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MicroOptical's  
Kip Kokinakis  
enjoys a video  
playing on his  
company's  
heads-up  
viewing goggles

Photograph for  
TIME by Paul Hu—  
Assignment Asia

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## (tech pioneers)

**KIP KOKINAKIS**  
MICROOPTICAL  
WESTWOOD, MASS.

# A New Glimpse of Reality

VIDEO GOGGLES ARE SUCH A STAPLE OF science fiction that it's hard to imagine anyone actually trying to build a pair. But that's exactly the target MicroOptical Corp. has in its sights.

The company has already introduced glasses with built-in video screens for specialists. In operating rooms, the glasses display critical data for surgeons so that they can continue working while monitoring a patient's vital signs. And soldiers may soon use them to see images of targets projected before their eyes rather than having to snap their head back and forth to refer to a video panel on a vehicle.

But the goal for MicroOptical, says CEO Kip Kokinakis, is to put video glasses on millions of consumers. "The medical and military businesses, while interesting, never grow very much," Kokinakis says. "We're venture backed, so we need to be mindful of growth."

MicroOptical has begun selling a mod-



Kokinakis wants video glasses to be stylish, light and affordable

PAUL HU—ASSIGNMENT ASIA FOR TIME

el that connects to a video iPod for \$299. The challenge is to avoid the Segway scooter's problems: sticker shock and nerdiness. "We have to overcome the geek factor," admits Kokinakis, "so we have more of an Oakley look than Star Trek."

To accomplish that, the company is working on slimming down the specs to look more like ordinary sunglasses. It's also trying to get sexy stars to don them. And Kokinakis hopes he can trim the price toward a \$99 sweet spot. The goal is to have a sleeker, more stylish version ready for the

2008 Beijing Olympics, enabling consumers to watch the Games on mobile TV.

Because video drains batteries quickly, another challenge MicroOptical faces is installing an efficient power source in the glasses without generating eye-punishing heat or bulking the device up. Kokinakis says people tend to watch video in 20-min. vignettes while sitting on a train or plane, so the goggles may not need the same battery power demanded of notebook computers. For now, he says, the iPod gadget relieves you of having to tilt your head down

or hold your arm up to look at the image.

Ultimately, the company wants to put its optics into ordinary prescription glasses. Unlike other attempts at video goggles, many of which look like mini-vcrs strapped onto a viewer's head, MicroOptical's are light and feature a see-through front panel so you can look ahead when you're not watching your YouTube downloads. But until the gear stops drawing stares from passersby, even that won't be enough. It's still tough bringing sci-fi to the streets. —J.C.