Review Of

Flight Simulator Lite

Manufactured by Next Level Racing

Intro

I find the world of flight simulation to be extremely fascinating and absolutely very interesting seeing all the new developments within both various types of software but also computer hardware and especially dedicated flight simulation gear.

Today I have started a new quest and set my focus on exploring a new branch of flight simulation gear that I have not previously looked into – Flight Cockpits featuring a built-in seat together with everything you need to mount your own hardware on to. You have probably seen cockpits like these before being racing cockpits for e.g. GTA or various other racecar platforms, but now you can also get customizable flight cockpits for the enthusiastic flight simmer, that will fit a great variety of your flight simulation gear and certainly lift your experience and the flight simulation immersion to a higher level.

This review will cover the exciting foldable 'Flight Cockpit Lite' flight cockpit created by Next Level Racing and this will be the start of a series of reviews within this very interesting segment.

Delivery & Packing

The delivery was carried out by using the international forwarder DPD, and the pack was sent from the Netherlands and to my address in Denmark. The transport time was about 3 business days which is good and the delivery was made directly to my door step – the complete flight cockpit is packed into just one large box, and there were no sign of unusual hard handling.

The first thing I noticed was the weight of the box; I could easily see that it was a large box, but still the weight surprised me – close to 25 kilos. During unpacking of the various included items I quickly understood why the box was so heavy – there are a huge number of items included and they are mostly made out of metal.

The packaging features an external transport box which is made from good quality, hard, stiff and thick cardboard that perfectly supports the various items within. Inside the transport box I found the display box which is also a cardboard box but made from a thinner and not so strong cardboard quality – this box is also slightly smaller in size and thereby fits perfectly into the outer transport box providing perfect support.

Now opening the display box I saw two packages – one was the basic parts of the set which were already partly pre-assembled and packed within a thick plastic bag and cornered by high quality cardboard angle supports. The second pack was a cardboard box made from a medium soft cardboard quality and featured all additional parts as screws, bolts, nuts, washers but also the accessories and additional parts to add to the basic setup. Inside this second box all parts were again packed within each an individual wrapping to support and secure each part perfectly. E.g. the various brackets were packed in something that looked like a thick aluminum foil with a softer material on the inside, and which absolutely was a superb packing for painted metal parts – they arrived without a scratch on any of them.

Other parts like screws, washers and bolts were packed within small plastic zip bags and additional parts for the basic set was also packed in plastic bags that seemed to have been created each for a specific part with a 100% fit.

Included in the bag was of course also an assembly/instruction manual – this manual features a total of 30 pages where the first section is regarding the content of the box down to number of specific screws and bolt etc. The second part is the assembly manual which is in English and features very good and detailed images for better understanding. The last part of the manual is ‘Warning’ and ‘Assistance’ and focuses on what not to do and what you need to have a focus on – this part is written in multiple languages as English, French, Dutch, Italian, Spanish and several other languages.

The instruction manual is a professional made, high quality and multi color printed manual, and even though this seat looks quite simple to assemble I did use the manual because some of the parts I was a bit unfamiliar with – this I will get into later on in the review. Overall the packaging was superb and supported the Flight Simulator Lite perfectly during transport and the unpacking.


FS FLIGHT LITE SIMULATOR
FOLDABLE FLIGHT SIMULATOR COCKPIT
FOR AGES 12+


NLR


TAKE IT TO THE SKIES
FS FLIGHT LITE SIMULATOR
INSTRUCTION MANUAL

What is included in the box

The complete material list is also a part of the manual and the set features the following articles and of course a huge number of various screws, bolts, nuts and washer. At first I was quite surprised by the sheer number of screws and bolts included and thought… oh no… that really looked like a nightmare to assemble, but I quickly found out that you only need a very few screws and nuts for the entire assembly. All the additional screws, nuts and bolts can be used to mount different 3rd party hardware on to the set, and to make it more versatile there are included more than enough screws and bolts etc. Very positive indeed!

There are two adjustable metal plates that can be mounted on each side of the flight cockpit hereby providing a good and solid base for adding various hardware controls. To support a great variety of hardware there are also included two special made metal bracket featuring a huge number of drilled holes – these brackets can e.g. be mounted on top of each of the side plates.

Additionally there is also one double sized metal bracket again with a huge number of drilled holes – this metal bracket can be used on top of the side plates or in the center of the setup to e.g. support a keyboard or a yoke or similar. If you would like to use this bracket for support for a keyboard, you can also effectively use the two smaller metal brackets with a 90 degree bend that are included. These smaller brackets feature an adjustable function and a soft material at the bended section to fully support a keyboard without using screws.

