

## AVSIM Commercial Aircraft Review

### Plane-Design Avro 691 Lancastrian

# AVRO 691 LANCASTRIAN



# by Trevor Clark

Rating Guide		
Publisher: <a href="#">Plane-Design</a> Price \$15.00		
Description: <b>Add-On for MSFS 2004</b>		
Download Size: 18 Mb	Format: Executable Auto Install	Simulation Type: FS2004 only
Reviewed by: <a href="#">Trevor Clark - Staff Reviewer</a>		
The AVSIM Commercial Rating System: 1 Star to 5 Stars (with 5 stars being exceptional) <i>Please see details of our review rating policy <a href="#">here</a>.</i>		



## Historical Background

Prior to the out break of hostilities in early 1939 the once proud British civil aircraft fleet had, almost without exception, been conscripted into military service in some form or another and after nearly six years of total war, very little worth salvaging had survived.

In 1944, in an effort to bring back civil aviation as quickly as possible, once the fighting was over, the British Air Ministry asked major UK aircraft producers to put forward proposals for an interim long range airliner. Whilst civil aviation had continued (and even been developed) in the USA, in Britain the entire aviation industry had been fully committed to the war effort. This had led to some of the finest aerial fighting machines of the age, such as the Supermarine Spitfire fighter and Avro Lancaster bomber. Whilst the Lancaster had superb payload capabilities and the required range, it lacked the creature comforts passengers would expect for journeys of up to 8 hours at time. Equipped with these hybrid bomber/airliners Britain's airlines attempted to regain the advantage lost to the competition overseas.

One of these early post war airlines was B.S.A.A. (British South American Airways), formed by legendary pre-war pilot/navigator and wartime leader of the Pathfinder Force in RAF Bomber Command, A.V.M. Donald Bennet.

With a staff of ex-Bomber Command crews, all with an intimate knowledge of the Lancaster, its civilian adaptation (now called Lancastrian) was an obvious choice of aircraft to cover the long range routes allotted to the airline. These routes included London to Bermuda and on to the West Coast of South America, long haul today, but in 1946 pioneering stuff!

After a few years of operation (including some tragic accidents), BSAA had replaced the Lancastrians with the Avro Tudor and in 1949 the airline merged

with BOAC and became history. The most famous fatal accident, now featured in a BBC documentary shown world-wide, involved the aircraft modeled here, the BSAA Lancastrian "Star Dust". She was lost on flight over the Andes in South America under mysterious circumstances. The mystery has only been partially solved by the discovery of Lancastrian remains being released by a melting glacier, almost 60 years after the disaster itself. Her passenger list at the time would be enough to inspire several novels or even a Hollywood blockbuster movie!

## Introduction

In market renown for producing ground breaking innovations and pushing the boundaries of MSFS design, it takes brave people to offer their first dedicated MSFS design as pay-ware. With the formation of Plane-Design, British based Ed Walters and Ken Scott in Indiana, USA has chosen to do just this. Payment is a reasonable \$15 and is made by using a "paypal" account. Not everybody will be happy using this method, but it provides a secure and cost effective solution for small developers. I have purchased all of Bill and Lynn Lyon's designs using this method for several years and have encountered no problems.

**STOP PRESS.....The designers have just announced that the aircraft should soon be available using the well known Flight One wrapper system.**

The choice of the Lancastrian (an aircraft never seen on FS2004 before) is interesting, not only does it share components with its more famous relative which makes expanding the product range to cover bombers (Lancaster and Manchester) relatively simple, it also provides the users of FS2004 with a taste of pioneering the early long range airline routes, before our current electronic and satellite navigation aids were available. So with the spirit of a pioneer, I clicked on the simple self installing file and fired up FS2004.....

## Installation and Documentation

Installation is simple and straightforward, everything is put in the correct place in a few seconds, with the addition of your code number, supplied by e-mail when you purchased the download. A manual is provided in the now common Adobe Acrobat format, but has to be removed from the Lancastrian folder created in your FS9/aircraft directory. Whilst some manuals now run to over 100 pages, this one restricts itself to some history and some useful cockpit layout guides and performance tables. As is normal now in MSFS, calling up the clipboard will also provide some basic performance figures and a complete check list.



