via electricity, the inert nitrogen in the air,  $N_2$ , to the form usable by plants,  $N_3$ , and he also worked on a system to harness energy from the Sun. He also dabbled in weaponry, inventing death rays (or peace rays as he called them), a form of particle gun that smacks of *Star Wars*. Extraterrestrial radio, defensive force fields, teleportation, and time travel were more than figments of his imagination.

The laxative platform Mark Twain rode was a mechanical oscillator. It produced vibrations by means of a relatively simple, by Tesla's standards, engine, consisting of a spring-operated piston encased in an iron shell and powered by compressed air or water steam (Tesla built engines of both types). The vibrations were transferred directly to the platform but isolated from the floor via thick cork and rubber insulating mats. Tesla was well aware of the effects of his machine on the human body, both positive and negative, and believed it held promise in the improvement of general health and well-being.

The platform vibrator was one of a series of inventions that made use of a mechanical oscillator. With this machine, Tesla thought he could generate waves that traveled through the Earth as sound waves travel through air. He saw many potential applications for this technology, which he named “telegeodynamics,” including