

Touch+ goes on sale, aims to make waving so yesterday

August 6 2014, by Nancy Owano



Touch+ announced yesterday that it is available on its makers' Ractiv website for \$74.99: Ractiv is offering this product as an add-on for a computer, evolved from a crowdfunding campaign last year for Haptix. Touch+ is the result. "We took Haptix back to the drawing board," said the team. The product is a small bar that sees your hands, "the first affordable 3D tracking device that allows you to tap, swipe, or zoom on any surface," said the company. That means the user can stop moving hands constantly on a mouse or trackpad. One does not have to touch the

screen.

As Jon Fingas in Engadget said Tuesday, "Put the device on a desktop stand or a laptop and its dual cameras turn your finger movements into gestures; you can play a first-person shooter by swiping across your [keyboard](#), or sketch in Photoshop using your desk as a drawing tablet." The keyboard becomes another kind of transmitter, where one can use as if it were something like an iPad. Or, as Brad Chacos in PCWorld put it, "Think of it as [turning](#) your keyboard or desk into a touchscreen for your PC, only without the screen part."

What is more, Touch+ temporarily suspends when you type and resumes when you are ready to use it again.

This presents a question about the future of gesture control and Touch+ may mark a clear transition. A key company pitch is that while traditional gesture control is about waving your hands in the air, Touch is about comfort where you can control your computer but this time with rested hands. Lai Xue, Ractiv co-founder, said, "The inspiration for Touch+ came from using a laptop on a bus and wondering what it would be like to have multitouch on the keyboard all the time so our hands wouldn't have to keep moving all over the place - which, needless to say, is tricky in a confined space."

How does it work? Touch+ has two cameras that see hands as the eyes do, tracking positions with computer vision algorithms. It can detect the height of your fingers and enable gesture shortcuts by detecting [hand gestures](#). Darren Lim, Ractiv co-founder, explains: "Touch+ only uses two normal cameras, so the magic happens in the software."

Touch+ works with Windows and OSX. They said Linux support is to be added soon. Touch+ connects to the computer with a USB 2.0 cable. The Ractiv website provides more details about the [cable](#) in its FAQ section

As for a competitive edge, a key selling point could simply turn out to be a physical ease of use. What helps distinguish Touch+, is the amount of movement required, wrote Chris Davies, executive editor for SlashGear. He noted how "expansive waving and moving around can get tiring. Just as Steve Jobs memorably slammed the idea of a touchscreen laptop display, since you'd quickly get tired of reaching [out](#) and tapping the screen, so anything which requires long periods of holding your arms in mid-air is ergonomically suspect."

Looking forward, Ractiv's promotional video indicates a wish to broaden its base beyond gaming enthusiasts into business cases too.

Caleb Garling in CITEworld said the company hopes its devices will be used in cases such as navigating the web, manipulating pictures in Photoshop, [building](#) designs in AutoCAD, or for boardroom presentations.

More information: — www.prnewswire.co.uk/news-releases/ractiv-launches-touch-plus-a-new-touchscreen-laptop-269972961.html

— www.ractiv.com/

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