

A LAND ROVER

with wings

First of all, no, you can't buy a Land Rover Maule 260. This is a one-time, one-of-a-kind marketing arrangement between Land Rover North America, Inc.—the manufacturer of the famous British all-terrain vehicle—and Maule Air in Moultrie, Georgia. ■ You can, of course, buy your own new 260-horsepower Maule Orion for \$153,988. (There is also a 235-hp Orion model available for \$135,706.) If you want to paint it like a \$58,000 Range Rover, the luxury Land Rover model, well, better talk to Land Rover first. ■ The IFR-equipped Maule Land Rover is one decked-out airplane. So fancy, in fact, that it is also in use temporarily as a Maule Air display aircraft at 1999 airshows. It is loaded with options. ■

Maule officials had to reduce the print size just to fit the list of options on the one-page invoice. There are dual-caliper brakes; a Precise Flight Pulselite system; a three-

**An all-terrain,
all-options Maule
heads off to the
mountains**

BY ALTON K. MARSH

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE FIZER





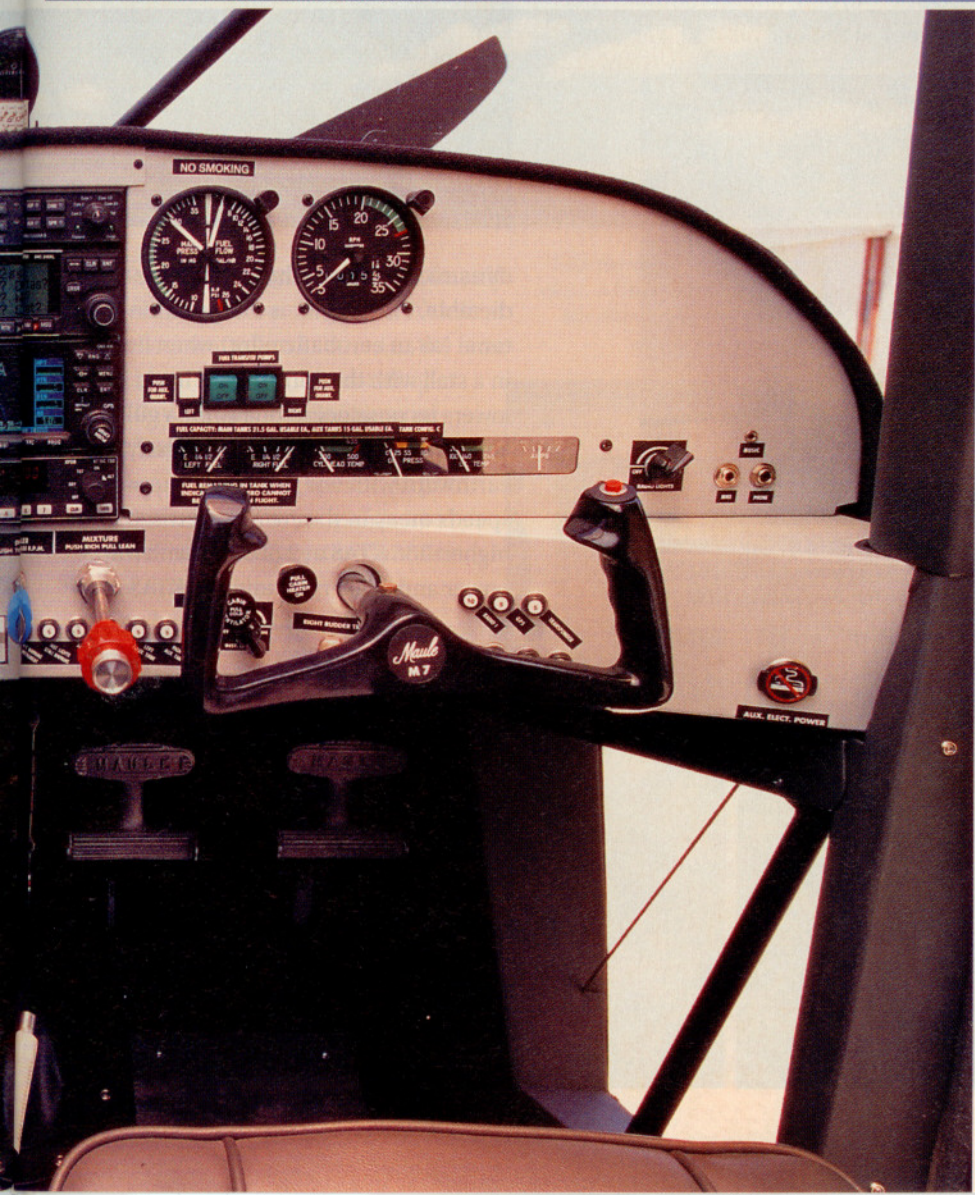


blade, 78-inch Hartzell propeller; leather seats; vortex generators; and a J.P. Instruments EDM 700 engine monitor with fuel-flow and GPS interface. Of course, the panel's main attraction is the Garmin GNS 430 with its color moving map.

Since the aircraft was built for a Colorado Land Rover dealer who will use it in his business, some of the options obviously were added with his customers in mind. Take the observation window for passengers behind the pilot, for example. That will make a great viewing position for scenic flights over the Rocky Mountains, where this particular aircraft will operate. The aircraft has smoke-tinted windows, a swing-out window for the copilot, a skylight for observing directly above the aircraft, and a camera hole.

