Completion & Refurbishment 2011

Cabin outfitting industry showing signs of recovery

by Kirby J. Harrison

There are growing signs that business aviation is entering a recovery period, and reports from the completion and refurbishment side of the house suggest that cabin outfitting is also shaking off the effects of a prolonged recession.

Major analysts—JPMorgan, UBS, Argus, JetNet and Avinode—are taking positive if tentative positions, reporting a reduction in the used aircraft for-sale inventory and increases in flight activity. And at the European Business Aviation Convention & Exhibition (Ebace) in May, the good mood that permeated the opening was even better as the show closed.

Nine-digit jet deals were again in vogue at Ebace. Most were for large-cabin aircraft, but there were orders for midsize and smaller airplanes as well. And there was plenty of proof that a growing market outside North America and Europe—primarily Brazil, Russia, India and China—is a trend with legs.

“In 2011, the European market is still active,” said Richard Gaona, CEO of Comlux The Aviation Group, a Zurich-based aviation services company that counts among its subsidiaries Indianapolis-based completion and refurbishment specialist Comlux America. And he added, “The Chinese market is growing and the Middle East seems to be recovering despite the turmoil there.”

Comlux recently placed an order for seven Embraer Legacy 650s for its own charter arm. The first three will be based in Almaty, Kazakhstan, from where they will provide nonstop service to Beijing, among other destinations.

Flying Colours is more than happy with the Chinese market. The Peterborough, Ontario-based completion and refurbishment center specializes in Challenger 850 green completions and Canadair CJ200 reconfigurations for executive use. Flying Colours and its Chesterfield, Mo.-based sister company, JetCorp, have already delivered two completed 850s to China and expect to deliver five more in China and another in India by the end of next year. “We have three more scheduled for 2012 delivery, and we’re negotiating for more,” said director of completion sales and management Sean Gillespie.

“Our Chinese customers like the large cabin, a range that will take them nonstop to most destinations in China, and a price in the $26 million range,” he explained.

China Poised To Become the Next Big Market

Bombardier estimates the China market potential at some 600 business jet deliveries between 2010 and 2019, and Brazilian OEM Embraer rates it at about 950 deliveries over the next 20 years. All that activity spells work for the world’s completion and refurbishment centers.

“Our Chinese customers like the large cabin, a range that will take them nonstop to most destinations in China, and a price in the $26 million range,” said Talco president Tom Langeland. This, he added, is especially true of larger bizliners for which the only guidance is typically a list of interior centers approved by the aircraft manufacturer.

In Singapore, ST Aerospace is a major MRO facility that also has the capacity to handle interior outfitting for aircraft up through an Airbus A330 or Boeing 747.

Like the OEMs and completion and refurbishment centers, cabin designers recognize the potential of the China market and are designing cabins that appeal to regional tastes.

Earlier this year, Airbus announced its Phoenix cabin concept, with a color scheme and layout that will appeal to the Asian sense of aesthetics. Taeco is among the cabin outfitters that Airbus has approved and audited.

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An Airbus A318 Elite, similar to that above outfitted by Comlux America, will make an appearance next month at the Latin American Business Aviation Conference & Exhibition in São Paulo, Brazil.
At the Aircraft Interiors Expo in Hamburg, Germany, in April, AirJet Designs of Toulouse, France, unveiled two luxury interior renderings reflecting the Asian aesthetic. The proposals—Art de Vivre and Xin Ge—are influenced by French, Italian and Chinese design styles. Associated Air Center in Dallas is working on two completion projects for the same Asian customer, both of which incorporate the 3,000-year-old Chinese principles of Feng Shui.

Lufthansa Technik will be providing cabin outfitting for a new Boeing Business Jet destined for corporate service with the new Beijing Airlines. Also on the schedule at the Hamburg-based center is completion of an A319 for another Asian customer.

Widebody Ambitions

In fact, centers like Lufthansa Technik that are devoted primarily to the reconfiguration of single- and twin-aisle airliners for executive use made it through the recession with minimal heartburn. A small number of owners deferred delivery, but in nowhere near the numbers who deferred and even cancelled deliveries of smaller business jets.

Airbus Corporate Jet Centre (ACJC) saw business slow down “a little bit” last year, but according to head of sales and marketing Bruno Galzin, “We have green aircraft to complete into 2012 for sure [and] we’re starting to fill in 2013,” he added. ACJC delivered its eighth outfitted cabin in late May. “And we will deliver four cabins this year maybe even a fifth one.”

Following the example of other completion centers, the Toulouse-based ACJC has expanded from dedicated green completion work to include maintenance checks, engine work and cabin upgrades and refurbishment.

