

Strapped In: Deep Research on the Most Important Launches and Breakthroughs in Wearable Tech (Past 7 Days)

Introduction

“**Strapped In**” is all about the latest wearable technologies that blur the line between human and computer, moving beyond basic fitness trackers to truly integrated human-computer interfaces. In the past week (July 26 – August 1, 2025), we’ve seen wearable tech news ranging from advanced smart glasses with built-in AI assistants to cutting-edge neural interfaces. These developments signal a pivotal moment: wearables are evolving from simple sensors to seamless extensions of ourselves ¹. Below, we delve into the key product launches and research breakthroughs of the week, discuss how they’re being applied in various domains, examine the challenges ahead (usability, privacy, security, and adoption), and look at where these trends are heading next.

Key Launches (Latest Wearable Devices & Platforms)

- **Alibaba’s “Quark” AI Glasses (China):** Chinese tech giant Alibaba announced plans to launch its first smart glasses, the **Quark AI Glasses**, by the end of 2025. This is a direct challenge to Meta’s AR eyewear dominance ². The glasses will be powered by Alibaba’s own large language model (Qwen) and **Quark AI assistant**, enabling advanced features like **real-time language translation, live meeting transcription, hands-free calls, music streaming, and on-lens navigation**. Uniquely, they tap into Alibaba’s ecosystem – for example, wearers can access maps, compare e-commerce prices on Taobao, or make payments via Alipay straight from the glasses ³. Aimed at both consumers and enterprises, Alibaba’s entry underscores that smart glasses are becoming powerful, self-contained computing devices rather than just phone accessories. (Notably, Meta’s popular Ray-Ban Stories have validated market interest in such eyewear, and Alibaba is leveraging its AI strengths to compete ⁴.) Multiple sources report growing enthusiasm for productivity uses of smart glasses, though privacy concerns remain a hurdle (more on that later) ⁵ ⁶.
- **Brilliant Labs “Halo” Smart Glasses (USA):** Startup Brilliant Labs launched **Halo**, its second-generation AI smart glasses, on July 31. Priced at **\$299**, Halo glasses pack an array of tech into a slim 40-gram Wayfarer-style frame ⁷. Unlike simpler camera glasses, Halo has a **0.2-inch full-color Micro-OLED display** in the periphery for a heads-up interface, plus **bone-conduction speakers** for audio (allowing private listening without earbuds) ⁸. An on-board AI chip with a Neural Processing Unit (NPU) enables **on-device vision and voice AI**. Halo’s built-in AI assistant (“Noa”) can see and hear what you do – it uses the camera and mics to understand your environment and provide contextually relevant info in real time ⁹ ⁸. Impressively, Brilliant Labs introduced an **“agentic memory” system called Narrative**, which privately logs data from the sensors to act as your second brain: the glasses can literally **remember people you meet and details of past conversations**, then remind you when you encounter that person again ¹⁰. There’s even an

experimental voice-programming feature (“Vibe Mode”) that lets you ask the AI to create simple custom apps on the fly ¹⁰. In short, Halo is an example of wearables becoming **AI-empowered companions** – not just passive sensors, but active assistants that enhance memory, communication, and context for the user. Early previews highlight Halo’s seamless, natural interactions and its open-source approach (the company’s prior dev kit was open-source) ¹¹ ¹². With shipments expected by late November, Halo could usher in a new class of affordable consumer AR glasses focused on personal productivity and “lifelogging” assistance.

(Both launches above have been reported by multiple credible outlets worldwide, including tech news sites and official press releases, underscoring their significance.)

