

Looks can be deceiving. This 5-channel fiberglass ARF certainly is sleek, but it's also surprisingly docile to fly, and not very difficult to assemble.

By Vic Macaluso

Great Planes

Seawind

PHOTO: BRYAN WEED

This review was a long time coming. My "history" with this plane goes back at least 20 years, probably more. I first became aware of this design when Byron Originals put out some promotional material on this plane, I guess to see what the "market" response would be. I don't know about the rest of the "market"

but this modeler went absolutely nuts for the design. It wasn't long before I was on the phone (no e-mail back then) demanding to know when the model would be available. This Byron model was also much larger than the subject of this review and was to be powered by a G-62 sized motor.

Byron decided that, due to tooling and design issues, there would be no attempt to market this model. My efforts to buy any existing parts/tooling for this model were fruitless. With this disappointment behind me, I designed a similar but smaller model which today is still only a sketch and a dream.

Back to today! One morning I go out to my mailbox and there it was! A catalog arrived

and "splashed" all over the cover was my beloved *Seawind*! Life was *definitely* getting better!

It wasn't long after that the offer to do this review was given to me. It took me about one millionth of a second to agree!

With that little bit of history behind us let's see what this model is all about.

As is typical of Great Planes, the *Seawind* comes in a very attractive box that really shows this model to its full advantage and protects the contents very well. The components of this kit are packed in layers with all of the components either taped in place to prevent any movement during shipping or encased in foam blocks for the same reason.

AT A GLANCE

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Type: | scale seaplane recommended for intermediate pilots |
| Construction: | fiberglass and balsa |
| Wing span: | 71 inches |
| Airfoil: | semi-symmetrical |
| Overall length: | 56 inches |



Each and every component or subsystem comes packed in its own plastic bag not only for protection but to keep each part of each separate subsystem together until ready for assembly or attachment.

Let's talk about each of these assemblies. The largest and most impressive component of this kit is the fuselage (hull)/fin/stab/engine mount. This is probably the finest piece of fiberglass work I've seen in a long time. This assembly is layed by hand and is extremely light and strong. The internal bracing is all laser-cut ply and all epoxied in place with what appears to be an epoxy/filler matrix. This not only adds to the strength, but separates the fuse (hull) into separate compartments. Although these compartments are not air/water tight within the hull, they do tend to isolate any water that may get into it and prevent it from sloshing around and possibly altering the balance.

In addition to the beautiful glass work the white color is a gelcote with the trim stripes applied over it and protected with a fuel proof clear coat. The overall finish is extremely high gloss and flawless. Matching this with a perfect fit is the enormous top hatch that gives complete access to a cavernous interior that will accommodate any equipment or configuration called for (more about configurations later). As you can see from the photos, the servo wiring is routed through plastic tubes with pull strings already placed for your convenience. Believe me, you'll need them!

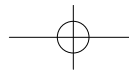
The next major components on the list are the wing panels. These too are constructed with all laser-cut ply/balsa and covered perfectly with brilliant white MonoKote (which matches the gelcote perfectly). The ailerons and flaps are also covered in MonoKote and all hinge slots in both the wing and movable surfaces are pre cut. The only assembly on the wings is to hinge the surfaces and attach the wing tip/float assemblies. These tips are also molded in hand laid fiberglass and are *very* light. As with the rest of the model, they fit perfectly. Just as the hull, the wings also have pull strings to facilitate servo installation.

As you move towards the back (stern) of the model you'll be mildly impressed with the enormous size of the fin/rudder combo and the relatively small size of the stab/elevator. All impressions aside, trust me, it all works! As with the wings, the rudder,



Vic used the O.S. .91 FS II Surpass (above) and found it was plenty of power, and fit nicely in the cowl. No adjustment was needed to provide a smooth transition from low to high throttle. A combination of different Futaba servos (below) and receiver (R168DF) was used to guide this model.





Seawind



Note the cooling vents molded into the nacelle. Plenty of cooling through the cowl inlets and out the vents. Vic started researching this plane 20 years ago and finds this model to be very scale in all aspects.

partly in MonoKote and of course, all hinge slots are pre cut.

