Mixed reaction to light aircraft

GRAHAM WARWICK/WASHINGTON DC

THIS YEAR’S Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) show provided a mixed message for companies planning to certificate new light aircraft.

RANS reports a “good reaction” to its S-7C Courier two-seater after displaying the production prototype at the EAA show, which took place at Oshkosh, Wisconsin (26 July-1 August), but American Champion Aircraft (ACA) says interest in its rival Model 7ACA is someone who does not have the time or inclination to build a kitplane. Aimed at the same market is the Fascination D4, which made its US debut at Oshkosh.

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Produced by Germany’s WD Flugzeugleichtbau, the aircraft started life as a kitplane, but is now certified in Europe as an ultralight. Approval under European very light aircraft (VLA) rules is due in February, allowing the aircraft to receive normal category certification in the USA, says Jacksonville, Florida-based distributor Harper Aircraft.

The Fascination is powered by a Rotax 912S, but has side-by-side seating, low wing and retractable tricycle gear, resulting in higher performance and a higher price tag — $98,500 in the USA.

Competition consists of the US-built Zenith CH-2000, with a base price of $70,000, and the Canadian-produced all-composite Diamond Aircraft Katana, which costs around $120,000.

On the eve of Oshkosh, Diamond received Canadian certification for the Katana 100, an upgrade of the original DA20-A1 two-seater introducing the more powerful Rotax 912S engine.

Cessna’s Citation CJ2 shows extra mettle

LANCAIR HAS selected Composite Solutions of Auburn, Washington, to build the wings for the Columbia certificated aircraft line.

The first wings are scheduled to arrive at Lancair’s final assembly facility in Bend, Oregon, within two months. More than 300 orders have been received for the all-composite Columbia 300.

Meanwhile, Lancair has started flight testing the 300’s upgraded stablemate, the Columbia 400. The twin turbocharged Teledyne Continental TSIO-350-powered aircraft has reached speeds of 232kt (430kn/h) at 1,750lbf (3,355m) and is designed to reach 245kt at 2,400lbf, says Lancair.

The aircraft will cost around $349,000 in standard instrument flight rules configuration. Certification is expected by mid-2001, with deliveries from early 2002.

Lancair is establishing an international network of sales and service centres to handle distribution and maintenance of Columbia aircraft and is lining up 11 domestic facilities. It has signed HILW of the Netherlands as its first European distributor.

Williams starts trial runs on small FJ33 turbofan engine

WILLIAMS International has begun test runs on its FJ33 small turbofan.

The engine operated “well above” its 1,200-1,500lbf (5.3-6.7kN) thrust rating during its first ground run in late July, the company says.

The FJ33 is under development to power new light business jets in the 2,300-4,100kg (5,000-9,000lbf) gross weight class.

Announced applications include the Century Aerospace CA-100 and Aerostar Aircraft FJ-100 twinjets. Engine certification is set for 2002.

The engine incorporates technology from Williams’ established FJ-44 small turbofan and its 700lbf thrust-class FJX.

Features include a low-noise sweep wide-chord fan and high-workcore.

Williams International, based in Walled Lake, Michigan, says the first production-configured FJ33 has bettered weight and specific fuel consumption targets and demonstrated low vibration and oil consumption.