



Top: In a demonstration of a medical or educational application, a cadaver head can be dissected one slice at a time. Bottom: A fake robot appears to stand on a real hand.

That's no doubt why Google took the lead in an astonishingly large \$542 million investment round in Magic Leap in October 2014. Whatever it is cooking up has a good chance of being one of the next big things in computing, and Google would be crazy to risk missing out. The investment looked especially prescient in January, when Microsoft revealed plans to release a sleek-looking headset this year. HoloLens, which lets you interact with holograms, sounds as if it's very similar to what Magic Leap is working on.

Behind the magic

Magic Leap won't say when it will release a product or how much the thing will cost, beyond that the price will be within the range of today's consumer mobile devices. When I press founder and CEO Rony Abovitz about such details, he'll only smile and say, "It's not far away."

He's sitting behind the desk in his office, which is just down the road from the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood airport. The shelves are lined with toys and View-Masters—the plastic gadgets that let you look at pictures in 3-D. Abovitz, 44, is a bear of a guy with a kind smile, and when I meet him he's dressed in black Nikes, a long-sleeved shirt, and slacks, his graying curly hair topped with a yarmulke. He's thoughtful and composed, which I find somewhat surprising given that the only time I had seen him before was in a video of his talk at a TEDx event in 2012 in Sarasota, Florida. It featured two people dressed as furry creatures called "Shaggles," Abovitz walking on stage dressed as an astronaut, and unintelligible rock music. Though the talk, called "The Synthesis of Imagination," came off as performance art (perhaps even a mockery of a TED talk), he swears there is a coherent message embedded in it; figure it out, he says, and he'll give you a yo-yo.

By day, Abovitz is a technology entrepreneur with a background in biomedical engineering. He previously founded Mako Surgical, a company in Fort Lauderdale that makes a robotic arm equipped with haptic technology, which imparts a sense of touch so that orthopedic surgeons have the sensation of actually working on bones as they trigger the robot's actions. Mako was sold to a medical technology company, Stryker, for nearly \$1.7 billion in 2013. By night, Abovitz likes to rock out. He sings and plays guitar and bass in a pop-rock band called Sparkydog & Friends. And as he tells it, Magic Leap has its origins in both the robotic-surgery company and his life as a musician.

Combining virtual reality with the physical world appealed to Abovitz even at Mako. Although the robotic-arm technology could give surgeons the sensation of touching their instruments to bones, Abovitz also wanted to let them see virtual