Misty Robotics seeds bright future for home, office robots

January 12 2018, by Nancy Owano

OCCIPITAL STRUCTURED LIGHT SENSOR (MAPPING)

HD CAMERA (FACE & OBJECT RECOGNITION)

3X FAR-FIELD MICROPHONE ARRAY

4.3" LCD DISPLAY

2X SNAPDRAGON PROCESSORS

USB & SERIAL PORTS (HARDWARE EXPANSION)

SPEAKER

RGB LED

TIME-OF-FLIGHT SENSORS (OBSTACLE AVOIDANCE) 3X FRONT, 1 REAR

TRACK DRIVING SYSTEM

HEIGHT: 14.5" (36.8cm)

DEPTH: 9" (22.86cm)

WIDTH: 8" (20.32cm)
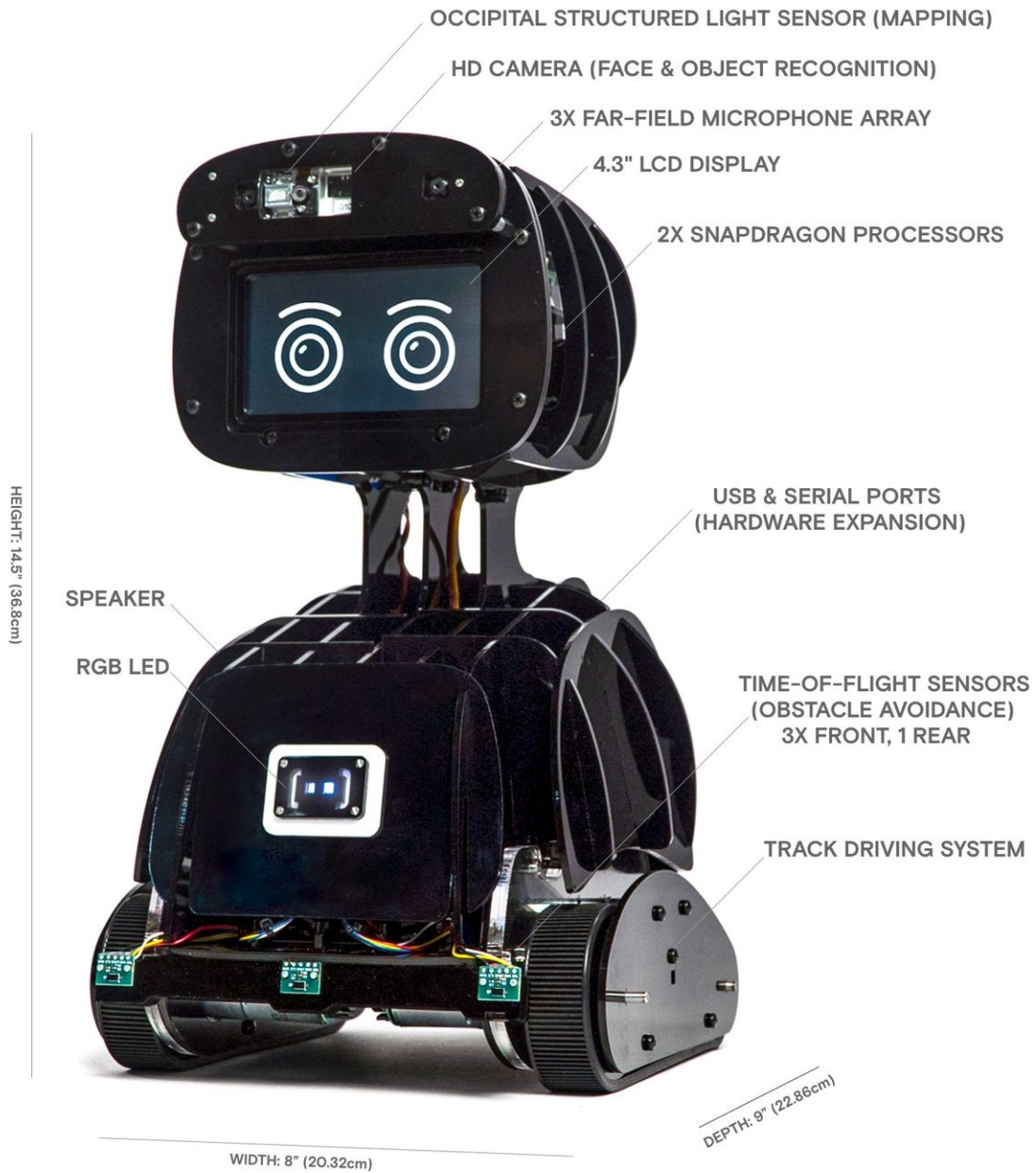
Misty I Developer Edition Prototype from Misty Robotics. Credit: Misty Robotics

