

## The Deep Space—Allan Pothecary

### A New One from the Benson Stable

Thinking of entering the next tricks party? – Read on! Just after the Gemini was released I took mine on holiday to San Diego where I got in to conversation with a really good flyer called Al Stroh about how to make his feel lighter.

I sort of knew Tim Benson from a distance at that time and said that I would ask for his opinion. It was here that I got my first insight at just how much effort goes in to the design and build of a top level kite.

Tim told me that before putting a kite on the market he had to be confident that it would do what he wanted it to do - and as well and preferably better than anything else around and trying all the possibilities with all the different types of materials that were available. So, Al could be assured that whatever he could think of, it almost certainly had already been tried before in the R and D.

Many sport kite flyers had noticed the beginnings of the latest new kite as far back as Brighton in July of 2004 and were impatient to own one especially after having had the chance of the occasional test fly at later events and festivals.

You won't ever get a cheap Benson kite – no more than you expect there to be a budget Rolls Royce and this one will be a step up from the Gemini range putting it in the Cornice class. What you get with a Benson kite is Quality with a capital Q, borne out of months of research and testing in all conditions and a combination of innovative ideas combined with the latest technology to provide you with a kite that will be right up to date with all the latest tricks and maybe, a few new ones that were discovered in its making.

This latest kite has evolved through intensive collaboration with co designer Andy Wardley and looking at every feature of a sport kite and improving it in some way.

Even the name was been a long time coming. Tim works in close liaison with Andy who lives about four hours away and each new major modification has to be identified so that when they talk over the phone about the C2 for instance, that was a later model than the B3 with alterations - and then they are both battling down the same strip. The C class name started to stick for a while as it was a name already associated with quality.....

I visited Tim at his workshop and got the chance to ask him about the kite. I asked what he had in mind right at the beginning, what was he aiming at? He said that it had to be different from the Gemini and had to do absolutely everything that he wanted to do without a struggle and it had to be easy and fun to fly.

When we tried the latest version out on the field later, Tim was testing the spine –was it better under tension and slightly curved and what was the difference when the sail was pulled tighter at the wingtips. Another prototype we had with us used slightly stiffer rods in the leading edge and there were shorter spreaders to try. So, how many different combinations is that so far?

If you ever get the chance to watch Mr B fly, take it. Tim really is a craftsman at what he does – you'll have to go a long way to see better, (OK - Andy too!) that's not to say that he's the best with every kite he picks up, like most flyers he has his own style but to see him wrap this kite three times around itself, fly it around the sky then slow it right down just above the ground whilst it flicks itself back to normal then slams down on to both tips in a perfect, two point landing – well it's just awesome!

But with Kites you get either good precision or good tricks there had to be a compromise in the new kite somewhere. Tim said that he wanted the new one to do everything - so I put it to him straight – what doesn't it do well? The precision was good, the usual flat spins, axles, flic-flacs, yoyos and back spins were excellent, it really did seem to do everything extremely well except, he finally admitted you really had to work a bit on lazy Susan cascades but they would get that right before the kite went on sale!

Tim and Andy concentrated on a snag free theme throughout the whole design and this is evident in the double reinforced Cordura nose. Cordura has high abrasion resistance and is also used to prevent wear during dead launches and ground-work on the low profile, Velcro fastening at the base of the spine which has been specially designed and shaped, to prevent line snags.

Tim has a great deal of respect for other flyers and has taken their opinions on board in his quest for perfection. I passed on some of the comments made to me by flyers who had tried one or other of the prototypes.

- "Not quite as good in precision as some but then much better in the tricks"
- "Brilliant it's like a different world"
- "Cometes weren't quite as spectacular because they are harder to do quickly"
- "I wish I hadn't flown it because now I have to have one"
- "Why doesn't he get it on sale – I can't find anything wrong with it!"

Tim has listened - improved it again - and the Cometes are **sorted!!!** So how would the kite fly with me on the end and the vast canyon of difference in skill levels between us?

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I actually didn't feel as inadequate as I thought I would because the kite really is easy to fly. It was very forgiving to any mistakes and wasn't at all 'snaggy' due to the integrated, internally reinforced glides which deflect the lines along the leading edges where the spreaders join and the way that the wing tip tensioners are cleverly, but simply concealed with an internally reinforced tip which also gives better distribution of the sail tension.

Andy's idea of having two bars hoop over the back of the kite on each wing, from the front, to the trailing edge to retain the lines when you wrap the kite, make it easier to shake your lines down so that they are level before you fly on – or put in another wrap – they also help to prevent the sails from bunching up when under tension from the lines wrapped around them during this trick.

Just listen to me – I couldn't even do wraps before – but with some gentle coaching and the right tool for the job – this was starting to get easy!

It's been a long time since I had this exciting feeling about a new kite – I should have mine by the time you read this – in "Close Encounters" colours of black and yellow.

Some of the other features to look out for on this kite are:

- The Icarex Sail is framed with Skyshark P200 in the



leading edges and 5PT for the bottom spreaders giving a span of 215cm and a weight of 290gms.

- The covering over the back of the stand-offs to stop the lines catching is the best I've seen.

- Look out too for a new, Andy Wardley, special active bridle.

The **Deep Space** is now available but a bit of a rarity to find one sitting on the shelf for too long due to the high demand.

You are going to have to spend around £180.00 to have this one in your bag but this is not just another kite – you really will be getting something a bit extra special for your money.

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