

## State of the Hobby?

**DISAPPOINTMENTS?**  
MY REFLECTIONS ON  
FPV AND BEING A  
CELEBRITY



**IMMERSE YOURSELF**  
A WEEKEND WITH  
FINAL GLIDE AUS



**THE REVERB**  
STILL GOING STRONG  
GREAT REVIEWS



**LIVING THE DREAM?**  
MAKING MONEY IN THIS  
HOBBY

# FGA PATREON NEWS



## Reflection time

Its amazing how quickly three years have flown by since the first DRONE competitive event in Sacramento USA. It was the 2015 Drone Nationals that put quads on the global scene and thrust me into the global limelight. My world changed irrevocably when I threw in my job of 18 years to follow something I was passionate about. My dream was to grow a hobby by sharing ideas and helping anyone who I knew would get the same life changing kick out of the FPV experience that I did when I first put on goggles. But men being men means that anything that even smells of competition quickly got the limelight. Racing drones suddenly took top billing commercially ahead of the joy of freestyle, ahead of the reason why people get into this hobby in the first place. Competition is the curse of this “sport” (like it is to many sports) because once the media starts believing drone racing is the next big sporting sensation then

business becomes the focus. I watched as everyone scrambled over others in their rush to cash into the “F1 of the future.” I watched as the “entrepreneur” in everyone suddenly imagined there was money to be made in all things quad related. This included skilled pilots who wanted to play with their toys full time and be called “professionals” meaning they flew for fun and were rewarded. But it also included people who saw the new sport as yet another opportunity to use other people’s skills and passions to build a business. And finally there were the true innovators, the ones who made quads fly the way they do today. It’s interesting to see how each of these groups in FPV quads have fared over the last 3 years. Its also interesting for me to take a long hard look at what has happened to me personally and be able to step back and take stock of my life with quads to date. Its not commercial drones per se that I am specifically talking about - its recreational quadcopters - the ones you build and fly, the ones that you create from components.

## Disappointments?

Disappointment is defined as “sadness or displeasure caused by the non-fulfilment of one’s hopes and expectations.” So I ask my Patreons - do you think I have fulfilled some of the dreams I set out for myself over 3 years? Have I helped you fulfil some of your hopes and expectations?



Here are some of my disappointments. You be the judge:

1. I'm disappointed by the fact that **this hobby lost its innocence** some 2 years ago. Instead of concentrating on the joy of flying "free as a bird unencumbered by space" the media and commercial interests have instead been hell bent on forever looking for angles to sell sell sell by building hype. Some people will laugh and say I am naive to think otherwise but it's this hype that has been so disappointing because it has turned the focus away from the real reason why people get into FPV. The human interest story occasionally gets mentioned but it's the business side that is in the sun's constant glare. You only have to watch the reaction of a person who puts on goggles for the first time to sense why we fly. That first time is what makes FPV so immersive, so mind blowing. How you take it from there is what needs more of our concentration, otherwise our hobby's appeal is lost. This is what concerns me.
2. I am disappointed to see **so much infighting** between various camps and fanboys. It's not about competition, it's not about who can fly the fastest or who has the coolest tricks, it's not about personalities. It's about the rich experience this hobby provides to humanity - to be in control of something moving miraculously through a third dimension. And that really is the secret of all. It takes patience and practice to develop skills - building and flying. Everyone goes through stages in their FPV journey yet we have so many out there who are judgemental and cynical as they line up behind their idols and commercial interests to throw vitriol and nasties. The very best thing about FPV is your own personal journey which you soon find out is a problem solving journey but its worth the effort. So many skills across so many incredible disciplines to master. Many fall by the wayside in frustration - at every level (novices to advanced). For some its an epiphany, for others its just another hobby. No matter who, these are the people we should be giving a helping hand to. Working with like minded people is what turned me on about this hobby when I first started. This is what still turns me on today - whether you have one arm, whether you are young or old, whether you come from Transylvania or the back of Bourke or whether you are male or female, we all understand and appreciate the same language - the language of the joy of FPV.