## First Impressions

### Test System

When first selecting this aircraft one is presented with a simple 2D cockpit, typical of a 1940's British military aircraft. Changing into virtual cockpit mode an identical panel is now augmented by a full range of knobs, valves and levers that would not look out of place on a vintage steam locomotive. By moving the mouse around (with cockpit tips selected) the haphazard cockpit layout starts to fall into place. A further investigation reveals that almost all of these rather odd controls actually move and actuate things such as flaps, trim and engine controls. The other striking feature in this mode is the view. With the captain sitting in a commanding "throne" on the left hand side of the extensively glazed cockpit, visibility is far superior to modern airliners. The designers have wisely decided to have the co-pilot absent from his position, but have modeled the navigator hard at work with his charts behind the captain. Humans seldom look good close up in MSFS, but the designers thought the aircraft looked a little like the "Marie Celeste" without any crew visible from the inside. I would have

**Computer**

Pentium P3 2.6 GHz

1024 mb SDRam

nVidia 5200FX

Internal Stereo sound

Windows XP Home

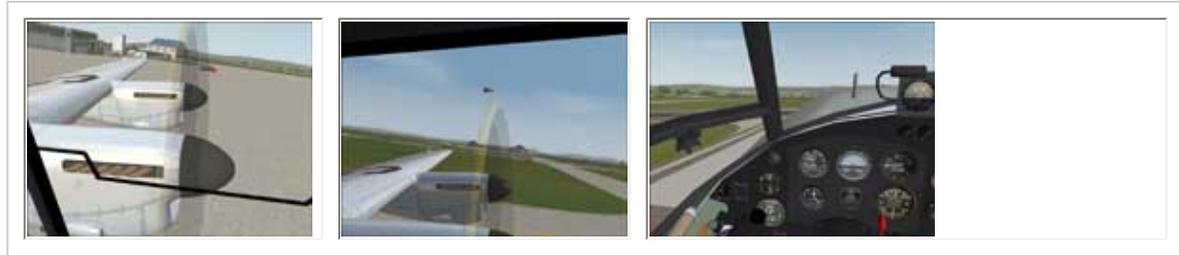
CH Yoke

CH Pedals

**Flying Time:**

10+Hours

preferred to have seen a curtain across this position, as was employed in the real thing. The interior texture also falls short of what is expected in current top flight FS aircraft. Ed Walters has plans in hand to replace the current textures with a photo-real set which will be developed after a forthcoming photo shoot on board the RAF Avro Lancaster, PA474. This update will be available free to registered users of the Lancastrian.

**Walkaround**

The view from the outside highlights the wartime origins of this aircraft. Sitting with its long nose (used as the baggage hold) pointed skyward and similar pointed fairing replacing the rear gun turret it still looks 90% bomber 10% airliner.

Finished in an "austerity" bare aluminum and sporting only a small company legend and civil registration the aircraft has the look of a well used machine. No highly polished reflective textures on this beast, the authors have gone for reality rather than style, with this aircraft.

The odd single rearward facing passenger seats are clearly visible through the cabin windows in the rear fuselage, but the only movement in this area is a rather basic cabin door.

Of particular note from the outside, is the attention to detail paid to the undercarriage area copied from genuine Avro drawings. The large paddle bladed props are clearly visible from the cockpit, but do not move when pitch is changed from your yoke, possibly an oversight in the design? When in motion the prop discs look a little like those seen in CFS2, again adequate but not impressive.

Although the aircraft looks right from all angles, it does not compare well against of the type of detail now we expect from the premier division of developers, it is, shall we say "more AlphaSim rather than Capt.Sim" in the standard of detail and texture, as however, is the price!

**Panel**

Both 2D and virtual cockpit users are catered for with this aircraft. Pop up panels are available for engine and additional flying controls, including a useable

R1155 radio receiver for tuning in the ADF beams used to navigate this vintage machine.

With such a great view (I never tired of panning left to look at those elegant Rolls Royce Merlin engines roaring only a few feet from the captains seat), it is very tempting to fly this airliner from the virtual cockpit exclusively. Luckily, the designers have incorporated more than enough clickable controls to accomplish this. With this in mind, the designers spent most of their time developing the virtual cockpit rather than the 2D panel, which is not as fully functional as is normally expected, and may well disappoint dedicated 2D panel users.



