



# The “Kiwi Mustang”

When Mike Crene phoned KiwiFlyer to place a classified advertisement for his rather special Titan T-51 Mustang, we immediately thought “Cover Photo” and arranged to meet him at Matamata. Mike’s well known aircraft includes several innovations jointly developed with other Titan Mustang builders. One result of this is that ZK-DBG is now affectionately known around the world as the “Kiwi Mustang”.

**FOR THOSE** not in the know, the Titan T-51 Mustang is a kitplane three-quarter scale replica of the P-51D Mustang, produced by Titan Aircraft in the USA. Since their launch, the kit has proved immensely popular with hundreds of kits sold and many dozens now flying throughout the world.

## Mike’s History

Mike’s ten years experience in the RNZAF lends itself well to professional kitplane building. He has built his own 2.5 litre V6 T-51 as well as a 2.7 litre V6 version. He also spent time as a member of the team who built the first two Rotax powered T-51s which were the first to fly in the Southern Hemisphere. Mike has been lucky enough to spend time working with John Williams of Titan Aircraft (whom he has a lot of respect for) and in Mike’s words “We have been swapping ideas since.”

## Building ZK-DBG

The answer to the traditional question of “How long did it take?” is about 2500 hours, plus another 1000 hours “just thinking about it”. Mike actually started the project when living in Kaitaia, then when about half way through shifted to Rangiora and finished it there.

Mike notes that Titan produces an airframe kit that he considers to be great value for money. It comes complete with a hydraulic pump for the undercarriage and a good amount of the wiring and switches are also supplied.

Builders can choose to source their own engine, reduction drive and prop, although now Titan can supply the

complete package which includes a recently developed prop for the V6’s and a gear driven reduction drive developed by Neil Hintz of Autoflight, based just down the road in Hamilton. Neil now exports geared reduction drives directly to Titan in the US.

DBG has an electric constant speed prop, and “steam driven” gauges in

use transfer pumps to top up the main tanks in flight, doubling the aircraft’s range. A lot of attention was also paid to the “cosmetics” of the aircraft. Mike wanted to more closely follow the lines of the original P-51 and his work here included shaping the nose cowlings with an English Wheel to get the “V12 shape”, changing the wing

root fairings, and creating a larger radiator intake scoop. Mike also extended the tail wheel down further to create a more realistic stance while in the 3-point attitude.

DBG is painted in authentic “Mustang Silver” with D-Day stripes for “extra visibility and safety”.

## Flying a V6 Titan Mustang

To start with the statistics: ZK-DBG will cruise at 140-160mph depending on loading and the drop tanks. She has a 600lb useful load. At 1750lb, she will stall clean at 68mph and dirty with gear and flaps out at 58mph. The aircraft can be flown aerobatically to a +6/-4G loading.

During test flying, DBG proved to be a very stable aircraft and clean stalls produced minimal height loss after a straight ahead nose drop. Mike says that it took an aft C of G and full flap / gear out at MAUW to provoke a docile wing drop, with instant

recovery aided by the powerful rudder.

Titan have produced a very pilot-friendly taildragger. The wide oleo undercarriage and V6 power combined with large flaps, allows for short field operations of under 300m. Mike proclaims DBG as a very nice aircraft to fly with responsive controls. It is also very nice to look at. In particular though, the V6 roar from up front sounds just like a V12 for both the pilot and onlookers on the ground.

## ZK-DBG For Sale

Mike is busy with other projects and is reluctantly offering DBG for sale. TTSN is just 80 hours. You can purchase this aircraft for not a lot more than \$200,000. Contact Mike on 027 667 4400 or [m.crene@xtra.co.nz](mailto:m.crene@xtra.co.nz)



Mike Crene and ZK-DBG in the sky above Matamata. The prancing stallion on the tail adds the finishing touch to a beautifully built aircraft. AeroPhoto by Michael Norton.



Whichever way you examine the lines, the aircraft looks lovely. Mike is sitting in the cockpit and though you can’t quite see in the photo, you can be sure that he’s smiling.

the cockpit for authenticity. Mike has completed the aircraft to a very high standard, which reflects both his Air Force service and a natural care and attention to detail. He says the Titan is not a difficult kit to build providing the correct sequence is followed.

## Innovating the special parts

The “Kiwi Mustang” was the first to use a V6 engine with a geared reduction drive and is currently the only V6 engined version flying in the Southern Hemisphere. The engine package is becoming well proven, having been upgraded from the problematic belt drive reduction unit originally fitted.

Mike has fitted Titan drop tanks, which are becoming a popular option. The tanks