

AIX draws thousands to Hamburg



Panasonic Avionics CEO Ken Sain at the announcement of the company's Astrova IFE product

From June 14-16, more than 12,000 professionals from the cabin interiors industry descended on the Hamburg Messe for the return of [Aircraft Interiors Expo](#) (AIX). The highly anticipated event – the first physical AIX in three years – created a sought-after opportunity for the passenger experience community, including representatives from more than 180 airlines, leasing companies and business jet operators, to reconnect face-to-face to discover the latest product launches from more than 600 exhibitors – and new announcements at the show did not disappoint.

A hotbed of product innovation

The opening day of Aircraft Interiors Expo 2022 was defined by a line-up of new product launches, with exhibitors eager to reveal the innovations and new developments they've been working on over the past 36 months. Among those to unveil new products, [Panasonic Avionics](#) announced its new in-flight entertainment (IFE) seat-end system, Astrova. Designed with passenger engagement in mind, Astrova reflects the latest on-the-ground technology, making the transition from passengers' personal devices to in-flight entertainment seamless. It features cinema-grade 4K OLED screens with High Dynamic Range (HDR), Panasonic's Bluetooth technology, as well as 67W of USB-C power to fast-charge smart devices.



Seating and IFE innovations could be found throughout AIX this year

Following its launch, the Panasonic team announced that fellow AIX exhibitor, [Recaro Aircraft Seating](#) would seamlessly integrate the Astrova seat-end solution into its newly revamped CL3810 product to further optimize the passenger journey for single-aisle and twin-aisle aircraft. Attendees visiting the Recaro stand were provided with a first look at the CL3810 economy class seat.

As the successor to the German seat manufacturer's popular CL3710, the new CL3810 offers weight savings of 1.5 kilograms per seat, combining innovative ergonomic technology, premium comfort cushions with layered foam, and lightweight smart engineering. Its unique shape is designed to support the passenger's points of tension, which reflects the design of the Recaro Automotive sport seat. Compared to its predecessor, the CL3810 offers an additional inch of living space, a more advanced articulated seat pan, and a wider backrest to enhance row-to-row privacy.

Other seating innovations were quick to make headlines across the show from suppliers including [Safran Seats](#), [TSI Seats](#), [Aviointeriors](#) among others. Showcasing a range of innovative concepts and configurations, Aviointeriors highlighted its Business Class Allegra lie-flat seat its FABRY Economy Class seat; and 'Heric' (Herringbone in Cruise) and 'DoDo' (Double Bed) family of products, which allow seating to be tailored to each airline's requirements. These concepts are designed to provide a seating area that can be easily converted to a lie-flat area, expanding configuration options for airlines.

Safran Seats showcased a duo of business-class products: VUE and UNITY. The first, VUE, is adapted to long-haul flights on narrow body aircraft, but designed to assimilate the experience of the most comfortable, widebody airplanes. The name, VUE comes from the window-facing experience it delivers for every passenger. Meanwhile, UNITY is a new generation of high-end, forward-facing business class seats that provide every passenger with direct access to the aisle and multiple storage areas.

TSI Seats also launched its economy class seat Milligram, and Business Class seat Royalux. Described as a next-generation lightweight economy class seat, the Milligram is optimized for narrow-body A320 and 737 aircraft. It is one of the lightest seats in the market at less than 7.5 kilograms per passenger without a dress cover and USB outlet. The seat is made with a reduced number of parts - less than 70 parts per triple - which are mostly made using ultra-durable, high-performance composite and aluminium parts. The company also displayed its new Royalux business class seat. Designed for the

A320, A350, 737 and 787 aircraft, it can be used in Business Class in narrow-body, or premium economy in wide-body aircraft types.

In one of the more thought-provoking designs on display, TU Delft student, Alejandro Nunez Vicente's chaise concept returned to the [Aircraft Interior Refurbishment España](#) (AIRE) stand. The concept is designed for a bi-level cabin that has rows of traditional seats on the floor, along with rows of elevated seats. Nominated for a Crystal Cabin Award in 2021, Alejandro returned to AIX following successful funding to work full-time on his prototype.

Ali Aljufairi, Manager IFE and Connectivity at [Gulf Air](#) attended AIX to see and try the latest seat innovations.

