plane sense?

"I DON'T THINK WE'RE STOPPED FROM INNOVATING, IT'S JUST THE TIME IT TAKES – CERTIFICATION TAKES LONGER THAN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS"
crowded house

MORE VISITORS THAN EVER BEFORE CRAMMED INTO THE HAMBURG MESSE'S HALLS TO SEE THE LATEST NEW DISPLAYS AT AIRCRAFT INTERIORS EXPO 2008

 Reed Exhibitions reports that visitor figures to Aircraft Interiors Expo 2008 were up by 2% on the previous year (7,754 in 2008, up from 7,610 in 2007) – setting a new attendance record, while VIP guests and press attendance also increased. The total attendance figure, which includes exhibitors, press and VIP guests, stood at nearly 11,200.

Visitors flocked to the show to check out all the latest new facts and innovations – this year was notable for a number of new economy seating models, as well as the latest fourth-class suites. Inflight connectivity service and a new generation of portable media players dominated the IFE sector, which was particularly refreshing to see a number of new concepts presented. A new urinal unit and washroom free up space for up to four extra seats on a B747-400 proved popular.

Aircraft's stand was particularly busy, with visitors eager to see out the new A350 XWB interior mock-up (see page 56), making its first ever appearance at an exhibition. By offering the widest cross-section in its category, Airbus says the A350 B cabin brings advantages to all passengers. Its straight walls provide more room at head and shoulder level, and extra width allows for nine abreast seating in a 3-3-3 configuration in economy, with a distance of 17.7in between seats 2m wide. In addition, the larger (50in long), pivoting head bins enable passengers to easily store their luggage to their seat – Airbus claims up to 48 bags for 45 passengers can be stored over three 30in sections.

Meanwhile, Boeing's director of passenger satisfaction and new, Klaus Brauer, used the opening press conference to flight his belief that airlines need to diversify their economy class to appeal to the differing needs of tourists on the one hand, and business travellers on a budget on the other. "My vision of the future is that there will be a lot more premium-economy cabins as we see a division between tourist economy passengers and premium economy passengers," he said.

The centrepiece of the Boeing display was a stairway from 747.8. "The new entryway will greatly enhance the passenger appeal and create a strong first impression," said Greg Ackerman, engineering interior team leader for the 747-8.

However, the entryway provides more than just aesthetic appeal. It was also designed to facilitate improved passenger flow during boarding and deplaning."
Economy seating  Thompson Solutions displayed its new economy seat, the Cozy Suite, which has been ordered by Delta Airlines for its entire Boeing 767ER and 777 fleet with deliveries starting in 2010. Delta has exclusive rights in North America for the product. The new Cozy Suite provides each passenger with two armrests. Designed to help travellers to sleep, it has a contoured shoulder area and offers up to 9in extra knee space compared to standard seating designs of the same pitch. It also features a unique hands-free, tip-up seat base, which makes it easier to get in and out of window seats, and helps to decrease boarding and deplaning times. James Thompson revealed he is forming a new company, Thompson Aerospace, for the certification, manufacturing and final assembly of the Cozy Suite, based in new premises next to Thompson Solutions in Kilkeel, Northern Ireland. "The engineering and certification is already ahead of schedule for the first delivery to Delta in November 2009," he said.

B/E Aerospace exhibited a new version of its main cabin Spectrum product — the new platform is 10% lighter in weight, and provides over 14% additional living space. The new version includes a sculpted Crystalflex back support system and will meet the 2009 HIC requirements. The enhanced platform is scheduled for delivery beginning first quarter 2010.

Recaro Aircraft Seating presented a new version of its single-beam Comfort Line 3610 economy-class seat. The seat was unveiled as the first Recaro seat to feature single-beam construction. This replaces the two conventional support beams with a single beam — eliminating the second beam from the seat greatly increases legroom, allowing economy-class passengers to enjoy more living space on long-haul flights — even at a relatively short seat pitch. The latest version replaces the original composite single beam with one made from aluminium. “Our objective was to further reduce costs and weight without sacrificing comfort — and this is exactly what we have achieved with the new CL 3610,” said Recaro’s CEO, Axel Kehletz. “The seat has been redesigned to be more modular, with less complex components, to make assembly easier and reduce weight.” Comfort features include kinematics that improve the seating angle, a flexible headrest, a footrest, and an ultra-thin lightweight aluminium backrest with comfort netting. Customers announced for the CL 3610 so far include Jet Airways, as well as Qantas, which has already received its first shipment for its first A380.