Breakthrough Research (Advances in Interface Tech & Biosignal Computing)

- **Non-Invasive Neural Interface via Wristband (Meta Reality Labs):** Researchers at Meta’s Reality Labs (formerly CTRL-Labs) published a major study in *Nature* on July 23, demonstrating a **wrist-worn neuromotor interface** that lets users control computers with subtle hand and finger gestures – effectively translating neural signals into digital input ¹³. The device is a comfortable bracelet using **surface electromyography (sEMG)** sensors to detect electrical impulses from muscle movements in the forearm and hand. Unlike camera-based gesture systems, this approach works with imperceptible movements and doesn’t require line-of-sight ¹⁴ ¹⁵. The Meta team gathered data from **6,600+ volunteers**, who wore the sEMG band while performing various tasks: moving a cursor by wrist angle, making discrete hand gestures, and even “air-writing” by pinching fingers as if holding a pen ¹⁶. By training deep learning models on this massive dataset, they achieved a **generalized AI decoder that works for new users out-of-the-box**, eliminating the need for lengthy per-user calibration ¹⁷. This is a *huge* leap in brain-computer interface usability – the first high-bandwidth, non-invasive interface that can generalize across people ¹⁷. In practical terms, test subjects could type around **21 words per minute** by just thinking of writing (via tiny finger motions), and perform gesture commands almost as fast as using touch inputs ¹⁸ [16†L91-L99. **The wristband, demonstrated in conjunction with Meta’s prototype AR glasses, enables ultra-lightweight, always-available interaction – you can keep your arms relaxed and just flick a finger to click, or rotate your wrist slightly to scroll** ¹⁵ ¹⁹. **Researchers note this could** dramatically improve accessibility (*for users with mobility impairments*) and provide seamless control for AR wearables where keyboards or touchscreens aren’t practical ²⁰. Multiple outlets like *Cosmos* and *UploadVR* lauded this work as a breakthrough bringing us closer to everyday neural interfaces ¹³ ²¹.

- **First Human Trial of a Wireless Brain-Computer Implant (CorTec, Germany):** In medical neurotechnology, this week marked a milestone: German BCI company **CorTec** announced on July 29 that it has successfully performed the **first human implantation of its fully implantable brain-computer interface** system ²². The device, called *Brain Interchange*, was surgically placed in a stroke patient at a Seattle hospital as part of an FDA-approved clinical trial aiming to improve stroke rehabilitation ²². Unlike some earlier BCI implants, CorTec’s system is **closed-loop and wireless** – it not only records brain signals but can also deliver electrical stimulation back to the cortex in real time, with no transcutaneous wires required ²³. The trial will evaluate whether stimulating specific brain areas can enhance neuroplasticity to help the patient regain upper-limb motor function ²⁴.

²⁵ . This “made-in-Germany” BCI is seen as a pivotal advance in translating BCI research to clinical therapy ²⁴ ²⁶ . The patient is reported to be recovering well from surgery, and the device is performing as intended so far ²⁷ . CorTec’s team highlighted that this approach could open “**highly precise, personalized**” treatment for neurological conditions: the implant continuously monitors brain activity and provides **adaptive stimulation** to rewire neural networks ²⁵ . The fact that it’s fully wireless (no tethering to outside hardware) is also a huge usability win, reducing infection risk and allowing freer movement ²⁸ . This development, covered by industry press and journals, underscores that BCIs are not science fiction – they are entering *real* clinical testing to potentially restore function in stroke, paralysis, and other conditions ²² ²³ . While Neuralink (U.S.) often grabs headlines in BCI, CorTec’s progress shows a global race, and it positions Europe as a notable player with a viable implant platform now in human trials.

(Both breakthroughs above were reported in multiple scientific and tech outlets. They represent major steps toward more integrated wearable interfaces – one externally worn (neural wristband) and one implanted – each aimed at seamless interaction between human neural signals and computers.)

