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THE INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF BUSINESS JET INTERIOR DESIGN AND COMPLETION

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ANDREW WINCH TURNS HIS HAND TO THE DESIGN OF AN EXCLUSIVE LIVERY AND INTERIORS FOR SYNERGY AVIATION

name that plane

Having redesigned one King Air 200 for Synergy Aviation, Andrew Winch was persuaded to transform and take part ownership of a second that now bears his name

Desperate to cut time lost on motorways or trains when travelling to yacht projects in Plymouth or Cherbourg, leading nautical and aviation designer Andrew Winch stumbled upon Synergy Aviation, a charter firm based in Fairoaks, Surrey, a short drive from Winch's Mortlake, Surrey-based headquarters on the banks of the River Thames, and just 45 minutes from central London. "It was taking me about four hours to get to Plymouth by car or train, and at least nine hours to get to Cherbourg on the train via Paris or by car on the overnight ferry," explains Winch. "By chartering some of Synergy's aircraft, we were able to cut these times down to just 45 minutes."

In 2008, Synergy Aviation, which boasts an eight-strong aircraft fleet made up of three King Air 200s, two Cessna Citation Jets, a CJ2, a Navajo and a BE20 Air Ambulance, approached Andrew Winch Designs to see if the design firm would be

interested in refitting two of its King Air 200s with new interiors, as well as developing a new livery for both aircraft. "I was happy to do it, as it would mean I would then be sitting in the plane that I designed, which I thought would be fun," says Winch.

The first King Air 200 (G-SYGA) to receive the Winch treatment had started life as an air ambulance before being converted for commercial charter. "I took the seats apart completely," he says. "We stripped them down to their frames and then redesigned their shape and came up with a new cream leather finish with dark leather piping to hide any wear and tear – we completely transformed their appearance." Winch also developed a new carpet design and replaced the previous dark mahogany gloss finishes with a lighter, more contemporary satin wood.

In terms of inspiration, Winch says G-SYGA was informed by the interior of the Range Rover he drove

1. G-WNCH combines classic good looks with the latest technology





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I WIDENED OUT THE SHOULDERS OF THE SEAT AS MUCH AS I COULD, TO THE POINT THAT THEY ARE RIGHT UP AGAINST THE FUSELAGE



to and from the airport. “We really wanted a more comfortable feel – the old seats were quite pyramid-like, with the backrests tapering in to meet the headrests,” he explains. “So I widened out the shoulders of the seat as much as I could, to the point that they are right up against the fuselage – there’s still clear aisle access, but far more comfort for guests on board.” The seats also feature retractable headrests, increasing the sense of ceiling space.

“At the same time as doing this aircraft, we were actually working with Range Rover on a project for a new custom car design, so developing the seats for the car and developing the seats for the aircraft went hand in hand, and we ended up with a far more contemporary-looking King Air interior,” notes Winch.

Second time around Synergy was so impressed with the result, it asked Winch to consider another King Air 200 interior overhaul, only this time he was also invited to become a partner in the business. “It made sense as they could charter the aircraft when I wasn’t using it, making for a much more cost-effective business travel solution,” says Winch.

The project was made all the more personal when Synergy was able to secure G-WNCH for the tailfin: “They said they’d found G-WNCH for the registration and that it would cost only £150,” explains Winch. “I didn’t realise it would become such a statement, to have a tail number with one’s initials on it. It was just a bit of fun, but it’s also become something of a signature.”

As for the interior, the second King Air was fitted with even older seating: “It had these chairs with very thin legs without any frame skirt around them – the challenge was to make these almost Tupolev-style chairs look contemporary. We stripped the chairs back to their frame and sand-blasted and epoxy-coated them with a dark brown paint to match the leather of the armrests and piping, helping protect the legs from the inevitable wear and tear of passengers’ shoes – it’s actually quite nice to have that extra space under the chair to stretch out into.”

In terms of style, G-WNCH has more of a classic Italian sports car feel, rather than Range Rover: “The chairs are more Maserati or Ferrari,” says Winch. “In fact



2. Winch also designed a striking silver livery for both King Air 200s
3. Turboprops such as the King Air 200 may be slower than jets, but they can land at a far greater range of airports
4. The cream tan leather seating of G-WNCH was inspired by classic Italian sports car designs

when I went with a client to Maranello to watch him race his Ferrari, they had this new soft, open-topped Ferrari there with a similar diamond-pattern leather to the one we opted for on the King Air – I thought it was quite funny that I’d chosen a design that actually represents some sort of Ferrari, having been inspired by Range Rover for the first project.”

However, like G-SYGA, Winch opted for a lighter and altogether less ‘shiny’ choice of wood: “Both King Airs feature a light satin wood finish, so there’s no gloss in the interior of either aircraft – we took the bling out but made it more beautiful and more comfortable,” says Winch. Both aircraft were also fitted with new window shades, but rather than opt for electric shades, Winch installed a manual circular, rotating lens design similar to the original system. “It’s just so simple and everyone goes, ‘Oh isn’t that clever!’ when they see it.”

