

ON TEST



GOING SOLO



CENTURY UK HAS DONE A GREAT JOB OF SELECTING AND DISTRIBUTING A WIDE RANGE OF READY-TO-FLY MODELS IN THE UK OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS. MANY OF THESE HAVE NO DOUBT CONTRIBUTED TO THE RISE IN POPULARITY OF R/C HELICOPTERS AS CENTURY HAS MADE THE AVAILABILITY OF RELATIVELY EASY TO FLY MODELS MUCH WIDER. THE LATEST ULTRA-MICRO MODEL TO BE ADDED TO THE RANGE IS THE SINGLE ROTOR SOLO PRO



We've seen an explosion in the number of new ultra-micro R/C helicopters arriving on the market over the last few years. As electronic technology advances and components get smaller and more readily available there seems to be more and more models arriving all the time. Of course they vary quite a lot in both quality and flyability, so you have to be careful to pick the wheat from the chaff.

Luckily in the UK we can rely on good distributors to do this for us and offer good quality products coupled with decent spares backup. One of the best has to be Century UK as they spend a lot of time and effort researching products which are invariably sourced in the Far East and making

sure they are up to scratch and properly supported. Most of the recent ultra-micro releases have been of the contra-rotating variety which makes them more stable and easier for beginners to fly, but now we are seeing a few models arriving with single main rotors and tiny little tail rotors to offer rudder control and aid stability.

MASS APPEAL
Century UK says the new Solo Pro ultra-micro sized model is aimed at both the beginner and experienced pilots alike as it comes with a new design of single-bladed head which is said to be ultra stable and perfect for the beginner. To make things more exciting the transmitter (Tx) comes with an advanced control switch, press this and let the expert pilot in you take over, but more about that later.

Another clever design feature of the Tx is the change from Mode 1 to Mode 2, simply unclip the aerial, swing it round to the other side, and as quick as that the job's done!

The model comes ready built complete with the ultra stable single-bladed head and micro tail motor controlling the rudder inputs. The Solo Pro is powered by two 6mm micro motors and comes supplied with a 3.7V 120MAh lithium polymer (LiPo) battery. With a micro weight of just 27g it can offer flight times of around five to seven minutes and a super stable flight envelope.

THE SCIENCE BIT
Instead of relying on the inherent stability of a contra-rotating blade set-up, these new little single rotor fixed pitch machines use clever electronics to assist in the flyability of the machines and make them

Features at a glance

- Super sleek ultra-micro design
- Responsive single rotor set-up
- Latest 2.4GHz technology
- 4-in-1 control unit
- Stable and easy to fly
- Flexible control system
- Tx can switch modes easily

suitable for both expert pilots and beginners alike. I don't intend to go into the technical details of how these systems work in this review, partly because it would take too much space and partly because I don't really know all the ins and outs of them, but suffice to say they are clever and they do work.
Apart from the use of clever electronics, the Solo Pro also has a



The Solo Pro is a smart looking little model that looks just like a miniature 3D machine



Photographed next to another marvel of modern technology to give you an idea of the Solo's size



As you can see there really isn't much to the Solo Pro which keeps the weight nice and low



The Solo also features a tiny little 6mm micro motor to drive the tail rotor that gives rudder control



Close-up of the clever Bell-Hiller control mixing arms on the Nine Eagles patented rotorhead



Under the canopy you will find a simple plastic main frame and the 4-in-1 electronic controller



Everything you need to get started is included in the box



The Solo Pro heli comes with a transmitter, four AA batteries, LiPo and small screwdriver

main rotorhead system that's been patented by the manufacturer, Nine Eagles Electronic Technology. This features a 45-degree advanced flybar system, with Bell-Hiller control mixing arms which gives it good stability in hovering and flying, but also makes it fast to respond in direction changes.

MODEL DESIGN

The Solo features a classic pod and boom design with a sharp and good looking canopy and a very thin and light tail boom that has a tiny little motor and tail fin mounted at the end. The whole ethos behind this model is keeping it light and simple in order make it maneuverable, crash resistant and extend the flight time available from the small LiPo battery.

The canopy is easily removed and fits just like on a larger model,

being held in place with rubber grommets. There shouldn't really be a need for owners to go rummaging around under the canopy, but this does make it easy to customise the model by fitting the readily available different coloured after-market canopies.