The options were added at a sacrifice in useful load, of course. With full fuel, this particular Maule Land Rover has a payload of only 284 pounds (standard payload is 412 lb), but rarely will the aircraft need its full 73 gallons of fuel. This one is going to resupply customer camping trips into the Rocky Mountains. It has an endurance of more than four hours while still meeting IFR fuel-





The Maule has an endurance of more than four hours while still meeting IFR fuel-reserve requirements.

reserve requirements.

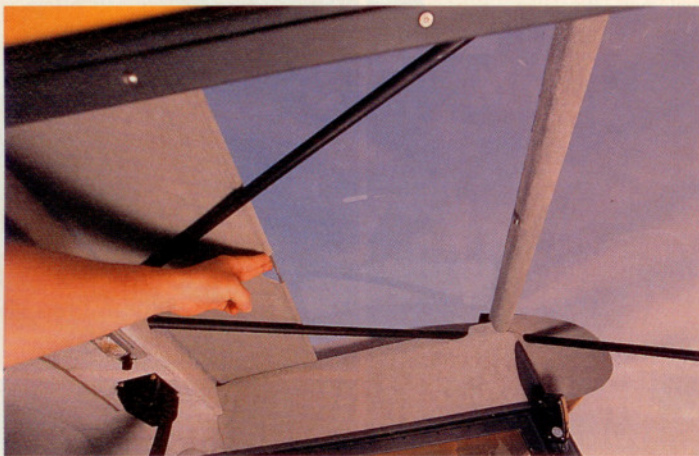
All those options—especially the avionics—boosted the price to \$199,487. (Yes, Maule still makes an aircraft for less than \$100,000. It is the 160-hp MX-7-160 Sportplane model with a base price of \$99,069.)

The standard M-7-260C Orion comes equipped for day or night VFR flight. You may wonder about all those *M*s and *X*s. The *M* stands for *Maule*, of course, but if an *X* follows it, then the aircraft has the slightly smaller fuselage of the two used in the 7 series that Maule happens to be building. The *C* means the main gear and tailwheel struts are made of spring aluminum. Model designations that are followed by an *A* have a fixed-pitch prop, while those with a *B* have the older oleo-strut landing gear. A

T after the *M* or *MX* means it is a tri-gear model rather than a tailwheel airplane.

What is the standard equipment on all the Maule models? The list is long, but it includes navigation lights, a landing light, wingtip strobe lights, cabin steps, double cargo doors, and a standard avionics package. The avionics packages start with your choice of an AlliedSignal/Bendix King KX-125-01 nav/com, a King KLX-135A GPS/com, or a Garmin GNC 250XL GPS/com. After that choice is made, you will also find in the standard package a King KT-76A transponder and a PS Engineering PM 1000II four-place intercom.

