

*Solid Signal's*

# HANDS ON REVIEW



*Zeiss Cinemizer* virtual reality headset



# CARL ZEISS CINEMIZER



## Because sometimes you really want to be in the middle of the action.

As much as we all want a truly 3D immersive experience, the last thing we want are bulky virtual reality goggles. No one wants to look like they're playing laser tag in 1993, let's just be honest. Not only that, even the most powerful goggles out there have suffered from a lack of quality optics, and most of them are just plain useless if you're wearing glasses.

Certainly, when testing out a pair of VR goggles from Carl Zeiss, well-known maker of quality lenses, top quality is pretty much a given. But let's delve into these Zeiss-made goggles and see if they really measure up.

# THE BASE PACKAGE

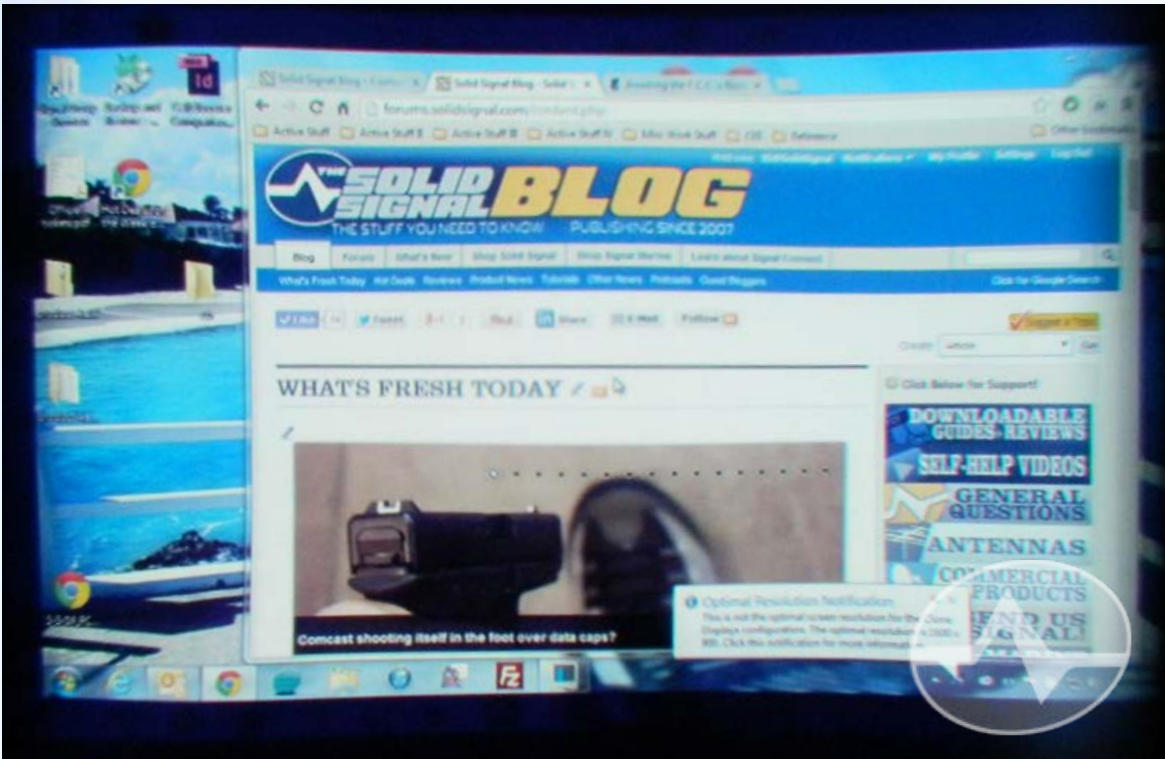


Start with the [Cinemizer](#). This is the basic kit and gives you what you need to get started in the world of virtual reality. The Cinemizer system is more or less a la carte, meaning that what you get is the Cinemizer itself that connects to anything with an HDMI port. It's a cool looking system and very light and comfortable to wear. There are two pieces to the Cinemizer: the goggles which you see above and the base which holds the battery and connects to the PC.



The base unit has two parts: the outer part consists of a "sled" which provides HDMI functionality using an HDMI type C adapter, which is slightly smaller than a regular HDMI cable. An HDMI-C to HDMI adapter is provided so you can use any HDMI cable you have lying around.

