



T H E 1 9 9 3 International Air Spectacular



LEN MOUNT TELLS THE
STORY OF HOW SIX OF
THE BEST TOOK PART IN
THE 1993 BOMBAY
INTERNATIONAL AIR
SPECTACULAR

To be asked a second time to fly in the Bombay Show was a great honour for me, I was asked to find six pilots for the event, they were Tony Rees, Ali Newman, Colin Bliss, Alan Stead, Steve Brett and myself.

All packed and eager to go for a week in the sun, (100° plus), the Len Mount Flying Circus arrived at Heathrow baggage check-in, we had nine large boxes of models, I had only got clearance for five, but after many phone calls and to and froing our charm won in the end.

Once airborne in an Air India 747 Jumbo we were politely asked by an Indian passenger if we were the team of pilots travelling to Bombay for the air spectacular, on answering 'yes we were', soon all the passengers knew about us, fame had reached us at last, this passenger was travelling to Bombay to see the show. The pilot of our 747, asked us if we would like to see the flight deck, it was a great way to pass 1½ hours of time, the crew looked after us very well indeed.

We landed in Bombay at two in the morning. It was hot and sticky. Whilst proceeding to go through the green channel, the Indian customs officers redirected us to the red channel, we were all asked to make a list of the contents of our boxes, no problems, until it was Tony's turn, the officer kindly offered to fill out the form for him, "Mr Reece, what is the name of your aircraft", 'Wot 4' Tony replied, "because I need to know", said the officer, a 'Wot 4' replied Tony again, after about five minutes the bemused customs officer, made Tony fill in his own form. Once through customs, I met up with Darius Engineer our guide and show organiser. Outside the terminal, on loading all our gear on to a truck, we found out that it had a flat tyre, we stood around for about an hour in the hot sticky morning, until the tyre had been changed, off we went in three taxis with the truck behind us, our hotel was to be the Bombay Royal Yacht Club for a few days, which was located at the rear of the Taj Mahal Hotel, the best in Bombay with all its towering columns and ornate colonial architecture, doorman in full regalia and red carpet. The taxi Darius and I were in pulled up outside our hotel, only to see the other two taxis continue

The Gateway of India.





Inside Bombay Airport after through customs

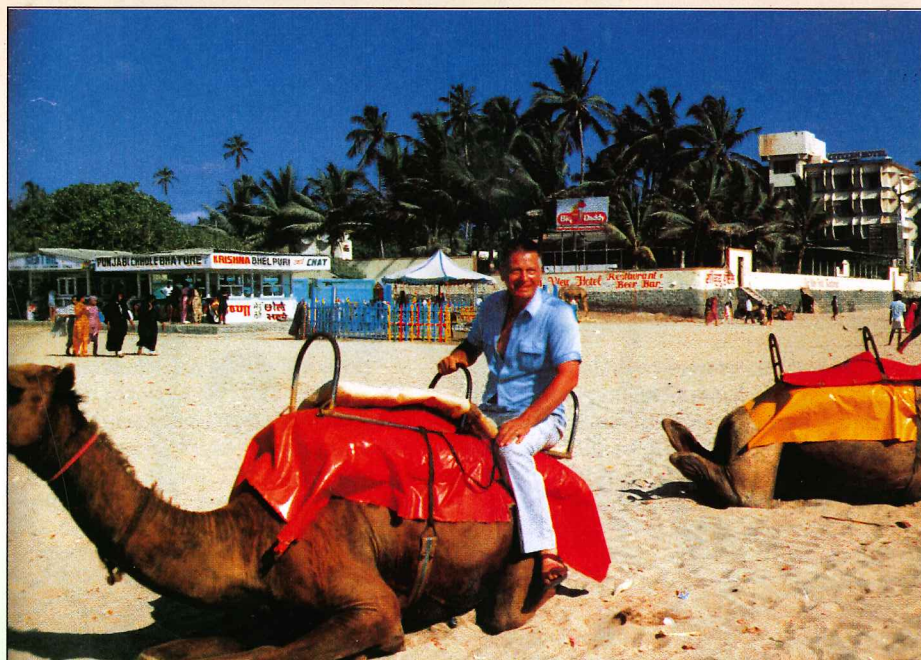
around the corner and under the large archway of the Taj. Tony and Ali looked up at the towering columns and muted the words "Old Mounty has come through with this one", Darius had the job of telling them that they were at the wrong hotel.

Next morning we were woken up by the dawn chorus of black parrots (crows), after breakfast, we adventured around the club, being a yacht club which had trophies and photos dating back beyond the 1900s.

The Times of India wanted a dramatic photo shot of a helicopter flying outside the Gateway of India, we had to oblige, it was about 120° in the late afternoon. I was privileged to fly in one of the most famous places in India and on my birthday too. The local crowd began to gather around all of us and the helicopter, not ten deep but thirty deep, it would have been crazy to fire up the G.S. Alpha, so we moved in to the confines of the Gateway, protected by a brick wall and iron railings. I took off, flying pirouettes, nose-in etc, to the amazement of an intrigued and enthusiastic crowd. By now the one newspaper had turned into eight with photographers and crews. After the flying, a young Indian boy knelt down beside the helicopter, so that his father could take a snap-shot, this triggered off a wave of frantic autograph signing by the whole flying circus team, on any bit of paper, I saw signatures on shirt sleeves and dresses.

That evening Ali was voted in to find the ultimate in Indian cuisine, we all tried it even Colin had some, but some of us suffered the next morning with the affects of Bombay Belt, you have to experience it to understand it.

