

# paperback writer

JENNIFER COUTTS CLAY, AUTHOR OF JETLINER CABINS, NOW AVAILABLE IN PAPERBACK, REFLECTS ON A LIFETIME OF INVOLVEMENT IN THE AIRCRAFT INTERIORS SECTOR

Images courtesy Braniff/George Design Studio



**F**irst published in 2003 by John Wiley & Sons Ltd, *Jetliner Cabins* is now available as a paperback. The revised edition boasts an extra feature focusing on next-generation interiors, including a look at the latest aircraft to be announced from Airbus, Boeing, Bombardier and Embraer, as well as a host of fascinating images, some of which are published here.

The new edition also provided the perfect opportunity to catch up with its author, Jennifer Coutts Clay, who has spent 30 years in the air transport industry, with practical experience of everything from airport operations to supersonic carpets.



1. *Jetliner Cabins* features over 400 images, including this example from Braniff International
2. Braniff's luxurious upper deck lounge – Clay believes such a scheme would never meet the approval of today's revenue management

**Q. What inspired you to write the book?**

For many years my colleagues in the aviation business had been saying there was a great need for a book on this subject. Of course, technical magazines such as *Aircraft Interiors International* have played a vital role in communicating and analysing the ongoing state of this side of the business. However, a book like *Jetliner Cabins* can fulfill a different role: it can act as a useful desk reference for aviation professionals and, at the same time, provide practical information for general readers who might not otherwise have access to the range of topics which are covered in the various chapters. I was also greatly inspired by Keith Lovegrove's book, *Airline: Identity*,

*Design and Culture*, which was published in 2000 and is listed in my bibliography.

**Q. How did you find a publisher?**

At the beginning of 2002 I sent an outline proposal to a few dozen publishing houses, emphasising the fact that there were no other books on the subject of jetliner cabins. The responses were varied: "We don't do aviation"; "We don't do colour pictures"; "We like the topic but our current schedule is full... could you contact us next year?"; and "We only publish under license – meaning your book would have to be a success before we could even look at it".



Courtesy SAS



3. A self-service buffet bar on board SAS – a dedicated chapter on catering trends is included in *Jetliner Cabins*



So you can imagine how thrilled I was to hear that John Wiley & Sons were interested in discussing my proposal. The company has a long history (since 1807) and has a list dedicated to architecture and design.

**Q. How is the book's content organised?**

The book is structured in four sections: product branding, passenger experience, cabin maintenance and marketing challenges. There are four chapters in each section, and each chapter has been written as a separate essay. In this way, readers can dip into any topics that are of particular interest to them, without necessarily working through the preceding

material. Each chapter ends with expert comments from a particular specialist; these outside voices provide fresh viewpoints and prompt readers to think more widely beyond my own statements.

As for the visual material, at least two-thirds of the pictures are accompanied by captions. This format has been very well received because it enables readers to flick through the book and enjoy a quick peek at the outline of the content.

Readers in a hurry also benefit from the introductory sentences at the beginning of each chapter that serve to define the scope of the treatment of each subject. Readers can save time by skipping the bits that are not relevant to their needs.

Courtesy Virgin Atlantic

4. Inflight beauty treatment area from Virgin Atlantic's original Upper Class

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**Q. What struck you most during your research?**

Escalating regulatory requirements have had the biggest impact on the industry: there is far greater emphasis on safety and security standards now than in previous decades. Chapters 11 and 15 contain a summary of the current situation.

I was also struck by the marvellous developments in lightweight and burn-resistant fabrics, carpets and wall-coverings – without any sacrifice in variety of colour or surface pattern treatments. Meanwhile a new generation of decorative laminates, as described in Chapter 10, have opened an exciting range of aesthetic options for architects and designers. Demands made of suppliers and vendors are much tougher

than in the old days: airlines now look for contract guarantees relating to serviceability and wear qualities.

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks the industry has also seen severe cut-backs in corporate travel budgets, with an increasingly large number of business travellers downgrading their flight arrangements. Some of the airlines responded promptly and in very practical ways: in 2002 we saw premium economy cabins starting to resemble the early business-class cabins. Meanwhile, many business-class cabins have started to look very similar to the first-class cabins of the early 1990s. This constant upward cycle of improvements presents enormous challenges for cabin design teams.