On the material list you also find a metal support arm as well as a TPR adapter → this TPR adapter you need to use if you want to mount the famous pendular rudder pedals from Thrustmaster. Other than these various items there are the sheer number of various screws, bolts, nuts and washers as previously written, together with one M3, M4 and M6 Allen's Key and a wrench… and of course the flight cockpit itself.

All parts are made from high quality metal and painted beautifully with a smooth and shiny black paint – the flight cockpit absolutely looks very professional. All screws, nuts and bolts are also painted black to complete the flight cockpit perfectly. The various screws are all machine screws with different length, thickness and heads – here both for use with an Allen key or a Phillips screwdriver. You also have square neck bolts and countersunk screws as well as nuts both with and without a flange together with wingnuts. There are also included 10mm nylon spacers and some M6 fully threaded studs so you have a huge inventory of screws, nuts, bolts etc. to mount your hardware with.

In the box you of course also have the actual flight cockpit which features a seat made from high quality fabrics, adjustable support for the seat both in the back and in the front together with a support for rudder pedals and keyboard/yoke.

Assembly & Compatibility

At first it looked quite simple to assemble the flight cockpit – I mean that most parts was already pre-assembled, but to be fair I of course used the instruction manual. This turned out to be a very good idea because the set can be assembled in many different ways depending on what you would like the setup to utilize. I wanted the set to fit most of my hardware so that it would be supporting both flying GA, but also when flying airliners as well as military fighters.

I started with the seat and thereafter moved on to the support for the rudder pedals – the rudder pedal support can also be mounted in two ways, so I had to find out what would fit my needs the best. The straight out solution was perfect for my set, so this was what I assembled.

The frame is all pipes where the ends fit perfectly into each other (at one end the pipe is slightly smaller in diameter so that it will fit into another pipe). This is actually sufficient enough to hold the flight cockpit into place, but just for making it perfect all pipes that are connected are also secured by a set of screws, washers and nuts. It did take me a while to understand how to set and how to change the angle of the back support of the seat – this is actually set using a high quality fabric with a built-in Velcro that is connected on the left side of the seat and to the left side of the center pipes. First I was a bit unsure if that could hold but it has truly proven me wrong, it can easily support and hold my weight without any problems.

The next challenge I had was to fix the correct angle of the front legs of the seat. Selecting the angle was easy but getting the built-in mechanism to work for me was not so easy at first. This was however an ‘error40’ meaning a human error and all I had to do was just to read the instructions and it quickly became easy. The lever can be flipped for an open/closed position and when in the closed position you can turn the mechanism and thereby tighten it – extremely user friendly as long as you remember to read the instructions.

Now I moved on to adding the support for the rudder pedals and this went super easy and without any issues at all. You can assemble this part without connecting it to the rest of the setup which makes it easier to assemble. When you have completed the assembly you can add it to the setup quite easily using two grips that are clipped on and fastened using two screws.

The rudder pedal support features two individually changeable sliders that can be locked to the support where ever you like it the best. On top of these sliders you can mount the rudder pedals – if you are using the Thrustmaster pendular rudder pedals (the TPR) you will encounter that the drilled holes on the sliders will not fit the TPRs on the back side since this is just too wide. Here you will need the TPR adapter which is included in the set. You can also mount the TPR without the adapter but then you cannot fixate the backside of the TPR to the back slider – it works and I have tested it but I would absolutely recommend using the TPR adapter to mount the rudders perfectly firm.

Now the set was assembled and I started adding my different controls. First I wanted to test the left side bracket which features one of the two universal special made brackets. I have 3 different throttle systems that I wanted to test here – all from Thrustmaster and it was the dual throttle from

the Warthog A10 series, the T.16000M single throttle slider and finally the Airbus dual throttle also featuring the two side pieces. I connected the universal bracket sideways to get a wider support and this worked perfectly for all three throttle configurations.

Now I moved on to the right side and on this side I wanted to include both a throttle system as well as a flight control stick. Here I mounted the double sized universal bracket as base to gain more space for adding controls and this indeed turned out to be a good idea. I successfully mounted the quad throttle Boeing system from Thrustmaster (two throttle systems = 6 levers) on the front end of the bracket and on the back end in the right side I could now mount the Boeing F/A18 flight control stick also from Thrustmaster. As an extra bonus I had a minor free space on the back left side of the bracket which fitted perfectly for my secondary mouse M705 from Logitech – this was really nice to also have a mouse support available.