Auto-pilot on this aircraft is similar to the real thing....a heading hold and elevator trim lever for height adjustment! Forget STAR's and SID's procedures, when this aircraft flew, STARS were a thing you used to Navigate by and SID was probably the first name of your wireless operator or steward!

## Sounds

As one would expect, a dedicated sound file is included. I have had the pleasure of hearing the Avro Lancaster from the RAF Battle of Britain Memorial Flight on many occasions and the sound file for this aircraft is as good a representation of this sound as I have ever heard in MSFS. With the addition of a sub-woofer to my set up, I am sure it would sound even better. Start up and shutdown files are also included.

## Flight Model

Flying this aircraft is rather like flying a gigantic Piper Cub; landings are made in the old fashioned "three pointer" style. A wheeler landing tends to result in several bounces and some very warm brakes at best....a heart-in-the-mouth overshoot at worst! Fully loaded, a large amount of runway (and a small amount of luck) is required. I followed the famous wartime practice of bouncing the aircraft down the runway as take off speed is reached, not elegant, but effective! Crosswinds can be challenging and one is often flying with full rudder just to keep straight. Take-off torque is also an issue and a few dabs of differential brakes are required before the rudder becomes effective to avoid drifting off the black stuff. Ground handling is good for a large tail-dragger; the good cockpit visibility really comes into its own while taxiing.

In recent months several early navigation aids have been released as freeware (driftmeter.zip and dc3\_bbsx.zip, a drift meter and bubble sextant respectively) both available in the Avsim File Library, these could really enhance navigation on aircraft of this vintage. If you really fancy taking your simming to different level, download and fit these instruments into this aircraft and try an Atlantic crossing!

The designers have allowed the default GPS to creep into the 2D pop-ups, so if navigation is not your thing, you will at least know where you are!

## Lasting Impressions

If this aircraft was freeware, I am sure it would be highly praised, very popular and would even get an award. However, with the recent release of the RealAir Spitfire and Flight One ATR (both reviewed here recently), flight sim pay-ware has moved on. People will expect a lot more for their dollar (or Euro) as further releases come out.

If you are content with sort of aircraft being released by AlphaSim, you are going to love this aircraft, if you are looking for the next project that "raises the

bar" in FS2004, look elsewhere.



## Summary

This aircraft falls well short of recent 5 star reviews, but it is "not a bad" aircraft. I know what a long and difficult process is required for a very basic aircraft to take shape in FSDS or Gmax (the latter is used in this design), but to create a full project such as this takes literally thousands of hours of hard work and dedication.

If you are lover of forgotten aircraft (in MSFS terms at least) such as I am, buy this aircraft today! Think of it as an investment in the future, not only will you benefit from the planned free updates that will improve this aircraft as time goes by, you will encourage the team to develop and improve their next project the mighty AVRO LANCASTER (check out these early screenshots <http://www.plane-design.com/lancaster.html>) one of the most important aircraft in military history, well deserving of a great MSFS stand alone model.

If we lose small fledgling FS development teams such as Plane-Design through lack of encouragement (and purchases), we can all look forward to FS2006 and FS2008 when we will all be flying modern jet airliners and executive jets with glass cockpits, developed by the same four or five add-on developers. When that happens our hobby will lose an important element of aviation history, and our simulated flying will become rather like airline flying is today... DULL.

### What I Like About the Lancastrian

- The brave choice of aircraft from a new development company
- The delight of hand flying a large four engine prop-liner.
- The attention to detail in areas such as the undercarriage
- The Sound files (but I really must get a sub-woofer).
- The constant small (free) improvements that are being developed

### What I Don't Like About the Lancastrian

- The constant small (free) improvements that are being developed, (shouldn't we have expected these to have been sorted in beta testing)?
- Some minor texture niggles in the props and the fact that they do not seem to feather.
- Only one paint scheme on release (more are planned, free to registered users)!
- The modeling of crew figures leaves a little to be desired

**Printing**

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