

Hovering drone draws rave reviews at CES

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An attendee photographs an AR. Drone helicopter by Parrot as it flies overhead during a press event for the 2010 International Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, Nevada. The device, which is controlled wirelessly from an iPhone, is expected to be available in late 2010, and has two cameras on it making it useful for video game applications.

Hovering silently a few feet off the ground it looks like a flying saucer out of a Steven Spielberg film.

But it's no alien device. It's a new toy called the AR.drone from French company Parrot -- a small remote-controlled helicopter which is piloted using an [Apple iPhone](#) or an [iPod Touch](#) through a Wi-Fi connection.

A demonstration of the miniature helicopter, or quadricopter for its four propellers, drew rave reviews at the opening here of the annual [Consumer Electronics Show](#) (CES) as it flew around the heads of exhibitors and journalists.

The pilot maneuvers the drone using the accelerometer in an iPhone or iPod.

Moving the iPhone forward makes the AR.Drone go forward while a sideways movement makes it turn a corner or change direction. Command buttons on the iPhone allow it to go up or down.

Parrot specializes in making hands-free wireless systems for cars and company founder Henri Seydoux said the AR.Drone is the first product of its kind from the Paris-based firm, which employs 450 people worldwide.

"We expect to have it on the market sometime this year," the Parrot chief executive told AFP.

He declined to name a price saying it had not yet been set.

The AR.Drone weighs just over 300 grams, or half a pound, and is equipped with a video camera that streams to the iPhone or iPod the view from the "cockpit."

The AR.Drone can be used for what Parrot called "augmented reality gaming" -- allowing "real world objects and conditions, like a tree or wind, to become a part of the video gaming experience."

Parrot said the AR.Drone is built on an open platform and the company is inviting outside developers to create games for the device.

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