



"The fact that Cubs aren't easy to handle makes them wonderfully absorbing and satisfying aeroplanes to fly"

PIPER J3 CUB



You don't have to look hard to see that some genuine care and attention has been lavished on this model.

On the face of it there's nothing terribly exciting about the release of a new EPO Piper Cub, however as Graham Ashby points out, this isn't any old EPO Piper Cub, this is an FMS EPO Piper Cub...

words » Graham Ashby | photos » Graham Ashby & David Ashby

Some years ago I reviewed Hangar 9's 80" span J3 Cub and, during the build, sourced a suitable pilot, painted him up and proudly stuck him in the front seat where I'd recently seen the pilot of a full-size Super Cub. The model was flown, the cover picture taken, the review written and the magazine printed and published. I liked the model, I thought I'd made a half-decent job of putting it together and was triumphantly polishing my halo when the first letter landed on my desk... "Lovely model, but you've put the pilot in the wrong seat. Didn't you realise the J3 is flown solo from the back seat?" I checked the calendar... No, it wasn't April

1st. I didn't recognise the handwriting, and the postmark was Scottish so it clearly wasn't a pal playing a prank. How very odd. Massively sceptical and more out of curiosity than anything, I Googled Piper J3 Cub, clicked 'images' and came across a lovely air-to-air shot of a J3, door wide open and the pilot sitting – AHEM – in the back seat. Oops! A rookie error which, painfully, I was reminded about repeatedly for the magazine's on-sale period (thank you dear reader). As the conscientious and diligent chap that I am, I immediately put the mistake right, burned all the remaining copies of the magazine and pretended it had never happened. Alas, try as I might, I've not

been able to forget it. Which brings me seamlessly to this latest, rather lovely-looking J3 Cub from the ever impressive FMS company, a firm that – if I may boldly suggest – should find the boffin responsible for sizing the pilots and working out which seat to stick 'em in, then give him (or her) an after-work detention and 500 lines: "The J3 Cub is flown solo from the back seat and I'm a twit," ought to do it. Now, on the face of it that may seem a little harsh, however one should realise that, unlike my identical mistake, this isn't a first offence. Oh no. As the third version of this particular model this is now a thrice repeated failing and one that really should have been corrected with J3 V2. They are, to put it mildly, making me look good.

REDEEMING FEATURES

A glance at the remainder of the model suggests that a completely different FMS employee has gone to considerable trouble to make this Cub

look the part. The characteristic 4-cylinder Continental looks fabulous, the sprung undercarriage has been beautifully realised, tyres look about the right size, the struts (complete with jury dittos) are ace, the colour scheme neatly applied and the whole thing suitably Cub-like. Mind you, we've come to expect good things from FMS and this one definitely follows the trend. From the careful manner in which it's packaged – avoiding dents and damage to the moulded EPO foam airframe – to the way it assembles and flies, it's a product that has clearly received care in both design and manufacture. I'm pleased to say it's a philosophy that FMS continues to adopt for its new releases and whilst you'll end up paying a little more for the trouble, my personal view is that the attention to detail (pilot aside) and the scale finesse that's employed, is worth every penny. I've said it before and I'll say it again, you can't blind a model aeroplane enthusiast with smoke and mirrors in



On the face of it he's not a bad looking chap but he's in the wrong seat (again!) in a plane that's too big for him.



I'm sorely tempted to put a bit of lose-ish fitting black heat-shrink around the springs.



Initially I thought I might be able to gain access to the pilot (to move him) through this panel but it won't budge.



Cub fans can't fail to like this model and with the supplied floats it may even encourage you to find a bit of water.





DATAFILE

Name:	Piper J3 Cub
Model type:	Semi-scale RTF foamie
Manufactured by:	FMS (China)
UK distributor:	CML Distribution www.cmldistribution.co.uk
RRP:	£209.99
Wingspan:	1400mm (55.10")
Wing area:	389sq.in.
All-up weight:	1320g (2 lb 15oz)
Wing loading:	17.4oz / sq.ft.
Power system:	3536 850KV outrunner; 40A ESC; 11 x 7" propeller
Functions (servos):	Aileron (2), elevator (1), rudder (1), throttle (ESC)
Req'd to fly:	Receiver, 3S 2200mAh LiPo



an attempt to hide a cartoon-scale profile, a shoddy design or a cheap clevis. Most of us have been studying aeroplanes all our lives and we know them like the back of our hands. FMS, fortunately, seemed to realise this many years ago and I'm convinced that the success it's enjoyed is due in no small part to this obvious care.

Of course, nothing's perfect and if you look carefully you'll find that small liberties have been taken here and there with authenticity. Accordingly, we should note an understandable degree or two of dihedral that isn't present on the full-size, an over-long and simplistic wire tail wheel and a larger than scale propeller. That aside, I'd have to say this Cub very much looks the part and would comfortably pass muster in a club scale competition.

FLIGHT PREPARATION

To fly it you'll need a time-honoured 3S 2200mAh LiPo, a four-channel receiver and about an hour or two of preparation time. The latter, you'll find, is a glue-free process taken up with installing the undercarriage, wing panels, struts, tail feathers, wire tail braces and propeller. Well written and clearly illustrated the step-by-step instructions will guide your way, the only real problem being the fitting of the struts. Cleverly, these are anchored at the fuselage by the undercarriage retaining bolts then clipped (snap link style) to the wing mounts. And herein lies a small but not insurmountable problem. The clips are very tight indeed, to the point that it's practically impossible to get the plastic pin (on the strut end) to engage with the two horse-shoe upstands (in the wing) without squashing the foam in the process. It's clearly been a cause of trouble as an addendum sheet has been supplied to address the issue. This suggests tilting the strut and engaging the pin in one clip before tackling the other. This helps but, to be honest, since there's still more pressure required than I was comfortable to administer, I took a



The jury struts are an important feature. Be careful to fit them the right way round!