I also do have from Thrustmaster the Airbus and the T.16000M flight control sticks which also fit perfectly on to the universal brackets in both the left and right side.

Setting the focus on the rudder pedals I tried two rudder pedals both from Thrustmaster – one was the T.16000M and the other was the TPR pendular rudder pedals. Again it was easy to mount on to the sliders and both sets of rudder pedals could be perfectly mounted.

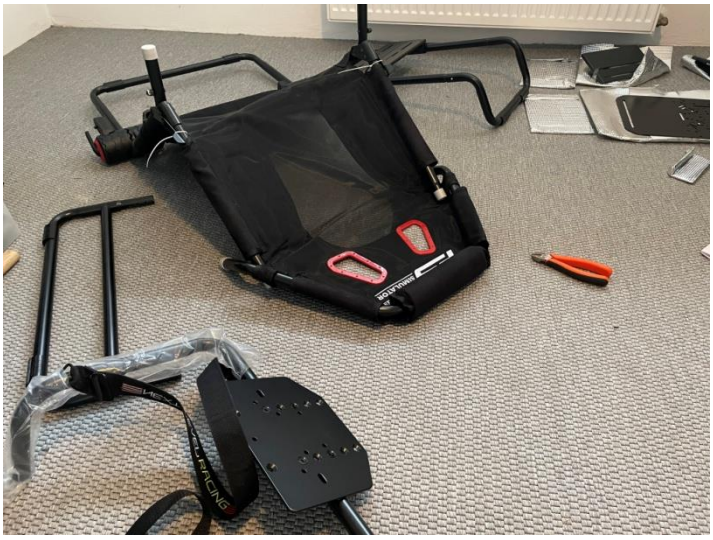
Most of the hardware that I mounted was from Thrustmaster and they were mounted with ease – I would certainly assume that most other similar hardware from other manufacturers would also be able to be used and mounted without any issues.

Now for the hardware that actually didn't mount that easily – I have recently acquired me the Boeing yoke from Thrustmaster and this I of course wanted to mount on the center bracket but here I got into some challenges. The center bracket will support a yoke on a flat base but the Boeing yoke from Thrustmaster in unfortunately not on a flat base. The issue is the way the center bracket is mounted on to the set with a huge tightening screw on the bottom – this is a superb solution for the flight cockpit and provides a sturdy and firm fixation for a yoke however, to be able to mount this yoke I had to un-mount the bracket, remove the large screw and flip the connection bracket upside down.

The result was a decrease of parts/volume around the center connection bracket which was just enough for me to slide the yoke over, and by flipping the connection bracket upside down I now had a flat surface to fixate the yoke on to using the fastening screws on the yoke. Not easy and not the intended use, but it worked and all my gear is now proven to be compatible with this flight simulator lite setup. Here I will of course recommend Next Level Racing to add a new form of bracket or support so that it will be easier to mount a yoke similar to the TM one.

I am a family father with small children and one thing really caught my attention – all the various metal brackets as well as the pipes and connections etc. all feature rounded edges meaning that there are no sharp edges to find on the entire set. That is a huge plus for me !


NEXT LEVEL RACING




THRUSTMASTER


NEXT LEVEL RACING


AIRBUS
PARK BRK
NEXT LEVEL


BOEING


THRUSTMASTER

Usage

It is always quite interesting trying out new equipment to see if the various products also do deliver what is promised by the manufacturer. The same applies for the Flight Simulator Lite and my test of this flight cockpit really got a lot of focus.

At about the same time I received the 'Flight Simulator Lite' flight cockpit I also started out a tour flying around all of Norway. This tour was 22 flights covering more than 2500 kilometers all flown in real time primarily flying GA meaning low and slow and now using the 'Flight Simulator Lite' flight cockpit as base. That was a lot of hours spend in the seat of this flight cockpit, so the test was absolutely very thorough.

The 'test results' were really good – the Flight Simulator Lite absolutely provided me with a better and greater experience of this flight instead of just placing the yoke and throttle on my desk. The seat is not a professional rally seat or a replica airliners seat but instead a high quality breathable fabric seat to support the folding functionality. The seat features two small built-in pillows for support of your lower back or maybe more accurately said, two small foam padding and they do make a difference on shorter flights however, flying as intensively as I did on my tour around Norway, this was unfortunately not quite enough. I had to add an extra pillow for my lower back as well as a softer pillow to sit on, but remember this was due to a very large number of continuous hours more or less every day in a two week period.

