CIRRUS 2 CONSOLE (C2)

Overall I am pleased with the Cirrus 2 console, however. As with anything you purchase, there are always good and bad points.

My main reason for purchasing the Cirrus 2 over the older standard Cirrus console (Cirrus) is I was told the Cirrus 2 has better engineering, internal components and wiring. Other benefits in my opinion were: hobbs meter, clock/stop watch, night lighting, elevator/rudder trim dials and trim wheel. I also was in favour of everything being within one larger and heavier console rather than two smaller, lighter consoles. Apparently, the Cirrus 2 engineering is also more responsive to inputs than the older Cirrus console.

One very good feature with the C2 is the method that PFC have used to construct the internal components of the console; They use replaceable modules. This means that if you have a problem with something, they replace the module that is causing the problem. This makes it easier to repair the console should you develop a problem.

The overall construction of the C2 is very solid – black sand-coated metal plate which weighs a tad under 20 kilograms; you will not easily break it! The console unit being heavy does not require attachment to a desk or table, unlike CH yokes and throttle systems.

Another benefit of the console size and weight is that the yoke and throttle quadrant (which attaches directly to the console box) can be used without the whole ‘box’ moving. I found when using CH Products that the yoke and throttles, unless securely attached to a desk or table, often moved when used.

The attachment points for connecting the serial port cable that links the C2 to your computer is also very well made, and disconnecting the unit (if necessary) is very quick and easy.

I have found that some of the switches on the C2 do not work as promoted unless using default Microsoft FS9 aircraft. I mainly fly the PMDG 737 jetliner and Aeroworx B-200 King Air twin prop aircraft, and only a few of the C2 switches operate with these aircraft. As a result I had to alter the configuration and set up using a registered version of FSUPIC for a number of switches. This isn’t really an issue, however, it takes a bit of time to work through each button resetting the button and key presses. If I had known this before purchase, I probably would have opted for a separate jetliner yoke and throttle system rather than the Cirrus 2 console.

I rarely use all of the standard switches on the C2 preferring to have separate GoFlight switches for lights, pitot, anti-ice, auto feather, etc. The main switches/levers I use on the C2 are: gear lever, flaps lever, elevator and rudder trim, handbrake and the manual trim wheel.

I’m not impressed with the design of the switches used by PFC – considering the cost of the unit; they are cheap toggle switches which are small, difficult to see, and are positioned in
hard to reach areas of the console (such as behind the yoke handle). Why cannot PFC use “real” aircraft switches, dials and knobs?

The RIC rotary dials (top of console in curved area) only operate with the PFC instrument console, however, the knobs duplicates rotary dial movement for the GoFlight MCP and FS9 default instrumentation.

The landing gear lever is constructed from stainless steel with a plastic knob, but operates as it should. The indication lights for “wheels down” are 3 large green/red lights – green for gear down and, red for gear up or transition of gear.

The manual elevator TRIM wheel is EXCELLENT. This would be the one thing that makes the C2 worth the money. The trim wheel is constructed from plastic, large enough to grip with your hand and is ergonomically located on the console for easy access. Both the manual and electric trim (switch located on yoke handle) are very responsive to very small inputs from the virtual pilot. Likewise, the elevator trim and rudder trim dials, located on the console, are also very responsive.

The flaps setting switch/lever is quite flimsy, but still functional. The lever does not have indents and you must push it down every time you want to change flap increments. There is no light indication that the flaps have been deployed; this would have been a good feature as often flap deployment is forgotten!

I was VERY disappointed with the night lighting. Basically they have several globes with a dimmer switch – very poor in my view as I was expecting back lighting similar to that displayed on the MCP developed by CP Flight in Italy. The bulbs are white light and I have replaced them with night vision red bulbs.

I find the stop watch and clock beneficial, although it can be difficult to view at times as the console is quite low.

The curvature of the top part of the C2 looks very impressive, however, the curvature inhibits you placing anything directly above the console such as an instrument stack. The flat area directly behind the curved front plate is an ideal location to store a keyboard.

Worse points of the C2 are:

1. Night lighting
2. Curvature at the top of the panel (although it looks good)
3. Many of the switches/knobs (with the exception of the trim wheel and landing gear lever) are really not necessary if you use other instrument modules
4. No areas to allow additional switches to be installed

I would have preferred a separate panel on the C2 where you can add, subtract switches and knobs to your preference – or add a GoFlight instrument panel or similar device.
I would rate the C2 as 8/10.