# IMAGE QUALITY



This is an actual shot of the view through the Cinemizer's optics. The native resolution of the two OLED panels inside the Cinemizer is 870x500, but it accepts inputs up to 1080p. The view was considerably sharper than

you would expect from those relatively low resolution panels and was almost as good as a regular monitor. The difference is, the screen takes over your field of vision; it's like having an 80" TV in front of you.

One of the big problems with VR goggles is that they are usually impossible to use if you wear glasses. Glasses have become very popular as a fashion accessory lately especially with women and so being unable to use them with virtual reality has suddenly turned into a real problem. The Cinemizer uses separate diopters on each eye so you can adjust focus. This is a massive improvement over other virtual reality glasses; the diopters have a very large range so even your humble reviewer was able to get the image in sharp focus without using glasses.



# ACCESSORIES



For those who want to use the Cinemizer in brightly lit environments, an [Eye Shield](#) is available (sold separately.) This accessory adds bulk but does a very good job of filtering out outside light, fits comfortably and adds hardly any weight.



This may not look like much, but this [head tracker module](#) clips onto one arm of the Cinemizer and moves the mouse pointer as you move your head. It really enhances the Cinemizer experience.

# iOS MODULE



Probably the coolest accessory of all is the iOS adapter. It gives any 30-pin equipped iOS device the ability to connect to the Cinemizer. A Lightning version is coming soon.



The [iOS adapter](#) takes the place of the HDMI "sled" and connects directly to both the iOS device and the Cinemizer.



This iPhone 4 was able to connect to the Cinemizer even inside its case, making this a pocketable system. Just remember not to go anywhere if you can't tell where you're going.

# IMPRESSIONS

Let's get this out in the open: The Cinemizer isn't cheap, especially if it's fully tricked out. But make no mistake it's the top of the line for virtual reality, at least here in 2014. It manages to actually keep you looking like a dork while using it, which is something no other VR headset can say. The quality of materials is superb; you feel like you're holding a set of Oakleys instead of a computer headset.

The Cinemizer uses custom ear buds to give you full stereo sound. They're definitely at the top of the line for ear buds, but if you want super-high-quality audio they can be disconnected giving you room to connect those big cans to your head for an experience that's as immersive to your ears as the Cinemizer to your eyes.

Speaking of the experience for your eyes, there was absolutely no complaint about the picture quality, especially with moving images. Even if you're not a gamer you'll appreciate the bright clear picture and fast refresh of the OLED screens. 3D content is supported and in the couple of demo videos available on the web, it was very natural.

Head tracking took a little getting used to just because most folks don't actually follow the mouse with our heads, we let our eyes do the work. This isn't eye tracking, so it's important to actually move your head in order to make the mouse cursor move. It took a little while to get the hang of that but once we did, it seemed very natural. The glasses aren't front-heavy at all like some VR glasses so it wasn't a strain at all to move the whole head in order to move the mouse cursor.

It is worth noting that if you have a particularly tricky eyeglass prescription, Cinemizer might not give you every bit of adjustment you're used to. If you have trifocal astigmatism correcting lenses it might be hard to get used to the Cinemizer at first, but if that's you, you probably are aware of the problem you have with viewfinders, binoculars and that sort of thing. The Cinemizer is hardly unique here.

Battery life was excellent. Our test team used this device for several hours straight with no battery life problems at all, and that included head tracking and audio, plus playing 3D movies. Probably the trippiest part of the whole experience was the iOS adapter. It's probably best that the head tracking module doesn't work with iOS because it's just weird enough having your iPhone's screen take up your entire field of vision. It's best to get to the app you want since it's not really possible to navigate through the glasses. On the other hand, Temple Run was a total blast and super intuitive once you get used to the fact that you can't see your hands.

# CONCLUSION

Cinemizer isn't for everyone. The price tag alone will tell you that. But if you're a heavy gamer you'll love it. Not only that, if you produce video this is the best viewfinder you will ever see, ever. This device, hooked up to a high-end video camera, will give you the kind of immersive experience you need to make really really compelling videos.

Tell you what the killer app is, though -- not long after the Cinemizer came in for a full test, one of the operations center crew brought in a drone with real-time live view through a smartphone screen. That's what we're talking about. Imagine the experience of piloting a drone with a VR headset... that's as close as you can get to being there, a sensation of freedom like none other.

We can't wait for the day when we can get both devices together for a little test.







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