



# Kit Junkies: Building From Scratch On The Rise

Most propeller-heads would rather be soaring with the birds than trying to figure out which end is up on a blueprint.

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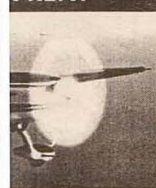
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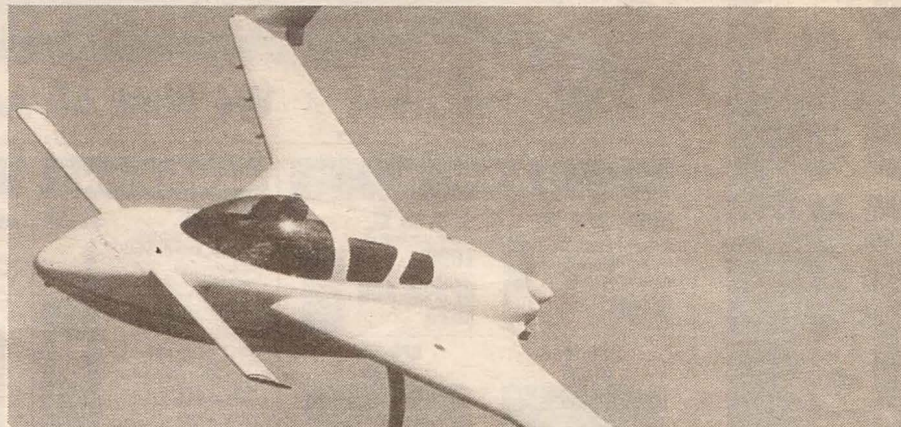
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People aren't turning away from pre-fabricated kits, says Nat Puffer, designer of the Cozy 3 and Cozy Mark IV. However, many companies selling plans-only designs report increases in sales. Photo courtesy Nat Puffer

tors who relish this challenge, causing some manufacturers to say the demand for scratch-build plans is on the rise.

Aircraft Spruce & Specialty reports sales of scratchbuild aircraft projects have steadily increased over the past few years with a strong surge over the past few months, although they were unable to provide precise sales figures or percentages.

"Kitplanes have lost some of their financial and convenience factor advantages in recent years," says Jim Irwin, president of Aircraft Spruce & Specialty. "There are a lot of exciting designs that are available on a plans-only basis, and what's happening now is that builders are shopping for performance, style and handling."

"If they see what they like in a scratch-build project, that could take precedence over a complete kitplane project—the point is, there's room for both," he adds.

Jerry Aguilar, also of Aircraft Spruce, says cost is also an issue, comparing the cost of a

\$29,500 Berkut kit to the \$12,000 to \$15,000 required to build a Cozy Mark IV from plans.

### Sales Are Looking Up

Scott Severen, president of Team Aircraft, reports his company's sales of plans-only aircraft designs in the ultralight market have been up in recent years.

"We've sold 1,600 to 1,700 scratchbuild plans over the last 10 years and, during the last four years, we've sold as many as in the first six years," he states.

Nat Puffer, owner of Co-Z Development, has seen a slight increase in the sales of his plans-only designs, the Cozy 3 and Cozy Mark IV. Currently, he sells about 100 sets of plans per year, compared to 80 plans per year sold a couple of years ago.

"I would say the idea of building an airplane is getting more popular—plans-only is part of the total [picture]...People aren't turning away from pre-fabricated kits," he notes.

"I think there are more and more people wanting to fly," Severen concurs. Plans-only designs can bring the fantasy of owning an airplane to the masses by offering an alternative to an expensive kitplane, he adds.

"If you're clever with your sourcing and have a shop, then you can save money" Severen says.

Puffer, who's built five planes from scratch himself, adds, "I enjoy getting the most for my money. If I can save \$10,000 on a plane by doing some things myself, I take pleasure in that."

### Better Grounded Than Skybound

But looking for a cheaper way to build a better mouse-trap is only part of the picture. There are the bizarre bird-lovers out there who are in it simply for the love of creating an

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