In the past, ACJC has focused exclusively on green completion of the Airbus ACJ line of business jets, but the company is looking closely at expanding into larger, twin-aisle configurations but has recently begun bidding for work on twin-aisle aircraft outfitting. ACJC is also considering an expansion of its activities to accommodate what it expects will be a growing demand for outfitting.

Galzin noted growing interest in cabin refurbishment work, in particular during the Ebace show.

In the U.S., few centers are as busy as Gore Design Completions in San Antonio. In a recently expanded hangar, the center is working on three Airbus A340s and an A320, a Boeing 777 and a BBJ3. The most recent delivery was a Boeing 767 in April. The Boeing 777 and one of the A340s currently in the shop are scheduled for delivery this year. “We were so booked over the past couple of years that we didn’t experience any downturn,” said co-owner and president Kathy Gore-Walters.

Following a restructuring, Associated Air Center in Dallas is resuming its place as one of the country’s premier centers. For the past couple of years Associated has been doing single-aisle airliner reconfigurations but has recently begun bidding on twin-aisle aircraft outfitting.

“We have stabilized operations here and we’re starting to bid on twin-aisle work again,” said Associated president Jack Lawless. “We are also considering partnering on some 747-8I projects. This way we would continue our single-aisle work and still support a large project like a 747-8I.”

Lawless said Associated did well in 2010, with deliveries of five outfitted aircraft. “We have a healthy backlog and things are going well for us.”

Comlux America in Indianapolis is also having a good year, according to Gaona. A new A320 completed in Indianapolis was on display at Ebace. A BBJ2 and an A319ACJ are currently in the completion process.

In the two years since it opened, the center has received approvals from Airbus, Boeing and Bombardier to provide completion and refurbishment. Comlux America is delivering aircraft–BBJs and ACJs–at the rate of about three a year.

Like some other centers, Comlux America is anticipating a growing demand for cabin refurbishment as the early BBJs and ACJs reach 12 years in service and come due for a major inspection. At that point, Comlux America CEO Dave Edinger expects a substantial number of those owners will take advantage of the down time to include cabin refurbishment. In fact, the facility recently opened a new hangar dedicated to refurbishment.

The focus at this point is on single-aisle airliner reconfiguration and refurbishment, but Gaona believes the time will come to expand into twin-aisle airliners, “maybe in two or three years.”

King Aerospace in Ardmore, Okla., has in the past been a refurbishment center for midsize and smaller business jets. During the recession when that business dropped off, the company’s extensive military contracts carried it through. Coming out

The galley redesign for the Nextant 400XT from Nextant Aerospace is compact but surprisingly roomy.

Warm veneers and modern fixtures blend nicely in a lavatory by King Aerospace.

Briefs continue on next page

Electronics Briefs

If there is one single word that describes this brave new world, it’s “connected.” We are all connected, tied to one another and the world at large by smartphones, tablets and laptops. We are connected by voice and by text, transmitting and receiving at virtually every moment of the day. The cellphone rings, or chimes an alert to an incoming fast and vie answer, at the breakfast table, in a meeting or on a date.

There is no place so sacred that we are out of touch. Especially not the cabin of a business jet, 40,000 feet in the air, 2,000 miles from land and hurtling toward the next destination at Mach 0.85.

In this Completion & Refurbishment Special Report, we have compiled a series of news items that illustrate in some part what is going on in the world of cabin electronics—from high-speed Internet to high-definition entertainment. In the August edition of AIN, the Cabin Electronics Special Report will take the story further and into greater depth.

Embraer Picks Honeywell Ovation for New Jets

Brazilian OEM Embraer has picked Honeywell’s Ovation Select cabin management system to equip the newest additions to its line of executive jets—the Legacy 450 and Legacy 500. In addition to controlling the system’s entertainment and productivity components, says Honeywell, Ovation Select puts lighting, seats, temperature, galley and window-shade controls at the passengers’ fingertips. The first ship sets have already been sent to Embraer’s São José dos Campos facilities. First customer deliveries of the Legacy 450 are expected in 2012, with the Legacy 450 scheduled for 2013.

TrueNorth Express Means Speed

TrueNorth Avionics has introduced a more compact Wi-Fi cabin-networking device, dubbed TrueNorth Express+, that “easily, effectively, securely and affordably” manages all wireless cabin communications. Using a built-in Ethernet-to-Wi-Fi link, TrueNorth Express interfaces with all FCC-approved airborne wireless devices, from handsets, intercoms and smartphones to in-flight entertainment devices such as DVD players, music players and game consoles. Amac Aerospace in Basel, Switzerland, is performing the first installation, on an executive Boeing 777.

