

Question:

What creates the most noise at an air show? Is it the Harrier (most efficient machine for converting Jet A into noise) or the F-14 in full burner? Or maybe, Sampson at full RPM and max throttle?

Answer:

None of the above.

The most accumulated decibels at an air show comes from the announcer and his public address system booming out all sorts of precious trivia to a huge crowd of semi-listeners.

Can You Hear Me?

I'd love to give an audience a pop quiz following an air show to see what they've learned following the announcer's four to eight hour lecture on the many facets of aviation and airplanes. I think it would sound like Jay Leno's incredible "Jay-walking" routine on The Tonight Show.

Jay: What's a bi-plane?

Air Show Fan: Uh...a two bladed wood scraper?

Jay: Nooooo....How fast does an F-15 go?

Air Show Fan: Ummm...I don't know trains!

Jay: Which act did you enjoy the most at the show?

Air Show Fan: Er, ahhh...that funny guy at the hot dog stand.

Your only Link

Whatever you think about announcers, they are, regardless of their talent, the only link between the performer, sponsor, and the fan with an attention deficit.

Granted, they're not all Bill Bordeleau, Gordon Bowman-Jones or Danny Clisham. For some small shows, they are the guy who missed a critical air show committee meeting and got elected...ouch! There have always been times when I wondered if the announcer ever actually attended an air show before. This is a long way of saying, it really pays to have a professional announcer who knows what he or she is talking about and takes his or her role seriously.

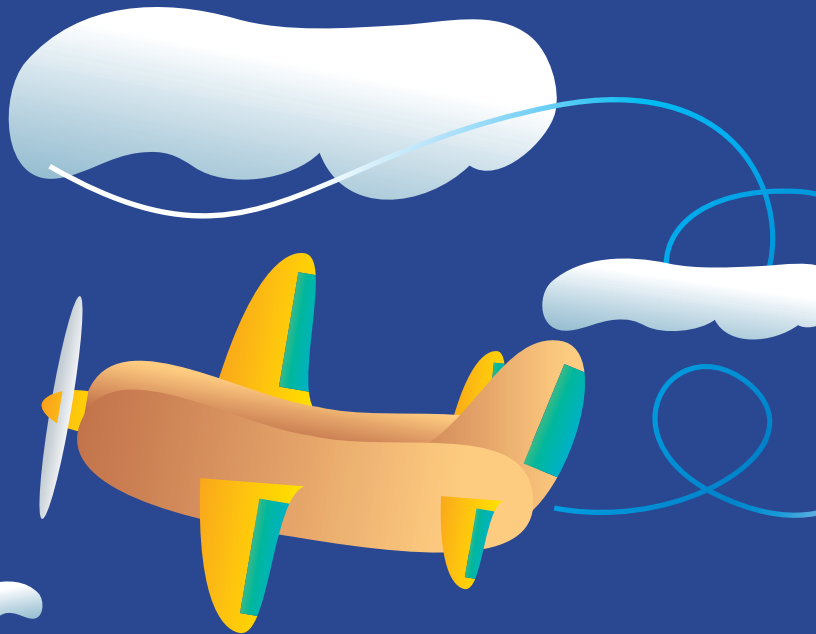
Few new performers (as well as the occasional veteran) realize their flying is subordinate to the announcer's depiction of it. If the announcer says you're great, eighty percent or more of the audience will think you're great. The other twenty percent are in the portapottie line or fighting to get a hot dog!

The Hot Dog Act

Mark Palmer, the former FINA representative and occasional air show announcer (or "color man") once told me how to spot a Hot Dog Act. This may offend some air show performers so, if your ego is fragile, you might want to move on to the next article.

The Hot Dog Act: Fellow shows up with a pretty nice airplane. So far, so good. He hits the briefing late and doesn't bother to get a clear picture of the 500' line nor does he record the air show frequency. He is later heard on the flight line asking for both.

He's wearing, and continues to wear, a beat up rock music tee shirt, torn blue jeans, and a "gimmee" cap that was "gimmed" long ago. He doesn't have a biography or a rou-



The Performer's Best Friend

BY JAN COLLMER



tine (certainly not a sponsor), but he gamely hand-prepares a crib-sheet for the announcer in the hieroglyphics of Aresti (virtually unreadable, even by a world-class judge) and struts to his plane.

When his time comes to fly, he puts on the most spectacular demonstration of precision aerobatics possible

(at the 1500-foot line and at 1500' altitude. Other acro pilots marvel at his ability and their view is not impaired by annoying smoke trailing his plane (smoke is for the non-purist).

The announcer, meanwhile, is not sure of his name, has no idea just who he is, cannot make head nor tail of what he's doing, and must try to make the best of it. After a minute or two, the announcer starts reminding people of the static displays, the lost and found location, the air show proverb of keeping the ramp clean, and oh yes, no smoking around the airplanes. And the crowd ambles off to get a hot dog!

Give them something to work with

Don't let yourself become a hot dog act. Write your routine in English. Even if announcers can read Aresti, you shouldn't count on it.

Give the announcer a few paragraphs on your personal aviation achievements, no matter how trivial. It's the announcer's job, and he can do it, to make those achievements measure up to the truly great members of our profession. Announcers become announcers because they enjoy puffing up the trivial into a big hot air balloon (pun intended). Just give them a little bit to work with.

For best results, print your

resume and routine in large type, laminate and three-hole punch so that when the announcer opens up his three ring binder, your resume will be on the left and your act on the right.

Remember that your air show success is 90 percent in the hands of the announcer. If he says you're great, you're great. If he talks about the static displays instead...sorry, you're nobody.

Announcers Have Feelings Too

Treat announcers with the respect their profession deserves. They can make or break your act regardless of your personal flying ability. Take time to visit the announcers stand. Be willing



Vintage Thunderbird

*Aerobatic Excitement
Level 1 [Surface] Waiver*



Fowler "Big Dog" Cary
803-254-9500
Fax 803-252-9530
PO Box 7488
Columbia, SC 29202

LOW-LEVEL & HIGH SPEED!



to say a few (very few) words on the public address system. Remember, they're the professional mouths and you're not.

Follow up with him after the show to thank him for his interest in your act. And try, please try to be humble even though you're perfect in every way ("Lord, it's hard work to be humble..."). You are just one more pilot to him if you don't seek to change the relationship.

Let Them Do Their Job

In my humble opinion, and with very few notable exceptions, pilot talk to the announcer detracts from a show. I'm not talking about safety or flying problems, but the average "on air pilot" sounds like a very giddy "valley girl." Like body odor, even your best friends won't tell you the truth. It works for

some, but on average, it's stinko.

Same goes for "dedicated" announcers. A few pull it off, but most performers would get a better rap from a professional announcer with a good script to work from. Many of the announcers who accompany acts are just friends that you can't say "no" to. Say NO! You, and especially your sponsor, will get more and better air time through the show announcer who's willing to sweat up there for six to eight hours.

Ever wonder what a Blue

Angels show would look like with Bill Bordeleau or Danny Clisham announcing? Not in the cards, but I just wonder. Probably couldn't talk Bill into standing perfectly erect with the microphone at a negative 30 degree angle of attack. Oh well, I can dream.

In Finale

It may seem like I'm blowing smoke for the announcers in our industry. I am. They're good, they're professional and they're the key in separating a ho-hum show from an excellent one.

I know I'm going to fly well when a professional announcer says, "Now, look to the left...smoke on!"

Jan Collmer is a 20 year air show veteran from Dallas.



DAVY DACY AIRSHOWS

1-888-848-DACY