We moved hotels to the Indian Automobile Club which has a swimming pool and tropical garden, Saturday morning the team set off for practice, taking a



ride in a Bombay taxi. This needs to be experienced to be believed, although the traffic lights are on red, if you have the loudest horn, then you go cars come at you from anywhere, up the wrong side of the road, motorcycles with pillion sitting side saddle cut you up and vanish into the sidestreets.

The taxi drivers only knew that we flew helicopters, and understood no English, on entering the aerodrome the taxis went flat out towards a group of Russian military helicopters we got within 50 yards of them and then the drivers saw some twin-turbine Dauphins so we headed for them! We were then stopped by aerodrome M.P.s, and marched to the control tower, where we all got an ear bending for driving all over a military aerodrome, our drivers got too enthusiastic with their job, we were reminded about the recent city terrorist bombing.

Practice went well and the models stayed

in a hanger for the night.

The morning of the show, the taxis were late by one hour, we were very concerned about being late, but all the red lights and cross roads never stopped us, we made it on time. The crowds had started to come in, the gates were closed two hours after we arrived, entrapping 15,000 people inside the aerodrome. The traffic was backed up both ways for over four miles, one unfortunate gentleman travelled 300 miles across India solely for the show, he arrived at 4 pm to be told it was all over.

The Indian pilots opened the show by flying a Telemaster towing a banner with the sponsors names on it, Air India and Indian Oil, Tony and Colin went up with their Wot 4 and Moronic with streamers attached to their tails, demonstrating their skills, they both sliced sections off each others streamers to the delights of the very enthusiastic crowd. Next a local pilot displayed a R/C flying saucer, not many in the crowd had seen a model airplane fly,

A change of transport away from the Bombay taxis.

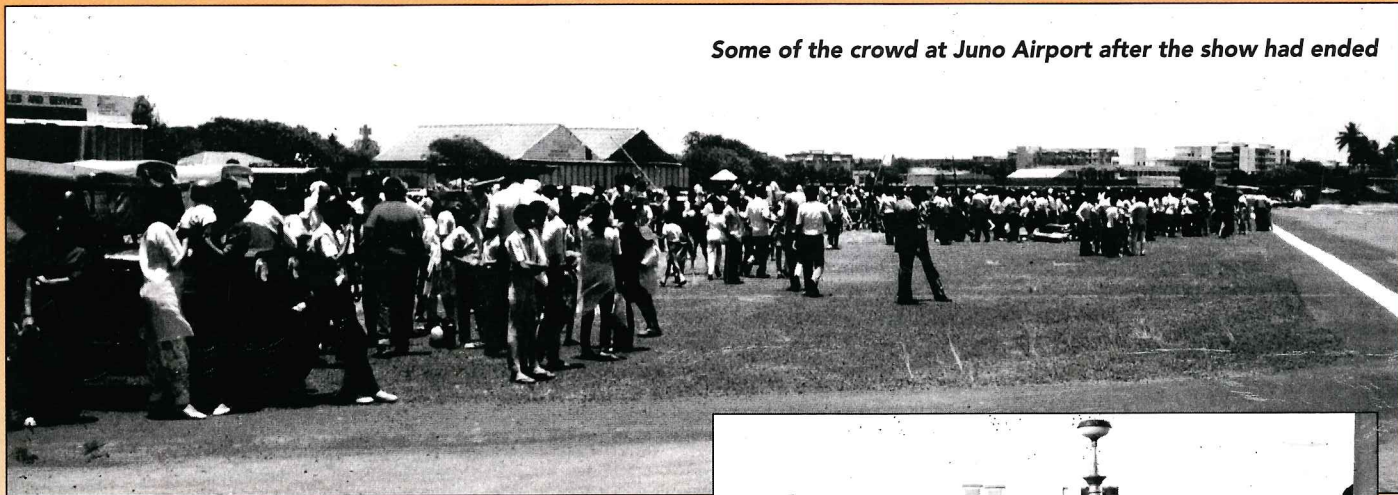
let alone a flying saucer. Ali, Steve and Alan sent up their Moronics with four hour video cassette tapes trailing behind them, they rolled, looped, flew sideways, backwards with hundreds of yards of flashing tape covering the skies, unlimited indeed is the cunning and expertise of the Len Mount Flying Circus, the spectators by now were overwhelmed by it all.

There was no shade on the runway with the temperature in the 130°F, our engines were at working temperature without being started, the electric starters had to be wrapped in cloth so that we did not burn our hands. Coca-cola was the drink of the day to stop us from dehydrating.

We recruited a young lady into the team to learn and master the art of flying, within a few minutes she was hovering flying circuits, rolling, low inverted passes, the



Some of the crowd at Juno Airport after the show had ended



crowd went wild with excitement, no one had noticed Ali hiding from view twiddling his thumbs as fast as he could.

Tony, Ali, Colin and myself flew our helis. Two were hovered along the crowd line, pirouetting as they went, cameras were clicking from all angles, while the other two were flying formation aerobatics, loops, rolls, rolling stall turns etc., all to the rapturous applause of the spectators. Two Indian pilots then followed with Patten ships performing tight formation aerobatics.

To end this show, five planes dropped a total of 16 pound of toffees with streamers attached to them, all along the crowd line,

what an ending to an exhausting but rewarding 3½ hours.

A superb event, our thanks go to Darius and his friends for organising the show and to our two sponsors, Air India and Indian Oil for their generosity and

making the trip possible, I hope this will become an annual event. □



Len Mount

ONE MAN AND HIS MODEL