Removing the canopy doesn't reveal much, just a very simple lightweight plastic mainframe with everything mounted to it. This includes a little circuit board which is actually the main four-in-one control unit that incorporates the servos, receiver, gyro and speed controller. It really is a marvel of miniaturisation and possibly the simplest and lightest set of electronics I've ever seen in a model helicopter. Other than that there is the main drive motor, main drive gear and the main driveshaft.

The little LiPo battery sits in a

cradle underneath the frame and is positioned at an angle which has been cleverly worked out to provide the best centre of gravity (C of G) balance. The whole model is then supported on some very thin, but flexible and quite strong undercarriage skids.

FLIGHT TEST

So now to the interesting bit. First the LiPo has to be charged and this is done by plugging it into a little cradle that sits under the model and as it is pushed in it makes contact and switches the model on. The heli and transmitter then go through a pairing procedure, much

like any other 2.4GHz controlled model, and it's then ready to fly within about three seconds.

Our test venue was once again my front room, so after clearing some of the furniture away I was ready to see what this little machine could do. The small transmitter is quite comfortable to hold and the sticks are

The Solo is supplied with an interesting Tx that can change modes easily





With the lightweight Lexan canopy removed you can see the clever electronics on the tiny board



The Solo Pro has quite a powerful little motor that helps this lightweight model lift off easily



Being a single rotor design, the model is quite lively in the air and responds well to input commands



The Solo Pro should appeal to both beginners and more experienced pilots alike who will all enjoy it



The little LiPo is charged by plugging into the back of the transmitter

quite light to operate, so it doesn't take much to get the model spooled up and lifted off. It has a remarkable amount of power available and really does feel quite lively once airborne. Our test model only required a little input from the digital trims and it was sitting nicely in the hover.

Now, being single rotor it is quite a responsive little machine and might come as a bit of a shock to a complete beginner or someone used to flying contra-rotating machines. It responds very well to control inputs, but you have to make sure you know what these

inputs are and how they are going to affect the model. The benefit of this system is that it feels like you're flying a larger model and will offer a good way to learn just how a larger model will respond and fly.

After getting it to hover gently I was then able to start seeing what she could do and was soon in full control and flying some nice circuits, both forward and reverse. For a small and quite powerful model it really is quite smooth in flight. I also had some inevitable hard landings and the odd impact with furniture and it withstood all I could throw at it too, a testament to its light weight, quality materials and clever design.

Now, if the smooth and easy to fly approach gets a big boring, or your skills improve, the Solo has one last trick up its sleeve - a special switch that alters its gentle and softened control behavior and makes it a much more twitchy and responsive model. A simple push down on the elevator (right-hand in Mode 2) stick is all that's required and the LCD screen on the transmitter confirms

you have entered 'Advanced mode'. I can only liken this to switching the traction control off in a high powered car and then trying to drive it at the limit. It's hard, but great fun and an excellent addition to what is already a fun to fly model.

THE VERDICT...

This ultra-micro model offers first-time pilots the ability to learn how to fly with ease and experienced heli pilots the chance to fly anytime, anywhere indoors or outside on a nice calm day. It's great fun and quite easy to get the hang of. I really enjoyed every minute of flying this model and can't really find anything negative to say about it.

The Solo Pro features the latest in electronic wizardry to keep it in the air and some really nice detail touches as well. I love the fact you can fly in a softer mode to start with before switching to advanced and flying it harder. It comes completely ready to fly with everything you need for under £70 and is sure to be a big hit. Add to that the back-

up from Century UK and this model comes highly recommended.

Neil Mead

TECH SPEC	
Solo Pro	
MODEL TYPE:	Ultra-micro RTF helicopter
MAIN ROTOR DIA:	190mm
LENGTH:	207mm
WEIGHT (RTF):	27g
MOTORS:	2 x 6mm micro
BATTERY:	1 x 120mAh LiPo (charger supplied)
TRANSMITTER:	4-channel 2.4GHz mode 1 or 2 with digital trims
FLIGHT TIME:	5-7 minutes
SSP:	£69.99
AVAILABLE FROM: All good model shops	
UK DISTRIBUTOR: Century UK	
TEL:	01795 437056
WEB:	www.centuryuk.com
MANUFACTURER: Nine Eagles	
Electronic Technology	
WEB:	www.nineeagle.com/en