



FEATURE

# THE 3D MASTERS

## ...UNCOVERED



THE 3D MASTERS YEAR EFFECTIVELY BEGINS IMMEDIATELY AT THE END OF THE PREVIOUS YEAR'S EVENT, WHEN ONE OF THE TASKS IS TO CONSIDER CRITICISM OF THE EVENT. YES THERE IS ALWAYS SOME, AND IT IS NOTED IN THE HOPE THAT WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO LEARN FROM IT AND IMPROVE THE NEXT YEAR'S COMPETITION. ORGANISER OF THE 3D MASTERS, JEFF BARRINGER DESCRIBES JUST WHAT GOES INTO STAGING ONE OF THE BIGGEST MODEL HELICOPTER EVENTS ON THE CALENDER



After a reasonably relaxed month or so it is time to look at the next year's event, and to sort out changes to rules, new manoeuvres, format and the location of the event. New manoeuvres and changes to format often come about as a result of what is observed at an event, so it is important to take note of input and observations by me, the judges and other parties. Over the years 3D Masters has evolved continuously to truly reflect the art of 3D so that the winner is truly the best in the world.

I aim to have this all sorted by November so that I can publicise as much as possible about the event before Christmas, thus keeping the table fairly clear over the Christmas holiday period. Just prior to Christmas the entry form and sponsorship information are created, and the database system I have evolved

over the years is cleared down ready for the following year's input. Entry prices for the event are also set, although we have managed to keep these at the same level for the last three years. Checks with potential helpers to ask them if they are willing to make space in their diaries usually meet with positive responses, so Christmas can be as relaxed as possible.

### ENTRANTS, SPONSORS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Broadly speaking, there are three areas which take up my time from January until the event in July. These are entrants, sponsors and infrastructure. The New Year kicks off with the publication of the entry forms, and my annual visit to Nuremburg Toy Fair takes place just after the forms are released. This gives me the opportunity to talk to sponsors about the coming event, and of course to listen to their input, positive and negative. Sponsorship

is very important for 3D Masters; it is only the generosity of sponsors which makes the event possible.

By the time I return from Nuremburg there is usually a pile of entry forms from would-be pilots from all over the world. We try to be balanced in our choice by taking into consideration ability, age of applicant, type of machine, nationality, and previous experience. It is in this final criterion that 3DX has been a big help because if a pilot can cite success in 3DX then we know that he/she is a capable 3D pilot who will not disgrace themselves. We also consider success in some other 3D events too of course. Sponsorship has never been an issue in selection of pilots, since all Sponsors appreciate the that purity of the event has to be maintained. Once places are let it is a matter of updating the website and then beginning the pilots countdown to the event, which involves various pieces of information, photos,

guidance notes, music etc. being exchanged. There is a large amount of work involved in dealing with questions from pilots, ranging from queries about manoeuvres and changes to machines through applications for visas and accommodation issues.

3D Masters is an international event so a large amount of time is spent in communicating with all interested parties (my outbox for any one year is typically around 4,000 emails associated with 3D Masters). Language is often a problem as I have only English, and most of the competitors are non-native speakers, which often means I have to spend a lot of time understanding their communication, and then a lot of time trying to give them the answer they need. Generally I tend to try to cover all emails within 24 hours, often rising at 3am to deal with the Far East, back to bed and up again for 08:00 when Europe comes online and then working into the evening



The 3D Masters was held at Northampton University in England for a number years and suffered from a mixture of weather condition during that time



The event attracts plenty of spectators that tend to be a mix of pilot supporters, model heli enthusiasts and those just interested to see what's going on



The 3D Masters was held in Spain in 2009 at the Mosa Trajectum Golf Resort, in Murcia where the weather was pretty much guaranteed to be good



The spectators gather at the 2008 event to watch the final flights and support their favourite pilots. A bit of sunshine always helps to bring out the crowds

as the USA livens up. Most days from January to July I work well over eight hours, including weekends. There is also an influx of bookings for spectators, all of which must be dealt with by answering queries and sending out acknowledgements that the items purchased will be available on the gate. I keep the website as up to date as possible, but it can sometimes be slightly neglected when the workload elsewhere demands it.

#### EVENT INFRASTRUCTURE

And talking of demands, by now the sponsors are beginning to come on board. We now have a well-documented sponsorship structure and prices do not change year on year, but still there are many enquiries to deal with, and this of course requires a fine amount of detail on the infrastructure. It is the infrastructure which makes the event happen, and so I will spend a lot of time sourcing tents, arranging parking, talking to suppliers of one type or another to make sure that promises I make to sponsors can be kept. Infrastructure of course also involves the basic requirements for the field, airside is: judges/sound/scoring/frequency control tents and furniture; sound system; safety fence; practice facilities; observation towers

(for photography); pilot's ready area/start box; power; sponsors/presentation area for awards; night flying facilities.

For groundside we need: pits area; notice board; observation area; toilets; sponsors trade stands; refreshments; Internet access.

While these are easy to list, each takes a lot of effort. Time goes by really quickly in trying to deal with these issues, but there are certain items which have to be ready on time before the actual event, such as the T-shirts and caps, competitors music (so that it can be put onto CD), the programme, all of the entry passes and lots, lots more. I also have to check out with the responsible persons that they are adequately prepared for the event - the commentator and the small army of helpers who give their time, such as gate crew and shop staff. The judges are well-rehearsed and Nigel Revill has been an extremely reliable scorer for some years now.

