

THE FLYIN' MIATA WESTFIELD

Ever since Colin Chapman conceived the simple-yet-perfect lines of the Lotus Seven in 1957, home mechanics and small-volume car builders have been copying the classic boy-racer concept. Caterham of England can claim the direct blood line—they acquired the rights to the original Lotus design from Chapman himself and are still building the 7 with various driveline and suspension options—but many others have joined the almost-a-Lotus ranks of 7 builders as well. Westfield, for example, has made both 7 and Lotus 11-style kits, and these cars, interestingly enough, were openly accepted at LOG27. No snobbery here; with Lotuses, the cult of physics and concept is at least as powerful as that of the number plate.

I've owned three original Sevens myself, but I also built a Sprite-powered Westfield 11 kit years ago and drove it from California to Wisconsin and back with my wife, Barbara. We wore motorcycle helmets and rain

suits, and suffered no permanent damage.

And now, from Flyin' Miata, a supplier of aftermarket performance parts for Miatas, we have the Flyin' Miata Westfield. The concept is simple: Buy a basic 7-style Westfield chassis kit and then install all of the running gear and ancillaries out of a battered or rusty old Miata. *Voilà*: You've got first-rate suspension components, a snick-able gearbox and an engine you can't break, all installed in a car that's about half a ton lighter than a Miata.

The basic kit costs \$16,990 (plus shipping within the U.S.) and includes the chassis, body, control arms, dash, seats, carpets and lights. Weather gear is extra. You add the Miata parts—engine, transmission, front and rear uprights, steering column (modified), steering rack, drive-shaft, brakes, wheels, tires, wiring loom, horns, switches and instrument cluster.

A second option is to buy the basic kit plus a "donor pallet" of salvaged Miata

parts needed to finish the job, all cleaned up with new seals, belts and gaskets. This combination costs \$20,740, and Flyin' Miata's Bill Cardell and Keith Tanner point out that no complete Miatas are taken off the road to provide these parts ("No animals were harmed...etc.").

Or, you can buy a turn-key car for \$26,176.

I had a chance to drive a turn-key car up the mountain roads at Snowmass, and found the package pretty appealing. The stock Miata engine is quick and smooth in this configuration, and of course the close-gated Miata gearbox is one of the best ever made. Steering turn-in is slightly more linear and smooth than it is in a standard Seven. The Miata brakes, as you might imagine, are excellent on this light car. Performance options for the Miata engine are almost limit-

less—turbos, superchargers, big-bore kits, cams, etc.

Keith Tanner, who works on this program at Flyin' Miata, is the author of a book called *How to Build a Cheap Sports Car* (Motorbooks). All a part of the "Lo-cost Seven" do-it-yourself movement started by Englishman Ron Champion.

One look at an original Seven, and you just want to get out the welding torches and steel tubing...

For more information, contact FM Westfield at <http://www.fmwestfield.com>, telephone 970-242-3800, or write: Flyin' Miata, 331 13th St., Grand Junction, Colo. 81501.—PE