"The return to an in-person event was so important in truly appreciating the different materials being used, the thought put into the design, as well as gaining a more rounded understanding of what the product can offer," he said. "This was aided immensely by attending the numerous product launches by seat manufacturers, such as Recaro, [Stelia Aerospace](#) and TSI. It is such an educational experience, an institution. If I could describe it in three words, it would be 'educational', 'crucial' and 'possibilities'."

Outside of new seating concepts, further product announcements were unveiled across all eight halls. Helping airlines bring the connected vision to reality, [Airbus](#) revealed its Airspace Link HBCplus - a flexible high bandwidth connectivity solution that will be offered as an SFE* line-fit catalog option and also for retrofit on all Airbus programmes. HBCplus, which initially encompasses Ka-band services, will enable airlines to connect to a choice of Managed Service Providers (MSPs) via a new certified terminal and radome built as part of the aircraft. In the future, it is planned to extend HBCplus to include MSPs which offer Ku-band services.

Airbus also revealed to AIX attendees that it had selected fellow AIX exhibitor and connectivity satcom leader, Inmarsat as the first MSP, while Safran Passenger Innovations (SPI) would act as terminal provider and hardware integrator of ThinkKom's proven antenna technology.

On the [Collins Aerospace](#) stand, attendees discovered the company's new modular, thermoelectric cooling system that is scalable to fit a variety of applications throughout an aircraft's interior. SpaceChiller quietly and efficiently chills compartments to food-safe temperatures without the use of refrigerants that may impact global warming. It is designed to offer airlines flexibility in service, storage, and space without sacrificing room for passengers and flight attendants. Applications range from premium suites and passenger social zones to single galley inserts and whole cart bays.

Meanwhile, [STG Aerospace](#) declared 2022 a major launch year with innovations across its core technologies, photoluminescent and electrical. It revealed the world's narrowest and lightest emergency floor path marking - the brand new saf-Tglo® SSUL-X11. This narrower option is designed to enhance cabin aesthetics, blending seamlessly into the cabin design, while maintaining passenger safety requirements. The company also announced its new platform-agnostic Universal Lighting capability and emergency exit system package for business jet and small fixed-wing aircraft (CS23).

"The show has been really good and really busy," said Kate Williams, Brand Marketing Manager, STG Aerospace. "We weren't sure what to expect after three years, but we've been fully booked with meetings and the quality of visitors has been great. We've had lots of interest in the new products we've launched at the show. The feedback has been really positive and it's great to know that we're launching the products our customers want and need."

A place to learn and discuss future thinking

In addition to the abundance of new product development being showcased, the return of Aircraft Interiors Expo (AIX) welcomed four days of high-level thought leadership as experts from all corners of the industry came together to learn and debate the future of the passenger experience industry. Kick-starting proceedings, the Passenger Experience Conference opened at the newly refurbished [Congress Center Hamburg](#) (CCH).

Opening the conference, Paul Wylde, Founder, CEO and Creative Director of [paulwylde](#) delivered an impassioned speech that reflected on the lessons learnt during the pandemic, the changing attitudes of passengers and the ever-growing importance for brands to watch, observe and understand their audiences. He provided the audience with five key observations, from consumers' desire to find something meaningful in the brands they choose, to the explosion of the metaverse and the importance of feeling connected. He encouraged brands to foster a culture of creativity, investigation and exploration and to find the will for measured risk-taking.

Following his opening keynote, Paul was joined by Silvia Mosquera, Chief Commercial and Revenue Officer, [TAP Portugal](#); Anthony Woodman, Vice President – Customer Journeys & Reward, [Virgin Atlantic](#); and moderator Jennifer Newlands, Vice President, Head of Strategy, Brand, Content, Airbus to discuss the critical passenger experience strategies transforming travel and supporting airline renewal.

Meanwhile, two conference streams ran in parallel throughout the afternoon: Rebellious Reconstruction and Integrity in Action, bringing together experts from [LIFT Aero Design](#), [TEAGUE](#), [Boeing Commercial Airplanes](#), [Diehl Aviation](#), [Tapis Corporation](#), [Breeze Airways](#), [Cirium](#), [PriestmanGoode](#), [Finnair](#), Safran Cabin, [LSG Group](#), [OneWeb](#), [Viasat](#), [Inmarsat](#), AERQ, [Cathay Pacific](#) and more.

