

Flying in style! The MSFS Beechcraft Model 17 Staggerwing review

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6 min. de lecture

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A bit of history

Introduced in 1933, the Beechcraft Model 17 Staggerwing was intended as a business executive aircraft. Aircraft executive Walter H. Beech and airplane designer Ted A. Wells set to work building what would become a classic aircraft featuring some of the 'art deco' style of the time with a streamlined shape that belied the faster and more aerodynamic aircraft that were to come.

At the height of the Great Depression, launching an executive focused aircraft was a daring project. So was the types' retractable landing gear, a first among GA biplanes of the time, as was its powerful engine (a 450 hp Pratt & Whitney R-985-AN-1 "Wasp Junior") and 200mph/184kt top speed. Sales were initially slow but production picked up as the type found several niches including as a military courier aircraft and an air racer.

The type is still flown today with several being maintained or restored to flying condition. The [AOPA even has a fantastic article from back in 1999](#) talking about the classic aircraft. It's worth a read!

It's a Carenado... mostly



Asobo are partnering with a variety of third party developers to make aircraft in their two ongoing aircraft series. That has lead to some interesting scenarios where each aircraft comes with the quirks of the developer behind it. In this case, Carenado, an experienced developer

for multiple flight sims, brings their both their strengths (and weaknesses) forward.

What differs between this and the standard Carenado affair is in two essential ways. First, the standard Carenado tablet that usually ships with their aircraft is missing. The tablet gives us features like the ability to set wheel chocks, open and close doors. With that tablet you could also place other static items around the aircraft. You could also toggle the aircraft's state from cold and dark all the way to ready to fly. Those features are missing here. Opening and closing the door and windows, however, are still a feature at least – just not done via tablet.

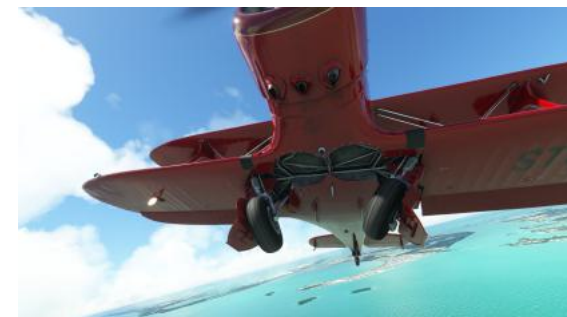


On the upside, the pilot models have changed. The older gentleman and his younger co-pilot, placed in some of the other Carenado aircraft, are replaced by the default MSFS pilots which are configurable from a variety of options. I see that as a bonus.

Carenado have also used the MSFS built-in interactive checklist which helps you find

controls in the cockpit as you startup the aircraft. Great for learning! I hope that this convinces them to bring that feature to their other types in the future.

Visually impressive





On the visual front, Carenado is well known for their expert work and the Model 17 Staggerwing does not disappoint in the slightest. From the extreme amounts of detail around the types' radial engine to the structural pieces in the cockpit to the leather seats and woodgrain armrests, the Model 17 impresses everywhere.

Even when you zoom in and look closely, it's hard to find fault with texture work or with the model. This is a real beauty and I can't find fault anywhere on this aircraft. It doesn't hurt that the Model 17 Staggerwing is also a classically good looking aircraft!

Audio is... pretty good?



Carenado types are a bit hit and miss on audio. While they usually have the levels dialed in well and they do go the extra mile of adding creaks and groans during turns and rolls, some of their sounds are less than inspiring and they sometimes have an obvious repeat in their audio clips. The Cessna C170B that I just reviewed is the worst offender.

Here the audio recording of the engine is very good. It's even enjoyable for the most part with that nice radial hum. There are still a few weird frequencies that I can hear with my headphones that bother me in the exterior view but the interior sounds good all the time.

Switches, gear and flap levers, and other miscellany of controls all have chunky sounding audio associated with them which makes me very happy!

Flying the Staggerwing



Takeoff with the Staggerwing is, like most tail draggers, a bit more involved than with a tricycle landing gear aircraft. That's doubly so when you have a significant crosswind. The sims' modeling of on ground and in air still leave me wanting as the transition between the two is very harsh. Still, Carenado have learned from their past tricycle gear aircraft and with appropriate rudder pedal control you can keep the aircraft straight. Just be prepared to hit the pedals hard and suddenly when you lift off.

Flying this aircraft on the other hand is a pure joy. Response is good on all surfaces and it seems to enjoy a fair bit of control harmonization.

The Staggerwing was designed with speed in mind and here it impresses. With a 184 knot top

speed and able to comfortably cruise in the 150-160 knot range, this is an aircraft that can get to places reasonably quickly. Not all that different from the [Mooney M20 I've been flying recently](#) and considerably faster than the [C170B that I just reviewed](#).

What it lacks is an autopilot so those cross country cruises are all hands on all the time. It is fairly docile while at speed so that isn't too hard and it does have elevator and rudder trim to let you sort the aircraft out which is nice.



It does lack sophisticated navigation gear and has just a single Nav radio. There is no integrated GPS like we saw cleverly integrated into the C170B. So, you'll need to either navigate old school or make use of whatever information you can glean from the VFR map provided in the sim. It also doesn't appear to have the ability to set a radio code so you'll have to do that automatically via the ATC dialogue box.

One thing I'll note with this aircraft is that like previous Carenado types that I've flown, its engine modeling is good from a standard procedures point of view but not from a failures point of view. Start-up and shut down work reasonably well and if you don't have the throttle cracked just right or the fuel mix and prop lever forward you'll struggle to start it. Pumping the fuel into the engine is fun too. Icing can be a problem for the engine and pitot tube as well. On the other side of the coin, I've never been able to make the carb heat jump up or introduce ice into the engine by descending at low throttle through cold air. Most MSFS aircraft do tend to lack that kind of engine modelling and this one does too.

Final thoughts

Although it's missing a few nice to have features, I would say that Carenado have done a very good job with their partnership release with Asobo for Famous Flyers #1. The Staggerwing is a classic aircraft and a lovely addition to the Flight Simulator aircraft roster. It's a fun aircraft to spend time with while offering up a few challenges of flying an aircraft that feels very much like a WWII era warbird.

Asobo have tended to offer these addon aircraft at good prices and at \$14.99 USD, the Model 17 Staggerwing is nearly half the price of your usual Carenado aircraft release. That does remove the tablet and a few other nice to have

features but its not all bad as it mostly makes up for those missing features elsewhere.

Carenado did not skimp on the visual details, the aircraft modeling, sound effects, or even the flight model which feels good enough to me.

For the price, this is a great addition and for the historical flyers out there, this is a good one to add to your collection.

Screenshots



