

Remote Madness

A DVD of insane flying by HeliGraphix plus an interview with Tobias Wagner

words: Jon Tanner, photos: Jon Tanner



HeliGraphix has become synonymous with the most daring and technically challenging R/C helicopter stunts in the world. In a joint venture the pilots of this group have joined forces with 60 people in the R/C sector to successfully turn the film project 'Remote Madness' into a reality. Emerging from these efforts is a DVD that is certainly unique, and which does not only show the most spectacular R/C helicopter stunts to date, but also sheds light on the background and technology behind some of the stunts.

The DVD shows 14 crazy stunts that should not be tried at home... It starts out in Austria with a series of 3-D stunts, which may not sound very special, except the pilot, Tobias Wagner, is a passenger in an Alouette II flown by Peter Jakadofsky... Moving to France, the Rocket-Copter follows, where model helicopters are 'assisted' by rocket boosters sufficient to see a 90-size model go vertical!

they chose a river bridge. The next stunt follows a water theme but this time instead of avoiding water, their Russian contingent see if a Raptor 90 can fly through a high power water jet. Now comes the jump where a stunt motorcyclist takes on a helicopter by jumping over it. By way of a change, Tobias next sees if he can fly his 3D MP under himself while he stands on a ladder and then he tries a Touch and Go with a 3D NT and a Tornado where the skids do the touching – yes one is upside-down.

Now things get really zany with a pilot looking up at the top of a multi-storey car park waiting for Tobias to throw his Hornet from the top so he can start it up before it hits the ground – needless to say he gets more

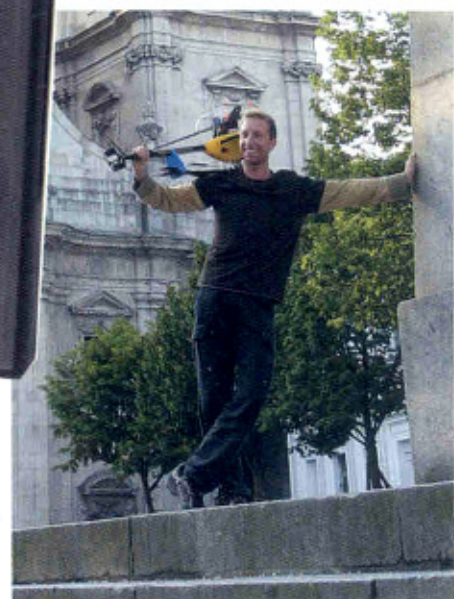
than he bargained for. Which is faster Tobias' 3D NT or a high-speed express train, yes he has to find out and 'The Race' is on. Next they set the Night on Fire with a Twister loaded with professional fireworks including launching some from the model.

Next it's back to water with a few loops round a bridge over a river and to do it properly, Tobias is in the river. Have you ever wondered why it is almost impossible to restart a rotor disc after a blade-stop auto? HeliGraphix try a novel experiment that demonstrates the problems perfectly and to make certain they have it right, they drop a Raptor 90 out of Peter Jakadofsky's Alouette II.

The last stunt came about from a challenge where a model was vertically challenged (it couldn't take-off...) so they added 4 rockets to give it a hand...

Add some outtakes and a very clear Safety Warning and there you have it – Remote Madness by HeliGraphix.

The last word: **DON'T TRY ANY OF THIS ANYWHERE!**



Tobias Wagner is a co-founder of HeliGraphix and yes he may well be insane

We managed to catch up with Tobias Wagner who told us about HeliGraphix and making Remote Madness.

MHW: Hi Tobias, it's great you make time for us. Before we start with all the questions – please tell us a little bit about yourself!

Tobias Wagner: Well, I am co-founder of the HeliGraphix company and have made a name for performing unusual R/C helicopter stunts, such as the world's first Ceiling Landing, Wall Start and Wall Landing, to name just a few. Also, I have a good reputation for 3-D flying and have been invited to parts of the world to fly public 3-D displays. I am also the author of a very successful 3-D column for the German helicopter magazine ROTOR that has a

somewhat unique approach towards the subject. Despite all this dedication to 3-D flying I am personally convinced that the 3-D boom is not everything, and that projects such as 'Remote Madness' clearly extend the scope of the R/C sport!

