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Smartphones can power a number of devices, including PCs and virtual reality headsets, but a startup named OLO 3D takes the concept to an unlikely place with the OLO, a smartphone-powered 3D printer.

Described as a miniature stereolithography 3D printing system, the OLO is compatible with any smartphone with a display up to 5.8-inch in size, and essentially uses a combination of companion app (iOS and Android) and smartphone display to replace the projector component in a DLP printer.

The cube-shaped printer consists of 3 parts-- a reservoir, a photopolymer resin and a mechanised lid. Users place the smartphone in the base and, once the printing process starts, it flashes the display in a specific pattern to harden the resin in the reservoir on top of the base. In turn the lid moves slowly upwards as each layer is created, until the 3D object is completed.

OLO says build speeds reach 1cm in around 46 minutes, with object resolution of up to 32 microns. The system is compatible with a variety of 3D apps (such as Autodesk 123D Catch), while printing requires custom-made OLO resins in a variety of colours, textures and finishes.

The OLO 3D Printer is currently available on a preorder basis on Kickstarter, where it already smashed past an initial $80000 pledge goal. Shipments are set to start from September 2016.

Go OLO 3D Printer Kickstarter