This crane machine is hooked up to a Raspberry Pi so you can play it from home

UK game room company has figured out a novel way for anyone to play one of its stand-alone games: it’s hooked up a crane machine to the internet for anyone to control, calling it . As a bonus, any toys caught translate into real dollars (or pounds, rather) that will be donated to St Mungo’s, a charity that provides support to the homeless.

To get it running, Liberty Games took a Sierra crane machine and attached a camera to the front. This allowed the company to livestream the crane, but then they needed people to be able to control it through a web browser. For this, they used PiFace and PiRack to code an API for the crane that allows its functions to be controlled remotely, and also send feedback when a game is over or a prize is scored. The web server was then linked up so buttons on the webpage can control the crane. The result is a webpage with a live feed of the crane machine, and four controls to try and nab a toy in 40 seconds: up, left, right, and grab.





Image: Liberty Games

As you might remember from your childhood, crane machines are notoriously hard to win. This is due to the machine's "pay-out ratio," a rate where the strength of the claw can be adjusted relative to how many wins the machine detects via infrared beams that are across the prize slot. Let's just say that in the spirit of giving and warm fuzzy feelings, the good people at Liberty Games have… tinkered… with this ratio.

This isn't the first time Liberty Games has hooked up their toys for people to play with online. They recently experimented with doing the same thing to a pinball machine, and have done the same crane machine for charity experiment before, in 2015.

For the best results with virtually no lag, play the game in Firefox. You can play in Chrome, though it requires a couple adjustments for things to run smoothly. , December 22nd, so get playing! (And, aim for the Santas, they're worth the most prize money!)

https://www.theverge.com/circuitbreaker/2017/12/21/16806694/crane-machine-raspberry-pi-play-online-liberty-games