

AVSIM Commercial FSX Panel Review

Beechcraft Baron with Aspen EFD Panel



Product Information

Publishers: [Friendly Panels](#)

Description: "Glass cockpit" retrofit for the Beechcraft Baron .

Download Size:
11 MB

Format:
Download

Simulation Type:
FSX

Reviewed by: [Bert Pieke](#) AVSIM Senior Staff Reviewer - April 10, 2011

Introduction:

When I heard that Friendly Panels had released an Aspen based avionics package, I was keen to try it, since I've been reading a lot about this new low-cost (real world) glass cockpit avionics package.

What is particularly interesting about these gauges (apart from the price point) is that they fit into the existing 3 inch holes in the cockpit panel that are left behind when you rip out the original steam gauges that are typically mounted in a GA aircraft.

Here is a picture of the original Aspen unit, where you can see that the part of the panel that sticks out behind the flat screen is shaped like an analogue

gauge housing.

In the Aspen marketing videos, much is also made out of how easy these gauges are to use and of the fact that having two panels side by side allows for a backup option where you transfer one set of gauges over to the alternate panel at the push of a button. Pretty slick!

In addition, Friendly Panels chose the default FSX Baron for their conversion. I've always liked this plane, and never found a way of installing as much as a GPS in the panel, let alone a complete gauge refit.

So, let see what you get when you order this package. Here is what the Friendly Panels documentation has to say:

"This pack includes two panels for the default Beechcraft Baron 58, with ASPEN EFD 1000/500 equipment, including a complete virtual cockpit, totally adapted to the new gauges.



Figure 1-1
EFD1000 PFD and EFD500 MFD Display Units

Aspen Guide picture

Main features:

- ASPEN EFD 1000/500 AND GARMIN GNS430 NAVIGATION INSTRUMENTS.
- A REALISTIC SET OF GAUGES: BENDIX KLN 94 GPS, GARMIN GNS530 GPS , BENDIX KX 165A NAV - COM RADIO, BENDIX KR 87 ADF, BENDIX KT 76C TRANSPONDER, Altitude Selector / Vertical Speed Selector / Alerter S-TEC ST360, S-TEC Fifty Five X Autopilot and different realistic Audio panels, etc...
- TWO DIFFERENT GPS: Garmin GNS 530 and Bendix KLN94
- GOOD FRAME RATE.
- VIRTUAL COCKPIT TOTALLY ADAPTED TO NEW GAUGES.
- MOST GAUGES VISIBLE IN 2D PANELS."

Installation & Documentation:

You can find the Baron EFD pack at the [Friendly Panels site](#) .

The installation is straightforward, and indeed, you end up with two new Baron models, one equipped with a Bendix KLN GPS and one equipped with a Garmin 530.

The documentation is divided into four manuals: an overview manual, and one for each for the Garmin GPS and for the Aspen PFD and MFD panels. Clearly the intent is not to use these gauges in other aircraft, but rather to fly the Baron aircraft "as is". The manuals are well laid out and fully illustrated and certainly support the Friendly Panels motto.

Being familiar with the Garmin GPS, I decided to take the GNS530 equipped Baron for a test flight.

The gauges:

I do most of my flying from the virtual cockpit, so that is where I started. Friendly Panels have done a nice job of modifying the default Baron with not only the new gauges, but also a removable yoke. This makes it easier to see the switches and is a welcome modification. Also, the engine gauges have been replaced with more readable units.

The EFD panels are nicely rendered and by clicking on them, you can pop up a larger, higher resolution window. This is useful when you want to see the map in more detail. The overall impression is quite nice. The Baron is not up to the latest standards in FSX add-ons, but certainly still enjoyable to fly! And, the lower texture resolution makes for good frame rates.

Test System
Q6600 @ 3.2 GHz
4 GB DDR 800 Ram
Nvidia GTX460 1GB Video Card
22" LCD monitor 1680x1050 resolution
CH Products USB Yoke
WindowsXP Professional
Flying Time:
10 hours



I had a small issue with the fact that you have to click the VIEW button on the MFD, before you can adjust the map range. This seems overly cumbersome and is not as shown in the real EFD documentation and videos. After some discussion with the author, I made a slight modification to the Gauge XML code which will hopefully appear in an upcoming Service Update. This allowed me to operate the map buttons with a single click and also brought the smart button menu on the right into view.

Original gauges:



Modified gauges:



Compared to the standard steam gauges, the EFD panel gives you a wealth of information, complete with moving map. The panel also has a GPS (Garmin or KLN) installed, so you can program and follow GPS flight plans. I added my trusty Reality XP GNS530W and was happy to see that the avionics also support fully linked LPV approaches for the ultimate in flexibility.



I can well see why real Baron owners would choose to upgrade their airplane with this glass cockpit option!

The Garmin GPS that comes with the package, is an enhanced FSX GNS500, with radios added, and without the irritating flaws of the original (popup now stays in synch with the panel mounted unit and the Range buttons operate like the real thing). Well done!

Last, but not least, the package also includes a 2d panel which for some users is still the preferred way to fly.



Summary:

So where does that leave me? Well, simply put: This package is a real bargain! Here is what you get: A nicely upgraded Beech Baron with the newest in glass gauges, and a handful of radios that can also be used to upgrade other airplanes in your fleet. If you do not want to spend the money for a Reality XP GPS, you get a Garmin and a KLN unit included, that would be a welcome upgrade for most FSX default planes in your hangar. And all that for less than the price of a take-out pizza.

Yes, there are more detailed simulations of the Aspen PFD out there, but for a higher price. If you are curious to experience the Aspen EFD avionics, this is the least expensive way to try it out! And if you always wanted to add a GPS to the Baron panel, here it is, included in the package!

What I Like About The Baron EFD Package

- Modern Glass Cockpit avionics, packaged with a nicely redone Baron
- Readable, well laid out panel
- 3D and 2D cockpits a pleasure to use
- All this at a bargain price

What I Don't Like About The Baron EFD Package

- Baron texture resolution not up to current add-on standards
- Small issue with the user interface which I hope will be fixed

Printing

If you wish to print this review or read it offline at your leisure, right click on the link below, and select "save as"

[Beechcraft Baron with Aspen EFD Panel](#)

[\(adobe acrobat required\)](#)

Comments?

Standard Disclaimer

The review above is a subjective assessment of the product by the author. There is no connection between the product producer and the reviewer, and we feel this review is unbiased and truly reflects the performance of the product in the simming environment as experienced by the reviewer. This disclaimer is posted here in order to provide you with background information on the reviewer and any presumed connections that may exist between him/her and the contributing party.

[Tell A Friend About this Review!](#)

**© 2011 - AVSIM Online
All Rights Reserved**