

Inside Cox International

A Chat with Bernie Eisele - By Chris Ottewell

When I first bought a model engine in around 1959, the choice was simple; small engines were diesels, medium sized ones could be diesel or glow and large ones were glow. That was it...

As a schoolboy, I could only afford a small one and chose a Frog 80 diesel, which by chance I still have. Friends bought Mills 0.75s, DC Merlins and the like and they all worked well. A few bought small glow motors like the DC Wasp or Bantam – they were all frankly rubbish. So when a US company called Cox started selling their little glow motors in the UK we ignored them; until that is, someone turned up at our flying field with a couple!

The Cox Pee Wee and Babe Bee ranges were a revelation. They were simple but powerful for their size, reliable and high quality. Just as important from our schoolboy

powered control line IA 35 Huanquero, an Argentinian light cargo/transport designed by Kurt Tank who designed the FW 190. The little Coxes were the only engines dependable enough to be used for a control line twin.

In that middle years break from aeromodelling, which most of us have, Cox got into difficulties and after several changes of ownership finally sank for good – or so I thought. A couple of years ago I noticed someone in Canada selling shedloads of Cox parts and even new engines. This turned out to be Cox International, a company formed just to support those lovely little engines of my youth! Intrigued I used the resurrection of AeroModeller as an excuse to “interview”



originally from Germany but now resident in Canada. Like me he grew up using Cox engines and he bought his on the proceeds of a paper round. He also missed these engines when they disappeared; however, unlike me he also saw a business opportunity! By 2008 he had “discovered” and bought all the remaining Cox stock from Estes who by then owned the

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point of view they were also keenly priced! Soon they became the engine of choice for small and simple control line or free flight models and I built many Pee Wee powered “Ebenezer Style” own designs including a quadra-plane and a Mig 17. I even built an own design semi-scale twin engined Pee Wee

(by e-mail) Bernie Eisele, the proprietor and find out more about him, his company, their objectives and what they can offer us, the modelling community.

The Man

Bernie (really Bernd) is an aeromodeller

brand. He found he then “owned” over 35,000 engines and 500,000+ spares items. Well over \$1,000,000 worth of stock at retail prices.

Naturally there are some parts that he was unable to source from Estes as they had all been sold. As a result they now manufacture about 80 different items. Bernie told me “It’s too long to list but mainly glow heads, various gaskets, fuel tanks, propellers, needle valves, reeds, spinners wrenches/spanners, head conversions, diesel conversions, field gear, custom and performance engines (from existing parts) and, of course, our revolutionary rear-mounted throttle for .049 Cox reed valve engines. We also plan to make a small run of Tee Dee .049 engines.”

As I always put much of the success of the small Cox engines down to the use of a custom “glow head” rather than a standard glow pug I was concerned to see that Bernie makes and sells conversion heads for many Cox motors. I thought that these must surely be a disappointment?

Bernie assured me that this was not the case, saying: “With the screw in type (your typical glow plug) RPM decrease in reedies is approximately 500 and 1,500 in TD engines. With our “insert style” RPM increases by approximately 500 in reedies and no RPM change for TD engines.”

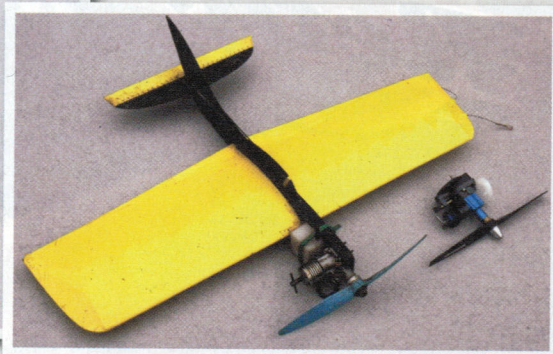
So it looks like Bernie has actually



Bernie and a fraction of his stock



Left: Chris has a 25 year old Semi-scale Hurricane with a 50 year old Pee Wee up front!
Below: Ideal Babe Bee C/L Model – Half Scale Flite Streak! This one has a PAW 0.8 though, Cox Diesel alongside



improved some of the engines!

There was one difficult question I had to ask Bernie – It was said that Cox quality dropped under its period of ownership by others and their engines weren't as good. So, what about the quality of the items Bernie is selling?

He replied - "There is a lot of misconception out there. What modellers are mostly referring to are engines from the 70's compared to today. Back in the old days tolerances were kept very tight, something that was relaxed when Estes took over in 1996".

