



ADS-B Out transmitter. As we reported in the May 2019 *Aviation Consumer* field report (we actually installed a skyBeacon in a Cherokee), many installations might not be completed in under one hour, but some might and the rest can likely be accomplished in a few hours, with paperwork and flight testing. The skyBeacon is currently priced at \$1850 and you can learn more by visiting www.uavionix.com.

**BEST LED LANDING LIGHT:
AEROLED SUNSPOT**



As aviation gadgets go, LED landing lights are only expensive when compared to old-school incandescents. While they may cost \$600 or more, there's value in performance of seeing better for landing and taxiing, plus improved conspicuity by leaving the LED lights on all the time.

The AeoleD Sunspot was our top pick in our LED performance shootout in the March 2019 *Aviation Consumer*. At \$349, we think the 1030-L-A is a high-value combination of price and performance. Visit www.aeroleds.com.

**BEST NEW AIRCRAFT ACCESSORY:
JET SHADES**

The Jet Shades product is a direct result of company founder Kevin Duggan trying to solve the nagging problem of excess heat in the cabin of his Eclipse Jet. Tired of sticking random things in the windows and trying automotive shades, he developed the Jet Shades. These are made of optical-quality polycarbonate material that's virtually unbreakable and shatterproof, block 99.9 percent

Editor's Choice Awards: Garmin An Easy Win

Garmin has expanded the STC list for its retrofit autopilots, earned widespread approval for the G3X Touch and now has new navigators.

In each July issue of *Aviation Consumer* we pick 12 products, services or companies that were standouts over the past editorial year. You know, the best of the best. We don't take our Editor's Choice Gear of the Year awards lightly, but when we looked back at what Garmin has accomplished recently, we knew we had our winner.

The Aviation Consumer

PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

Perhaps what impressed us the most about Garmin this past editorial year was its ability to earn a wide variety of STC approvals. This includes expanding the GFC500 budget-based autopilot, a system that not long ago was limited to experimental aircraft. At press time Garmin announced a new STC for installation of the system in Mooney M20J/K/M/R/S models, in addition to the Beech Bonanza 36 series.

As we reported in the June 2019 *Aviation Consumer*, Garmin also earned an STC for installation of the G3X Touch integrated avionics

suite in over 500 aircraft models, is nearly completed with the G5000 integrated avionics suite for Cessna Citation XL/XLS jets (the system was recently certified for Beechjet models), plus Garmin designed and earned a TSO and STC for a new series of standalone GPS navigators. This is the GPS175 and the GNX375—a navigator with built-in mandate-compliant ADS-B Out.

For all of these accomplishments in a short amount of time, we offer credit where it's due and tip the editorial hat to Garmin.

**EASIEST ADS-B INSTALL:
UAVIONIX SKYBEACON**



For the second year in a row the editor's choice for a budget ADS-B Out solution goes to uAvionix and the skyBeacon wingtip LED position/strobe system with integral



of infrared light, over 44 percent of solar energy and can reduce 70 percent of glare.

What's unique about the Jet Shades is they are custom fitted and can be left in during flight, and easily removed for night ops. We tried a set in the cockpit and the rear cabin of a Pilatus PC-12 and in the sun-splashed cabin of a Diamond DA40 and found them to be excellent performers, while Duggan and his team couldn't be easier to work with when it comes to tweaking the fit.

The Rhode Island-based company is constantly improving the product and offering more applications—from small piston singles to jets. Since the Jet Shades are a removable accessory, there's no FAA approval required. Those are the shades fitted in a Cirrus SR22 at the top of the page. Contact www.jet-shades.com.

**FAVORITE IFR HOOD:
VIBAN**



When it comes to IFR training hoods, also known as view limiting devices, you should choose for personal comfort and compatibility with eyeglasses and hats.

Our market scan in the March 2019 *Aviation Consumer* proved there's plenty of variability in fit, form and comfort. Of the hood

design, our top choice is the \$39.95 hybrid-design ViBAN. It has good durability and comfort plus it's easy to put on and take off. Depending on the type of glasses you wear, you might

make it work with them. Contact www.viban.com.

**MOST ADVANCED AUDIO PANEL:
PS ENGINEERING PMA450B**

Tennessee-based PS Engineering has never been a company to let its products go stale and the PMA450B audio control panel is proof. The flagship panel is the result of nearly 34 years of PS Engineering designing nothing else but aircraft audio systems.