What's in a dev kit coming in February? A whole lot of potential for those inclined to run the gamut of their imagination, in working to develop home robots. And by "those inclined" we do not mean roboticists per se. The Dev kit's creators, Boulder, Colorado-based Misty Robotics, would say Oh No.

The robot will be made available to a select group of developers and inventors.

They are introducing The Misty I Developer Edition robot next month as a platform for developers—not roboticists, but software developers—and people without much in the way of experience programming robots, said *IEEE Spectrum*.

Fast Company similarly said the Misty I prototype was "a full-fledged platform aimed at developers who have programming chops and a deep interest in creating skills for a general-purpose robot, but who aren't themselves roboticists."

The team has a favorite call to action to developers: Let's figure out how robots will be used in our lives.

As their news release put it, the Misty I Developer Edition gives tools to "non-robotics" programmers. With those tools, they can explore things like robot capabilities for navigation, seeing, hearing, and speaking.

Maybe the person having one of these would like to make the robot move in a certain way. Express words in a certain way. Show companionship in a certain way. The tools provided will help them do that.

The Misty I Developer Edition robot will begin shipping next month and is priced at $1,499.

"We don't think consumers are ready for robots, we think programmers are, because it's going to take three to five years of refining and working and building real, meaningful experiences that will meet the expectations of regular consumers," said CEO Tim Enwall in *IEEE Spectrum*.

A video posted on Jan. 8 was all about an event held at their Misty office last month.

Engadget: "The company recently held a "robothon" at its Boulder, Colorado, location to give 25 developers a shot at building some experience for the Misty 1. We can expect to see that sort of experimentation on a larger scale once even more devs get their hands on it."

One event participant in the video expressed excitement over adding a personality to his robot, including changes to the voice, intonation, speaking, to convey the robot seems more empathetic. If Misty helps developers solve these hurdles, then developers will be keen to make still more interesting robots with which to interact.

So what does the robot look like?

Engadget thought it "looks like an early concept version of Wall-E with its mini-tank treads, squat size and large, expressive eyes." Scott Stein similarly said in *CNET* that to him It looked "a little like Wall-E without the forklift."

It is a 14.5-inch-tall robot, with a 4.3-inch LCD screen. The company release said developers can get started with "a Blockly GUI [Blockly is a visual programming language] and/or code using JavaScript."

On the hardware side, Misty will include serial and USB ports. These will be good for those who want to extend their robots with new

hardware. Hardware also includes an HD camera for face and object recognition and sensors for avoiding obstacles.

Actually, said *Engadget*, "The company only plans to sell a number of units. CNET said the Misty I Developer Edition will be available in February for $1,500 (about £1,100 or AU$1,900) to a "dozen" or so early partners.

[Tamara](#) Chuang, *The Denver Post*, reported: "The $1,499 Misty I robot kit will be sold only to people willing to help create robot skills." Also she said, "Developers who apply and are picked will be able to reach out to the company's engineers and shape the next robot generation, the Misty II."

Here is how the news release from the company worded the plan: "The robot will be made available to a select group of developers and inventors who will help create useful skills for the next generation robot, Misty II, coming later in 2018."

Those who are selected to purchase the Misty I, said the company news release, "will get real-time access to the Misty Robotics product and engineering teams and will both influence and [shape](#) the next generation of advanced, personal robots—the Misty II."

They said on their site that they are looking for developers interested in helping shape what Misty will become.

Misty Robotics is a spin-out company from Sphero, makers of the robot by that name. In June, Sphero completed the spin-off of its advanced robotics division into a newly created Misty Robotics.