Liquid Motor Revs Up

Here's a fun science project: Iranian researchers have found they can stir up a vortex in a thin film of water simply by applying an electric field. The effect, described in a recently published [preprint](http://xxx.sissa.it/find/cond-mat/1/au:+Amjadi_A/0/1/0/all/0/1), works well enough with pure water—but add some glycerin and a little detergent to the mix and the resulting micron or even nanometer-thick films can whirl for up to several minutes before breaking down, the researchers report. [Click[*here*](http://softmatter.cscm.ir/FilmMotor/movies/movie.1.wmv)for a movie.] Although such a liquid motor is unlikely to power your car any time soon, they say it might be useful for mixing fluids for industrial applications or in studying turbulence in two dimensions. It would look good on a dorm room wall, too.