Courtesy Airbus



5. The first-class bar from the Airbus A380 cabin mock-up in Toulouse, designed by Priestman Goode

**THIS CONSTANT UPWARD CYCLE OF IMPROVEMENTS PRESENTS ENORMOUS CHALLENGES FOR CABIN DESIGN TEAMS**



**Q. What is your favourite image from the book?**

Thanks to the ingenuity of the art editor, Mario Bettella, we have over 350 images in the hardcover and well over 400 in the paperback edition of *Jetliner Cabins* – and I like them all! I just wish I could have incorporated hundreds more! But if I had to choose one special group I would opt for the Braniff pictures from the 1970s which are displayed at the beginning of Chapter 13. They are so glamorous and amazingly distinctive. Of course, we need to explain to newcomers to the business that those cabin schemes were fabulously expensive and, nowadays, airline revenue managers would find it impossibly difficult to justify that level of expenditure! However, the cabin

décor schemes pioneered by that team of brilliant individuals: Harding Lawrence, Mary Wells, Alexander Calder, Alexander Girard, Emilio Pucci and Philip George (who is one of the book's quoted specialists) set hitherto undreamed-of aesthetic standards for our industry.

**Q. How did you first become involved in interiors?**

In 1984 I was appointed controller corporate identity at British Airways (my aviation alma mater!). At that time we were preparing for the privatisation of the airline – the fleet interior upgrade was crucially important to the future of the company and, working in conjunction with Saatchi and Saatchi



Courtesy Airbus

6. First-class seating detail from the Airbus A380 mock-up

**WE HAVE OVER 350 IMAGES IN THE HARDCOVER AND WELL OVER 400 IN THE PAPERBACK EDITION OF JETLINER CABINS – AND I LIKE THEM ALL!**

Advertising, and Landor Associates, we moved to a totally new look. I used to rush from the airport hangars to design studios, manufacturing plants, board rooms, union meetings and press briefings: everyone had a thousand questions on how the work was proceeding.

**Q. How have aircraft interiors changed over recent years?**

There is a much greater emphasis now on product testing during the early stages of the design development process. The regulations and requirements relating to FAA certification testing processes for flammability, fire retardancy, smoke and toxicity are well-known. But airlines now also carry out stringent

technical test programmes with the focus on maintainability standards: abrasion, shrinkage, colourfastness in the laundry and dry-cleaning cycles, staining, stretching, pilling, puckering, bubbling etc. These tests can be costly and time-consuming but the net result is an aircraft interior programme which, in the long run, will be far more reliable, durable and manageable than one that was put together on a wing and a prayer!

**Q. What is your earliest experience/memory of air travel?**

In the 1950s, flying on board Silver City Airways, a Bristol freighter car ferry flight from Lympne, Kent, in England to Beauvais, France – a family holiday, most exciting.



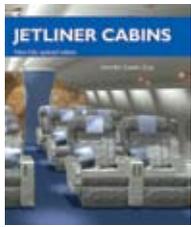
Courtesy China Southern



Caption please

7. China Southern staff apply the finishing touches to the economy cabin

**AIRLINES NOW ALSO CARRY OUT STRINGENT TECHNICAL TEST PROGRAMMES WITH THE FOCUS ON MAINTAINABILITY STANDARDS**



**Q. And your most recent trip?**

A Delta flight from Nice, France to New York-JFK, USA. I was in the Business Elite Cabin, which provided a very pleasant flight experience. Although this sleeper seat has been flying since 1999 it still looks up to date, and the armrest-mounted touch-pad makes it easy to adjust the seat contour supports.

**Q. Just how important is an airline's interior?**

As the part of the airline that passengers actually touch and experience on both a physical and perceptual level, an airline's interior is of paramount importance to the ability of the company to earn and maintain a good reputation.

**Q. How do you relax when not working?**

Apart from the frenzied lines at the airports, I still find travel relaxing and refreshing. Every trip brings something new, so travel is high on both my work and leisure agendas. For example, last year I visited Hamburg for the Aircraft Interiors Expo – it was a short trip but one which gave me masses of new ideas for my writing – and made me want to come back again this year! **END**

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Courtesy British Airways

**AN AIRLINE'S INTERIOR IS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE TO THE ABILITY OF THE COMPANY TO EARN AND MAINTAIN A GOOD REPUTATION**

8. British Airways' Club World – Chapter 2 of Jetliner Cabins is dedicated to business-class comfort

