

Not one for the beginner

by *The Editor*

"We want you to fly – not just buy an R/C helicopter" – so says the blurb on the package and in all the hard sell advertisements. Unfortunately, I do not think it stands up to all its designers claims. What a pity he cannot allow one to make up one's own mind, rather than making exaggerated claims which lead the novice to disappointment

and a feeling of anti-climax. As another saying goes – 'It's just not cricket, old boy!!'

With this model in the .25 size engine-powered class, the novice or the beginner is certainly going to have a hard time. That is not to say that someone with experience will not enjoy flying this zippy little machine, but I am looking at

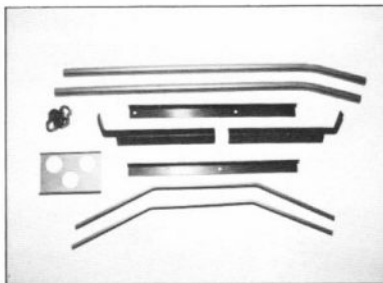
these models from the point of view of someone with little or no experience – i.e. a first time buyer. The Cricket is 'New and Improved', but the model still flies the same – only easily in the hands of an experienced flyer. I do not feel this model is for a beginner unless he accepts that it will be a very long road to success (simple hovering and circuits) and a costly one at that. After all, it is theoretically possible to learn to fly on any model, it's just a matter that some make the going easier and smoother than others – also cheaper. Yes, the spares are easily available and relatively cheap, but goodness me, what a lot of spares you will go through! 'The United States Champion R/C Helicopter' – well in sales and parts, maybe, but in teaching someone to fly – well that's another matter. After all, no one can dispute the fact that in the hands of Robert Gorham the machine flies superbly well, as I have seen for myself, but that is not what I am here to talk about.

Before I go any further, I will say that the model is well produced and packaged. Not only will you get excellent instructions but also copies of add-on newsletters pertaining to new modifications or improvements to the building and flying of the model. (However, even with these improvements it didn't stop its designer from crashing the model in a very short space of time at a recent West Coast Fly In!)

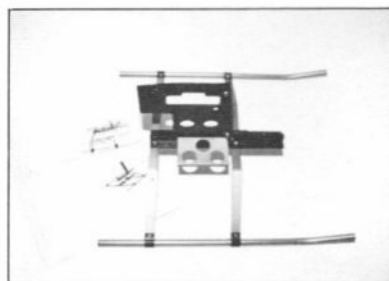
From opening the box and going through the contents, it becomes apparent that it should not take long to build. Though this can be the case – experienced people understand the problems – it is not quite so for the novice, remember he knows nothing at all about helicopter design or flight characteristics prevalent in the model. Do read the instructions thoroughly and with luck you will have built a model that will eventually be possible to fly. After building and finishing the model in the prettiest of colour schemes and using the best radio equipment and nicely running engine – DO NOT FEEL that you will go out



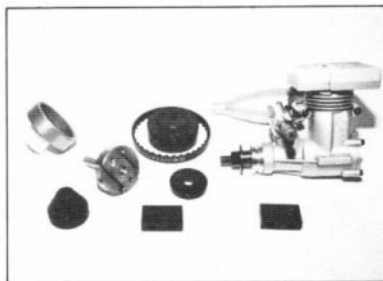
The kit laid out, prior to assembly.



The chassis and skids.



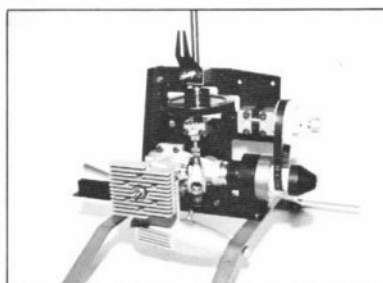
The sub-frame, after assembly.



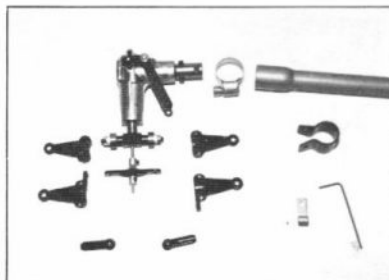
The OS 25 FSR with clutch, spinner and mounting blocks.



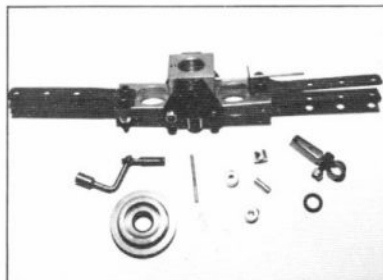
The ballraced bearing support blocks for the main shaft and gear.



The completed assembly – engine, main shaft, bearings, cone starter and tail drive.

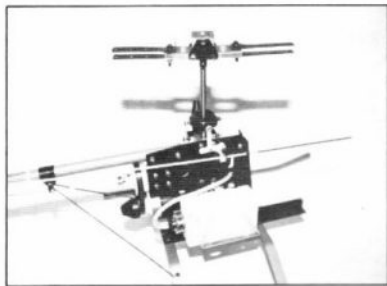


The tail rotor gear box with its blade holders.