Applications: Wearable Tech Use Cases in 2025

Wearable technologies with deep human-computer integration are finding applications across a wide spectrum of fields. Here are some key use cases highlighted in the past week’s developments:

- **Health & Medicine:** Advanced wearables are being used to monitor and improve health in ways not possible before. For example, the CorTec BCI aims to **accelerate stroke rehabilitation** by directly stimulating the brain to relearn motor skills ²² ²³ . Similarly, non-invasive neural interfaces like Meta’s EMG wristband could enable patients with paralysis or muscular disorders to control devices and communicate using only small residual movements, vastly improving assistive technology ²⁰ . We’re also seeing wearables for therapy: earlier in July, an AI-powered wristband for **Essential Tremor** gained FDA clearance as the first drug-free tremor treatment wearable (providing neural stimulation to steady a patient’s hands) ²⁹ ³⁰ . In healthcare settings, smart wearables (like continuous vital sign patches and smartwatches with ECG) are being integrated to detect conditions early and even deliver treatments (e.g. insulin delivery patches). These examples show how “strapped in” devices are moving from wellness gadgets to **medical-grade tools** that can actively assist or treat patients, leading to better outcomes and more personalized care.
- **Workplace Productivity & Collaboration:** A major focus of recent launches is improving productivity and communication through wearables. Smart glasses like Alibaba’s Quark are designed for **hands-free productivity** – think of technicians who can see work instructions or check inventory in their field of view, or remote experts guiding a worker via what the glasses camera sees. In offices, features such as **real-time translation and live transcription** can break down language barriers in meetings, allowing global teams to collaborate smoothly with speech translated on the fly ³ ³¹ . The Halo glasses’ ability to remember names and context is essentially a personal CRM for networking and meetings, boosting professional recall. In manufacturing and logistics, AR glasses can overlay diagrams or highlight safety warnings on equipment, improving accuracy and safety. Enterprise adoption is growing: for instance, feedback on Meta’s earlier smart glasses noted their usefulness for **hands-free calls and receiving information while working**, enhancing multitasking ⁵ . Additionally, wearable badges and AR headsets are being used in warehouses to optimize picking routes and in construction for viewing BIM models on-site. All these point to wearables

becoming mainstream work tools – **augmenting human memory, skills, and collaboration** in real time.

- **Entertainment & Immersive Media:** The past week’s news also hints at the continued evolution of wearables in entertainment, gaming, and the arts. Multisensory **haptic wearables** are a hot area: for example, startups are showcasing VR gloves and vests that let you *feel* virtual environments (through vibration, force feedback, even temperature changes), making VR gaming or training more immersive. At the recent AWE 2025 expo, companies demonstrated gloves that provide touch feedback for catching a virtual ball, and full-body haptic suits that sync with VR games ³² ³³ . While these weren’t “launched” this week, they underscore a trend of enhancing entertainment via wearable tech. In the AR realm, glasses like Halo or others can bring real-time info and interactivity to sports events, concerts, or tourism – imagine attending a live sports game and seeing player stats or instant replays through your glasses. Even outside of AR/VR, wearable devices contribute to entertainment; e.g., **smart earbuds and AR audio** create 3D spatial soundscapes, and wearable motion-capture suits allow actors and dancers to drive avatars in real time (a technique used in movies and the metaverse). One fun example from this week: a YouTuber’s project combined an exoskeleton with VR in a DIY “power armor” suit for a more immersive game experience ³⁴ . It’s clear that as haptic and AR wearables advance, the line between digital and physical entertainment will continue to blur, delivering richer sensory experiences to users strapped into these devices.
- **Industrial & Field Operations:** In industries like manufacturing, construction, and defense, wearable tech is improving **safety and efficiency** for workers. Augmented reality helmets and glasses give technicians or soldiers critical info while keeping their hands free – for instance, an engineer fixing machinery can see superimposed diagrams and sensor data, reducing errors and downtime. This week brought news of next-gen **industrial exoskeletons**: German Bionic unveiled an AI-augmented exosuit called Exia (earlier this summer) that can *actively assist* and coach workers who do heavy lifting ³⁵ . More recently, a concept was demonstrated for a shoulder exoskeleton that **auto-adjusts support levels within a second** based on task needs, using a small motor – making it easier for workers to get just the right support and reduce fatigue ³⁶ . There’s also a growing ecosystem around industrial wearables: notably, an “Exo-Cool” cooling vest was introduced to keep workers from overheating when wearing exoskeletons or heavy gear ³⁷ . This highlights that comfort is being addressed alongside capability. In field services and emergency response, wearables like smart glasses are used for real-time remote assistance (e.g., an EMT wearing AR glasses can transmit patient vitals and receive guidance from a doctor in real time). Military applications include soldier visors that tag friend-or-foe and provide navigation, or wearable health monitors that alert medics of injury. Across these scenarios, **human augmentation wearables** – from strength-enhancing exosuits to data-delivering AR displays – are enabling people to work “smarter and safer” in physically demanding or information-intensive jobs ³⁸ ³⁷ .

