



SIMPIT: 3D visual surround flight sim developed in NZ

Contributed by Emily Bird

IT HAS BEEN nearly two decades since 32 year old Czech migrant, Tomas Zahradka, first dreamed of inventing a full flight simulator. Tomas, a C-Cat rotary wing instructor with more than 400hrs fulfilled his dream in August this year. While living in Motueka, he built the first simulator with complete 3D visual surround using six individual projectors.

The simulator, with 270-degree vision immerses users (wearing 3D goggles if desired) in a realistic flying environment. The technology is possibly a world first after an extensive global search earlier this year failed to find anything else like it. Tomas' enthusiasm and passion for his custom built SIMPIT has you convinced he's offering a sophisticated simulator that is well ahead of the market.

"Combining complete 3D surround vision via projection with the motion seat, real controls and the tracking system fools the brain into thinking you're in the air and flying" says Tomas.

Built into his SIMPIT are 150 choices of fixed wing and rotary aircraft with 17,000 different airports from around the world to test your skills. Opportunities of flight range from circumnavigating the globe in a Boeing 747 to tearing up the skies while flying an early biplane in a wartime dogfight.

More than 200 people have already flown in his prototype located in Nelson, and of those Tomas estimates more than half hold a pilot's license.

Along with the variety of aircraft types and different terrain available, flyers can also join global virtual aviation world VATSIM and compete in Friday night leagues of Red Bull air races.

A Dash 8 Air New Zealand captain has described flying in Tomas' SIMPIT as the closest experience he has had to being in the actual aircraft. Other pilots to fly in it have confirmed the

aircraft you can fly do behave as real models. This coupled with realistic portrayal of New Zealand and Australian terrain has allowed students and pilots to prepare for flight training, aircraft type ratings, flight missions and emergency procedures training. "Students will require less dual time in an aircraft therefore saving a lot of money on training" says Tomas.

Training in the simulator is more time efficient for repeating manoeuvres such as botched approaches when Tomas can simply drag the plane back for you enabling another immediate attempt rather than the time and fuel consuming reality of committing a go-round in real live flight. "It really allows you to focus on specific areas that you need to practice" says Tomas.

An hour's flight costs

\$75, making this a very versatile and economic simulator for flight instruction. There is a real cost saving potential for pilots and aviation enthusiasts who would like to receive additional training to reach a desired skill level. "With increasing fuel costs this could be an invaluable training tool", says Tomas, "I'd also like it to become the first VFR training tool for private and commercial pilots."

Tomas is hopeful that in the future CAA will accept hours spent in the SIMPIT for recognised flying hours. "Although being the first of its kind and setting a precedent for flight simulators, this could take some time" he says.

After 15 years of development Tomas is excited to find himself on an aviation journey that could help change the industry. With interest from Norway, America, Germany and Australia, the future for SIMPIT looks secure.

For further information and bookings visit www.simpit.co.nz



Tomas Zahradka in his simulator and (right) outside his SIMPIT operation in Nelson.



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