

Sun 'n Fun Roundup 2014

Starting the air show season right

Plane & Pilot

James Wynbrandt

Fantastic weather, thrilling shows by the Blue Angels, record-setting crowds and a visit from the governor: The 40th Sun 'n Fun Fly-In, held April 1-6 in Lakeland, Fla., had much to celebrate this year. As we went to press, preliminary figures on attendance "was 15 to 20% higher than any gate we've ever had," said Communications Director Sandy Bridges, estimating 225,000 visitors and 11,000 aircraft movements during the show. That attendance will translate into more aviation for youngsters.



Stallion 51's Mustang, Crazy Horse, arrives at Lakeland, Fla., with a view of the Sun 'n Fun ramp.

"We're a 501(c)3, and all our money goes back into education," said Bridges. "So this is a spring break for pilots, but it's not just a spring break. We've paid for 18 students to get their pilot's licenses over the past year. That's what everyone here is helping with."

Rick Scott, making the first Sun 'n Fun visit by a governor of the state, spent two-and-a-half hours enjoying the sights and sounds. "He was overwhelmed," said Bridges. Also overwhelmed: Sun 'n Fun president John "Lites" Leenhouts. "You all did such a good job, you're going to have a tough act to follow next year," he told volunteers at the show's conclusion.

In addition to the air show and static displays, the workshops and evening programs, exhibitors showcased their wares and introduced new offerings. Here's a roundup of some of the most exciting products and services new to this year's show.

Daher-Socata TBM 900

www.tbm.aero



The TBM 900, the newest version of Daher-Socata's sleek and sporty turboprop single, made its public debut at Sun 'n Fun. (See Pilot Report on page 24.) Top cruise speed has been upped to 330 knots, the takeoff roll shortened and time to climb decreased, thanks to aerodynamic refinements and firewall-forward enhancements. A new composite five-blade Hartzell prop acts like a turbocharger, driving air into the intake bowl, and winglets improve low-speed handling qualities. The French OEM has also restyled the interior to invest more of a sporty ambiance to the cabin. The four-place seating is completely reconfigurable; any or all of the seats can be quickly removed, or positioned in club or commuter (all forward facing) arrangement. The cockpit features a restyled panel and improved soundproofing, and a quieter engine lowers sound levels inside and out. Priced at \$3.71 million.

Rotax 912 iS Sport

www.flyrotax.com



Rotax introduced an updated version of its fuel-injected 912 iS engine, the 912 iS Sport. The iS Sport delivers shorter takeoff roll, better climb rate and faster cruise speed, while reducing fuel consumption more than 20% over the iS, according to Christian Mundigler, manager of Rotax Aircraft Engine Sales. Once power is below 97%, the engine can be switched from power mode to a fuel-saving ECO mode for maximum economy. "Even in the power mode, it still has 10% better fuel efficiency," Mundigler said. The 100 hp iS sport has a modified air box and intake system, and new software loaded into its ECU (Electronic Control Unit). Rotax hadn't officially announced the price as we went to press, but Mundigler said it will

be offered until October 14 at the 2013 price of the 912 iS, about \$25,225 retail. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Rotax model 912 engine.



Premier Aircraft Sales Premier Edition 172 with Garmin panel and Centurion 2.0 liquid-cooled turbocharged diesel engine.

Premier Aircraft Sales' Premier Edition 172

www.flypas.com

The south Florida aircraft sales and services company introduced its Premier Edition 172 upgrade program, delivering a completely refurbished Cessna 172R or S model with a Centurion 2.0 liquid-cooled, turbocharged diesel engine, a new Garmin panel, and completely restored and refurbished airframe. Customers can have the company source an aircraft and convert it for them or have any combination of Centurion engine, Garmin avionics and interior installed in their own Cessna 172.

"This program is a direct response to what our customers have been asking for," said Art Spengler, VP Operations at the company. At 75% cruise power, the 135 hp Centurion FADEC

engine will burn about 5.2 gph of Jet A, versus the 9.2 gph burn of the Lycoming-powered Skyhawk. "Power, mixture and propeller settings are all done with one lever," Spengler added. "No more worrying over fine power/fuel adjustments." The demonstrator, with the "soup-to-nuts" options including full Garmin ADSB-compliant touch-screen panel and KAP 140 autopilot, \$289,500.

Garmin G3X Garmin VIRB Elite Aviation Bundle

www.garmin.com

Garmin unveiled a turnkey aerial video system for in-cockpit, HD video recording featuring an HD 1080p action camera with a unique 1.4-inch Chroma color display, recording up to three hours on a single charge. The bundle includes a new stereo headset audio cable for embedding pilot-to-pilot and air traffic control communications within the video, a propeller filter reduces propeller distortion created while filming in-flight videos and accessories for mounting the equipment in the cabin. The company also introduced the Garmin G3X Touch, a glass touch-screen flight display system for experimental and LSA aircraft. The 10.6-inch display features split-screen functionality and a host of advanced interface options.



