Motion Control Device Adds Pizzazz to Web Surfing

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Back at CES ’09, I had the chance to preview Hillcrest Labs’ MEMs Accelerometer-based motion-control technology. They’ve since marketed it as a consumer device, the Loop Pointer [1]. Essentially an air mouse on steroids, the Loop Pointer is one of the coolest gadgets I’ve seen in a while.

The Loop Pointer is a disc-shaped device applicable in a wide range of media apps. There’s a left click (‘select’), a right click (‘back’), and a scroll wheel. But that merely describes a tethered mouse. The Loop Pointer’s bread and butter is its motion-sensing technology, powered by MEMs Accelerometers. Navigating your PC feels odd at first, but the “air surfing” quickly becomes second nature. Unlike the WiiMote and various other motion control devices, the Loop Pointer suffers no line-of-sight restrictions. Simple flicks of the wrist send the pointer across the screen.

As for the tech specs, the Loop Pointer is 122 mm x 30.5 mm (4.8” x 1.2”) and 4.9 oz, with a frequency of 2.4 GHz (2401 MHz to 2482 MHz) and a range of up to 10 m (33'). Hillcrest describes the Loop Pointer as a “mouse for your TV.” It “works on your TV when you use the TV as the monitor for a PC or Mac.” Lacking this set-up, I tested the Loop Pointer as a standard PC mouse and a PS3 remote.

The plug and play functionality is simple—connect the USB RF transceiver, put batteries in the Loop Pointer, turn it on, and you’re good to go. At first, navigating the Web feels odd without a tethered mouse. But you get used to it quickly. The Loop Pointer also serves as a makeshift PS3 DVD remote. Navigating through the

PS3's menus is a breeze. While playing a movie, flicking the Loop Pointer left or right will rewind or fast-forward, respectively. But the Loop Pointer is so sensitive that this is hard to control. It's better simply to lock the device during playback.

I would highly recommend the Loop Pointer. And at $99, it's a steal. You'll never look at your mouse the same way again.

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[1] http://www.hillcrestlabs.com/loop/