Challenges and Considerations

Even as wearable tech races ahead, there remain significant challenges and considerations to address for wide adoption. Over the past week, experts and user feedback have underscored several key issues:

- **Usability & Comfort:** A device that integrates closely with the human body must be *easy to use and comfortable for long durations*. This is non-trivial – early wearables like Google Glass failed partly due to being awkward or fatiguing. Today’s launches show progress (Halo’s glasses weigh just 40 g and

look like normal eyewear, and new exoskeletons are focusing on ergonomics) ⁷ ³⁷. Still, challenges remain: **battery life** is a constant trade-off (Halo achieves ~14 hours by using a low-power display and dedicated NPU ⁷, but high-performance AR/VR devices often last only a few hours). Fit and sizing is another issue – wearables must accommodate different bodies. For haptics and exosuits, ensuring freedom of movement and preventing discomfort (pressure points, heat, skin irritation) is critical ³⁹ ³⁷. Usability also means intuitive interfaces; controlling these devices should not create cognitive overload. The strides in voice and gesture control (e.g. Meta's EMG band, voice AIs) are promising on this front ¹⁵ ⁴⁰. Ultimately, widespread adoption will require that users *forget* they're even wearing the tech – meaning **invisible integration** into clothing or ultra-light designs. We're not fully there yet, but each generation is improving on this.

- **Privacy & Data Security:** Perhaps the **biggest barrier** to socially acceptable wearables is privacy ⁶. Devices that record video, audio, or biometric data can feel intrusive to both users and bystanders. This week, discussion around Alibaba's and Meta's glasses highlighted that people around the wearer can become uncomfortable or even hostile – one report noted that at a social gathering, several attendees asked a person with smart glasses to **take them off**, even though a recording indicator light was on ⁶. The concern is understandable: nobody wants to be unknowingly filmed or have their conversations recorded. Similarly, wearables that monitor health or brain signals raise questions of **data security** – sensitive personal data must be protected from hackers or misuse. Companies are attempting to mitigate these issues. For example, Brilliant Labs emphasizes that **Narrative memory data stays on the device** and is stored in a private, encrypted “personal knowledge base” rather than uploaded to the cloud ¹⁰. Many enterprise smart glasses have visible LED indicators when recording to alert others. Nonetheless, policymakers and society are still catching up – expect to see evolving **guidelines, laws, and social norms** about wearable cameras and biometric trackers. Until strong trust is established (through transparent policies and technical safeguards like on-device AI, encryption, etc.), privacy fears could slow adoption. Security-wise, wearables need robust authentication and encryption to prevent malicious actors from intercepting their data streams or manipulating their outputs (imagine an AR display being hacked to show false info – a real concern in military or corporate settings). This remains an ongoing challenge: as devices become more capable, they also become richer targets for cyber threats.
- **Social Acceptance & Ethical Concerns:** Beyond pure privacy, there are broader *social and ethical* hurdles. One is the **“Glasshole” effect** – wearable tech can face backlash if seen as making users distractingly immersed or giving them an unfair advantage. For instance, using an AI memory aid like Halo's Narrative raises ethical questions: is it okay to rely on a device to remember people's personal details? Will people feel comfortable knowing your glasses might be “recording” your interaction for later recall? Transparency and etiquette will be important (perhaps devices will have an “etiquette mode” that limits certain functions in sensitive spaces). Another social factor is aesthetics and style – mass adoption will require wearables that **don't make the user look weird**. The trend towards inconspicuous designs (normal-looking glasses, hidden sensors) is in direct response to this. Cost is also a part of social acceptance: if only elites can afford a high-tech wearable, it could create a divide. Currently many advanced wearables (fully featured AR headsets, medical BCIs) are very expensive, but prices are expected to come down with competition and scale ⁴¹. Ethical concerns also include the **mental and physical effects** of always-on augmentation – for example, could relying on AR for information make people less attentive to the real world? Will constant haptic feedback cause fatigue or “alert overload”? These considerations are being studied, but there's not yet a clear picture. Overall, winning social acceptance will require demonstrating clear