Even the least expensive engine we sell runs perfectly fine with average RPMs no different than 20-30 years ago. However, we have noticed that there could be a 1,000 RPM difference between worst and top performers. This is a result of pistons and cylinders not being hand-matched. By the same token, even at the bottom of the spectrum, a Cox .049 engine will turn a 5x3 propeller at 15,000 RPM with 25% nitro; not too shabby for a \$25 engine."

So, some small variation from best to worst, but it appears that now, as then,

"everyone's a winner"!

My favourite Cox engine has always been the classic Pee Wee, so I asked Bernie if there is any chance at all of these ideal tiny sport engines being reproduced at some future date? I was disappointed but not surprised when he replied: "Virtually zero. To make a run of 1,000 would cost about \$35 each, making for retail price somewhere around \$80 or more. That is not bound to sell in any quantities aside the fact we don't really have \$35,000 to spend on something that is bound to be a real slow seller. The problem is low runs. Make 50,000 and you can retail an engine for \$30 but you will never sell 50,000 Pee Wee's in a lifetime".

The .049 outsells the 020 by a margin of a least 10 to 1 and we only sell about 5,000 of the .049 engines per year.

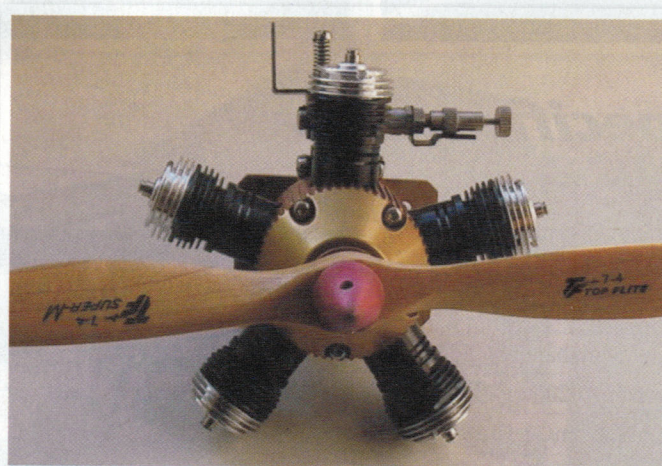
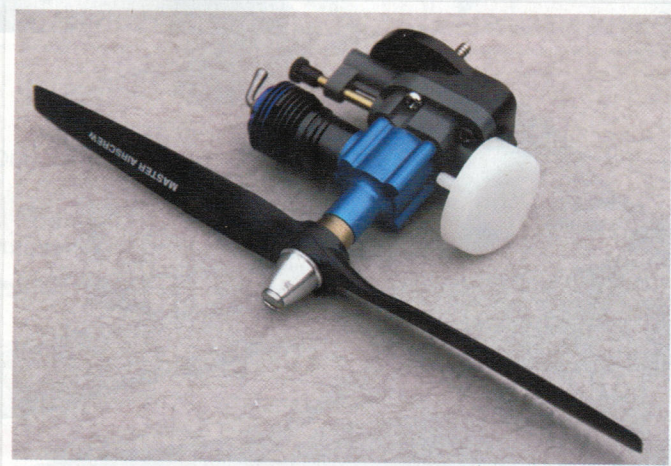
We are looking into making 1,000 of the TD .049 engines because they are the 2nd most popular engine after the .049 reedies. Estimated retail price around \$70-80 and we anticipate it will take us 3-4 years to sell them".

With that proven business acumen and

experience I could hardly dispute this with him. That acumen has led him to fully exploit the possibilities offered by eBay which have allowed Cox International to remain based at Williams Lake, British Columbia, Canada and yet do business all over the world, even winning the prestigious eBay 2012 eBay International Entrepreneur award. If you want to check out Cox International on eBay, they can be found as "Xenolook". At the time of writing they had over 13,000 trades and a 99.9% satisfaction rating – that's an incredible achievement. They are also on the Internet independently as: www.coxengines.ca and have their own Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/pages/COX-International/389980851068219

Finally I found that the Cox International web site has a page or two of customer creations so I asked Bernie which was his favourite. Like me he chose the five-cylinder radial engine.

I could have talked to Bernie all day but he had a business to run and I had an editor to satisfy, so we stopped it there!



Cox .049 Diesel conversion with a Cox International Free Flight Tank

Customer Built Cox 5 Cylinder Radial