

We fly Alsim's AL250 twin simulator.

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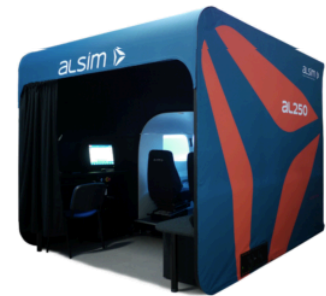
ALsim AL250 flight review

First impressions are important, and our mind categorizes them almost immediately as positively or not. Stepping into the AL250 was one of those nice-to-remember pleasant experiences. The cockpit realistic size, the fit and finish, the panel realism and the external visuals, perfectly calibrated to feel natural. We visited the ALsim team in Oshkosh, WI during Airventure. I'll be candid, I had never heard of them here in the US. So walking by I stopped, look and I was immediately intrigued. Here is a great example of what a simulator should be, I thought. I chatted with Elise, Scott, Mike and Nicolas, for

a bit, asking generic questions and made an appointment for the day after "during the airshow, it's usually quite...". So I was there the following afternoon to learn more and to take the AL250 for a virtual spin. Firstly we discussed the details of ALsim operations in an [interview](#) with Mike Tonkin, Business Development Director. Then we stepped into the cabin. Comfortably sitting on the left seat, the first impression of the panel lay-out made a lot of sense to me. This is an AATD, reconfigurable according to a matrix of single and twin and, further, analog or digital combinations. Smart. It takes literally a few minutes to make the change, including changing the throttle quadrant, although it's easy to adjust the twin engine control levers as just one for each control. The configuration I had was a PA44-like twin. I say "like" because the large G1000 looking digital display is actually ALsim's interpretation of an integrated PFD, fully functioning and very intuitive. To complement the avionics set, there were co-pilot analog instruments and, lower on the dashboard we had a real, functioning, touchscreen GTN 650 (the actual thing, not a copy). I learned that ALsim works in



close collaboration with Garmin to equip its FTD's line with real G1000s, interfaced with ALsim's own simulation software (read more about it in the interview). I examined carefully the throttle quadrant, trim controls (all 3 axis), flaps, cowl flaps, gear handle, all looking professional-grade and with a very solid feel to them. I asked for the checklist, it was on the left panel, easy to retrieve. Since we were at Oshkosh we taxied to Rwy 36 with the idea of taking off, do a left turn then continue downwind to fly around the pattern and land. We were a bit compressed with time because a team from Cirrus Aviation was about to come to take ownership of the C172 FTD sitting next door, so the engines were already running so I did not go through the start-up procedure. My attention, taxiing to the holding line waiting for clearance, was on the external visuals and the ground handling. The 180+ degrees visual are produced by three projectors and three walls placed just outside,



perhaps 1.5-2 feet or 50-60cm, from the cockpit's windows. This produces a very realistic and pleasant effect with enough "swing" to the visuals to become completely immersed in seconds. The blending software ALsim's own, worked well with no visible lines or overlapping areas. The pedals felt solid and the feedback mechanisms made them behave much like a real light twin. We taxied into position, applied full power and waited for that inevitable initial swerve, common on twin simulators, which actually did not come. Our takeoff roll was smooth and predictable in near no-wind conditions. Rotating at Vr, marked on the speed tape, brought us to a pleasant climb. I could now feel forces acting on the yoke, so I trim them out. all worked as expected. I leveled off at 1500 on a left turn. My ALsim staff co-pilot dialed the ILS 36 approach into the GTN650, we listened to the localizer ID, and continued downwind. The simulator felt solid,



the sound, feedback forces and the visuals greatly contributing to create a full immersion experience. During the downwind, I asked for weather, wind, lightning and time of the day changes to be dialed in. All happened with no loss of smoothness in the flight. for a few minutes we were battered by heavy rain, had to correct for a stiff wind, changed season and lost visibility in and out of clouds. Parameters were adjusted quickly from the instructor console. We intercepted the localizer and came in for a survivable landing, but slightly off the centerline. Touch down was felt on both controls lightly shaking.

Overall I was impressed by the entire experience. I can safely expect flight schools globally to look seriously at this product in their simulation acquisition program. At US \$ 200,000 the AL250 is marketed at a similar price-point than many other professional, flight-school-grade sims, meant to be used around the clock. The price tag includes it all in the US, from installation to remote maintenance down to some common hardware spares to keep on site. The team was very upbeat and motivated and a pleasure to deal with (a lot

of french flair and humor). I look forward to test-fly their FTD and expect to write about the "Airliner" their new A320-B737 sim now in late stages of development.