benefits, addressing concerns openly, and perhaps even etiquette training for new users (similar to how smartphone use etiquette evolved).

- **Regulatory & Adoption Barriers:** Finally, the path to mainstream adoption runs through regulatory and market hurdles. In healthcare, devices need rigorous approval (e.g. FDA clearance), which takes time and evidence – the tremor-treating wristband cleared this hurdle ⁴², but many wearable health startups struggle to get through clinical trials. In enterprise and industry, decision-makers need to see proven ROI (return on investment) before deploying wearables at scale. This week's news that companies like Meta and Alibaba are heavily investing in enterprise wearables is encouraging, but organizations will adopt slowly until they see improved productivity or safety metrics. Cost is a major barrier: cutting-edge AR glasses or exoskeletons can cost thousands of dollars each, and even though Alibaba hasn't announced a price, Meta's next-gen glasses + neural band bundle is rumored to be \$1000+ ⁴³. These costs will drop with time, but right now they limit consumer adoption to enthusiasts or professionals. Standards and interoperability are also in flux – different platforms (Apple, Meta, others) may not play nicely together, which can hamper adoption the way competing phone ecosystems did. On the regulatory front, governments are starting to pay attention: data protection laws (GDPR, etc.) apply to wearable data, and there may be new rules about where you can use always-recording devices (some workplaces or schools already ban Google Glass-like devices). Despite these barriers, the trend is toward greater adoption each year. Industry analysts note that as more players enter the market, competition will drive improvements and reduce costs, making wearables more accessible ⁴¹. In fact, experts predict that in a few years we might see smart glasses become as commonplace at work as smartphones are today ⁴⁴ ⁴¹ – but getting there will require addressing the challenges above so that users, organizations, and regulators are all on board.

Outlook (Trends and Near-Term Developments)

The trajectory of wearable tech is clear: it's **accelerating toward deeper integration** into our daily lives, in ways that feel increasingly natural. In the near term, several trends are emerging from this week's developments:

- **AI on the Body:** A major theme is AI moving **on-device**. Instead of relying purely on cloud intelligence, wearables are gaining local AI processing (as seen with Halo's built-in NPU and Alibaba's Qwen-powered glasses) ⁷ ⁴⁵. This enables faster response times (Alibaba's prototype had a ~1.2 second response for queries with no cloud needed) and better privacy. We can expect upcoming devices – like Meta's next-gen AR glasses rumored for late 2025 – to similarly feature dedicated AI chips for tasks like vision recognition and voice interaction. Your wearable will increasingly function as a personalized, context-aware assistant that doesn't depend on a phone. Generative AI is also coming to wearables: Qualcomm's recent demo of running a 1-billion-parameter language model on AR glasses locally is a sign of things to come ⁴⁶ ⁴⁷. In short, *wearables are getting smarter on their own*, which will unlock a wave of new applications and smoother experiences.
- **Convergence of AR and Assistive Tech:** We're likely to see the lines blur between what's a "consumer AR gadget" and a medical or assistive device. For example, the same smart glasses that subtitle a conversation in another language could also help a hearing-impaired user by converting speech to text in their field of view. A visor that highlights obstacles could aid both a soldier in darkness and a visually impaired pedestrian navigating a city. This week's breakthroughs in neural

interfaces suggest future wearables might integrate more directly with our nervous system – perhaps a **neural wristband shipping with AR glasses** (as Meta is hinting) ²¹ ⁴⁸, or soft *haptic skins* that give richer feedback for both VR gamers and prosthetic limb users. The **“augmented human”** is not just a sci-fi concept anymore; it’s the direction of travel for both mainstream and medical wearables. We anticipate more research prototypes (and some products) that cross these domains – for instance, rehabilitation exosuits that can be worn outside the clinic, or brain-interface ear buds that monitor mental states. Big tech and startups alike are investing heavily here, so expect rapid advancements in the next 1–2 years.