**JETLINER YOKE (JLY)**

I find the JLY to be outstanding. It’s the best yoke I have seen and used to date (other than a real one). The yoke setup and calibration is straight forward, although calibration can be a little time consuming if you calibrate null zones. All setup and calibration is done via the PFC software interface. The smoothness in operation of the yoke (roll and pitch) is excellent and the yoke is very responsive; at no time do you experience binding, grinding or staggering, which is a common problem on some of the less expensive yokes. The yoke is constructed from metal and the main yoke pin is constructed from stainless steel. All other components are metal. The all metal construction makes the feel of the yoke superb. It actually gets tiring holding the yoke in a forward or back position if the aircraft is not trimmed correctly!! There are enough switches on the yoke to programme most things (a few more would be beneficial, but they are not really needed). A drawback for flight simulation is that the yoke does not have a HAT switch.

I found I had to alter one of the tension springs with the JLY as it was making a noise (a tinging sound) when I pushed the yoke all the way forward – small alterations are apparently common and easy to do (you need a screwdriver).

I rate the JLY 10/10.

**THROTTLES**

I use the 2 engine jet, turbo prop and Cessna style (with carb heat) throttles. All the throttles are easy to configure and calibrate and very easy to change on the C2 console (just make sure you enable the correct throttle in the PFC software interface before starting FS9).

Throttle quadrants are constructed from industrial grade plastic with plastic handle knobs, but metal handle stems. I would have preferred an all metal casing for durability, solid feel and look.

The throttle units do not have any additional functionality (i.e. TO/GO), unless you purchase the B-737NG throttle system.

I have not had any problems with the throttle units. I rate the throttle units 10/10.
PEDALS/RUDDER ASSEMBLY

A very solid base-plate constructed from metal hold the heavy duty plastic pedals in place. The assembly is very solid, with strong springs to provide a very realistic peddle push (unlike CH products which slide backwards and forwards with little tension). Installation is very simple as it is plug & play. Set up and configuration is by the PFC software interface.

For some reason I cannot activate digital toe brakes on my set up, therefore, I do not use the braking capability of the pedals. I have a button on the yoke set up as wheel brakes, so this is not a problem to me.

I find that the rudders occasionally fail to operate correctly – I have no idea why. When I restart the flight the pedals operate again as they should. This problem occurs 1 in 30 flights thereabouts.

Although the pedals are mounted in a solid, heavy, all metal unit, I find that when you depress the pedals the unit will lift up from the floor. This can be solved by securing the unit to the floor with screws/bolt. The unit comes out of the box with velcro, however, this does stop the unit from lifting upwards.

The actual pedal boots are quite large (as in a real aircraft). I find that the indentations on the pedal surface become painful if you fly barefoot! I wear boots or shoes to counter this problem.

Considering the price of the pedals and the overall size/weight/freight of the box they are shipped in, I probably would not purchase them again (based on price only). They are rarely used except in cross wind landings and taxiing (I rarely waste time taxiing about the place).

I rate the pedals 6-7/10 (this is based on occasional failures, inoperable toe brakes & the unit lifting from the ground).

SOFTWARE

The PFC software is intuitive and very easy to use. An extra menu item is placed in the FS9 menu. All calibration, instrument configuration, throttle, console, and yoke selection are made from within this software interface.

Configuration of switches, keys, etc is straight forward, however, calibration can be a little frustrating, especially if programming null zones. I recommend reading the PFC documentation several times.

For programming the various switches, I recommend using a registered version of FSUPIC.
VALUE FOR MONEY

The C2 is expensive, but if you enjoy flight sim I think you will be happy with the purchase. There is NO comparison between the C2 and JLY to CH Products – period. PFC products are highly responsive to small inputs made by the pilot and as such the degree of realism is enhanced immeasurably.

SUPPORT

Initial sales support from PFC was excellent. E-mails and questions were answered promptly. After purchase support is lacking other than support via the PFC forum. Usually questions get answered within a 2 week period. I cannot comment regarding telephone support as I have never used this.

PFC is a very small company developing and constructing specialist products for a relative small market. This is their excuse for not offering more speedy support. That said, I believe that their support could be a little more efficient.

OVERALL OPINION

- Jetliner yoke is superb and well worth the investment
- Manual trim wheel located on the C2 console is excellent as it gives you a better command of elevator movement.
- Elevator and rudder trim dials located on the C2 console are worthwhile
- Rudder pedals, despite having problematic toe brakes, are solid and provide 100% more realism than other products on the market
- Throttle units, despite looking a little too plastic operate well

The Cirrus 2 console in my opinion is not worth the extra capital outlay considering that much of what you are paying for you do not use unless flying default aircraft – and then there is the poor switch ergonomics.

However, much of my decision to purchase the C2 console, was based upon what I told concerning the internal engineering and components. Not being an engineer, this is something I know little about and can only go on the “trust and honesty” of the PFC salesperson.