

A Quick Circuit in the Aeroprakt A22 Foxbat

By Peter McLean

It was another beautiful day in paradise (Yarrowonga Aerodrome) when we heard the sound of a 912 Rotax... We were saying goodbye to the P96 Golf (Tecnam) that has found a new home at Holbrook airfield. It's going on line there, for training. That's a good move.

We heard another engine overhead, looked up, and saw a bright yellow aircraft. "What is it?" I said. Anne replied, "I think I saw it in the magazine the other day." She quickly ran off to grab a Pacific Flyer from the shop to find out the name of this shiny yellow aircraft.

The aircraft landed and taxied to the parking area, two people got out and walked towards a car. Anne came back and said, "It's the A22 Foxbat." I looked at Anne with a puzzled look. Then Anne showed me the advertisement, and sure enough, she was right. We were standing near the hangar expecting the aircraft to start up and taxi back to the runway. But instead it started up and taxied towards our hangar.

After it shut down, the hatch opened and out climbed Trevor Mahoney of Drouin, Victoria, the owner of this smart looking Foxbat. Trevor had flown up to leave his son at a friend's place for a couple of days, and he thought this was as good a time as any to drop in and see our new place.

After a cuppa Trevor asked me if I would like to go for a flight? My reply was, "Does a one legged duck fly in circles?" A minute later we were at the Foxbat and Trevor opened the hatch for me to get in.

I must admit I was impressed, even before I climbed into the aircraft. The latch was spring loaded and easy to open and close. This also means that you don't have to worry about whether you have locked the hatch or not. The door won't close properly unless the spring loaded latch is lifted. The hatch is also supported by a gas strut. No more trying to hold up the door, or looking for the latch on the wing to make sure the door doesn't hit you as your getting in.

Once entering the aircraft, I was surprised at the roominess of the cockpit, and the centre control column was very different. As the picture shows the control column is on an angle and this makes it almost a centre stick control. The rudder pedals are well forward which means that your passenger can easily keep their feet off the pedals.

Once we were strapped in, it was off for a test flight.

Trevor started up the 912 and we taxied to runway 01. The take-off roll was short. The book said 75 metres, but I would say we were off in about 50 metres and we were climbing out at 900 feet per minute. I was also amazed at the visibility! Not only through the windscreen, but also the doors, offering almost 90° visibility. Looking over your shoulder you can easily see the runway behind you through the clear panels on the fuselage. In no time at all we were cruising at 1,500 feet and sitting on a steady 70 knots.

Trevor then handed the controls over to me. Well, what a delight to fly. I did my usual trick and moved each flight control independently, each surface operated well and the aircraft responded as if it was an extension of my body. I was a little concerned about the Y-shaped joy stick. But after a few seconds I felt quite at home with it.

I put the aircraft into a right hand turn and then quickly swung it back into a left hand turn. The Foxbat handled it with ease. We then came back into the circuit area and once again there were no surprises. The aircraft just slowed up and came in through the thermals with ease.

After landing we taxied back to my hangar. On the way I kept thinking that the brake handle in the joy stick would catch your fingers if you were not careful. This thought was definitely unfounded, as there is no way that the brake lever could come back that far.

The only thing that was a little disconcerting was the flap lever. This is mounted on the roof between the pilot and passenger, and I did notice that combined with the centre stick it could be a bit tricky putting the flaps down if the weather was rough. But this aircraft is a STOL aircraft anyway so it does not really pose that big a problem.

After Trevor left, I phoned the agent for the Foxbat, Peter Harlow at Silver Wing Aviation in Queensland. Peter is a very easy person to get along with and in no time at all I had an information pack faxed to me on the Foxbat. I did explain to Peter that I was not interested in buying an aircraft but that I did like it.

If you are looking for a good looking, roomy aircraft, I would give Peter Harlow a call and have a look at the A22 Foxbat. It might be the aircraft for you.

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So here are some basic facts on this gem of an aircraft....

Dimensions:	Length	6.30 metres
	Height	2.40 metres
	Span	9.97 metres
	Cabin width	1.28 metres
Weights:	Empty	265 kg
	MTOW	450 kg
	Max Fuel Cap	90 kg
	Design Factors	+6 -3
	Performance:	VNe
	Cruise	90 kts
	Stall no flap	33 kts
	Stall with flap	28 kts
	Climb rate	1,200 fpm
	Take-off roll	75 metres
	Landing roll	75 metres
Engine:	Rotax 912 ULS	
	Power	100 hp
Propeller:	Three bladed, ground adjustable.	
Airframe:	Metal airframe with Ceconite covered wings and control surfaces, two seat, tricycle fixed undercarriage, dual controls. Rugged, comfortable, spacious. Fly away or kit.	



The control column is set on an angle.



Trevor Mahoney and his A22 Foxbat.