All the metal fittings were also retouched to bring them more up to date: “The belt buckles, the light fittings, even the hinges on the table – they’re all original, but they’ve all been replated in a black nickel finish. So again, they look much more contemporary even though they’re over 20 years old.”

Recharge your batteries The more modern look and feel is matched by some rather nifty gadgetry – G-WNCH features 240V power for laptops, and there’s a dock that allows passengers to charge their iPhones or iPods – not bad for an aircraft of such vintage. “Lots of clients seem to have them and they like to drop it in and charge it, so when they get off the aircraft, their phone is charged,” says Winch. “We have seen a definite rise in bookings because we can offer iPods,” confirms Synergy’s Paddy Magan. “Customers and their children plug them in and play music as they fly down to their holiday destination.”

A KING AIR CAN SAVE TIME BY GETTING PASSENGERS CLOSER TO WHERE THEY WANT TO GO

"We've also got an espresso coffee machine running off the inverter and a hot water boiler for tea and hot drinks," adds Winch. "There's a large stainless steel ice box for champagne and wine and we've got a complete set of wine or champagne glasses, water or whisky glasses, a set of espresso glasses, and coffee cups – all loaded in a display cabinet."

Synergy offers a simple food service on board: "There's no hot food, it's all tray food, but I'd much rather have a nice croissant and a good quality smoothie than a poor quality hot meal, so we've made sure we only stock really fresh items. It's a catered, self-service aircraft, although the second pilot will come back and help, because it's always flown for charter with two pilots."

In terms of challenges, getting the iPod dock to work and finding an espresso machine that fitted the small galley are top of Winch's list: "Electronics are never easy on any aircraft – it was quite complicated finding a coffee machine, and we ended up borrowing about half a dozen and trying to squeeze them in and out to try to get them to fit," he says. "But I was adamant that I wanted the lovely

Icing on the cake

"When I first went to view Synergy's King Air 200 to discuss the exterior livery design, I recognised that the de-icing system included a line which travelled along both the leading edge wings and tail edge and up to the black rubber inflatable nose," remembers Andrew Winch. "I decided that whatever I did to the paint scheme, I was going to recognise this feature.... I thought if we could integrate the black rubber in the Synergy line, we could create a unique and contemporary livery for the aircraft, as well as the Synergy fleet."

The result is an aircraft featuring a striking, metallic silver paint finish with a strong black slipstream line starting at the nosecone, running down the fuselage, round the edge and on up to the tail.

"In contrast to Synergy's King Air 200, most similar aircraft have a much lower undercarriage," observes Winch. "All three Synergy aircraft are equipped with Raisebeck technology allowing them to land on both short and grass runways. When approaching the Synergy King Air 200 you immediately see that not only do they stand higher but their silver exterior paint schemes increase their visual dominance when standing next to an aircraft of a similar size."

aroma of espresso coffee in the cabin." Winch worked with Farnborough Aircraft Interiors and GAMA Aviation on the completion of both aircraft.

Close the deal Synergy's Magan says its seven-seat King Air 200s appeal to customers looking for the convenience of a solution that gets them as close as possible to where they want to go. "We can get people closer to their final destination without having to land at major airports and the reason why we can do that is the King Air can land on runways of 900m or less, and on grass, whereas a jet will need 1,500m of tarmac," he explains. "Across Europe, there are hundreds and hundreds of airports with 900m runways, but far fewer airports with longer runways, so a King Air 200 can save you a lot of time by getting passengers closer to where they want to go."

Another advantage identified by Winch is a larger cabin compared to jets offering a similar seat count: "The nice thing about the King Air fuselage as opposed to some jets is that it feels more roomy," he says. "There's lots of leg room and the tables are generous and comfortable. I recently flew to Genoa in G-WNCH for a project meeting with two of my colleagues, where we carried out a complete design review in just two-and-a-half hours using full A1 drawings rolled out on the aircraft's two tables."

Obviously it takes a little longer to arrive in a turboprop than in a jet, but customers benefit from more competitive pricing: "A jet from London to Nice will take two hours and a King Air will take two and a half hours," explains Magan. "However, in a jet you will be looking to pay around £8,000, while in a King Air, you'll be looking to pay around £6,000."

A turboprop also offers more baggage space: "The King Air has almost 90ft³ of baggage room, and weight is less of an issue compared to jets," adds Magan, who notes the aircraft are particularly popular with customers keen on country pursuits, "looking to go hunting, shooting and fishing in Scotland."

For those in search of a trophy, arriving in an aircraft bearing the name of one of the aviation industry's most pre-eminent interior designers simply adds to the occasion. **END**

Web www.synergyaviation.co.uk

5. The G-WNCH registration was a snip at just £150!

