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By Fred S. Hunter

Pilots on the line, says A. G. Heimerdinger, flight operations manager for the Santa Monica division of the Douglas Aircraft Company, are going to find the DC-8 an easy aircraft to handle. Even easier, perhaps, than the DC-7. Heimerdinger—Heimie for short—heads up the team of test pilots on the DC-8 program and has put in a large number of hours in the left-hand seat in a wide variety of flights to date, including the initial flight of the first airplane and again the first flight of the first JT4 airplane. The DC-8 is a big, heavy jet with a swept wing, but Douglas is coming up with the same characteristics as a straight-wing airplane, Heimerdinger avers, and the harmony between elevator, aileron and rudder is "just what we want."

• **Easy to land**—The DC-8 lands at contact speeds of 115 to 118 knots as compared to 110 knots for the DC-7. Stall characteristics are better than any airplane he has ever flown, Heimerdinger declares. This applies to pitching, lateral control throughout the stall, loss of altitude in the stall. It's a simple matter to keep out of trouble. "You can apply power and fly right out of it." How about handling the DC-8 in landing under instrument conditions? "It's a dream," Heimerdinger replies.

• **Easy to taxi**—Heimerdinger feels airline pilots will get a real thrill maneuvering the DC-8 on the ground. Rear wheels of the bogey gear on the DC-8 are castered, making it possible to turn the big jet-liner in a very tight circle. As a matter of fact, Douglas pilots, flying the No. 4 airplane at Long Beach, swing the plane around in 180-degree turns after landing using only one-half of the width of the 200-foot-wide runway just to show how easy it is. Maximum throw of the DC-8 nose wheel is 74½ inches. The rear wheels of the bogey landing gear unlatch and caster when the nose wheel has turned 40 degrees.

• **Easy to take off**—Keeping the DC-8 headed straight down the run-

way on takeoff will be no strain, says Heimerdinger. For takeoff, the nose wheel is linked to the rudder pedals so that the pilot steers the airplane with his feet instead of the hand wheel used for nose wheel steering in taxiing. Heimerdinger, as a pilot, likes the power response of the Pratt & Whitney jet engines, particularly the JT4. He has not had an opportunity yet to try the Conway, but he has no doubt the Rolls-Royce job will compare favorably with the JT4. The P&W JT3 goes from idle to takeoff power within 10 seconds, Heimerdinger reports. With the JT4, it's 4½ seconds. "The JT4 just follows your hand," says Heimie.

• **Easy to fly**—The Douglas test pilot keeps coming back to the word "comfortable" in describing how he believes airline flight crews will feel in operating the DC-8. In other words, there are no special problems. Heimie confirms Ivar Shogran's report that the DC-8 is completely free of Dutch roll. There are no lateral control problems on takeoff or in landing. Douglas has not yet hooked up a yaw damper on any of the test airplanes and there appears to be no actual need to do so, although the company may finally decide on it for passenger comfort. The DC-8 cockpit has adequate visibility for the entire operation of the airplane in the air or on the ground, Heimie says. He also reports that the air blast rain removal system designed to get away from windshield wipers looks as though it will work out.

• **First commercial delivery**—By the time you read this, unless there is more interference by the weather, Douglas will have flown the first intercontinental DC-8 for Pan American. It will join the flight test program at Edwards AFB. This is the No. 5 airplane in the DC-8 series and the No. 6 and No. 7 planes also are JT4 models for Pan Am scheduled to go into the test program. The No. 7 plane, incidentally, is the one Douglas will use for the accelerated service test program for FAA type certification. This airplane is now in the No. 1 position on the production line and right behind is the airplane which will be the first commercial delivery.