

FLYING

Editors' Choice Awards

2008

Flying's editors get together every fall to go over the developments of the previous year in order to find a few truly outstanding achievements. Along the way we consider only those aircraft, avionics, pilot services and equipment that have been fully certified and have entered service during the year.

When airplane makers add a product to their lineup, they need to bring something new to the mix. In the case of the Piper Matrix, that new ingredient is a hearty helping of value. The Matrix, an offshoot of the popular Mirage, is a high-performance, retractable-gear, true cabin-class single with a difference: It is unpressurized. This change, along with some other value-minded modifications, lets Piper keep the price of the airplane low, less than \$850,000 very nicely equipped. Just as Piper hoped, that price point has proven alluring to many pilots who are happy to be flying at non-oxygen altitudes (or in the



teens with supplemental oxygen) but who want a real cabin-class experience for their passengers. The Matrix moves along at better than 200 knots at altitudes pilots typically fly, and it does it with the full-featured flat-panel Avidyne Entegra avionics package, the S-Tec 55X autopilot and proven known-icing equipment. Most importantly, the Matrix does it with an airstair door in back, one that leads to an attractive

and comfortable club-seating area. For finding a way to bring this experience to a new class of pilots, we make the Piper Matrix a *Flying* Editors' Choice for 2008.

Aspen Avionics Evolution Primary Flight Display

Great things often come from a single innovative concept, and in the case of Aspen Avionics, that big idea was to create self-contained retrofit flat-panel primary flight and multifunction displays that could be installed without major surgery to the airplane's panel. In Aspen's approach, the hardware that drives the displays is fitted into a can-shaped enclosure that goes into the hole in the panel formerly occupied by one of the steam gauges. The display itself, a bright full-color LCD, fits flush against the panel. By utilizing only the space that's available by uninstalling the airplane's previous gauges, Aspen was able to make the panel installation process about as simple as possible. And starting at around \$6,000 for the VFR Pilot unit and around \$10,000 for the IFR Pro display, Aspen's Evolution PFD 1000 is an affordable alternative to much higher-priced retrofit PFDs while offering the same safety and reliability improvements of more expensive solutions. For bringing the glass to the masses, we award Aspen Avionics a 2008 *Flying* Editors' Choice Award. ✈

