The MiG 29 made its maiden flight in 1977, but it was not until 1986 that most people in the West were aware of the Soviet superfighter. I was hooked on its elegant lines by the first photograph to appear in an aviation magazine. The distinctive shape and awe-inspiring aerobatics still make the MiG 29 one of the leading stars at the world’s airshows.

My design was based on experience gained from an earlier success with a Jetex powered F15 Eagle. That model was hastily drawn and quickly assembled for a mass launch of Jetex aircraft at Old Warden Scale Day. To my surprise the F15 won first prize. The memory of so many hissing aircraft flying in every direction inspired me to refine the design concept and produce the MiG 29.

CONSTRUCTION

This model is designed for speed of assembly rather than true scale, but the outline is fairly close. I cut out a stiff cardboard template of every piece shown on the plan and actually built three aircraft in the time it normally takes to build one.

Start with the wing centre section. This should be light sheet. The strength is enhanced by the cross bracing action of the engine fairings and the fuselage. Make two of the main fuselage parts from light half inch sheet and glue together to make the full width. It would be possible to produce this part from sixteenth sheet sides and infill with scrap to provide the correct width. Sand to the correct profile and glue to the centre section. Fill in the step beneath the centre section with scrap to finish off the outline.

I found it easiest to add the wings next because the centre section could be pinned flat with the nose protruding out from the building board. In all three of my aircraft cyan was more than strong enough to butt join the wings to the centre section. These should be sanded to section at this stage.

Add the air intakes next (completing the bottom with cross-grain sheet) and then the top fairing so that the jet exhausts can be fashioned with the help of scrap. If you are not too fussy, they could be left rectangular without any ill effect. Either inset or glue directly the ply engine mount plate between the engine fairings. Next add the tail fins, using the angle template for correct outward angle, and finally the stabilisers.

Mount the engine holder and add a little litho plate, or whatever you prefer, to protect the balsa close to the Jetex exhaust. I sprayed my first model with a thinned coat of clear dope (sanded off) before a light coating of Humbrol enamels and then the second just with colours.

My first effort weighed in at 2.2oz complete with Jetex motor (empty) and the next one at 2oz. A small screw was needed in the nose to get the C of G correct. It is advisable to add a little up elevator before the first test glide. Under power it flies well in a wide climbing circle and is stable in the transition to the glide when the power cuts.

In practice I have found that the advantage with this design is that, when you come to launching with a lighted motor, the engine fairings provide the perfect grip and some protection against the exhaust gasses. All in all, it’s my idea of the perfect aircraft. I hope you’ll build one and agree.