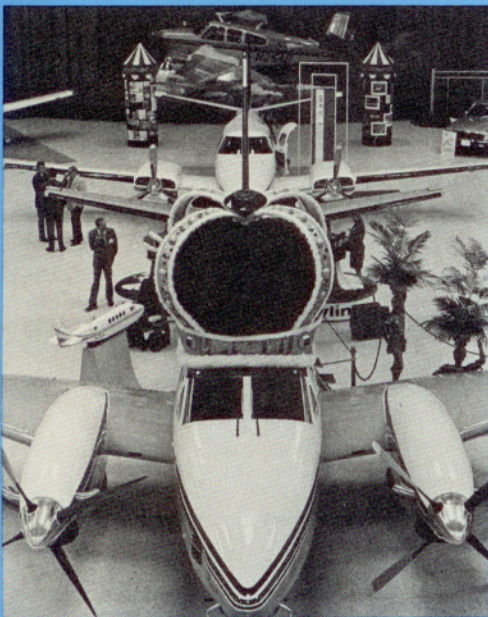


# BEECH Debuts 1973 Models At 1972 Prices

Progress cited in attempts to penetrate flight training and light single-engine rental aircraft markets. New model changes primarily limited to lower end of line



In keeping with its practice of bestowing royal titles on many of its aircraft, Beech formally displayed its 1973 models in the Century II civic center, Wichita, Kan., with king-sized crowns perched on top of members of its royal "family." Pilot staff photo



by LEW TOWNSEND / AOPA 376636

The 1973 four-place Sundowner, along with its light single-engine cousins—the two-place Sport and the four-to-six-place retractable-gear Sierra, boasts a number of refinements, mostly under the cowling and inside the cabin. Exterior changes on all three models include new wingtip-light reflectors. Note the magnetic compass has been moved from the center of the windshield down to the panel to improve visibility.

Beech Aircraft photo

■ Buoyed by an increasingly steeper upward trend in aircraft sales, especially in the high ticket aircraft in which it has always specialized, Beech Aircraft Corporation formally introduced its 1973 line in late October with a qualified statement that the new models would sell at 1972 prices.

The company thus became the second major general aviation aircraft manufacturer this year to say it was holding the line on prices for 1973. Cessna Aircraft Company earlier announced its 1973 models would be priced the same as its 1972 models [Nov. PILOT, page 55].

## Suggested List Prices 1973 Beech Aircraft Models

Sport B19 .....	\$15,975
Sundowner C23 .....	\$18,795
Sierra A24R .....	\$25,795
Bonanza F33A .....	\$46,000
Bonanza V35B .....	\$46,000
Bonanza A36 .....	\$50,500
Baron B55 .....	\$75,000
Baron E55 .....	\$92,650
Baron 58 .....	\$108,850
Duke A60 .....	\$179,500
Queen Air B80 .....	\$204,500
Airliner B99 .....	\$555,600
King Air C90 .....	\$399,500*
King Air C90 .....	\$429,500*
King Air E90 .....	\$518,750
King Air A100 .....	\$644,500
Beechcraft Hawker 125-400 .....	\$1.3 million
	(average price)
Beechcraft Hawker 125-600 .....	\$1.59 million
	(average price)

\* For 1973, Beech is offering the C90 for \$399,500 with factory-overhauled engines and for \$429,500 with new engines.

Beech, however, noted "prices are subject to change without notice," and Roy H. McGregor, Beech vice president-marketing, said, "We do not know how long we can hold these prices, but they are firm at this time." His statements helped spark a flurry of ordering by the company's distributor-dealer organization, which met in Wichita, Kan., Oct. 23-24 to witness formal unveiling of the 1973 models and to hear firsthand the company's plans for the future.

Items added as standard equipment and various improvements on each of the company's 17 different models range from \$500 to \$13,000 in value, officials said. "When you consider what has been added as standard equipment plus the many other improvements, it represents significant pricing progress," McGregor said in announcing there would be no price increases at this time.

The company's current line extends from the two-place Beechcraft Sport B19 (formerly Musketeer) at \$15,975 to the Beechcraft Hawker 125-600 jet, which has an average selling price of \$1.59 million. [See page 80.—Ed.]

Highlighting the new model introductions, which Beech held for the first time in Wichita's spacious and modern Century II civic center, are a number of improvements to the company's three-model light single-engine line—the Sport B19, Sundowner C23, Sierra A24R—and a unique new pricing structure for the King Air C90 that allows customers to order the aircraft with either new or factory-overhauled engines.

Officials also provided a status report on their plans for carving out a place for Beech and its aircraft in the flight training and rental aircraft markets [Feb. 1972 PILOT, page 36], plus the company revealed details of a recent marketing survey of more than 2,000

Beechcraft Bonanza owners and over 5,000 owners of competitive aircraft in the Bonanza class.

