Great Planes **RealFlight 7.5**

Take a real flight in the virtual world

BY JOHN REID

I have to say that throughout the years, I have been fortunate enough to try out a number of different versions of the RealFlight simulators. Armed with this past knowledge I can say that the latest version, RealFlight 7.5, is far and away one of the best ones to hit the marketplace. The new RealFlight 7.5 has improved the real physics graphics to give a very realistic flight simulation on all aircraft including multirotors. The background graphics are so realistic that there is less eyestrain while flying, which permits flying for much longer time (good for your thumbs, bad for your household chores!). The InterLink Elite controller is designed by Futaba and feels very comfortable in your hands. I couldn't feel the difference between this controller and the one that I normally use while flying. Of course, the Elite controller has three dual-rate switches, digital trim, flap and gain knob, quick-select button, and the most important switch of all, the reset button. One of the highlights of the new RealFlight 7.5 is the addition of a number of multirotor aircraft that the pilot can select.

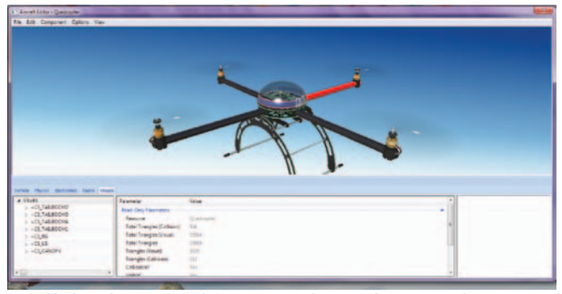
Installing the program does take a little bit of time, but that's because there's so much information that needs to be pulled off of that disk on to your hard drive. Once installed, getting into the program is easy and intuitive and before you know it you're flying one of your favorite multirotor aircraft in the virtual world. The look and feel of the virtual world is outstanding. It is so easy to get lost into the terrain as you fly around, this is especially true when using the First-Person View on the aircraft.

After a few flights, I like to open up the aircraft editor and change some of the parameters of some of the multirotors that I fly. This allows me to adjust them so that they act and feel, at least to me, like the multirotors I fly. But I only have to tweak them slightly because many already fly and feel very true to my actual aircraft. One of the improvements on this version of RealFlight is that the aircraft editor has an easy-to-use tab menu system, this makes scrolling through and finding the adjustment you need easy and intuitive. This is perhaps the safest way to make adjustments to see how the multirotor will react. For example, on my real multirotor I don't want to adjust the throttle curves, dual rate or other settings too far, but in the virtual world I can make large changes just to see what might happen. If it goes badly all I have to do is press the reset button and then change the control adjustments back. The nice feature about the RealFlight 7.5 program is that after just a few minor changes, you can make any drone match the flight and feel of aircraft in your hangar.

TAKING THE CHALLENGE

RealFlight 7.5 comes with a number of challenging games that help improve your skill and flying abilities. Many of them were in the previous version, such as balloon bust, ring race, grappling, limbo and spot landing competition. This new version also added a Quadcopter Trials pilot challenge. You can accumulate points and medals all based on how fast you complete each stage of the competition. As your skills improve, new versions and harder challenges become available.

The standard-size quad can fly in and around obstacles in many of the virtual environments.



Don't like how the aircraft feels? It's easy to adjust a multirotor's attributes.

Larger birds like this Octocopter 1000 feel very solid in the air and move at a very controlled speed.

The X8 quad has the "feel" you get from counter-rotating props.

FOR THE BEGINNER

Of course one of the key reasons for most people to purchase a flight simulator is to learn how to fly and RealFlight 7.5 has a number of training aids for the beginning RC pilot. Many of them cover training for the fixed wing pilot. However, there are a number of helicopter training segments including heli hover training, heli auto-rotation training, and helicopter orientation, have a very similar flight characteristics to our multirotors. There is also an expanded virtual flight instructor training that offers actual videos of flight coaching from expert pilots. These use the record/playback feature that's found on RealFlight. Videos from expert pilot "coaches" give play-by-play instruction and a visual rendition of the aircraft flying, along with the stick movements.

PICK YOUR BIRD

Whatever aircraft you like to fly you will find a virtual representation of it in RealFlight 7.5. One of the reasons I was first in line to do the review on this particular flight simulator is because of all the new multirotor designs that are incorporated in this version. Their flight physics are extremely realistic and duplicate that of real-world multirotors. There are 13 different multirotors to choose from, but with the aircraft editor many of the parameters can be changed to allow you to produce an unlimited variety of aircraft. There are a number of different environments and physics to make each flying experience unique.

FLYING SITES

When it comes to different environments in a virtual world, RealFlight 7.5 has to be the king in this realm. You have a selection of more than 40 sites that include photo fields, night fields and 3D flying sites. The photo fields have outstanding detail and the 3D flying sites are embedded with over 5,000 square miles of TrueLife Terrain, which means you will never run out of flying space. If by chance you grow bored with the terrain, you can use the FlexiField site editor to add in some extra buildings, trees and more.

FINAL THOUGHTS

If you have never flown a RealFlight simulator, then you really need to look into the new RealFlight 7.5. This is the perfect trainer for new pilots and experienced pilots looking to improve their flight skills. And there is no better simulator for multirotors. Bottom line here is that for $169.98, RealFlight 7.5 is far and away the best investment you can make in your multirotor.

Smaller quads such as the Quadcopter X are not as stable as the larger drones and require more skills on the sticks.

The SLT wireless interface eliminates the wire from your controller. Just plug it into the USB port and fly.