Before we move onto the “sub systems” I’d like to mention the included stand that greatly aids the building/assembly process of this model. Should you decide to build this strictly as a seaplane, this stand will last the life of the model. It consists of two end caps that are molded to fit the hull perfectly and two plastic tubes that these caps slide onto.

A little hint: When you find the proper location and spacing for these caps, glue them in place so that you won’t have to readjust every time you place the model onto it.

In addition to the above, a molded fiberglass tank hatch and a nose gear bay hatch are also supplied. These will have to be trimmed and custom fit depending on how you decide to configure this model.

The “subsystems” I’ve spoken about earlier are packaged separately and contain all of the hardware and parts needed to install them. They consist of a beautiful aluminum

spinner/backplate combo that is already preslotted for the necessary three blade prop, a complete hardware/linkage package, glass filled plastic engine mount, complete fuel tank assembly, and all parts necessary for the fixed gear version of this model. Also supplied for the fixed gear version is a set of lightweight wheels. Various other parts and pieces complete the very comprehensive presentation of this kit.

The last item in the “box”—just relating to this kit and its assembly—is the 28-page manual. As is typical of all Great Planes ARFs, this manual covers all aspects of assembly and trimming in detail and all necessary disclaimers relating to safety and product liability.

Because this is a fairly high performance model aimed at the high intermediate/advanced pilot/modeler, I’m not going to go into the assembly process. That’s all explained in the assembly manual, and should you not understand any of it, perhaps you

should not be considering this model. What I will do is emphasize here what is also emphasized in the assembly manual.

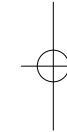
Pages 21 and 22, “Getting the model ready to fly”, are perhaps the two most important pages in this manual. Three points on these pages are highlighted! I know “real men” don’t need instructions, (myself included) *but* I suggest you read and heed them to insure a successful first flight. The only change I would make to these suggestions would be to increase the aileron throw, and this was only after several flights (more about that later).

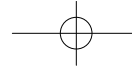
I need to mention how to balance this model because the suggested way is to use Great Plane’s CG Machine, and although this is a fine product and I use mine most of the time, in this application it proved to be a little awkward. Because it’s emphasized that there is *no* c.g. range and that the model *must* balance at the point shown, I found that using two pencil erasers mounted to carbon fiber tubes and sharpened to a radiused point worked perfectly (see photo). I’m sure a couple of #2 pencils would work just as well.

As I said before, because of the expected skill level of the purchaser of this kit I won’t go into the assembly process but we will discuss the other goodies and, of course, the performance of this model as well as the various configurations possible.

For power, this review was conducted with the OS .91 FS II. This is the recommended power for this model and proved to be perfect. It’s suggested that any .61 to .90 sized two- or four-cycle will work. It appears to me that this model was designed around the OS .91 FS II so why reinvent the wheel? As with all of the OS motors I’ve used and flown throughout the years, this one ran flawlessly right out of the box. With only enough running to adjust the needle valve to ambient conditions, this motor performed perfectly from dead idle to full power (more than enough) throughout all three flights put in that first time out.

The guidance for this model, also supplied by Great Planes, was all Futaba. For the ailerons and flaps the standard Futaba S3004 servos were used. Due to the design/balance considerations of this model, the Futaba S3102 metal gear micro servos





Engine mount blind nuts are already installed and the firewall indexed to easily line up the engine mount correctly. Absolutely no guesswork on this model. This entire project was simply a matter of assembly. Just follow each step in sequence in the assembly manual and in about 12–15 hours go fly!



were used on the elevator, rudder and throttle applications. Again, a great deal of thought and testing went into presenting you this model, don't reinvent the wheel. The brains of all this stuff is the Futaba R168DF receiver and the power is the Futaba 1000 mAh four-cell battery pack.

As mentioned before, this model can be built in three configurations. The full-sized version is, of course, an amphibian and there are many flying today. This model "theoretically" can be flown as an amphibian but I really don't recommend it.