Beech further announced it was continuing to increase its yearly budget for product development to obtain "major improvements in range, noise level, pressurization" for its aircraft. "We even believe now that these essential ingredients of aircraft design and development [that Beech is now working on] will combine to let us break the magic 300 mph barrier for Beechcraft turboprops while retaining size, comfort, and short-field performance normally associated with our products," McGregor said.

For 1973, the standard equipped C90 has not one but two suggested selling prices: \$399,500, when equipped with factory-overhauled Pratt & Whitney PT6A-20 turbine engines; \$429,500, when equipped with new PT6A-20 engines. Both the new and the factory overhauled engines have a recently approved 3,000-hour TBO (time between overhaul), Beech said. The TBO on all King Air model engines was recently upped to 3,000 hours. The increase represented a 900-hour increase on the King Air A100's PT6A-28 engines, and a 600-hour increase for the King Air E90's PT6A-28 and the C90's PT6A-20 engines.

Prior to detailing improvements for 1973 in the Sport, Sundowner, and the retractable-gear Sierra, Beech confirmed it is still "actively pursuing new approaches to the two-place trainer market that will provide a highly competitive entry, both from an acquisition [initial purchase cost] and from an operations standpoint."

It is generally known Beech feels it must come up with a two-place trainer that is directly competitive with the

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\$11,340 Cessna 150 Trainer, currently the most widely used for primary flight instruction. It is also known that Beech's Liberal, Kan., plant, where the company's light single-engine line is produced, has been diligently working on three different two-place aircraft designs. One of the designs, designated the "Model 16," is now flying and a second design reportedly has progressed to the mockup stage. The third design, it was reliably reported, "is quite a ways down the road yet."

Following is a summary of some of the new improvements in the 1973 Sport, Sundowner, and Sierra:

- **Lighter control response**—Column forces have been reduced by approximately 50% by changing the stabilator tab linkage from a 1 to 1.65 ratio to a 1 to 1 ratio. Excessive play in the control column also has been reduced by utilizing a spring-loaded roller, similar to that used on the Bonanza, on the forward side of the panel.

- **Improved visibility**—Instrument panel has been lowered 1½ inches plus the glare-shield eyebrow has been padded, tilted, and extended aft to reduce lighting glare during night operations. The outside air temperature gauge (OAT) also has been mounted at the far left of the windshield and the magnetic compass has been relocated to the panel area, near the clock.

- **Quadrant controls standard equipment**—Similar to the quadrant used in multi-engine aircraft, the throttle, propeller control, and mixture control knobs are "touch, or feel, coded, as well as placarded for easy identification." Friction lock for the quadrant controls is a lever, on the right side of the console, that can be rotated aft to increase friction on the levers as wear occurs. Carburetor heat control on the Sport and Sundowner has also been relocated to the left side of the quadrant console.

- **Easier oil inspection**—The oil filler tube has been extended to within easy reach of the access door, "so it's no longer necessary to reach down in the engine compartment when checking the oil. No more oil smudges on your shirt and jacket cuffs. The dipstick is of the bale type that doesn't have to be unscrewed. Just lift up on the handle and the dipstick is free. No more struggling with overly tight dipsticks when the engine has cooled down."

- **Shoulder harness standard equipment**—Inertia-reel-mounted shoulder restraint belts have been added as standard equipment for front seat passengers. Also, seatbelts are now held in place by retainer straps on the sides of the seat bottom cushion, "no more groping around on the floor" for the belts.

- **Wingtip-light reflectors**—Reflectors now allow pilot to tell when the navigation lights are functioning.

- **Radio speaker and microphone jack**—The speaker is now mounted forward, between the front seat passengers, "so that the volume can now be adjusted to a comfortable level for both front and rear passengers. Audio reception for the pilot is improved considerably by this modification." The microphone and headset jack have been moved so that they are now located away from the pilot's right leg.

- **Improved door latching**—"The knob at the upper aft corner of the door is no more. The inner door-latch handle has been changed to an automotive type and, through cable linkage, it actuates two latch assemblies—one at the aft center of the door where it has always been, and a new one at the top aft corner of the door." Door frame also is now painted.

- **New interiors**—Styling and materials are the same as used in the Beechcraft Bonanza models. "Blue, red, and gold-striped seat fabrics with compatible colored side paneling and seat trim have been utilized with an off-white headliner and black trim accent for a completely new look."

- **Additional door for Sierra**—A rear entry door, measuring 24 inches by 30 inches, is now located on the left side of the fuselage "for easier passenger or cargo loading." The new door, Beech said, "greatly improves entry and exit to and from the optional fifth and sixth seats and facilitates loading of cargo or stretchers."

George D. Rodgers (AOPA 216908), director of Beech's light aircraft marketing, reported the company's first year of expanded efforts in the light aircraft market was marked by progress. He said

a total of 30 Beech Aero Centers was franchised over the past six months and he projected there would be 100 by the end of 1973.