In fact, the PMA450B is perhaps the most feature-rich panel we've used, with a highly configurable UI that caters to a wide variety of users. It has dimensional audio, which digitally processes incoming radio signals at user-defined locations in the headsets, Bluetooth for streaming to multiple devices, interfaces for action cam audio streaming and a variety of other advanced features—including a programmable aural warning system—that leaves room for the typical buyer to grow in to. It's \$2595, and done right the install won't be inexpensive, but we still think it's a good value and the most feature-rich audio panel on the market. Contact www.ps-engineering.com.

**BEST VFR REFRESHER COURSE:
SPORTY'S RUSTY PILOT**

Among a handful of interactive pilot refresher courses for VFR flying, we favor the Sporty's Rusty Pilot pro-

gram. What we like best is the course is a good way to hone rusty radio communications skills. After trying a handful of courses, we think the \$99 price is fair, it's accessible in app and desktop format and we like the excellent support provided by Sporty's. You can read the report in the December 2018 *Aviation Consumer* and visit www.sportys.com.

**FAVORITE AIRCRAFT WASH:
FLEET WASH**

In an exhausting trial for the August 2018 *Aviation Consumer*, we gathered a few dirty airplanes and took out the buckets and hoses to test a handful of popular aircraft wash products and found that the Fleet Wash from Arrow-Magnolia was a hands-down favorite. We particularly like that it's easy to work with and has deep-cleaning qualities.

Fleet Wash is \$30 per gallon and made satisfying amounts of suds—something that's important to us when washing aircraft. It was strong enough to wash away slimy de-icing fluid without leaving behind any film. Best of all, it left a brilliant shine after rinsing and drying. Visit www.arrowmagnolia.com.

**BEST PORTABLE POWER SUPPLY:
FLIGHT GEAR BATTERY PACK**

If you're like us, you need a reliable and powerful charging bank for topping off portable electronics on the fly. We found that the \$79.95 Flight Gear backup battery pack (sold by



Sporty's) gets the job done.

What we like best are the multiple charging ports—three standard USB-A and one USB-C output/input port—for charging multiple devices at once. With 20,000 mAh of capacity, we've found it tough to run the bank dry. It even has a microprocessor that monitors the battery health of the charged device and shuts





down the charging circuit before it overcharges.

We're told this battery is different than others that resemble it and sold by Amazon because the Flight Gear was tested to ensure it won't interfere with onboard avionics.

MOST ADVANCED TUG: TRACKTECH BY AC AIR

When it comes to modern aircraft tugs, we think Chino, California-based AC Air Technology excels with its line of TrackTech remote-control tugs. The general idea of a remote-control tug (it moves on heavy-duty rubber tracks—yes, like a tank) is having the freedom to walk around the aircraft while inching it into tight spaces without needing a wing walker.

The tugs have a lanyard-equipped remote-control unit with a joystick that moves the tug forward, back, left and right and there's a three-po-



sition speed switch for low, medium and fast. There's an even a lighting option for night ops. AC Air has a good website for getting the right tug for your aircraft and it has models for basic piston singles up to jets. Prices start at around \$3500. Contact www.acairtechnology.com.

BEST BACKWOODS TURBOPROP: QUEST KODIAK 100

With excellent fit and finish, a refined and sophisticated cabin and modern avionics, the Series II Quest Kodiak 100 is perhaps the most versatile turboprop single we've flown.

Moreover, it was even easier tagging the Kodiak a favorite because the one we flew for our report (September 2018 *Aviation Consumer*) was fitted with big Aerocet amphibious composite floats, adding even more utility, but at a speed penalty. Powered by a 750-HP Pratt PT6A, a Kodiak 100 on wheels does around 183 knots—no speed demon—but the payback is that it's easy to get the airplane in and out of tight places on the water and backwoods runways. If you had \$2.15 million (nearly \$2.8 million with floats) to spend for a rugged yet refined workhorse, we'd have no problem recommending

the Kodiak as the best backwoods utility turboprop. Visit www.questaircraft.com.

BEST PORTABLE EFIS: DYNON D3 POCKET PANEL



Dynon's latest-gen Pocket Panel D3 portable EFIS doesn't do everything a permanently mounted and certified EFIS does, but at just shy of \$900 it's priced about one-third of the typical budget EFIS.

For pilots who already have glass cockpits, or who are proficient at partial-panel flying, the D3 could be one of the best investments when it comes to belt-and-suspend-er portable backup.

The D3 uses the same AHRS as Dynon's panel-mounted avionics, but uses GPS data instead of pitot/static input, plus it has a new touchscreen, synthetic vision and a better UI than its predecessor. Visit www.dynonavionics.com.