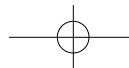
Version "1", the model of this review was built strictly as a seaplane. I chose this version because I live on a lake and can fly it anytime the mood strikes me, and I don't have access to a flying field at my lake house. Besides I just like seaplanes! In this configuration, moving all of the "movable" stuff in the model as forward as possible, I needed 17 ounces of lead in the nose to balance the model at the mandated location. Ready to fly, it weighed 11.25 pounds.

Version "2" would be the fixed gear version (parts supplied). It's here that you start to lose the "wet" capabilities of the model. To build this version you now have to compromise the water tightness of the model by removing the MonoKote covering from the wheel wells and cutting holes in the nose gear bay for the steering cables. With this

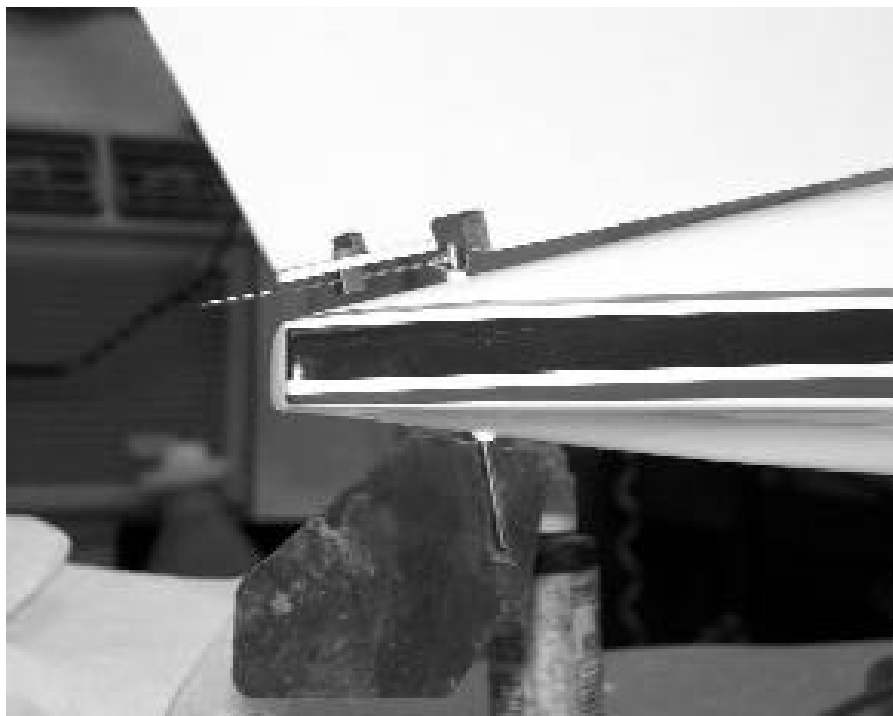


Though the engine is shown inverted (**above**), it is first mounted in the upright position to get the correct prop backplate distance from firewall and mark location of mounting screw holes. Mounting holes are then drilled and tapped to receive the 8–32 supplied mounting screws. Self tapping sheet metal screws would also work here with this type mount. The entire motor/mount assembly is then rotated to the inverted position and using the index marks on the nacelle, bolted into place. Instructions in the manual detail the cowl installation (**below**). You'll notice in the photos that there appears to be excessive clearance between the spinner backplate and the front of the cow. As mentioned in the text, with this motor, the rear of the mount needs to be relieved somewhat to properly position the motor. This position was a compromise between material removal and appearance. From most angles you don't even notice.





Seawind



The water rudder installation. The geometry of this assembly will give you almost twice as much water rudder steering as air rudder steering. Again, much work was done to come up with this combo and it works! Don't change a thing!

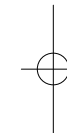
version you can still fly off water by removing the gear legs and re-MonoKoting over the well openings. Don't forget to rebalance!

