

MIT Presents the Smallest Trackpad

Written by Marco Attard
24. April 2015

MIT Media Laboratory researchers present what is probably the smallest trackpad out there-- the NailO, a thumbnail-sized wireless input device one can wear on their, well, thumbnail.



The tiny device packs a battery, Bluetooth radio, multiple processor and a capacitive trackpad, and according to the makers allows control of smartphones, laptops and other wearable devices while the user has their hands full. It can also augment other interfaces (such as toggle between symbol sets while typing) and even allow for subtle communications of the sending a quick text during a meeting variety.

“It’s very unobtrusive,” researcher Cindy Hsin-Liu Kao says. “When I put this on, it becomes part of my body. I have the power to take it off, so it still gives you control over it. But it allows this very close connection to your body.”

Interestingly, the NailO was inspired by disposable nail art stickers popular in some Asian countries-- and as such, the capacitive touch surface handles a thin nonactive layer between the finger and underlying sensors, allowing the addition custom detachable membranes.

Currently the device faces a power issue, as it has a battery life of just 2 hours. However the creators say it can be improved with the addition of a sleep mode.

The NailO prototype will be shown off at the Seoul Computer Human Interaction conference.

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