Smoke Trials

Roger Simmonds

I have just retuned from a splendid SAM Gala where there were a reassuring number of smoke trails in the air, from both Rapiers and real jetex motors, and I'll have some photos and a full report ready for next month. It cannot be denied that the problems with Rapiers have had some impact on our activities, but the stalwarts, Chris Richards, Andy Blackwell, John and Mark Digby, André Bird *et al* were carrying on in the face of difficulties, showing a typically stiff upper British lip, even if the one below was trembling with frustration over the inchoate communications – which are contradictory to the point of aporia – emanating from 'Castle Rapier'. We had it on good authority, and from more than one source, that Dr Zigmund had failed to find a new source of L2 casings and L2s were to be replaced by a de-rated L3 – a sort of 'L3-LT'. This at least made sense and was consistent; but then Bernard, who lives in Prague, had a long conversation with the lad himself whilst he (Dr Z) was attending a Junior Rocketry Competition. Below is a slightly edited version of Bernard's story as reported on the *Small Flying Arts* website:

"I was paid a surprise visit this afternoon by Dr Z … here is what he told me: The problem with the paper quality for the L2 has been *more or less* [my italics] resolved! Dr. Z has found a new source for tubes of appropriately high quality paper (a shotgun shell factory apparently) and so will start production by next week or so. He hopes that within a month he will be back at full steam producing one L2 every minute or so (about 55/hour, 250/day). So that is good news for us Rapier junkies. Dr Z also told me that he is thinking about a new longer burning L2 but did not disclose more. Furthermore, he hopes that when he is going full steam again he can continue working on a mass-production line (he is currently packing each motor individually himself as he has no employees). Your Rapiers are, therefore, each worth about one minute of Dr. Z's life so treat them with love and kindness. Dr Z stopped development of the 'Euro 20k Mass-Production Machine' when the L2 paper [or case] problem appeared, but he hopes that this device will double his production rate to 500 per day.

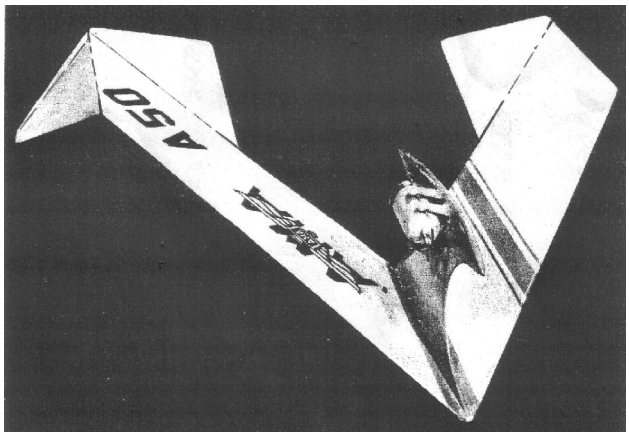
On the future: Dr Z has some fears that the factory where he purchases his propellant is going to close; if this happens than we can expect a hiccup in production and possibly a price jump if he has to purchase from a distant and therefore more expensive source – so if you can't live without em you might wanna hoard them. Lastly, Dr Z says he is overwhelmed by a huge backlog of orders so don't expect new Rapiers soon as it will probably take a few months for the motors to show up at your favourite Rapier emporium. Any questions?"

Hmmm … suffice it to say that this Upbeat Update has left me as confused as anybody else, and I am very suspicious of that 'more or less'! As to questions, well, one obvious one is, "what has changed in the last couple of weeks to justify Dr Z's optimism – has he tested the new cases and got some good results and statistics?" I'm sure I don't know. Meanwhile, on the evidence of what I've seen on the flying field, the smart Rapier flyers are having fun with L1s; brave souls are using L3s, and I am using up my old stocks of L2s with reckless abandon, hoping to defy the odds, and, slightly less frenetically, enjoying flying real Jetex again after more years than I care to remember.

As readers are aware, I love the old Jetex (Wilmot Mansour) ARTF models, but it should not be forgotten that other manufacturers also produced ARTFs. Sigurd Isacson in Sweden, for example, but by far the biggest market was the US, where ARTFs, complete with motors, were sold by mail order in a pedagogic package that was very attractive to the fledgling flier. Few, if any of these made it to the UK, which is a pity, if the alluring examples on the left are typical. These adverts were in bright, not to say garish, colours guaranteed to catch, and hold, any youngster's eye. The Skyfighter was marketed by Telasco; the one below was (somewhat confusingly) made by 'Jetex Skyfighter'. I do not know who made the F-102. Priced under $2.00, I'm sure all these were very popular. But I have seen no examples – do any US readers remember them?

I ripped the illustrations off eBay, where the adverts, not the desirable object themselves, were on sale for an exorbitant $9.95. According to John Miller Crawford, it is now quite common for dealers to eviscerate magazines and to sell the articles, plans, and (as in this case) adverts therein piecemeal. Now this is a nefarious practice akin to those of certain 'Metal Detectors' in the bad old days, as the context of the items is lost. So I can tell readers nothing about when or where these adverts were published. A great pity. And no, I am not paying out $9.95 for something which should be distributed freely and with joy amongst fellow historians. Or should I get real in these 'credit crunch' times? John says that this particular seller has pedalled these items before, but there were no takers … perhaps he will get the message. A plague on all dealers' houses I say! Or at least a heavy cold.

The IMA Target Drone has again been featured in *SAM (35) Speaks*, with a nice history of Frances Plomer (né Randall), of whom Bert Judge also speaks so highly. It would be good to make a replica for L3 power (the Target Drone, not Wren Frances), and Ben Nead of *Jetex.org* was going to draw up a plan way back in 2005. Alas, Ben is way too busy at the moment, so would somebody else with access to the real thing care to have a go? The nice illustration bottom left shows one on its 'launching catapult'. I can't remember where I found this unique photo. Readers can have a copy for a mere £9.95.



Having had reports of problems with both L1s and L3s (low power with the former, burst cases with the latter) I've been looking for a design flexible and robust enough to handle anything. And here it is – courtesy of Gordon Rae, who kindly sent me the plan – Theodore Grzeszczak's curious 'Jet-Liner'. Being all-sheet, with a motor mounted on a cabane well away from the flying surfaces, it will be ideal for using up all those L2s of dubious provenance lurking in your flight bag!

It was first published in *Flying Models*; I have no date, but the Jetex 50B implies at least 1953. Mr Grzeszczak writes, "This all-balsa Jetex 50-powered flying wing is almost indestructible [good!] and despite its small size the flying qualities are great. Total weight was kept down by the proper selection of quarter grained balsa. The generous amount of sweepback with the upturned tips affords good longitudinal stability and the cabane area, along with the drooped tips, provides good directional stability. The placement of the jet motor gives a high thrust line, which prevents looping toward the end of the flight when the motor is delivering maximum thrust".

I have not seen this angular model on the flying field – not even in the hands of André Bird, our own arch-aficionado of idiosyncratic all-sheet designs. I would guess that if built light it will be more than adequately powered by a 'standard' L1, and can easily be resized for L3s, or any L1s of especially low power. The designer reports no peculiarities of trimming, but significantly comments; "A slight indication of stall will prevent a tight circle from developing into a spiralling dive". This is good advice which I confess to following when trimming both the Wren and the Sharky.