Beech Aero Centers represent factory-direct retail outlets for the company's three-model light single-engine line. Rodgers said these outlets are being set up "only in areas where the organizations handling the larger Beech products felt it was advantageous." An integral part of the program involves a second franchise program, whereby the Beech Aero Centers establish branches of a national flying club, called the Beech Aero Club. The clubs are to be exclusive users of Beech's light single-engine planes and have been likened to a country club for general aviation pilots.

Rodgers said one test Beech Aero Club was established at Van Nuys, Calif., in mid-1972. "It has proven to be highly successful," he stated, adding that as the Beech Aero Center franchise program expands, the number of Beech Aero Clubs also will increase. "Every aero club must be attached to an aero center for support, but not every aero center necessarily will have an aero club," he explained.



Dale R. Erickson, manager of franchise sales, detailed the various services and activities available through Beech Aero Clubs and reported the company's original membership fee structure had been considerably modified as a result of input from both FBOs and prospective club members. The original plan centered around an initial \$700 fee and \$45-\$47 per month dues. The \$700 was viewed as a five-year membership fee.

Beech said it now has three classes of membership to the Beech Aero Clubs: (1) Fleet memberships; (2) Sport memberships; and, (3) Associate memberships.

"Fleet memberships will cost \$295 initially plus \$29 monthly dues and will be renewable annually for \$195," Beech reported. "This will entitle members to full utilization of all aero club aircraft and club activities at lower hourly rental rates than present retail prices. The new Sport membership is available for \$99 plus \$9 monthly dues and will entitle the member to full participation in club activities and use of the Beechcraft Sport at reduced hourly rates. The Sport membership may be renewed annually or converted to a full Fleet membership anytime during the year, with \$50 of the initial fee credited toward the purchase of a Fleet membership. The Associate membership is being established for individuals who already own aircraft but would like to participate in aero club activities. The rate structure for an Associate membership and the number of memberships available will have to be determined by each aero club chapter on 'a space available basis.'"

The Sport membership was created, Beech said, primarily for those who are undergoing flight training and would not have the requirement for larger and higher performance aircraft.

When reporting the current status of  
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The 1973 Sierra, top of Beech's light single-engine line, has a new entry door on the left side of the fuselage to facilitate entry to and exit from the optional fifth and sixth seats.

Beech Aircraft photo



The indomitable Bonanza, now celebrating its 25th year in production, continues to be a mainstay in Beech's stable of aircraft. A recent Beech survey indicated 58% of all purchasers of new model Bonanzas previously owned an earlier model Bonanza.

Beech Aircraft photo

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the program, officials emphasized "the hourly rates are established by each individual Beech Aero Center to fit its local situation. The Fleet membership allows the member to fly all aircraft up through the Sierra at about 60% of the hourly retail rate. If the member flies the national average of 72 hours, he not only enjoys the many extra benefits of the Beech Club, but saves money in the process."

Will G. West, Beech's director of market research, reported on the survey of over 2,000 Bonanza owners and over 5,000 owners of competitive aircraft in the Bonanza class. Beech itself surveyed by mail all owners of record of Bonanzas and Debonairs built from 1964 through June 1972 and the company contracted with Aviation Data Services, a Wichita research firm, to conduct a mail survey of "a select group of competitive retail owners." The company said its connection with the survey was not made known to those surveyed by Aviation Data Services.

The survey showed that the age and income brackets for both new and used buyers of Bonanzas were almost identical, Beech said. The majority of the Bonanza purchasers, as well as the purchasers of competitive new aircraft were in the \$35,000 to \$75,000 per year salary bracket and the 35 to 54 age group accounted for 73% of new retail Bonanza sales, and 79% of used Bonanza sales, Beech reported. A total of 79% of the competitive owners who purchased new aircraft also were in this age group, Beech said. The 44-year-old-and-less age group purchased 45% of all new Bonanzas and 44% of all new competitive aircraft. "Cumulatively," West said, "85% of new Bonanza buyers were 54 years old or less" and "84% of new competitive buyers were in this same age group."

The survey also provided potential updated definitions for a "new" and a "used" aircraft. A "new" aircraft was defined as one that had up to 150 total hours on the airframe, while a "used" aircraft was one that had over 150 hours on the airframe.

Beech reported that the survey also revealed 58% of all new Bonanza sales were to previous Bonanza owners; 12% were to previous Cessna 182/Skylane owners; 6% to former single-engine Piper Comanche owners; 5% to former Musketeer owners; and 4% to previous Cessna 210 Centurion owners.

During the 1973 model introductions, Beech officials also detailed and extolled the performance and handling characteristics of the balance of the company's line, from the Baron through the new Beechcraft Hawker 125-600 business jet. Though not spelled out, the company said various improvements were incorporated in all models. Beech's suggested retail prices for its 1973 models are shown in the table that appears on page 49. □