Our hobby is actually a very small niche yet our lack of respect for others is one of the reasons why I have stepped back out of the public limelight. When I try to stick up for others I get personally attacked because of my high profile. I'm out. The lack of respect is very upsetting, not just for me personally but for many people who wear their hearts on their sleeves and give so much to this hobby. Its not worth it, financially, morally, emotionally.



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3. I am disappointed by the **lack of appreciation of the research and development work** undertaken by the real innovators in this hobby. Many of these innovators have exited the scene because they are not being adequately remunerated for their time and effort. And worse, there are detractors who believe that anything is justifiable, such as publicly supporting openly blatant copying of products. Many of these “true” innovators are leaving or have already left the industry. What is left are people who think they have suddenly thought up a better solution only to find there is no BETTER solution, it's just a different hammer with a different head. I watch in astonishment to see someone who has just entered the hobby with no background except an academic piece of paper and suddenly comes out with products that bear their name when I know they had no hand in any part of the development or design except to select the colour or the logo thrust in front of them by a manufacturer or retailer. The FPV world is rapidly filling with “wannabe experts” selling hype disguised as “the latest innovation”. No issue with people having a go to invent a better egg timer but let's not expect miracles (or believe the marketing without proper due diligence). At the same time let's also pay some respect to the people who actually know what they are doing. We would not be here without their work. I am in contact with many of the innovators. Their sadness about the state of this niche industry is palpable.



4. I am disappointed about the **lack of cohesion and public clout** of this hobby. What promised to be an enthusiastic cohesive group of passionate people has instead turned into a diminishing shark pond where people turn on each other (about stupid nonsense that actually does not really matter). We should instead by concentrating our energies on how to appeal to our politicians so that our hobby is seen in a more positive light. That is not to say everything we do is dangerous - it's not. The vast majority of posts out there I witness pay more attention to cynically cutting down others (or personalities) or giving an opinion about how others are ruining the hobby instead of shutting the fuck up and working together to influence the very people who need influencing (to show how benign and incident free this hobby really is in the grand scheme of all things aviation). I find it rather strange that when a public poll was raised to demonstrate to government how best to regulate the hobby more sympathetically and how many people are affected by unwarranted restriction, most pilots did not even give a hoot and said nothing (but instead went back to their fanboy comments). Despite the amazing passion shown in so many ways by so many people, this hobby has become a very fractured community. It's almost too late to wake it up as the large commercial interests are set to dramatically marginalise our hobby and push it underground even further than what it is today. So sad.
5. I am disappointed that the **industry is driven by fake news**. Retailers (masquarading as manufacturers) and people who actually make products need to sell something to stay in business. Anything. Especially if it will give you a better margin. No matter the quality - it's all about profits. I guess it's the same in every walk of life but it appears that so many FPV hobbyists are desperate to upgrade or get access to the next big thing. The truth is that this has been the situation for the last 3 years. In generally the trajectory of real innovative products/components has been flat to say the least. Improvements have not been mind blowing. But this



has not stopped the hype makers from appealing to the uninformed. Most pilots in this hobby have an arsenal of drones they have built. Everyone is pretending to test whether the hype is real or not. Problems abound. Naturally. There are millions of combinations of products and software so the quad world is ripe for misinformation and dubious claims. And herein lies the problem. When a new person comes into this hobby they are lost. Everything is not what it seems. Help is at hand but it usually comes with hidden provisos, hidden agendas. Agendas that are linked to what others are familiar with. Asking a simple noob question on social media clearly shows how unsympathetic parts of this community really are. In essence despite lots of people playing in this hobby the sharing of information has become obtuse and hard to unravel. And the recreational quadcopter build and fly market has not expanded anywhere near as much as the commercial interests had hoped. This has had disastrous effects on suppliers. Literally all the major suppliers have downsized or are scrambling to widen their product range. It's almost like the early days of automobiles - lots of different makes and

models. Far too many alternatives. For someone with a strong aviation background (flying, instructing and maintaining gliders) I too have dabbled in ways to help other pilots, designing more efficient propellers, more efficient motors, improving frame durability (along with easier build and better balance), easy to use flight controllers and a bit more. I have not improved my bank balance and have become very cynical about product reviews and gimmicky options put up as innovative.