The idea behind this flight cockpit I find to be very cool – first of all you get a lot of value for your money meaning that you get a complete environment setup for a low cost, but the idea of the flight cockpit to also be foldable is simply just awesome. If you are living in an apartment or home with not that much extra space, then this flight cockpit is a perfect solution. You can fold the cockpit to almost fit into the box it came and additionally you don't even have to remove your flight gear. You can quickly fold and store away the set when not in use, and when you suddenly just want to get flying, it takes just a few moments to fold back and you are then ready for action. However I did have to remove the Boeing yoke to be able to fold the flight cockpit all the way as shown on the intro picture, but I could also let it be and then the fold would still be possible but not as great as without the yoke.

This feature also comes in handy if you want to use the flight cockpit at a different location – could be at a friend or a flightsim gathering for some quality flight simming or if you perhaps spend the weekends at a cottage or similar, then this Flight Simulator Lite flight cockpit is actually also portable… it's certainly heavy to lift and pack in your car, but still it's really a cool feature.

Only two simple steps are needed to fold the entire flight cockpit – first step is to detach the steering strap (Velcro support) on the left side of the seat and release the two locking hooks found on the lower back of the seat and now the seat can be folded forward.

Second step is to unlock the uniquely designed hubs and remove the fabric support underneath the seat and now the seat can be folded over the rudder pedals. This is quick, easy and simple and to setup the flight cockpit again you just follow this in a reversed order and you are ready for take-off.

There are a number of different adjustment possibilities by changing the angles of the legs of the seat, but also the center bar (used for e.g. mounting a yoke) and also for your rudder pedals – you can use this cockpit no matter if you are tall or not – the sliders for the rudder pedals provides a fluently motion where you can lock them at any position. Also you have the possibility to lift up the end of the rudder pedals bar, providing a slight increase from the base – some might like that but I do prefer the rudder pedals support to be horizontal.

The quality of the Flight Simulator Lite is high and in the details is written that the hubs can withstand a force of 150kg to ensure a solid flight position – now, I don't weight that much but I am still a larger fellow and I had no issues what so ever using this flight cockpit.

Now with all that various flight simulation gear all mounted in one flight cockpit, I also needed a way to select which gear I wanted to use for each flight. In my setup everything is connected using USB cables, but if I just plug in all USB cables I would have a risk of some of the gear making issues due to overlaps in configuration etc. To overcome that issue I simply added a four-ways USB hub providing only 4 USB entries to the computer at a time. This is perfect for my setup since if I select the stick configuration then I need in total just 3 slots, and if I select the yoke configuration I need in total 4 slots. This USB hub I have mounted beneath the left side metal bracket for easy access so I can configure the next flight without leaving the flight cockpit.

I did have to remove the bracket for the keyboard support to be able to add the yoke to the flight cockpit – normally I would assume the keyboard then could lay on top of the yoke or you would need to place it on the floor or similar, but the Boeing yoke from Thrustmaster actually features a support on top of the yoke – this support is probably mend as a support for e.g. an IPad or similar, but it actually also works perfectly as a support for my wireless keyboard.

Conclusion

Now to summarize my experience with the Flight Simulator Lite flight cockpit from Next Level Racing, I found the flight cockpit to be a superb addition to my flight simulator experiences – the flight cockpit absolutely gave me a better immersion and truly a higher level of realism in my simulation experience.

I love the fact that I could have almost all my various flight simulation gear mounted on the flight cockpit and everything within the reach of an arm's length.

The Flight Simulator Lite is a good, high quality and solid product featuring a metal construction for a good, sturdy and stable base with a high durability. Included are numerous metal brackets and accessories together with lots of various screws, washers, bolts and nuts etc. all being a part of making the flight cockpit a very versatile base for an immersive flight environment.

High quality breathable fabric for the seat provides a strong and stable seat but I would recommend more padding or adding pillows for back support as well as to sit on during longer sessions of flight simulation.

If you want to upgrade your home flight simulator with a flight cockpit, this could very well be a perfect solution for you. A fair price for a good quality and a superb solution of you need to store away the flight cockpit when not in use for whatever reason.

The Flight simulator Lite is absolutely recommendable and I would like to thank the team at Next Level Racing for also providing flight simulation enthusiast the possibility of a professional home cockpit solution.

Thanks Next Level Racing – Keep up the great work!

Rays Aviation