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Quadcopter Fun

Many members of Sutton Coldfield Movie Makers watched a demonstration of quadcopters on The Gadget Show in October last year. This led to much excitement... and some shopping.

Children at Play



Members of SCMM experimenting with a quadcopter (not equipped with a camera) on loan from a camera shop.



Versatility

The drone is attractive, not just because it is fun to play with, but also because a camera mounted on a drone can take a wonderful variety of shots.

Pans, tilts, 'dolly shots' and tracking shots are all possibilities.



Drone's POV



Shots from a drone fitted with a GoPro Hero 4 Black on a specially adapted gimbal.



Simple Operation

The quadcopter is operated by a simple control unit with two joysticks which can send it up and down, forwards and backwards and around making a 360° turn.





Orientation

Before beginning a session with this drone (Phantom 2) it is necessary to orientate it with GPS. This is a great safety feature. If the 'smart' battery is running low, the drone calculates how long it will take to get back, and returns to base. Turning the control unit off will force the drone to return to base. Useful if, for example, the drone were to go out of sight.



Extra bits and pieces

SCMM member, Arthur, with his Phantom 2. It is equipped with a specially adapted gimbal and a GoPro Hero 4 Black. It also has a monitor which enables Arthur to see what the camera sees. The unit includes a wireless transmitter on the drone and a receiver and monitor on the control unit. This system allows a much greater range than a smartphone would have - something like one mile.



Tilting

Underneath Arthur's control unit is a little lever, which is used to control the tilt of the camera. It can be tilted 90°.



Coloured lights

The colour of the lights indicates which is the front and which is the rear of the quadcopter.



Guards

This drone is fitted with propeller guards to protect the drone's blades and to protect people and objects in the event that the 'copter accidentally knocks into them. Here Arthur has also added some strong twine between the guard units for further protection.



Stability

The drone is remarkably stable. It will just hang in the air if necessary, and can even cope with some wind.



Going Places



Of course one of the great features of a drone is that it can go to places that are usually difficult to get to. For example, over lakes, above houses, over tree tops.



Limitations

Any user must be aware of the Civil Aviation Authority Rules. At present they are not too restrictive, but with the increase in popularity of these drones, new Rules will shortly be coming out.

They cannot be used anywhere near an airport. Fortunately the Phantom 2's firmware has identified all the airports (large and smaller) all over the *world* and the Phantom 2 simply will not operate within a given radius of those airports.

Roads and crowded places must also be avoided.

Privacy rights must be observed.

Ideally they should be used on private land where permission has been obtained.



Watch out for drone shots in future Sutton Coldfield Movie Makers films.

