Leap Motion targets May for pre-orders and store sales

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(Phys.org) —Leap Motion will start shipping its 3-D motion controllers on pre-order basis in mid-May. Big news? For a growing Leap Motion fan base, it's great news. Leap Motion launched its sensing controller last year, and developers began working with this advanced motion sensing technology for human computer interactions. Thousands of developers have since worked with Leap Motion's device. According to the company, the device will cost $79.99 on pre-order and will ship from May 13. Following that, the device will be sold at Best Buy from May 19 at $80.

This is 3-D gesture-control where a user controls the screen in three dimensions using hands and fingers. It is capable of imaging all ten fingers and the entire hand and it actually tracks hands and fingers as well as chopsticks.

The hardware will be supported in Windows 7 or 8 and Mac OS 10.7 or 10.8. The process begins when the user plugs the Leap Motion controller into a USB port, loads Leap Motion software, and waves to calibrate. The company's claim is that its technology is 200 times more accurate than anything else on the market. Leap Motion sees its controller as potentially entering numerous applications beyond gaming. For digital art, the art work could more readily feature 3-D images; in business, the user would create signatures; in medicine, surgeons could control 3-D medical data on the screen with hand waves and without having to remove their gloves.

While Microsoft Kinect for Windows features hand and finger control, the Leap Motion device is not the same as it commands a smaller observation space, where Kinect works in an entire living room space. Technology watchers believe Leap Motion will play its own role in how future computer users interact with screens beyond mouse and touchpad.

Last year's headlines alone reflected a high level of interest in the company's technology. *Wired* in May headlined "Why the Leap is the Best Gesture Control System We've Ever Tested." *Technology Review* a month later told its readers, "Forget pinch-to-zoom," and instead imagine rotating a hand to control the orientation of an object with six degrees of freedom, or using both hands at once to control either end of a surface, in sculpting, as part of an object destined for a 3-D printer.

Recently, Leap Motion's tendency to unleash imaginations was in evidence when Robbie Tilton reported on his blog that he used a Leap Motion for working on an image projected on to a prism. The display he

designed created the illusion of depth. His use of Leap Motion helped to create a visually arresting gesture-controllable display that looked like a spinning globe floating in mid-air; a computer monitor was laid flat on a table and aimed up at the prism.