

NEW “KID” ON THE BLOCK!® by Dan Pemble, Kissimmee, FL – January 7, 2019

From the south-facing patio of my home in the Kissimmee Bay Country Club sub-division, I am treated to an almost endless array of various commercial airliners flying over my house on their final approach to Orlando International Airport's (MCO) runways 36L and 36R. In the distance to the east, I can also see, but not hear very well, flight arrivals that have been directed to land on MCO's runways 35L or 35R. Having spent over 40 years at McDonnell Douglas and Boeing in various commercial airlines Customer Support roles before my retirement in 2009, the sights and sounds of these airplanes continue to light up my life and bring music to my ears!

Having returned to my Kissimmee home from my last Field Service assignment over 8 years ago, I have been well-conditioned to hearing and observing “veteran” airliners overhead on their approach to MCO; thus, I can easily identify most airplane types simply by their aerodynamic and engine sounds – without even looking skyward. Of Course I have memorized most airline schedules by now too! Having been afforded 28 years of employment in various capacities by McDonnell Douglas, I truly miss seeing members of the infamous “Douglas Aircraft Twinjet Family” (DC-9, MD-80, and MD-90) flying overhead; however, the Douglas-derived Boeing 717 is still alive and well as is the MD-10 and MD-11, as used by various cargo carriers. Having spent over 12 years as a Boeing employee, I am also extremely proud to see the 747 757, 767, 777, 787, and of course the forever-popular 737 derivatives continuing to “command the skies”. Of course I can also readily identify Airbus type airplanes and their airline operators.

Just the other day while tending to my plants on the patio, I heard an airplane on its approach to MCO that had a truly-foreign sound. As I looked up, it was an airplane that physically mirrored the design of the 737 with 2 under-wing-mounted engines and large upward-pointing winglets. However, its engines' sounds were nothing like the very-well-known sounds emitted by the CFM56 engine and derivatives as used on the 737 and other airplane types. My “light bulb finally came on” and I surmised that “this must be the latest Airbus/Bombardier CS-series airplane”! So, after further research, I concluded that this airplane was indeed the Airbus A220/ Bombardier CS airplane as ordered by Jet Blue, Delta, and other airlines. Also, what I perceived as an unusual sound is attributed to this airplane's Pratt & Whitney PW1500G engines with their industry-unique gear-driven fans. These engines do indeed make sounds unlike most other more-conventional engines. I know Pratt had some development issues, so it remains to be seen just how reliable these engines will be on in-service airplanes. Anyway, I can now identify this “New Kid On The Block” when it flies over my house!

