



GDC 2008: Dreamflyer - Scuse Me While I Kiss The Sky

by [Joe Blancato](#), 25 Feb 2008 19:28

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Stationed in the Intel Lounge, three floors and another half mile away from Team Humidor's home base, was a gentleman named Rahul Lakhote, CEO of Flight Motion Simulators, and he was showing off the coolest gaming chair ever.

He calls it the [Dreamflyer](#), and it's as close as you'll get to an F-16 cockpit into your living room. It's designed to recreate the experience of flying a plane, from the wide field of view to the pitch and roll of a death spiral. It hooks up to any flight sim, though it's designed to work best with the Microsoft games.

At first look, it's an intimidating contraption: a bucket seat surrounded by black metal piping, flanked by three widescreen monitors, with a joystick attached to more piping jutting out right at crotch level. Just getting into the thing seems intimidating, in some way official, like all you're missing is a flight suit.

When I arrived, Lakhote was showing off the Dreamflyer to another attendee, who was tilting about 15 degrees to the left before Lakhote grabbed the back of the chair and twisted it quickly, startling the user and sending her plane careening toward the ground.

"You can tilt it 50 degrees," he told me with a smile.

The device doesn't use hydraulics, servos or gyros to stabilize itself. Rather, it was designed by a team of mechanical engineers to be perfectly balanced on each axis, so when a user manipulates the joystick, his weight shifts the entire Dreamflyer in one direction to another. The view on the screen corresponds perfectly, because the game takes its cue from the joystick's position. Lakhote said the simple design helps keep costs down, but at a \$3,000 price tag, it's still well out of anyone but the most hardcore flight sim junkie's hands.

After I blanched at the price, Lakhote invited me to hop into the seat and take a test flight. When I sat down, the chair pitched forward and I went into a nosedive. He paused the game and produced a five-pound dumb bell weight, which he then attached to the front of the chair. It pitched backward, and I was perfectly level. When Lakhote resumed the game, I was cruising along at 18,000 feet, and then I got to trying to rip the wings off. I put the Dreamflyer through its paces, rolling left and right to the chair's limit, trying to throw it out of sync with the sim, to no avail. I pulled up into a stall, and even that felt right; as I jammed the stick downward to regain control, the view in the game corresponded to the chair's position. And it felt like flying, except I wasn't sweating about hitting a mountain.

I asked Lakhote about the Dreamflyer's application in schools. He said it definitely plays a role, especially in schools with lower budgets that typically use *Microsoft Flight Simulator* a lot anyway. He said the Dreamflyer costs less than a full-fledged simulator, which means schools could teach more students at the same time about how flying in a cockpit feels before exposing them to the real thing thousands of feet in the air.

Lakhote said they're happy to reach both the low-end flight trainer and high-end gamer market somewhere in the middle.

The Dreamflyer is currently on sale, and won an innovation award at the 2008 CES.