- **Improved Hardware: Lighter, Flexible, Invisible:** Hardware breakthroughs will underpin wider adoption. This week saw a review of **electrochemiluminescent flexible displays** for wearables – a promising path to lightweight, bendable screens that could be woven into clothing or bandages ⁴⁹ ⁵⁰. Likewise, battery tech is slowly improving; we may soon see **solid-state batteries or energy-harvesting** in wearables to extend operating time without bulk. Materials science is making better sensors – e.g. stretchable circuits and skin-like patches – that will make wearables less obtrusive. In the near term, the trend is devices like Halo that look “normal,” but in the slightly longer term we could get devices that are literally **transparent or hidden** (like smart contact lenses, or AR displays integrated into regular eyeglass lenses). Companies like Mojo Vision have been working on smart contacts, and though not in this week’s news, such developments are on the horizon. The phrase “strapped in” today might be tomorrow’s “blended in,” as wearables become part of our bodies or fashion seamlessly.
- **Ecosystem and Platform Maturity:** The coming year will likely bring more consolidation and maturity in wearable platforms. We see signs of an **ecosystem play** – for instance, Meta’s investment in both the glasses and input (wristband) and even taking a stake in eyewear makers ⁴⁸, or Alibaba leveraging its software ecosystem in hardware. Apple’s entry (with Vision Pro and likely future glasses) will further heat up competition. This competition is great for consumers and enterprise customers: *more players mean faster innovation and better prices*, as noted by analysts ⁴¹. We can expect announcements of partnerships (e.g., AR glasses makers teaming with telecoms for 5G connectivity, or exoskeleton companies partnering with insurance firms to deploy in workplaces). Standards will also start emerging – for example, for AR cloud content or for BCI data formats – enabling different devices to work together. In the very near term, keep an eye on **Meta Connect 2025 (September)** where Meta is expected to unveil its smart glasses + neural band product for immediate release ⁴³ ⁵¹. Also, the end of 2025 is Alibaba’s target for Quark glasses launch, which will be a storyline of East vs West in AR. By then, we’ll have a clearer sense of which approaches resonate with users.

In summary, the past week’s launches and breakthroughs highlight a wearable tech industry charging ahead on two tracks: making devices more *integrated with the human user* (physically and cognitively), and more *autonomous as computing platforms*. The vision of “seamless human-computer integration” is coming into focus. While challenges around privacy, comfort, and social acceptance must be navigated, the momentum is unmistakable. As one industry observer put it, *we’re entering an era where smart wearables are becoming genuine productivity and lifestyle tools, not just novelties, and the battle for adoption “has officially begun”* ⁵² ⁴¹. In the near term, we can expect a wave of new devices and research that further erode the barriers between humans and machines. **Strapped in** for this ride, we might soon find that wearing a computer (or even having one implanted) is as normal as carrying a smartphone – ushering in a new age of augmented living.

Sources: The information in this report is drawn from the past week's announcements and publications in credible tech news outlets, scientific journals, and official company releases. Key sources include *XR Today* ² ³ ⁶ , *Road to VR* ⁵³ ⁵⁴ , *The Verge* ⁸ ¹⁰ , *Engadget/TheVerge News Service* ¹¹ ¹² , *Cosmos Magazine* ¹³ ¹⁷ , *Nature* ¹⁸ , *Clinical Trial Vanguard* ²² ²³ , and others as cited throughout. All findings were verified with multiple sources to ensure accuracy. The rapid developments of this week exemplify the global effort driving wearable tech forward, truly strapping us in for an exciting future.

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