6. I am somewhat **disappointed by a number of high profile pilots** who deliberately mask and smudge their advice. I

hate it when someone puts on an act publicly and I know for a fact they are not themselves on camera. Their persona is only for show and it's not real - only to get fans to follow and buy stuff. It's a sad fact but YouTube views have become paramount. It supposedly makes good money (if only that were true). Celebrity status reportedly sells products - no matter how good or how bad these products really are. No matter if the celebrity has not had any hand in it either. No matter if the celebrity actually uses the product or not. I stand behind the products I recommend and I abhor fakeness. I'm out when I am required to perform as someone I am not. For example EVERY pilot experiences jello but you would never know this. The community believes otherwise. "Things" are done to limit jello. Hidden things. Soft mounting, software and now the GoPro 7. People are frightened to come clean - it might show them up. They would rather be seen as perfect. I don't produce videos for views - they are my way of documenting my story or teaching something for others as a reference. Even my Rotor Riot videos contain this type of theme. Check them out again if you will.

I am certainly NOT disappointed with the opportunities that have come before me. It's been an amazing ride full of surprises and challenges. I have travelled the world and been to places I would never ever have believed I could ever visit. For a "home body" this has been a ride of a lifetime. It's also been a most stressful time having to live continually out of a suitcase, thousands of miles away from family and support and on-the-go literally every day for over 2.5 years (in cultures that are extremely foreign to me). It has not been easy. I have been violently sick, I have had tooth abscesses, I have had to cope with extreme weather and I have always been the one man out using Mode 1 while the world uses Mode 2. Lol. Nevertheless I have met some wonderful people from all walks of life. I believe I have influenced many aspects of this sport and I am proud of my achievements. I was never one to jump into the unknown but that happened 3 years ago. Most importantly I grew as a person and realised many of my limitations. I also realised that your morals are very important - almost as much as true friends. And I have lots of close friends who understand why I do things (and why I don't). I am humbled that my Patreons have supported me all this time. As I step slowly out of the limelight I trust that you have enjoyed the journey so far. There is more to come. I intend to spend more time on another passion of mine - full size gliders. It's an area that I am very familiar with. There are lots of carry overs into FPV and RC models so hang on to your hat as I try to incorporate these. I value your support and encouragement.



# Making Money in FPV

“Be more professional - monetising everything.” Right. But how do actually generate a regular income stream if you want to be called a professional FPV pilot?

## **YouTube**

Not worth worrying about unless you get more subscribers than our hobby has pilots and an equivalent number of views when releasing EACH and every video. It's also best to release video as often and as regularly as possible (minimum weekly or more often). That's not easy to do.

## **Patreon/GoFundMe**

Patreon allows you to set your own levels of donations. You can gain a reasonable following by building a close relationship with your supporters by giving them password access to your special resources/information/freebies/discounts. Most Patreon's actually supplement their income from other sources. GoFundMe and similar sites are more project based - set a target and appeal for funds to reach that target. Remember a percentage gets taken out of any donation made.

## **Paypal**

Donations can be paid direct to your Paypal account based on your email address. Paypal even gives you code for a donation button on your web site.

## **Affiliate links**

When a viewer clicks on a YouTube (or other channels) link in the descriptions area (usually Amazon) to buy a product, the producer gains a small commission on sales. The more links listed the more chance there is to appeal to or capture viewers. Many viewers are turned off by this.

## **Amazon store**

You can set up a personal online department within the Amazon store and populate it with Amazon products that you designate. You pay for the privilege per month to set it up (even if you don't sell anything) plus there is an extra fee on product sales and on the amount of traffic through your store. You have to sell quite a bit to make money. You can just as easily create an online store on your web site but you may have to do additional work to keep it functioning.

