

## Betaminds M2i Heliodisplay: Images appearing out of thin air

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Every now and then a new technology appears that makes us sit back and exclaim "WTF?" This reaction inspired a section in our **Crave Podcast**, and the WTF candidate for our next recording is the amazing M2i Heliodisplay from **Betaminds** and IO2Technology.

It's a free-space display system that projects images or video onto thin air -- it doesn't need walls, screens or any other solid object. What's more, you can physically interact with images by 'touching' them. Just point your finger on whatever it is that's being projected and you can 'click', drag or rotate it across a two-dimensional plane.

We spent several days trying to work out what kind of voodoo Betaminds was using to achieve this, but the technology is actually quite simple. The M2i Heliodisplay unit is essentially a large tank of water that spews a constant stream of water vapour into the air. Images are then projected onto the water vapour via an internal projector and an external mirror, but you can also use a standard external projector of your own and leave out the mirror, which makes the final effect more compelling. Check out a video of it in action [here](#).

The image manipulation comes courtesy of a row of infrared light emitters positioned just in front of where the water vapour emerges. The system senses when your finger breaks through the infrared beams and interprets your movements in a way not dissimilar to a touch-sensitive screen -- except there's no screen. The M2i Heliodisplay can run for up to 10 hours on 2 litres of water and can display at resolutions of up to 1,280x1,024 pixels. It's mainly intended for commercial use, but if you've got £8,000 burning a hole in your pocket you can contact the guys at Betaminds. Tell them Crave sent you.

Betaminds also took time out to show us its Interact FX display system. This display system reacts to movements and lets you interact with images that are projected onto walls or floors. Remember the scene from *Minority Report* where the Pre-Crime cops are using hand gestures to interact with a computer screen? It works in exactly the same way -- minus the ability to catch criminals before they commit a crime.

If you fancy trying it out yourself, take a trip down to Tekzone, the TV and video area of Selfridges in Oxford Street, where Betaminds has installed an Interact FX system to help promote the **Sky HD service**. If you're lucky, you may also spot the M2i Heliodisplay. -RR