



Everything in one neat box is typical of Century UK



Century UK are really on a roll with their new releases these days. It seems the boys from

Sittingbourne in Kent have really found a healthy market for their range of fully ready-to-fly (RTF) micro helicopters, and this latest model will be the third in their flybarless V-series in less than 12 months. Due to my own hunger for anything small and RTF, I've also been lucky enough to own or review all of the range, and the opportunity to take out the latest, and weeniest member of the family was strong enough for me to be onto the editor for a go with the new Ultra Neon as soon as I heard wind of it!

**SMALLER THAN YOUR AVERAGE CP**

So, in case you hadn't realised, this new Ultra Neon 120 CPX slots in the range size-wise below the EVO 180 SE, but is a reasonable amount bigger than the likes of a Nine Eagles Solo Pro or E-flite Blade mSR. Of course, what makes this heli more interesting, and more incredible, is that it is a fully collective pitch machine, capable of 3D flight, and therefore is more of a competitor for the likes of the Blade mCP X. Perhaps the name gives that one away a bit?! For those of you that want the numbers, the Ultra-Neon sports a 305mm main rotor diameter, and an overall length of 273mm, so actually is a bit bigger than the aforementioned Blade. What I really like about the Century is that it comes with a nice full size six-channel computer radio (like the bigger helis in their range) and this gives the expert flyer the range of adjustments and feel of a transmitter they would expect with a CP. So, small heli, big tranny? Let's take a look at what makes it tick.

**UNDER THE CANOPY**

Ignoring everything else you get in the box for one second (we'll come to that later). Let's have a look at the thing we all grab impatiently out of the box first - our latest and greatest little chopper. Perhaps the first thing that strikes you is how light it is - at 66g all up weight, it's perhaps not as light as some of the smallest sub-micros, but when you are used to picking up a Neon Blaze like I am, it is quite incredible they can produce a proper 3D capable machine that weighs so little! Maybe they forgot something? Well, actually, yes they did. Intentionally, it doesn't have a flybar, as this gyroscopic in-air balancing is done by clever electronics in the four-in-one unit mounted in the nose. The same electronics, that when released a few years back

# Nano Neon



CENTURY UK ARE BACK WITH ANOTHER FLYBARLESS RTF WONDER, AND THIS TIME THEY'VE APPLIED THE SHRINK RAY! TOM STACEY TAKES THIS TINY TERROR OUT TO SEE IF IT CAN HANG WITH THE BIG BOYS...



The Ultra Neon is great to fly inside or out and holds a very stable hover



Spare blades, batteries and even a charge adaptor are all supplied with the heli

weighed about the same as this complete heli. The ever relentless pace of technology eh? You could probably send man to the moon on this much computing power, but I doubt he'd get far on a 350mAh LiPo battery! Back on topic; the flybarless head is a nice little thing, which, except for the top button, is made from plastic, which is about par for the course for this size. In a bigger machine with more stresses, aluminium becomes

more desirable, but here, it just adds weight, so I'm happy to see the cheaper material used. Extending from the head are of course the main rotor blades, which are quite long for such a small model, and these are chosen I assume, to utilise a lower head speed whilst giving the same amount of lift/authority. A neat little swashplate connects to the three tiny, but separate

servos (no surface mount stuff here) and as you would expect, they are arranged in a 120-degree CCPM manner, and this gives you a full range of collective control. The four-in-one control unit combines 2.4GHz receiver, two brushed speed controls and the FBL and tail gyros in one tiny unit, and these connect to the servos, battery and motors via push fit connectors. I like the fact that it does use connectors, so if you fry a servo, or the board goes down, then you don't need to buy the whole lot as is the case with some sub-micro machines. The board also has adjustment pots for travel and sensitivity on all the main channels, meaning you can tweak these settings to suit your flying style or just adjust out any inconsistencies in the factory setup. Personally, I didn't touch anything on the heli itself, choosing to make my setup changes on the transmitter.

**BUILD QUALITY AND CONSTRUCTION**

I've mentioned what I think are the most important things about the Ultra-Neon above, but as I know

most R/C heli fans are sticklers for detail (like me!), it's worth looking a little closer at the construction of the model, especially as this is a completely new platform for Century UK. The main frame, as with quite a few other Century helis is plastic. As I've said in past reviews, I prefer this as a material for frames than the twin plate carbon/FRP setups you often see in some micros. The main shaft that runs through the frame to the rotorhead is steel, but conversely to what I just said, I actually prefer carbon for shafts as it resists bending; something that can easily happen during the rough and tumble of micro flight.