## **Racing - Podium Finish**

How much net profit you make depends entirely on the expenses you incur when coming to the event. Some events will fund travel and accommodation (with maybe some food covered too). Very few events pay an appearance fee unless you are a celebrity with a high enough profile to attract wider interest (or you are part of DRL or DCL). The major reason why pilots push to attend a high profile racing event is to win prize money or gain selection to be invited to attend a higher profile event with greater prize money. Remember you may have to pay tax on your winnings and if paying for your accommodation you may also be forced to live in expensive digs close to the venue. The number of pilots making enough in prize money to support themselves is miniscule.

## **Sponsorships**

The vast array of sponsorships on offer are really only about gaining some free products and marketing gear. The payback is that sponsors/manufacturers will expect you to demonstrate and talk about their products in a good light. Sponsors who will pay you a retainer to continue to promote their products are rare as hen's teeth. They might pay for your airfare and accommodation to attend an event in the hope you will win and highlight their product but that's as far as they will go. And they might only do it once.



## Celebrity Products

Many well known pilots sidle up to manufacturers and “ask” that their celebrity status name be placed on a product. Usually this means that they will request a small commission on sales but in some cases a lump sum may be given instead. These sorts of commissions are actually where celebrities make most of their income. The level of the commission depends upon many things including the negotiation skills of the celebrity or the extent or otherwise of input into the development of the product. A celebrity name on a product does not necessarily mean that the celebrity has had any input into the design or makeup of the product or that the celebrity necessarily uses the product in every flying instance. There have been many examples where celebrities have endorsed a product only to move on to another manufacturer once a new improved alternative comes onto the market. Its all about marketability and not getting left behind in the race for the next “big thing”. It’s important to treat everything with a grain of salt. The need for manufacturers to have celebrity endorsement is obvious but mind you in a lot of cases a manufacture may put to market a celebrity product alongside exactly the same product but without the celebrity signature. And then there is the matter of some celebrities who are world class pilots but have only limited technical knowledge yet their notoriety is such that less skilled pilots will invest in the product simply because their idol is seen to fly the product in their marketing, irrespective of that product’s quality or fitness for purpose. It’s the name that counts.

A large number of celebrities are simply salesmen of online stores. They are encouraged to “build their own brand” (and their own products) but their status/face and recommendations are used to legitimise the products sold in the online store. Some of these organisations pay a small retainer to the celebrity and get a preferred manufacturer to subsidise the salary package and also to pay for travel and accommodation. The celebrity then gains income from a variety of sources.

## Reverb

The Reverb continues to be in high demand across the globe. ImpulseRC, here in Oz, have worked tirelessly to create a sales network reaching many countries so consumers are well supported. The number of positive reviews about the Reverb keeps building and the number of build videos/explanations is now well over 12 and in many foreign languages. I am particularly pleased to be associated



with this frame since its the source of a major part of my current income. Pilots have rightly pointed out that although nothing is ever perfect, the Reverb is one of the most beautifully balanced, amazingly durable, very straightforward to build and repair frames and it has lots of alternatives for pilots interested in tinkering with various flight controller options. It’s well and truly become a staple item in the ImpulseRC product line alongside the Alien. It could not have happened without Sean Blakemore and the boys at ImpulseRC - one of the only fully dedicated frame designers/manufacturers in the world. If you have purchased the Reverb or have friends who have or are interested in buying one (or more :-)) thank you.

## A Big Thank You

I have to tell you that the broadband coming into my apartment sucks big time. I cannot rely on it at any time. My Shooting the Shit videocasts have therefore been non existant. Ever time I try to have a go its impossible - the lag and delay is getting progressively worse. The people living in my area are totally pissed off with the whole thing. So apologies. I don't really have a solution unless I go and use the internet at friend's places which I am loath to do. My internet speed has been dropping so much that the Australian Asssistant Treasurer has been caught using taxpayer funds to try to improve his access speed at home. The "(Dis)Honorable" Stuart Robert MP is so pissed off with the lack of speed in our local area he was spending \$2500 per month just to get decent internet. He lives very close to me so go figure.

Hopefully pressure may now be bought to bear from our masters that might result in a more workable solution for our community soon. Cheers and thanks for being so understanding. This whole unsavoury broadband situation has given me the shits - so much so its been a major reason for me withdrawing from social media. :-) Lol. Naaa.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Cheers.

Chad