**Garmin VIRB
Elite**



Garmin G3X

Patty Wagstaff Aerobatic School

www.pattywagstaff.com



While performing at Sun 'n Fun, three-time U.S. National Aerobatic Champion and Plane & Pilot columnist Patty Wagstaff also promoted her newly established Patty Wagstaff Aerobatic School, located at Northeast Florida Regional Airport (KSGJ) in St. Augustine, Fla. Her academy will focus on precision aerobatics in classic competition style for pilots who want to fly for recreation, air shows or competition. Additionally, the school will also offer tailwheel training and upset training to individuals and corporate flight departments. Training will be provided in the Super Decathlon and the Extra 300L, the two-place version of the high-

performance monoplane Patty flies in air shows around the world. "Starting an aerobatic school gives me and my instructors a chance to pass on our experience in aerobatics and upset training, and to help create more skillful and safer pilots," said Wagstaff.

With an aerobatic box adjacent to the airport's primary runway, St. Augustine's airport has long been a magnet for sport aviation and top aerobatic performers. The aerobatic school is based at Southeast Aero, the U.S. distributor of Extra Aircraft.

Avidyne IFD540

www.avidyne.com



Avionics manufacturer Avidyne Corp. of Lincoln, Mass., displayed its soon-to-be-certified touch-screen IFD540 and IFD440 FMS/GPS/NAV/COMs in Lakeland. Designed as replacements for Garmin's GNS 530 and 430, the plug-and-play units slide into the same racks respectively as the legacy Garmins and require no installation. The units provide VHF communication and SBAS/LPV navigation, and meet ADS-B accuracy and integrity requirements. The touch-screen functionality includes pinch-zoom, map panning and graphical flight-plan editing.

"The 540 is priced the same as Garmin's 750, but there are no installation costs," said Tom Harper, Avidyne's director of marketing. "And we think customers will like the features on our unit." Avidyne plans to have the unit certified and available for purchase at AirVenture, scheduled for late July in Oshkosh, Wis. The units are priced at \$16,995 for the 540 and \$14,995 for the 440.

Mooney Acclaim And Ovation 3

www.mooney.com



Mooney International Corp., which bought the assets of moribund Mooney Aircraft Company in October 2013, announced it's resuming production of the single-engine Acclaim Type S and Ovation 3 models. The first off the assembly line since 2009—an Acclaim, Mooney's 240 knot-plus flagship model—is scheduled for completion in July and will be auctioned online, the proceeds seeding a Mooney Museum, CEO Dr. Jerry Chen told guests at the company's relaunch ceremony at Sun 'n Fun. Open to all qualified bidders, the auction will end and the winner announced on July 11, two weeks before AirVenture in Oshkosh, Wis., where the aircraft will be displayed. After that first delivery, the factory will produce one aircraft per month through the end of the year and double the rate in 2015, aiming to quickly climb to three aircraft per month. The company's new owners, Soaring America Corp., backed by Chinese investors, are committed to spending at least \$50 million over the next 10 years to revive the company, Chen said. Base price for the turbocharged 2014 Acclaim is \$699,000 and the normally aspirated Ovation 3 is \$649,000.

Flight Design Vision Touch

By Garmin

www.flightdesignusa.com



Flight Design and Garmin announced this avionics package, which combines TSO'ed and non-TSO'ed avionics, for the in-development C4 4-place aircraft. The avionics suite will be certified together with the airframe, an approach that provides a significant cost reduction—some \$30-\$40,000 over an all-TSO'ed system, according to Flight Design—with greater flexibility for

future enhancements and upgrades. The suite features two of Garmin's new G3X Touch screens combined with a Garmin GTN 750 GPS-Nav/Com, Garmin GNC 255 Nav/Com, Garmin GMC 305 autopilot and a Garmin GMA 350 audio panel. "Affordable new technology is the goal of the (FAA) Part 23 rewrite," said Tom Peghiny, president of Flight Design USA. "That's what we're doing with the C4." The C4's first flight is expected this summer and certification is anticipated by mid-2015. Thanks to the savings on the avionics, price for the airplane will be about \$250,000, Flight Design says.

Tecnam Astore

www.tecnam.com



Italy's Tecnam officially introduced the Astore LSA, a sporty Rotax 912-powered aluminum low-wing trike, incorporating an Apple iPad mini as part of its standard equipment. The aircraft received its Special Airworthiness Certification the week before the fly-in. "What better way to celebrate Tecnam's 65th anniversary than by offering our customers the very best next-generation LSA—the Astore?" said Paolo Pascale, Tecnam's Managing Director. The Astore's iPad comes equipped with checklists, weight and balance data, and POH. The Astore uses the same wing as the P2002 Sierra, the company's previously introduced low-wing LSA, but the fuselage is redesigned. A clamshell bubble canopy tops the cabin's side-by-side seating, and the interior features luxury car styling. Power choices are the Rotax 912 ULS, 912 iS and Turbocharged 914 UL. Panel options are the Dynon SkyView Touch or Garmin's G3X Touch. Price varies based on configuration, but starts at about \$139,400.