The landing skids are very thin and are made from a combination of wire and plastic. They may look very dainty, but in fact held up to all my flight testing admirably, most likely due to the low weight of the machine. The tail utilises one of those very fine carbon rods to prevent tail rotor ground strikes, and one little tip I can offer here is to dip the tip of this in superglue to prevent it delaminating and resembling a little brush before too long. You only need a tiny bit, and it'll increase the service life of this part significantly.



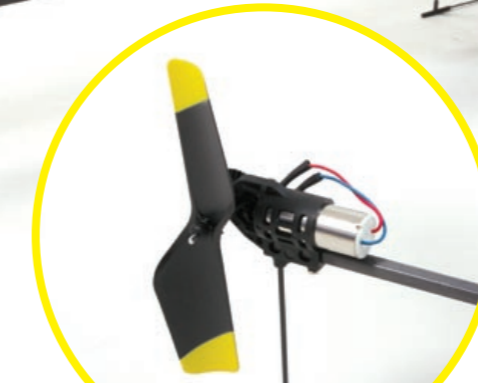
A long, almost dainty frame is a feature of this heli



The blades are finished in a carbon fibre effect



The tail rotor is directly driven by a brushed motor



Whilst the main rotor head is driven by a larger brushed motor under the canopy



The canopy keeps the family theme going, looking similar to its bigger FBL brothers, but here it has some vents cut out of the windshield, which will no doubt keep the motor cool whilst you are putting the airframe through its paces.

The motors themselves (as there are separate main and tail units) are brushed, which again seems to be a theme with a lot of Century's range. Personally, I prefer brushless for longevity, cool-running and performance, but a lot of buyers prefer aggressively priced products, and equipping your heli with brushed motors and speed controls certainly helps achieve this objective!

**WHAT'S IN THE BOX?**

After tearing it apart to get the bounty out, I finally returned to have a peek in the box to see what else you get for your hard-earned. A nice treat was to see two LiPo batteries, which will allow you to get one on charge whilst using one to fly. It's little things like this that improve the owning experience, so top marks to Century for thinking of their customer here. You also get the de-rigueur LiPo charger, and this is a particularly tiny little affair, looking more like a mobile phone charger than a hobby one! Also in the box is an adapter to convert the tiny battery connector to a more standard 'Deans' type - useful if you want to use your own charger, and again a sign of Century UK

thinking about their customer, and convenience. Spare blades feature as usual, but here there are spare tail and main blades - a good thing because I never broke a main blade on my Evo 180, but broke a few tails, and it didn't come with any spares!

A clear plastic zip pocket contains the main helicopter manual which covers setup of the on-board electronics and the usual safety information, whilst a separate manual covers the Centra 2603 transmitter. This is because this model is available as a BNF (bind 'n' fly) model as well as the RTF

package Rotorworld has here for review. The final thing in this bag is a spare parts list, and this also contains clear colour photos of the spares and options available from from the manufacturer. As usual, you'll find a couple of tiny tools in the box to enable you to carry out blade replacement and adjustment of the four-in-one electronics. You'd think Century had thought of everything, and in fact, they have!

**IN THE AIR**

Like so much kit now, this heli, as with the rest of the range comes fully

built, test flown and setup. Gone are the days when you'd spend a week of evenings building a kit and fitting your electronics, and then the same again setting it up (often to destroy your hard work on the maiden flight). Thankfully now, labour in the Far East is cheap, and the skills of the people who put these kits together is absolutely impeccable. Therefore, a lot of the time, I'd rather have an RTF as they just work. All you really need to do is give both batteries a bit of a top up charge and fit eight AAs to the transmitter and off you go! My maiden flight couldn't have

been in a perfect location or time of the year; a late, still summer's evening at my friend's industrial unit. I therefore had the choice of flying in a large indoor warehouse type space, and outside where there was hardly a breath of wind; perfect for a diminutive machine like this. So, cutting to the chase, what is it like? Well, it flies! Perfectly, out of the box. No trim was needed, as I spun the rotors up and she popped into a very stable hover once out of ground effect. As with all sub-micro single rotors, it is very responsive, dare I say a little twitchy, but you can always bring it back to a hover that is not far off as stable as a small co-axial heli. It certainly has enough cyclic response

to put it wherever you want, and quickly. A criticism that I do have, is that it lacks a bit of 'oomph' from the 1225FC motor and this is more noticeable outside if you do need to battle with any wind. With the idle up switch on, it gets better, but sometimes I wonder if I could put a bit more power behind the motors and really let it come alive.