We were very lucky in 2009 to have Antonio Conde and his team to organise the flightline for us - another advantage of 3DX is that it helps us to find capable staff. We are also very lucky indeed to have a team of stalwarts who will put themselves out to help us make the event happen.

Come the event itself the really busy time for me is Friday morning, when we have to register all pilots. We check that their set manoeuvres and music are okay, provide airside passes and hand out the freebies - usually caps, T-shirts and fuel courtesy of our sponsors. With over 50 pilots this takes all morning and we are just about ready in time for the first Set Manoeuvres round. It is always a relief to hand over the event to the airside staff, because then I know that I have delivered an event, and its conduct is largely out of my hands. The airside task is considerable because the event has to run on time, which often means that we have to move things along at quite a pace, but if each pilot uses just one minute more than their allocated time, with over 50 pilots we can soon be an hour adrift.

#### OTHER TASKS

Once the competition itself is underway I busy myself with the other tasks which have to be completed, such as ensuring that sponsor's demonstration slots are agreed, handling enquiries from visitors, pilots, sponsors, and all and sundry, while at the same time keeping a weather-eye on the conduct of the event. I am helped in this by my wife Judy and my

son, Ben. On very rare occasions there is some sort of unplanned emergency which threatens the continuation of the event, such as the loss of the sound system in 2009, and often there are weather-related considerations and the inevitable stream of minor injuries such as wasp-stings etc. Our contingency plans are pretty tried and tested and problems are dealt with quickly and efficiently, rarely impinging on the conduct of the event. While it is difficult to recall exactly what takes our time and attention, I can say that I rarely manage to watch more than a couple of flights over the entire weekend - this year in Spain all I saw was Duncan's flight to music, which was superb.

The evening and night flying has been a feature of 3D Masters for some years, and this too needs organising, along with the addition of the synchro competition for 2009 - considered highly successful by all who watched and took part. The awards ceremony is always scheduled for Sunday afternoon, and while it may be a bit wordy, it is important to take the time to thank all those who have contributed to 3D Masters. Remember that everyone has worked very hard, the Judges have often judged 200+ flights, the commentator talked



The trade area at the 3D Masters 2009 held in Murcia, Spain. The trade are big supporters of the event



2009 3D Masters winner, Dominik Haegele



To the winners, the spoils. The UK's Duncan Osbourn and Germany's Dominik Haegele show off their trophies



3D Masters mastermind, Jeff Barringer

for hours, most of the staff have been on their feet for much of the weekend and the pilots have given their all. I often manage to see the subsequent victory flights and it at this time that I suddenly feel a sense of achievement, all those people contributing to and enjoying the skill and the exuberance of a competition well-run and now reaching its conclusion.

The inevitable clearing up takes a lot of time and I seldom leave the field before dark, usually to enjoy a beer and an early(ish) night. In subsequent days there is more work, dealing with complaints and queries and writing my own reports on the event. I try to answer the messages of thanks within as short a time as possible. The media have always been very supportive of 3D Masters and have contributed tremendously to its success. We publish Press Reports on the 3D Masters website, with the Editors permission of course, so I make sure that the Press is

sent accurate scoring data and that sponsors are thanked for their support in a timely manner. If we haven't already done so we pay the many and varied bills due, including our donations to Club funds for the host club - over the years this money has paid for runways, clubhouses, hard standing and roadways. Some helpers elect to have their Club Fees paid by 3D Masters for the following year. Later I send out a certificate to all pilots stating their position in the event for them to hang on their wall should they wish.

#### NEW VENUES

In the days when we were established at the university location was not an issue, but now finding a suitable venue occupies quite a lot of time. We have been offered venues in a number of countries and I have travelled to view quite a few of them. Recently we were contacted by Walter Robijns of the Jupiter Venlo Club in Holland,

established for over 50 years and with a very enthusiastic hard-core 3D element. Walter himself has been a regular visitor to 3D Masters for some years and the club even host their own 3D event every year. The site appeared very promising so I hopped onto the trusty motorcycle and took le Shuttle for a quick look - it's only 200 miles from Calais. I am please to say that the Jupiter Venlo site and the attitude and enthusiasm of the members gives me great faith that they will live up to their promise - We want people to say: "This was the best 3DMasters experience, EVER!"

So, as I write this we have a venue for 3D Masters 2010 and the whole cycle is about to begin again, my own enthusiasm bolstered by all the Competitors, Sponsors, Helpers and Fans who get so much from what has become the world's biggest and most iconic 3D competition.

#### SKILLS, GENEROSITY AND TALENT

Thinking about it, 3D Masters is a rare

coming-together of an awful lot of skills, generosity and talent. Over the years we have turned a basic flying style into an artform, and while we may have our imitators, it is 3D Masters which has given form to 3D flying. They say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, but often I wonder just where 3D flying would be were it not for the dedication and commitment of all associated with 3D Masters. What if the imitators had to create their own manoeuvres for example?

Opportunities in life float by like gossamer on the breeze. One can reach out and grab them or let them pass, missing what might be the one opportunity of a lifetime. I for one am pleased that I reached out and grabbed the opportunity, and that I worked with so many other talented and dedicated people to achieve what 3D Masters has become. I hope you, dear reader, agree! ☺

Jeff Barringer