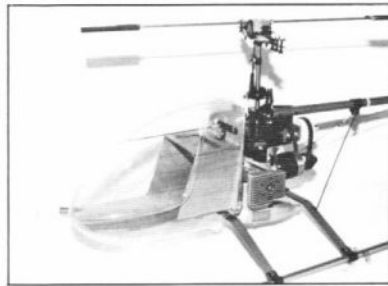


The rotor head and the swash plate which utilises an O ring for movement – not bad.

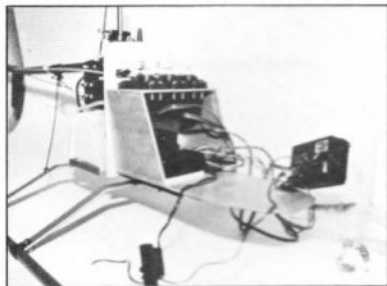
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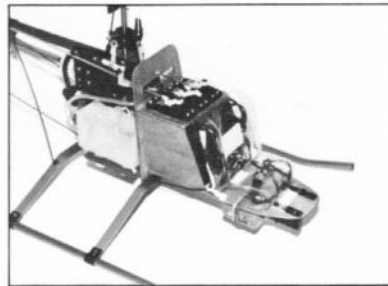
The fuel tank in position.



The cabin structure made up from diecut plywood and the plastic canopy.



Installing the servos and radio gear.



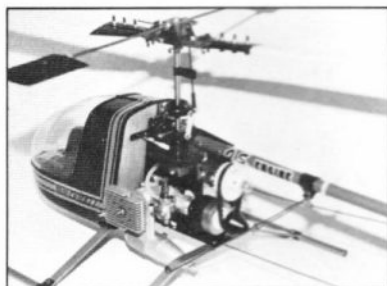
The plastic seat – an optional extra – which is very useful for holding the receiver and hiding all the wires.



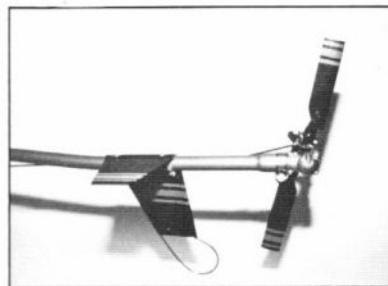
Painted in distinctive black with gold stripes to match the super custom black and gold of the frame and boom.



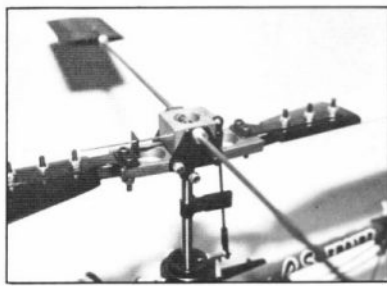
When the seat has been fitted – which helps with the C of G, the impression is not at all bad.



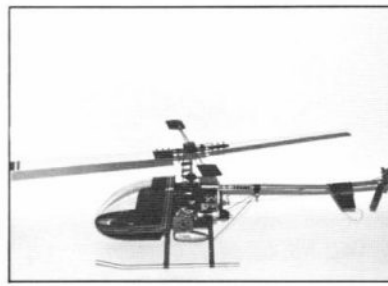
Rear side view, showing the mechanics neatly in place.



The tail rotor blades, gear box and the horizontal and vertical fins.



Close up of the rotor head. Blades are kept in place by using two bolts.



The completed model – looks a pretty little thing!

and immediately fly the model. The model will not even fly you – you will most likely have a disaster which can leave you very dependent. This is, of course, completely normal for a beginner but unfortunately you can be led to believe otherwise, if you believe everything you read in advertising material.

The sub-frame or chassis goes together very easily and by the time you reach bag 3 (motor drive assembly) things start looking as though they should be where they are. I don't propose to go through the assembly piece by piece, as the instructions are, as I have said before, very explicit, and do not need expanding. The tail rotor assembly in bag 4 is also straightforward. However, considering it is a Hirobo gear box then the All American concept of a helicopter soon dwindles. The rotor head is a design much copied and still lacking in serious application. (Remember, we are talking about training future pilots, and that is serious.)

After completing bags 5, 6 and 7 after installing the radio equipment, the model is looking good. It far outstrips its competitors the Lark, Zenith and Heli-Baby in design, but not the superior Baron 20. However, here we are with a nice little model, that does look pretty. Yes, it will easily fit into the boot of a car, yes there are some good engineering designs and yes it flies reasonably well.

The model starts easily due to its cone spinner – and is reasonably quiet with the OS 25 FSR engine – and it will lift off into the hover fairly smoothly, provided the blades have been angled as per the instructions (not easy). With the trim on the tail sorted out, and the help of a gyro, this little model will fly very nicely. It can do most of the things that a larger model can do, within the capabilities of fixed pitch response – but as this model is advertised as one for the novice, then doing aerobatics doesn't seem to come into the arena – so to speak – and through the inherent problems of fixed pitch, then learning to fly a model helicopter on this machine will be, for the average man in the street, a long, long road.

It is certainly a good effort from John Gorham, who has tried to produce a helicopter within the pocket range of everyone. The only snag is, that not everyone can fly a model helicopter and I'm sorry to say that I believe this machine – although responsive like any other chopper – requires more than what the novice has – experience!