Chasing Dory review

By Peter Rowlands

Chasing-Innovation, a Chinese company started in 2016, and I go back quite a while now for I have long been a fan of their small ROVs and back in 2017 I pledged on Indiegogo for their first product - The Gladius Submersible Drone (GSD). I reviewed it in Issue UwP99 Nov/Dec and it has proved a most useful and reliable vehicle.

In my review I congratulated them for having made such a good product right from the start. It provided the capability of ROVs costing several times more and was extremely easy to deploy and operate.

In early 2019 when I heard that they had developed the GSD into the Gladius Mini Submersible Drone my original purchase was 'Ebayed' and now resides in Turkey with a marine surveyor!

The Gladius Mini has proved to be a significant improvement; one of the most important being the ability to tilt and hold it's angle which makes searching for anything on the seabed so much more productive. In addition the ability to hold depth and stabilise makes the Mini perfect for filming steady footage and stills. The wide angle 4k lens produces excellent image quality so the whole package is very productive.

Before I had had time to write an in depth review, at the DEMA Show in Orlando I met Craig Glover, Market Development Manager at Chasing Technology and he urged me to review their latest offspring - Chasing Dory; a much smaller ROV aimed at the leisure market at a much lower price.

Within days Craig had organised a review unit to be sent to me and all I can say is that it performs nearly as well as the Gladius Mini but is much easier to set up and so is really fun to use.

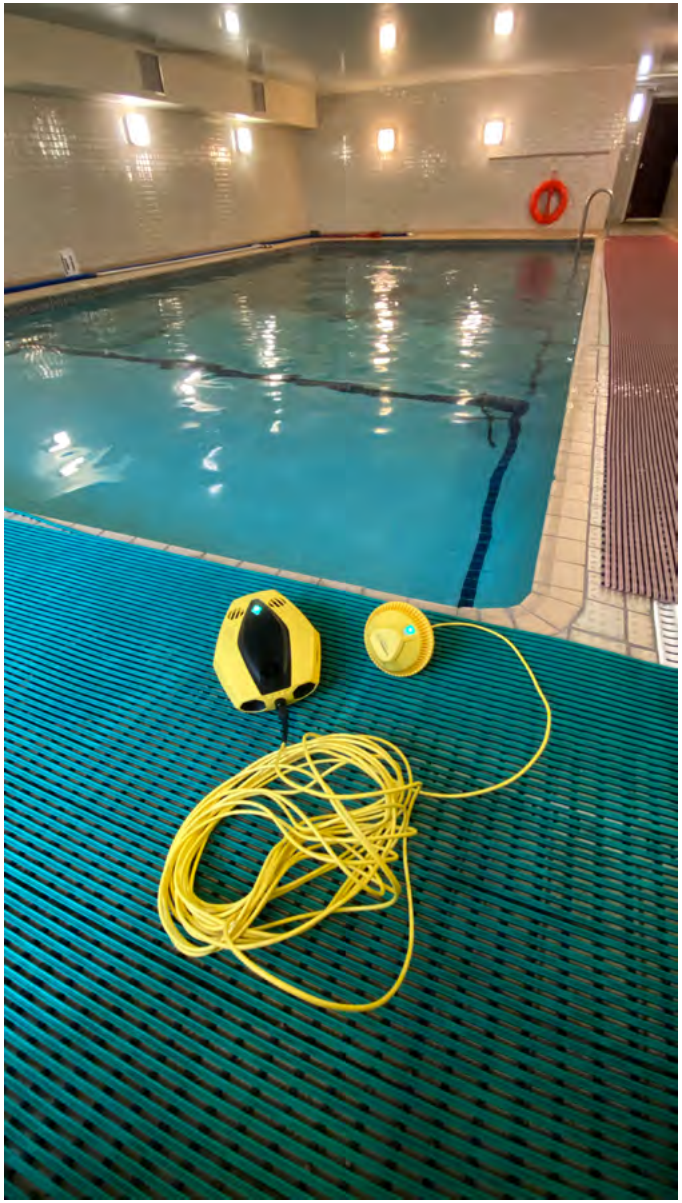
Being fun to use might imply that, like so many 'toys', they end up in a cupboard once the initial excitement has worn off but the Chasing Dory is much more than a play thing if you want it to be. In fact it performs nearly all the tasks which it's big brother can do just within a more limited depth range.

Initially I thought the 15 metre umbilical would limit it's capabilities but that's far from the case and the sheer portability and ease of use mean it can be considered for many other purposes than just filming the kids in the backyard pool (which it is very good at by the way!).

