

HM Review

Dennis McFarlane

Parkzone Mini Vapor

An ultra micro-size radio control airplane.

The Vapor series of airplanes has been with us for a number of years. When the Vapor first appeared it created quite a stir. Until this time, R/C pilots only experimented with super lightweight airframes and tiny power plants. The ultra-light airplanes were very much novelties, often only appearing at the larger indoor electric events where they were often relegated to unused corners of the flying arenas. The original Vapor placed the world of micro aviation on end, putting this type of flying into the hands of the everyday radio control aviation consumer.

As popular as the original Vapor was, when the Night Vapor came on the market, with its bright LEDs it was even more popular. It's now impossible to attend any indoor electric event, local or regional, without seeing a Vapor on nearly every table; they are everywhere one looks.

As small and lightweight as the original Vapor was, with developments in micro electronics one knew an even smaller version would eventually be launched into the radio control aviation market and the Mini Vapor is now on dealers' shelves.

The model is available in the now standard two versions. The ARF (Almost Ready to Fly) version #PKZU1200 comes with the familiar Parkzone MLP4DSM game controller style four channel transmit-



ter. The BNF (Bind-N-Fly) version #PKZU1280 reviewed is the same airplane with the same components, such as a 1S 30mAh lithium battery and dedicated battery charger. The only difference between the two products is with the BNF the consumer provides his own JR or Spektrum DSM compatible transmitter.

With a wingspan of 8.7 inches and a length of 11.8 inches, the Mini Vapor is approximately 60 percent of the size of the original Vapor. The ready to fly weight is advertized to be 8.7 grams, but on my scale the review model weighs 9.1 grams. Unless the end user plans on

entering some sort of duration contest, the difference of 0.4 grams is not much to be concerned about even with a model this lightweight. It could be something as simple as an extra piece of tape was used to secure the covering on the review model, or even the accuracy of the electronic scale used. It isn't much to worry about, and if the flying performance is affected I certainly can't tell.

Preparing the model for flight couldn't be simpler. Prior to binding the model to the chosen transmitter, in this case a workhorse JR9503, a blank model memory was selected and by using the transmitter's reset button, all of the control functions were returned to the original factory settings. Speaking from experience, this is a wise practice for any new model and should always be recommended to every customer who is new to com-



The Mini Vapor was bound to an extremely reliable JR 9503 transmitter for the flight evaluation.



Features

- An even smaller version of the extremely popular Vapor design.
- Packaged with everything needed to fly in one box.
- Available in either a Ready to Fly or Bind and Fly version.
- Carbon fiber construction assures ultra-lightweight performance.
- Fun model that can be flown in any room of your house.

puterized transmitters.

While the flight battery was charging, the instruction manual was read one last time. The manual is pretty standard Parkzone in that it is 75 pages long and printed in five languages. The English section of the manual is 19 pages and covers all of the necessary basics to prepare the Mini Vapor for flight. One thing that should be noted is to make certain you introduce the end user to the section on balance.

The battery tray slides back and forth on the carbon fiber "stick" fuselage rather easily, thereby dramatically changing the C/G (Center of Gravity). Experienced modelers love to play with the C/G, but for beginners, especially first time pilots, stick with the balance point as recommended in the instruction manual. Manuals are printed for the consumers benefit.

Once the flight battery was charged, the model was plugged in, and after a few seconds an LED on the receiver began to blink indicating the model was ready to be bound to the transmitter. At this point the transmitter was turned on and placed into the bind mode. A few short seconds later the LED began to glow a solid red and the control surfaces snapped to neutral. The model was now bound to the transmitter, and it was time to put the new Mini Vapor in the air.

The room selected is pretty much a standard residential size space and contains everything a person would see in a dedicated TV room. Things like a sectional sofa, ottoman and a couple end tables with lamps were present, but not much else in the way of obstacles.

Following the recommendations in the manual, the tiny motor was spooled to about half throttle, and the little Mini Vapor was released. To be honest it took about three attempts before I caught onto flying the aircraft in such a restricted space. Even so, some of the first turns looked more like modified hovers as the throttle was jockeyed while the Mini Vapor changed directions as it hung on its propeller. Finally I began to catch on, and flying the little Vapor became more fun, but as silly as this may sound, it was still a bit frustrating and somewhat of a challenge.



Flying the Mini Vapor in an open arena allows ultra-light

ROG's (Rise off Ground) takeoffs were attempted and were marginally successful. The problem lies with the space necessary to obtain flying speed, the climb over the furniture and the hard turns to avoid the walls. Once in the air, after a couple of turns, it's exactly like a hand-launch, but it was really more fun just to hand launch the little airplane when flying in such a small area.

The Mini Vapor was taken along to E-Fest, and this is where the airplane really began to shine. With an opportunity to explore the flight envelope, a pile of information was garnered like the range of airspeed and the amount of elevator to use when making turns so neither pitch or altitude would change. With the larger arena, ROG's and spot touch-and-go landings became the norm, not an exception.

Once back home, flight in the restricted space of our residence was much more entertaining. Now that the Mini Vapor was better understood, it was a lot of fun to fly and a whole lot easier to keep off the walls and away from obstacles. The key to success with the Mini Vapor is to learn all of the nuances of the airplane in a large arena and once the ins and outs of the flight envelope have been explored begin flying it in a more limited space. The Mini Vapor has progressed into a way to grin after a long day staring at a computer screen.

It wasn't tried, but I don't believe the Mini Vapor will handle the out of doors very well. Flying this series of airplanes is more like changing directions than anything else. Something as simple as a furnace blower activating will blow a slow flying Vapor around, so even trying to fly during the calmest of evening hours would be difficult if not impossible, still I'm sure there will be those who make an attempt and they may achieve a certain degree of success.

The Mini Vapor is another in a series of very popular Vapor designs. The original Vapor is no longer available, but the Night Vapor which replaced it sells just as well as ever, and the Mini Vapor is certain to follow the same path of consumer popularity.

Like all Parkzone products, the Mini Vapor is available exclusively through Horizon Hobby. **HM**



Well known R/C enthusiast Walt Throne is shown flying his Mini Vapor in the dining room of his residence.