Closing the day, Fabien Pelous, Senior Vice President Customer Experience at [Air France](#) shared candid insights into how the airline is responding to the latest trends and passenger expectations. He explained the role personalization is playing and how Air France customers increasingly want more entertainment and better connectivity. Pelous was joined by Joe Bentley, Chief Technology Officer, Panasonic Avionics and Jochen Werner, Vice President Industrial Design, Airbus for a final panel discussion, where it was agreed that the way forward required a focus on a sustainable in-flight experience, as well as one that is more connected and personalised for every passenger.

Future cabin trends under the spotlight

Continuing to offer opportunities to learn and debate future cabin trends, CabinSpace LIVE returned to the AIX show floor with a programme of insightful sessions offering attendees a chance to reflect on cabin-specific trends and challenges.

A panel of senior industry executives provided attendees with an up-to-date outlook of the commercial aviation and interiors market. In this session, aviation and cabin interiors experts including Andrew Doyle, Senior Director, Market Development, Cirium; Gary Weissel, Managing Officer, [Tronos Aviation Consulting](#), Inc.; Rob Morris, Global Head of Consultancy, Ascend by Cirium; Elizabeth deYoung, VP Marketing and Strategy, Safran Cabin; and Markus Höllner, Head of Strategy and Products, RECARO Aircraft Seating painted an optimistic outlook for the future of their respective industries.

Morris described the industry's 10-year period of 'uninterrupted growth' before the pandemic as 'driving through thick fog with our foot firmly on the accelerator,' only to hit a COVID-shaped brick wall. However, he was upbeat about the industry's recovery prospects, demonstrating through modelling calculated by Cirium's Ascend tool that the future was bright, with one scenario predicting

the market could return to pre-pandemic levels by August 2023.

Both Morris and Weissel, however, were keen to stress these were hypothetical, complicated by many unknowns going forward, particularly the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Weissel predicted that due to said uncertainty, there might be significant changes to the supply chain, such as restructuring processes that could see more production brought in-house, something both DeYoung and Höllerer agreed with. Both too predicted a positive recovery path for the aircraft interiors industry, but the latter acknowledged that the supply chain issue was the primary obstacle before demand and investment could return.

Other sessions explored how to make sustainable aviation a reality; the how and why of accessible air travel; and the role of women in aviation. In addition, attendees were treated to an introduction to this year's Crystal Cabin Award Winners. Each company was provided with an opportunity to showcase and introduce their award-winning concepts to the AIX audience, revealing the inspiration behind their innovative designs and intended applications onboard.

This included Safran Cabin's Fire-Resistant Cargo Container, which took the Health and Safety Award after it wowed the jury with its ability to offer fire containment for Class D fires for up to six hours. The [Thales Avionics](#) team also headed to the CabinSpace LIVE stage to introduce its 'Pulse' charging solution for aircraft cabins. Winner of the Materials and Components category, it uses patented power management technology to dynamically allocated power during the flight.

First-time visitor Diana Danvova, IFE Engineer, [Air Astana](#), commented on her show experience, stating: "It's my first time at Aircraft Interiors Expo. I've met with so many interesting suppliers who will help me with upcoming projects. As my focus is on IFE, it's been great to meet with so many relevant companies. There is so much innovation on display, and the chance to meet with my peers has been priceless."

Getting back to business

With so much innovation and new technology on display, attendees were focused on building existing and new relationships at AIX to discuss future projects, facilitated by the show's innovative new show planning tool: AIX Connect. Designed to help key airline buyers meet exhibitors during the show to build business connections and discuss new projects, the show planning tool has never been more relevant as the aircraft interiors industry reconvenes for the first time since the global pandemic began. It demonstrated its pivotal role in facilitating the industry's desire to network, with more than 5,000 confirmed meetings across the three days of the show.

Commenting on the success of Aircraft Interiors Expo this year, Polly Magraw, AIX Event Director, said: "We have been completely blown away by the response from exhibitors and attendees this year. The atmosphere at this year's show was extremely positive and demonstrated the appetite among all attendees to reconnect and drive the industry's recovery. Visitors were able to identify new and exciting products from exhibitors, suppliers had the opportunity to do business with the airline buyers they wanted to meet, and delegates spoke extremely positively about the education opportunities at the conference.

"I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all who joined us over the course of the four days. The breadth of innovation on show was truly remarkable and is a clear demonstration of the resilience and hard work the industry has been firmly focused on during this time."