The highlight of the flight test of this logo-carrying aircraft was not the aerodynamic portion, but this author's first-ever look at the Garmin 430. The aero-



This one-off Maule-cum-Land Rover is designed with visibility in mind, and features extra side windows, a skylight, and a camera hole. Leather seats give passengers comfort in which to watch the views outside.



dynamic portion of the test was predictable. The aircraft is disappointingly tame (to an aerobatic pilot) when held in a stall with the controls full back. It lowers its nose occasionally for a gulp of airspeed but otherwise floats calmly earthward with few gyrations. The airspeeds measured were as advertised or higher: 136 KTAS at 2,500 feet with full power and 2,500 rpm, and 145 KTAS at



8,000 feet. Landings were as simple as it gets for tailwheel aircraft. I wasn't tail-wheel current when I arrived at the factory, but was by the third landing—with Ray Maule's excellent instruction. Ray operates a tailwheel aircraft restoration facility at Spence Airport where the company is headquartered, and he has recently restored models other than Maules.

You have read at least a dozen times by now about the wonders of the Garmin GNS 430 and how easy it makes IFR flight—especially from a situational awareness standpoint. All those stories are true. When flying IFR, the Orion's stability is impressive.

Ray Maule directed me toward a holding pattern near Moultrie Municipal Airport. I could see the teardrop entry unfold on the Garmin color moving map as the airplane icon moved over the racetrack pattern depicted. Later, as I was shooting a

Like the interior, this Maule's panel also has class. A Garmin 430 is the center of attraction, but there's also a Garmin 250XL GPS/com and a four-place intercom.


GPS approach, the aircraft ended up precisely over the intersection of two runways on the airport.

Maule continues to upgrade the airplane, which should result in its having greater acceptance from the flying public. Once Maule was known for paint that just might flake off a little during the flight from the factory to the new owner's home. Several years ago the factory invested in a fancy paint booth made in Italy and changed the type of paint used. Now, the paint job is first class—as good as any in the industry. Offering leather interiors also went a long way toward converting the public image of the Maule from workhorse to a family recreational vehicle.

But the workhorse image is not far away. While the Maule Land Rover is spruced up to impress owners of the ultimate all-terrain vehicle, more than half of all the M-7-260C Orions



ordered last year were put on floats and put to work. □

 *Links to additional information about Maules can be found on AOPA Online (www.aopa.org/pilot/links.shtml). E-mail the author at alton.marsh@aopa.org*

Maule M-7-260C Orion

Base price: \$153,988

Price as tested: \$199,487

Specifications

Powerplant	Lycoming IO-540-V4A5, 260 hp at 2,700 rpm
Recommended TBO	2,000 hr
Propeller	Hartzell constant-speed three-blade, 78-in dia
Length	23 ft 8 in
Height	6 ft 3 in
Wingspan	32 ft 11 in
Wing area	165.6 sq ft
Wing loading	15.1 lb/sq ft
Power loading	9.61 lb/hp
Seats	5
Cabin length	6 ft 11 in
Cabin width	3 ft 6 in
Cabin height	40 in
Empty weight, as tested	1,778 lb
Maximum gross weight	2,500 lb
Useful load	850 lb
Useful load, as tested	722 lb
Payload w/full fuel	412 lb
Payload w/full fuel, as tested	284 lb
Fuel capacity, std	78.6 gal (73 gal usable) 471.6 lb (438 lb usable)
Fuel capacity, optional	90.5 gal (85 usable) 543 lb (510 usable)
Oil capacity	8 qt
Baggage capacity	250 lb

Performance

Takeoff distance, ground roll	250 ft
Takeoff distance over 50-ft obstacle	600 ft
Maximum demonstrated crosswind component	12 kt
Rate of climb, sea level	1,400 fpm
Cruise speed/endurance w/45-min rsv, std fuel (fuel consumption) @ 75% power, best economy	146 KTAS/4.1 hr 8,500 ft (90 pph/15 gph)
Landing distance over 50-ft obstacle	600 ft
Landing distance, ground roll	300 ft

Limiting and Recommended Airspeeds

V _X (best angle of climb)	65 KIAS
V _Y (best rate of climb)	78 KIAS
V _{FE} (max flap extended)	83 KIAS
V _{NO} (max structural cruising)	128 KIAS
V _{NE} (never exceed)	158 KIAS
V _{SI} (stall, clean)	54 KIAS
V _{SO} (stall, in landing configuration)	43 KIAS

For more information, contact Maule Air Inc., 2099 Georgia Highway 133 South, Moultrie, Georgia 31766; telephone 912/985-2045; fax 912/890-2402; or visit the Web site (<http://members.surfsouth.com/~mauleair/>).

All specifications are based on manufacturer's calculations. All performance figures are based on standard day, standard atmosphere, sea level, gross weight conditions unless otherwise noted.