If you just want to do sport flying then it isn't a problem, but if you do want to fly 3D, then you might struggle getting it to do anything much more advanced than loops, rolls and inverted flight. On the whole though, it flies excellently, and the stability really is amazing considering it is both tiny, and flybarless. Oh, and another thing is the robustness of the design. Here at Rotorworld we test products properly, and if that means a few 'brushes' with the ground, then so be it! (Really? I'm not sure we crashes caused no damage whatsoever. They weren't big impacts, but some

of my helis can't handle a heavy landing, let alone what the Ultra-Neon handled and survived, so 10 out of 10 for strength to the little guy. In terms of runtime, I got about five to six minutes out of both packs, not quite what is claimed, but as with any heli, runtime will depend on how hard you fly, and I guess I pushed this review model pretty hard.

**THE VERDICT...**

I was tempted at first to say this was another solid release from our Kentish heli supremos, but actually, after having had it for a few weeks, and put plenty of flying time on it, I'm growing to like this little machine more every time I fly it. It could do with a bit more power if I'm honest, but adding brushless motors and their requisite speed controls would no doubt add more weight, and complexity, and of course, price.

As it is, the 120 CPX hits a sweet spot for price and performance, and to get such a nice transmitter in the box is a real bonus. Of course, if you do already have one of the

newest Centras from something like the Neon Blaze SE, then you can re-use this potentially. It flies well indoors or out, and its diminutive size means that you can use it in smaller indoor venues such as where I fly, without taking over the space.

As I said earlier, to think that something this small can offer 3D (or at least inverted flight) and excellent, almost trainer like stability, is incredible and it just shows how far technology has moved recently. I also like the complete buying experience of the Century kit - a few spares in the box, very easy spares availability, and a UK based company to speak to in case of any problems (unlike that tempting grey market Internet stuff). You can see why they are growing, and releasing more onto the market all the time. One of the head-honchos over at CUK recently tweeted that they'd have a total of nine new models before Christmas 2011, and frankly, I cannot wait!

*Tom Stacey*



With the canopy off, you can see the neat and simple layout of the electronics



The two batteries supply up to seven minutes flying time each

Decent transmitters are a Century UK feature, and here as usual, the supplied kit doesn't disappoint

The manual is better written than some of their older ones, and the photo based parts list is useful



The flybarless head is plastic, but very well engineered. The top button is however, aluminium



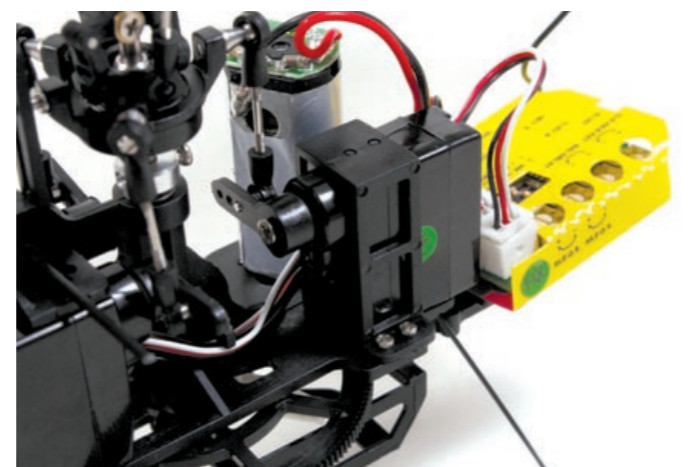
The electronics are all contained in this yellow package. You can see the aerial



The wiring is neat, and all the components can be separately replaced



The servos are tiny, but are proper separate units, not surface mounted



Here is a close up view of the servo, showing how it connects to the FBL head

**TECH SPEC**

**Century UK Ultra-neon 120 CPX**

- Model type:** Sub-Micro electric micro 3D
- Length:** 273mm
- Width:** 44mm
- Height:** 85mm
- Main Rotor Dia:** 305mm
- Tail Rotor Dia:** 58mm
- Battery:** 3.7V 350mAh LiPo (two included)
- Main Motor:** 1225FC
- Tail Motor:** 0716R
- Flying weight:** 66g
- RRP:** £169.99 RTF  
£129.99 BNF

- Available from:** All good model shops
- UK distributor:** Century UK Limited
- Tel:** 01795 437056
- Web:** www.centuryuk.com



A parting flying shot. Tom really enjoyed chucking this baby Century about!