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May 2014

Sun 'n Fun 'n Aero



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Invitation to Pain

Jumping the Gun

Bensen Days



Chip Irwin flew to Sun 'n Fun and flew home in an electric Zigo MG ultralight. Chip says that soon you can do the same thing.

really was pretty amazing, using a mix of low and high tech devices to simulate flight in a foot-launch powered paraglider. I got a chance to 'go flying' with it and it was a blast.

You begin by strapping into a real PPG harness suspended on a simple gimbal mechanism that tilts you appropriately when you pull a hand toggle 'in flight.' The real magic however comes from the virtual reality goggles that replace a battery of video screens that, no matter what, always look like a battery of video screens. The goggles are great because they look where you look. Look left and the view in the goggles moves left. Turn your head right and of course the scene moves right. Want to see all the detail off on the horizon? Well, it just seems that it is still a little hazy over that way. I'm sure the haze will be burned off with additional computing power and more time spent programming. But really, the haze seemed perfectly natural. In fact it was a little more realistic than I cared for having found myself surrounded by fog in the past.

Other details that made the virtual flight more realistic were the shaker mounted on the back of the harness to simulate an engine and a small fan in front to give you a hint of a breeze.

The virtual flight itself was great. It gave me a chance to fly along a small river, fly around trees, and generally have a fun time. I saw a virtual bird. They told me that the programming would allow me to fly under the surface of the river, but I didn't try that, having concerns about virtual alligators.

They made me stop, which was pretty easy since they had the on-off switch. I had to make room for a repeat customer, a young man who is destined to become either a powered paraglider pilot or hitman, depending I suppose on which virtual reality experience he enjoys more. This may seriously be one of the best sales tools for powered paragliding yet. Someone needs to set up a kiosk in a mall!

Electrifying!

Every year the dream of electric flight gets a little closer. And by closer, I mean affordable for the masses, of which I am part. There certainly are electric aircraft flying, but a true Part 103 that can be purchased, built (or not have to be

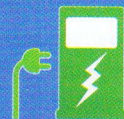
built) and flown by a mass is still something talked about more than it is actually done.

To be fair, it is kind of tough for the pioneers developing this new technology because the components used –yes, primarily the batteries– are changing for the better all of the time. That makes it hard to commit to a production design. It is kind of like committing to a computer purchase when you know that when you get it home, plugged in, and start surfing the web, you will immediately find an advertisement for a newer, faster, better computer that makes you think you bought your new toy from an antique shop.

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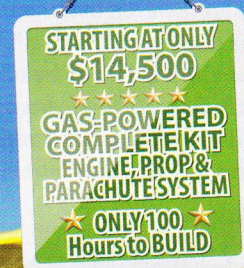
ZIGOLO MOTOR-GLIDER – PART 103 Single-Seat De-Regulated (SSDR)

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