

Aircraft *interiors* INTERNATIONAL

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AND FINALLY...

Super times



LET'S FINISH WITH SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF THE PAST TWO DECADES AND PREDICTIONS FOR THE FUTURE FROM ONE OF THE BEST-KNOWN EXPERTS IN THE INTERIORS INDUSTRY: JENNIFER COUTTS CLAY



During the past 20 years cabin designers have emerged as the new heroes and heroines of the civil aviation sector. Their work has had to comply with the most stringent aviation standards; and every day their cabins are in service, they are analyzed in minute detail and publicly critiqued by millions of passengers.

Just consider the recent challenges. At the end of the 1990s, major airlines invested fortunes in upgrades: entire first class cabins were reconfigured to accommodate fully flat beds. During the 2000s, the trickle-down product upgrade process resulted in dramatic reconfigurations of business class cabins. These levels of luxury were unparalleled in the history of scheduled air travel.

After the economic crisis of 2008, witnessing radical changes in consumer and corporate travel trends, designers focused on premium economy. On a number of airlines the visual treatments for these cabins recall the look of Concorde interiors, regarded as the epitome of elegance in the heyday of supersonic flight.

In economy class, many airlines are now offering larger overhead stowage bins, improved air quality, bigger windows, refreshing mood lighting, contoured seat foams, endless IFE

content options, plus wi-fi connectivity. In real terms, ticket prices have declined significantly over the past two decades, but passengers might not realize that governments frequently add punitive airport departure taxes.

When oil prices spiralled to all-time record highs, designers were told to reduce the weight of cabin fixtures. In addition to achieving measurable savings in jet fuel, this move was made to please the growing green environmental lobby by demonstrating significant reductions in carbon emissions and landfill waste. Cabin specialists developed production programs focusing on advanced materials, methods and manufacturing processes.

From the turn of the millennium, the leading 150 airlines have seen enormous worldwide traffic expansion: in 2016, passenger boarding figures were close to 3.5bn, with load factors surging to around 80%, and in some cases, above 90%!

Cabin designers have to repeatedly recalibrate durability and maintainability metrics; and all their design elements – tested both individually and jointly – have to meet international safety requirements relating to flammability, smoke, toxicity and heat release.

So what do the next 20 years hold? Customer surveys worldwide indicate that airline passengers are longing for more personalization, humanization, interesting experiences and warmth of welcome.

Cabin specialists have started to explore creative new concepts: virtual reality displays for information and entertainment, automatic reporting of items requiring management or maintenance attention, smart robots to deliver meals, and zoned clusters for personal well-being (such as childcare or exercise areas).

During the upcoming cutthroat battles to capture the maturing millennial market, social media platforms will offer opportunities for airlines to run lifestyle and loyalty programs designed to inculcate the allure of air travel.

On the operational front, can we envision the effects of the projected rise of low-cost long-haul airlines (Ryanair already carries over 100 million passengers annually on short-haul European routes and there was talk of 'stand up' seats)? And what about flying cars for airport transfers? And how about affordable second-generation supersonic aircraft services?

Cabin designers are ready for all these challenges. So, watch this space....

Upfront

006 TWO DECADES OF WISDOM

Aircraft Interiors International has been a forum for expert opinion for 20 years. It's surprising how relevant this advice is today... even that of our very first contributors

014 CLOSE BUT NO CIGAR

A trawl through the archives found no predictions that were way off the mark – but a few examples that didn't quite hit the mark

018 INTERVIEW: AIRBUS

A regular face in *Aircraft Interiors International* over the years, from his time at Lufthansa and now at Airbus, Ingo Wuggetzer shares his thoughts on the industry's successful path and the road ahead

026 INTERVIEW: BOEING

Boeing's payloads chief architect, P J Wilcynski, on the magic of flight, a wonderful past and a promising future

036 INDUSTRY MILESTONES

A lot has changed in the aircraft interiors sector over 20 years: see how much you remember

048 IFEC ADVANCES

From yesterday's first DVD players and Connexion, to today's 2Ku, the world of IFEC has progressed rapidly

054 BIG NAMES

Aircraft Interiors International features the biggest names in cabin design in every issue, but occasionally a household name has dropped in

184 LOOK BACK

Renowned cabin expert Jennifer Coutts Clay shares thoughts from the past 20 years in her beloved sector, and tells us how she views the future

184 INDEX TO ADVERTISERS



"An airline's interiors are of paramount importance"

'FRIENDLY' RIVALRY

"Any airline that attempts to steal a march on us in the all-important areas of product and service does so in the knowledge that their advantage can only be temporary," warned Michael Tan, EVP at Singapore Airlines (until 2004). Tan was discussing the airline's US\$300m investment in its B747-400 cabins, but it is consistently among the very best in terms of inflight experience. Tan added, "A single-minded approach in putting the customer first is crucial to our long-term investment strategy. We must forge ahead and reassert our leadership in high-quality service and product innovation." Tan left the airline to join Millennium & Copthorne Hotels in 2004.

1999



It's all about reputation

"As the part of the aircraft 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," said Jennifer Coutts Clay in 2006. She was, and still is, principal of J Clay Consulting and author of Jetliner Cabins: Evolution & innovation. See p184 for more thoughts from Jennifer.

2006



Key focus: napkin rings

"A total brand experience requires total design management in order to define the macro statements and the micro detail. Qualitative research confirms continuously what we have always instinctively believed: brands are more often remembered for their smallest, softest details rather than bigger, harder innovations," stated Michael Crump, British Airways' former senior manager of design management, in 2002.

And Crump really did have an eye for even the smallest of details: "In any service industry, the micro detail can be a powerful symbol of the health of the brand. The psychological reassurance of a quality, detailed napkin ring is a subliminal confirmation that we care for and maintain the aircraft's engines to the best of our ability."

2002

KEEP IT FLEXIBLE

"If you lock both suppliers and customers in a closed catalog offering, I'm not sure you are meeting market requirements," said Francois Caudron, Airbus's VP of business and customer development for the A350 program, in 2008.

2008



Captive audience

"If you want a quiet zone – away from the cockpit – forget it. We want Ryanair to be noisy and full because we will be trying to sell you something," said Michael O'Leary, Ryanair's CEO yesterday – sorry, in 2006. O'Leary has since decided to soften his unconventional approach to customer service with the Always Getting Better program – mainly because he has found that being nice to customers can benefit profits.

2006

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