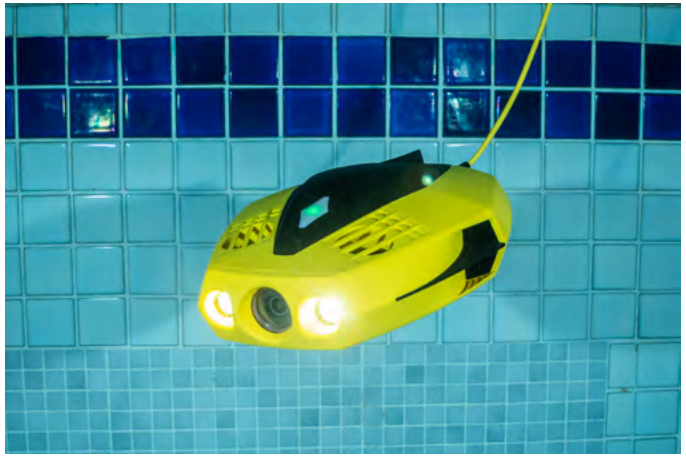
A marine engineer friend of mine has used it to provide visual evidence of boat engine and hull condition for a client and so saved them several hundreds of pounds not having to have the boat craned out for inspection. Another contact in the aquarium world sees a very valuable use inspecting tank and coral conditions which would otherwise involve a physical diver with all of the health and safety implications, not to mention the cost.

As with so many devices today Chasing Dory is controlled by a smartphone or tablet screen swiping app rather than a joystick games console and this makes operation incredibly easy; No wires and just a wifi link to the floating buoy so you can operate from almost anywhere to suit your requirements.

In terms of use I think the bigger the screen the

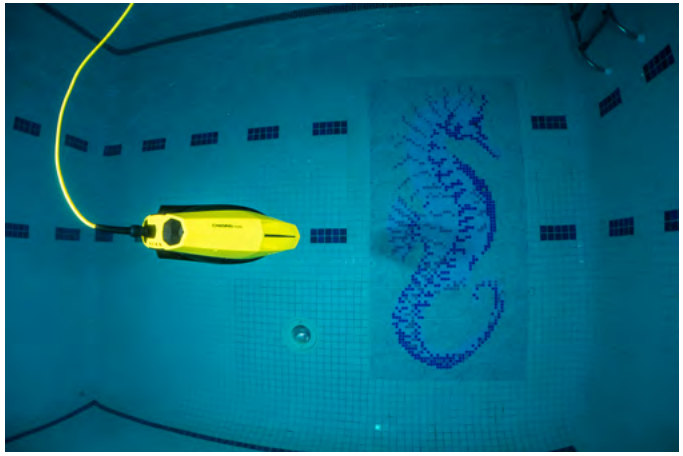


Chasing Dory is very portable, extremely simple to set up and very easy to control via a smartphone or tablet app.



The onboard batteries provide an hour of use and there are two very useful LED lights for use when the water is clear.

The onboard motors must be very quiet underwater because on my first sea dive to ten metres I was able to find and get very close to firstly a cuttlefish and secondly this octopus. Neither seemed spooked by Chasing Dory and I was able to get some pleasing footage although British sea conditions in winter are notoriously poor in terms of clarity as the above left shot shows but corrected in the excellent Dive+ app the image is really brought to life.



Chasing Dory is extremely stable and produces excellent stills and 1080p video.

better it is. I started with my 6" iPhone which was fine but things got so much easier when I used my iPad Mini and then even more so with my full size iPad.

The app has some very useful image control functions and the 1080p video camera and still images are smooth and recorded onto the 16gb built in memory for later downloading.

Anyone who has flown a drone will be at home right away for there is a choice of Japanese or American controls as well as the ability to fully customise the controls to your own individual tastes. The other two decisions to make are how fast you want to go and what angle to set the viewing tilt. Even if you haven't flown a drone there is a logic to the controls which is almost intuitive and five minutes in a swimming pool will make you feel very much in control.

From a learning point of view it makes sense to start on the slower of the two speed settings until you get a sense of how it reacts to your screen swipes but if you're anything like me the higher speed setting is when the real fun starts.

As with most aerial drones, if you take your hands off, Chasing Dory will just stay there awaiting orders while you gather your thoughts and decide what to do next. It really couldn't be simpler.

The onboard batteries provide an hour of use and there are two very useful LED lights but it should be realised that in turbid conditions these could be counter productive.

I know myself well enough to know that the likelihood of me sending the review unit back was pretty slim so I now own and have paid for a Chasing Dory AND a Gladius Mini because they both have their purposes and I am sure will provide many hours of productive pleasure. One thing's for certain neither will end up in a cupboard :-)

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