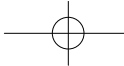
Version "3", full retract version, for all practical purposes makes this strictly a land plane. As with the fixed gear version, all watertight integrity will be compromised besides the additional need to run air lines and other support equipment in the model. Should you decide to go "all the way", Robart makes a retract gear set just for this model (ROBQ1622).

This version will add approximately 2 pounds to the basic weight of the "water only" version, but judging how "light" the review model flew at 11.25 pounds, I really don't think that will present a problem to the pilot familiar with flying with high wing leads. This is the sexiest model I've ever built and it flies as good as it looks!

As you may have noticed from the photos, the day of these first flights was somewhat breezy. My suggestion would be that on a day like this, should you have access to one, fly from a boat. The reason for this is that you can position the model directly in front of you, pointing directly into the wind.

There are reasons for this. Even though the water rudder is very powerful and will turn this model on the water in just about any wind you would want to fly in, the model sits very low in the water and the wing tip/tip floats will submerge should much wind get under the high wing. When this





happens, should you be at any decent speed, the possibility of water (ground) looping becomes very real!

In calm to light breezes this is not a problem, but for the first flights this became obvious *real* quick! Another reason for flying from a boat directly behind the model is that you can correct any aileron trim problems much quicker before they can bury a wing tip on take off.

Once lined up into the wind gradual application of power will quickly bring *Seawind* onto the step and from here you are flying. As suggested, in the water conditions shown in the photos, no flap was necessary for a short, smooth takeoff. In dead calm conditions—and this is true for all seaplanes— $\frac{1}{4}$ flap will produce the additional lift needed to break the “suction” these conditions create.

Once off the water this model is rock solid in the air! Balanced at the recommended location I felt as if I were flying a jet, not because of the speed, but because of the way it just locked into a groove. It felt very similar to how a pattern plane flies. I attribute this to the enormous fin and rudder area of this plane. Again, at the balance shown, there was *no* tendency to pitch or hunt. It just locked into a groove and flew!

After some very minor trim corrections, one click up, two clicks of right aileron, I started to really fly this model. No matter how much or little power put to this plane, it just did not change trim. The real kicker is that it had similar reaction, or lack of, with any application of flap. It just flew slower!

Next on the list were Cuban 8s. The tracking through these maneuvers was rock solid with or without flaps.

The biggest surprise I received from this model was in the rolls. Most models when asked to aileron roll will more or less roll around the datum line which is usually close to the thrust line. When hard right (or left) aileron was put in, the model executed a perfect barrel roll around the thrust line with no elevator or rudder inputs! My first reaction was “wow”, that was the best barrel roll I ever did and I didn’t even try!

The prevailing feeling I got throughout that first flight was that even though the plane flew very “light” it also was extremely predictable. The gusting wind, especially in the cove where I was flying had very little effect on the model and at no time did I



PHOTO: FRANK FANELLI

Vic says that it's best to decide if you want a land or a water plane. If water (**above**), then don't install landing gear. If land, then you might want to install the optional Robart retracts. Flying characteristics were very groovy (**below**), and the plane was easy to manage.



PHOTO: DIANE MACALUSO

feel “disconnected” from the plane.

The slow flight characteristics are amazing! At full flaps, with just enough power to maintain altitude, the plane will just hold in a level attitude in pitch and there just is *no* tendency to yaw. In this configuration the stalls become just a straight ahead mush with a loss of altitude. The real stability (unfortunately, the still photos can't show this) is demonstrated with its very low speed, full flap, high bank turns. It quite simply just does them!

Although this model looks difficult to fly, it's not. Before the first flight was over, all of the first flight jitters were gone and I

couldn't wait to get in the air again.

To me, much of the fun of flying off the water is the touch and go landings and the really slow, full flap flybys. This model is perfect for that and it just looks amazing in the air.

The editor of this magazine once admonished me for my use and abuse of superlatives and for the most part I've been a “good boy”, but for this review I had to fall back to some old habits! Forgive me Frank, but it was worth it!

Whichever version you choose to build, you will not be disappointed with the *Seawind*. Fly safe. 