

Polter kindly invited me to submit a "brief" review of the CH Fighterstick and Pro Throttle. How could I refuse?

First of all I should mention the price. Quality doesn't come cheap. It'll cost you the same as the TM Cougar. I purchased (separately) my own set from a company in the US who delivered them three days later to the UK by courier and I paid around £140 all in including shipping, saving over £100. Please note that Amazon (UK) are liars and will fail to deliver.

The Fighterstick itself is modelled on the F-16 FLCS like the Cougar but CH have opted for their own unique design for the throttle. It's difficult to avoid a comparison with the Cougar but I'll come to that later.

Don't begin by thinking that CH are second best. This is an established company that produces flight controllers for real aircraft and the quality really shows from the start when you open the box. The controllers are lightweight but very robust being made from high quality polycarbonate. These are far from your typical plastic controllers. The non-slip pads are easily the best I've encountered. Ergonomics are superb and the throttle, although not styled on the RL TQS is extremely comfortable to use. All of the buttons and hat switches and conveniently located.

Each device has three 4-way hats, one 8-way hat, and numerous buttons. I'd have liked to have the paddle switch of the TM sticks but some neat extras make up for this. The Fighterstick has its own throttle slider (which I've configured as a landing gear lever), and manual pitch / roll trim controls. These work in-game so will save you having to map trim to the stick. The Pro Throttle itself is very responsive and accurate but there is no detent as with the Cougar, although this can be programmed using the more advanced features of the software. The Pro Throttle also has a 4-way mini joystick ideal for mapping the radar cursors.

The latest version of the CH Control Manager software now comes on CD and it's easy to install your controllers (via USB). If you're using a version of Falcon prior to BMS 2.0 / FF3 you'll need to combine the FLCS and throttle as a single device using the controller wizard in order for the throttle axis to be assigned properly. An easy process but I was caught out first time around. A friend in the US called CH on my behalf, got through in a matter of seconds to a human being (no annoying call centre), and they sorted the matter immediately. They were even aware of this issue with older versions of Falcon! Customer support at its best.

The software itself is a cinch to use and program. I was up and running with a full blown profile 15 mins after installation. It's that easy. The controllers can be programmed using a three mode function or with a configurable shift button. If you feel the need, you can even combine these giving you 6 functions for each button / hat. You will certainly not run out of mapping space on this one. The axes can also have different assignments in any mode. Both controllers have LEDs (green, red, amber) indicating current mode. More advanced programming options are available for the hardcore user but I'll try to keep this review short. You can tweak gain, deadzone, run custom macro scripts, etc.

OK, so how do they perform? Like a charm! The axes are smooth, responsive, and I've experienced no hovering or spiking at all in the months I've had them. I can honestly say that my flying improved significantly. From speaking to other CH owners, these are expected to last years without any problems whatsoever. Should the worst happen however, they come with a three year warranty and CH will replace defective controllers with brand new ones! No waiting for months for DIY pots to show up in the mail, Cougar style.

OK, now what factors prompted me to go CH rather than Cougar...

Better quality of construction. Yes, the Cougar is metal (yawn), but it's a cheap and nasty die cast material. I'd have preferred a more robust and lightweight aluminium or magnesium alloy such as that commonly used on semi-pro / pro camera bodies.

Better reliability and customer support. Good luck even trying to find a phone number for TM-Guillemot, especially outside the US.

More functions and ease of programming.

Now arguably the Cougar offers a greater degree of response from the controller axes, but this is in part the reason for the infamous unreliability of the pots. Both set-ups cost a lot of money so choose wisely! You can also buy the Fighterstick and Pro Throttle separately if funds are an issue.

Oh, and did I mention that the buttons wont fall off.

In short, if you're a desktop pilot, the CH combo is the best of the best. Top Gun. If you're a dedicated home pit builder and have money to burn, get the Cougar and an expensive 3rd party upgrade.

Finally, some useful links...

CH Products Home...

[www.chproducts.com](http://www.chproducts.com)

Forum and profile downloads...

[www.ch-hangar.com](http://www.ch-hangar.com)

Some nice covers (for CH, Saitek, and TM)...

[www.hotascovers.com](http://www.hotascovers.com)

Ziggy's F4 Profile...

<http://www.ch-hangar.com/forum/index.php?showtopic=1810>