Remote Madness – a piece of R/C history has been written with the production of this special DVD. Never before have we seen such 'insane' stunts as landing on a vertical section of a wall, rocket helicopters or drag races against high-speed trains. What made you and HeliGraphix start and produce such an unusual project?

For quite some time HeliGraphix has been devoting a lot of time to performing somewhat unique actions in the R/C sector and has become widely known – one could almost speak of a cult. The funny thing is that even people who are not into helicopters and R/C have come to appreciate what we do. We wanted to stage a number of more special ideas and that was just the nature of it. Such a venture involves both cost exceeding the normal budget and risk and the logical consequence is to do a DVD film production.

Please explain to our readers who and what actually is HeliGraphix, and what's the purpose of the company.

HeliGraphix has changed and expanded a lot. Originally the company was founded for aerial filming and photography. Today we give well-attended multimedia clinics on technology and history of helicopters and do public 3-D demos, also worldwide. The 'stunt division' has always been our hobby and somehow sneaked into the field of R/C from former hobbies.

Less known to the general public is that we test and develop R/C equipment, e.g. we have been involved in the new Three Dee MP-XL from Henseleit Helicopters. All our partners and sponsors are at the same time friends and this is important for us. Another interesting point is that HeliGraphix has become a competent platform for reliable

information in today's chaos of Internet forums.

You have travelled all over the place in order to shoot the different actions. Which were the main locations?

It has proved once again that borders do not limit R/C helicopters and HeliGraphix – in fact, they have little meaning in this context. If you want to name it, we mainly filmed in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and France. Sometimes it was for logistical reasons, in case of a stunt it was just impossible to get permission to fly in Germany.

I see not only many locations, but also a number of people have contributed to the project?

Almost too many! To stay in contact with over 60 people and to cope with the logistics means some effort; that's one reason why production took 14 months. In the end this broad base had a very positive effect on the project – everybody contributed a decisive share to success. Unfortunately, it is not possible to name all the people and sponsors here; but we are happy about every single person who has shared our enthusiasm and placed confidence in us. These are things we never forget.

How about the title of the film production – 'Remote Madness'?

There are a number of puns and ambiguities in the films, and the title is no exception. Apart from the obvious meaning 'remote-controlled madness' we also had in mind 'a touch of madness'. Such small things beyond the visible horizon are often that extra something; having said this, they have of course no influence both on understanding and having fun with the DVD.

The contents of these 110 minutes of helicopter action clearly meet the expectations from the title. The 'madness' – if this can be clearly defined anyway – plays a major role in all the stunts. But the risks had been assessed and all the scenes planned thoroughly, hadn't they?



Opening scene gives you an idea of what's to come



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3-D flying while flying in an Alouette II



The wall landing – how did they do that?



The Jump

Some of the stunts create the impression of being rather spontaneous; in the movie industry this distinguishes good actors, in our case this indicates good planning. It is one thing to obtain permission for the individual actions and to be prepared for possible damage. The other thing of great importance is to work precisely, from the choice of locations and maintenance of equipment to exact planning of how a stunt should and could turn out. One would never believe it, but the whole logistics, the unusual location, time pressure, weather and nerves make the flying as such almost trivial. Against this backdrop the pilots really achieve extraordinary work.

How about your 'real' life – what's your main profession?

Despite what many (or even most) people think, my main profession has nothing to do with helicopters. In fact, I am a research scientist. However, this also teaches you to make exact plans, pay attention to the smallest of details and to think around the corner.

I would be surprised if prior to your stunt flights you did not have to deal with authorities in order to obtain permissions?

The funny thing is it wasn't that bad – 'HeliGraphix' has an excellent reputation, and this literally opens doors. Often the worst part was to explain to authorities what exactly we were going to do and what was the motivation for such stunts; they kept asking these questions again and again in disbelief. And despite of all permits we had occasional encounters with both police forces and the German army.

You mentioned that after the filming had been completed you had to deal with some issues and not just in the run-up?

Welcome to Germany and Europe, the land of 'super regulation'! This really delayed the DVD release after its completion. As an example, we did not know that the Intercity Express (ICE) high-speed train of the German federal railway company is a registered trademark, and that if you want to publish a picture or film material you need the explicit permission of the company.