I can't fault the dummy Continental. Lovely.



I'm not convinced the tail bracing needs to be functional but it stiffens things up well.



If you have to remove the wing panels disconnect the struts at the undercarriage.



The tail wheel is overly long but I've since bent mine back for better effect.



I've looked but can't find HB-OWY (in full-size form) anywhere on the web.



No glue required at the tail end or, indeed, anywhere on the model.



Nothing to fault here, it's all eminently fit for purpose.

One doesn't often get to say this but the propeller is a little larger than scale.

screwdriver to the clips and gently prised the hooks apart. It worked well and the struts finally engaged with a very positive snap. All well and good but I wouldn't want to be disassembling it anytime soon and if you're thinking of doing the same on a weekly basis, to get the model in yer Smart Car sans wing, I wouldn't fancy your chances of keeping those clips in one piece. They've got 'use me twice and I'll ruin your day' written all over them.

Anyway, short of fitting your receiver in the underslung hatch behind the cockpit, and your XT60-equipped LiPo in the hatch between the wheels (sensibly positioned on the C of G) the job's a good'un and if you've not done anything silly the balance will be spot on, near as damn it. Do I need to mention the common sense practice of fitting the propeller only after the radio has been installed, servos connected and motor checked for correct operation? No, I thought not. Apologies.

HEIGH-HO HEIGH-HO...

It's off to the patch we go. Aye, 'twas on the very next day that I whistled my way to the field, Cub slung over my shoulder, camera, transmitter and a triplet of LiPos in hand. I was under no illusion, Cubs aren't trainers, I've flown many in my time and they need good stick and

rudder skills to get the best out of them. Fortunately the grass at the patch was short so I wasn't worried about the small wheels and the model appeared to have an abundance of power. All good.

Now, those who've read my reviews in the past will know how much I enjoy a good taxi. To me it's as much a part of a scale flight as the take-off and landing and it absolutely deserves your time. When you're next at the field, stop and watch a few scale models being taxied and I fear you're likely to be presented with a frenetic dash to the holding point that lurches from one abrupt turn to another through a series of over-cooked throttle bursts the whole process overshadowed by a general lack of attention. Urgh. For me, there's pleasure to be had in ground handling, picking your way carefully to the threshold and lining up ready for the off. Fortunately our J3 handles it well, the key to it all being good tail control, a reluctance to nose over and, for electric models, enough milliamps in the flight pack to give you time to do it properly and not fret about shortening your flight.

Lined up dead into wind and with throttle gently applied the Cub will quickly accelerate but do be aware of the torque reaction from that large propeller. Side-thrust is non-existent the result being a quite pronounced swing to the



Flying the Cub properly is a full stick and rudder task and mush the better for it.

left that'll need some early correction to ensure you stay ahead of the game. It caught me out on the first flight and I had to settle for a rather untidy snake down the runway before getting on top of things and lifting off with my dignity just about intact. It's a perfect example of the very untrainer-like characteristics that Cubs can display and a prime example of why this model isn't for beginners. Once airborne you'll find the handling relaxed and predictable. Control authority is good, power more than adequate and trim just about spot on, save a touch of up elevator on my example. She feels heavier in the air than you might expect, a characteristic that led me to imagine a less than gentle stall. In the event though, the stall comes very late indeed, amounting to nothing more than a casual drop of the wing well beyond its anticipated arrival time. Good news.

As you'd expect, turns look best when initiated with rudder and balanced with aileron, although, in fairness, she will fly fine with aileron-led circuits. Helicopter flying long ago taught me the discipline of using independent rudder and aileron control for turns, however if you'd rather mix 'em I've no doubt it'll be a good halfway house.

Another characteristic that doesn't favour the beginner is the model's reluctance to glide. I guess it's no wonder when you think about it, indeed with all

FMS has always gone the extra mile with detailing, a fact which makes its models all the more desirable.



Circuits and bumps is what this model is all about and it performs them beautifully.

FLOAT SET

Boxed with the model and adding greatly to the value of the package is a set of moulded EPO floats that not only come with all the hardware needed to fit them but include a pre-attached water rudder and sealed-in steering servo (port-side float only). At time of going to press these have just been fitted and our water venue booked. Can't wait!

the strutter, wheels, suspension, engine detail, tail bracing, the large propeller and the relatively chunky flat-sheet fin and tailplane, there's a fair amount of drag on the airframe. The result is a model that needs flying all the way in but is none the worse for it. The fact that Cubs aren't easy to handle makes them wonderfully absorbing and satisfying

aeroplanes to fly. Circuits and bumps is where the enjoyment lies with this aeroplane. Add the challenge of taxiing, taking-off nicely and landing smoothly and, believe me, you'll have enough to concentrate the mind without engaging in, frankly, girly aerobatics which don't suit the thing and – with the possible exception of a loop – look horribly untidy.

IN A NUTSHELL

The FMS 1400mm J3 V3 – what's not to like? Well, I thought long and hard about this and came up with a list of three major drawbacks which, quite by chance, do stand out as being remarkably similar, if not closely related. They are:

1. The pilot
2. The pilot
3. The pilot

Everything else is top notch, beautifully manufactured and representative of the quality we've come to expect from FMS. If you can live with the crappy pilot and you're ready for your first Cub experience (or, indeed, your second, third or fourth) you're going to like this a lot. For my own part, I'm a huge seaplane fan so those floats (see panel) will very shortly be put to good use. Stay tuned and I'll tell you all about it in due course. ✈️