What was the greatest challenge in producing 'Remote Madness'?

Not letting oneself be put off and being consistent often requires a lot of stamina. Personally I think that if you work together with the right people all problems can be solved. Having said this, there is one thing that really gives us a hard time: Pirate copies.

Then is there an aspect of 'Remote Madness' that you particularly like?

There are quite a number of people who just don't regard the work as pure entertainment, but who have read the booklet and understand the philosophy behind the project. To fly around in a 3-D style and maybe do the one or other stunt is certainly possible for a couple of people. To make a film, however, and to document things clearly and thoroughly is a totally different level. We had great fun combining action with a story – and I am convinced the viewers will be as thrilled as we are.

Talking about the R/C sector, I have rarely seen such a professionally produced DVD. Not just that the disc is stamped and has a printed and clear-coated label, there is even a booklet dealing with well-chosen topics. Why have you gone to such great lengths?

While creating 'Remote Madness', we were aware that a piece of R/C history was being written. This was one of the reasons why the project developed an incredible momentum of its own, one could almost

speak of its own 'existence'; it is hard to explain if one hasn't experienced something like this before. Against this backdrop the question of effort never arose – you automatically worked at the optimum.

It's great for us that the DVD has been produced in English; but why didn't you choose German?

German would have been somewhat easier for us, but since HeliGraphix operates worldwide and we have countless supporters in many countries around the globe, English was the only option that made sense. As production time was 14 months you can see how our approach to the language and the interviews changed over time; the further into the project, the more emphasis we put on good English.

Which chapter or stunt is your personal favourite?

That's the wrong question as we naturally see the DVD through different eyes! About 60 hours of film footage have been cut down to 110 minutes, and when watching a scene we often think what else there was. What we enjoyed most was working with so many great people both in front and behind the camera.

Will there be a sequel, such as 'Remote Madness 2'?

'Remote Madness' will be hard to top. This is one reason why a sequel would be set up differently. It is certainly not a matter of ideas – we have more than we can ever turn into reality – but one also wants to progress from a technical point of view. The cost and risk for such a new venture are hard to calculate. But I can tell you that we are receiving countless feedbacks of people asking for a second part, and people not into R/C but other extreme sports have contacted us. I am not saying that something is in the works, but just that we're considering continuing.

Now the final and most important question of them all: Are you really insane?

(Tobias laughs) A good question! Two years ago I'd have answered with a

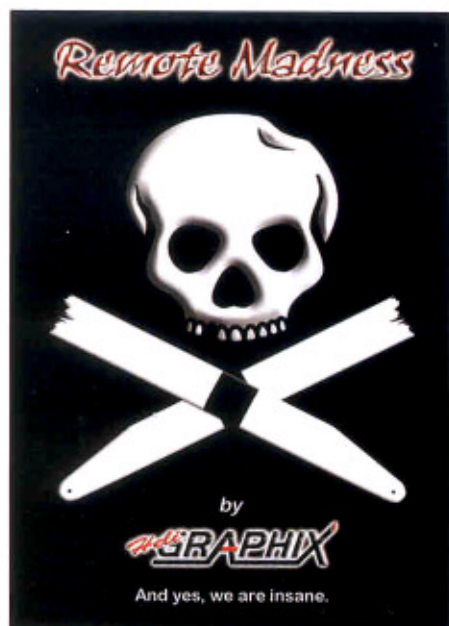
Who's fastest?



Touch skids shall we?



Is a Raptor 90 waterproof?



DVD Info

- Producer: HeliGraphix GbR
- Run Time: 110 minutes
- Language: English
- Introductory Price: £15.95
- Where to Buy: Europe: Traplet Publications, Email: sales@traplet.co.uk;
USA/Canada: SKS Video Productions, Email: scott@sksvideo.com
- Region Code: Code free
- TV-Standard: PAL in Europe, NTSC in the USA/Canada
- Year of Release: 2006
- Filmed on location in Germany, France, Austria and Switzerland



definite 'No', today I'm not so sure. Maybe it really is the often-quoted narrow margin between genius and insanity that characterises our acting and maybe the future will give a more definite answer. Until then, things remain as they are!

Thank you for this interesting insight. We wish you continued success and hope to hear more from you in the future!



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Do not attempt to repeat any of them!