TrueNorth has also introduced HD Voice, a high-definition enhancement of its Simphone OpenCabin. The Canadian company claims “a significant quality improvement over other phone systems on calls made via the Inmarsat SwiftBroadband and Swift64 Satcom links. Airbus Corporate Jet Centre in Toulouse, France is the launch customer on its ACJ line of business jets, to be followed by installation in a Boeing 777 by Amac.

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A Boeing 747-8 proposal by Greenpoint Technologies features a roomy master suite in which warm umber seats such as this French “Art de Vivre” creation for the dining area.

Describing Lufthansa Technik’s current pace of completion and refurbishment, Walter Heerdt said the numbers for the center are on track and approximately the same as last year.

He pointed out that the newest airplanes–Boeing’s 747-8I and 787–are getting closer to delivery and the facility is gearing up for its first 747-8I in mid-2012. “We’re already beyond the design phase and well into the engineering cycle.”

As an Airbus-approved maintenance center working on all the Lufthansa German Airlines fleet of 747-8s, Heerdt figures Lufthansa Technik is well positioned to do not only interior completion but also to provide maintenance and service for executive versions of the airplane as part of a total package.

More Business From Emerging Markets

Like other centers, Lufthansa Technik is seeing more business from emerging markets, said Heerdt. He added that the Hamburg facility, as well as the company’s Tulsa, Okla.-based BizJet International completion and refurbishment center, is well positioned. But Heerdt was far from declaring that the industry recovery has begun, saying simply, “We are carefully optimistic.”

Careful optimism also describes the completion and refurbishment centers that focus on outfitting aircraft from large-cabin Gulfstream down to King Airs.

Ron Jennings, director of completions sales at Elliott Aviation, said activity started picking up earlier this year, “mostly people who had been waiting to have an interior refurbished, and others who just acquired a used airplane and want a cabin upgrade.”

Jennings said the exterior paint business has been particularly busy. “We’re now six months out in terms of paint and interior slots, primarily Challengers and Citations.” He added that most of the Moline, Ill. facility’s customers are also having some cabin work refurbishment done in addition to paint.

StarPort USA in Sanford, Fla., saw a strong start to this year but refurbishment work took a hit in early spring when owners of two airplanes in for major refurbishment stopped sending progress payments. Since then, said executive director of sales Eddie Hidalgo, “One owner has come through. But we’ve since gotten busier and when the other guy resumes payment, it’s going to be difficult to work him back into the schedule.”

Jet Aviation St. Louis appears to be eclipsing its Midcoast Aviation origins but, like its former entity, continues to grow, and did so even through the recession.

Its green completion work on Bombardier Challengers and Globals continues and with a couple of owner cancellations were barely hiccup in the work flow.

“Activity in refurbishment is strong,” said interim general manager Rodger Renaud. “And that activity is turning into contracts, not just for recovering seats but for some pretty sizable jobs.”

Perhaps more important, Jet Aviation St. Louis, like some other centers, is expanding its completion and refurbishment repertoire to include single-aisle airliner conversions to executive use. The center is currently involved in turnkey cabinetry for two BBJ3s and a BBJ2 for the parent company in Zurich where the installation is being performed. “We expect to take in our first airplane here next year.”

Approximately 60 percent of the work is coming from outside the U.S., “both green completion and used aircraft refurbishment,” said Renaud.

As for 2011, he concluded simply, “We’re going to get significantly better.”

Interest in refurbishments has been growing, said Duncan v-p of sales John Slieter. “Our first quarter this year got busy [with] aircraft changing hands and owners deciding to do some upgrades.”

Customers, he said, are coming from both the corporate and charter sides of the industry.

Corporate flight departments have been flying more in the last year, and it seems as if most of them were getting through the first quarter before deciding whether to spend the money budgeted, he explained. This has created a workload scheduled out six months for some Duncan shops, such as maintenance and avionics. And while Duncan is working at close capacity at this point, it is mostly the result of some layoffs as well as losses through attrition when the company began pulling back in 2009. “We’re hiring again, but we’re being careful,” said Slieter.

Duncan Aviation is a cabin refurbishment center, and like Elliott, is also an outsource provider for components from cabinetry and upholstery to composite cabin shells and exterior paint.

Duncan is happy with work as a subcontractor to Dassault Falcon, doing Falcon 7X interiors at the rate of three or four a year.

Slieter concluded, “I honestly believe we’ll be up 10 percent over last year.”

The Wichita Cessna Citation Service Center reports an increase in business, “simply because a lot of aircraft owners are keeping [their airplanes],” said supervisor of sales and marketing Tom Heck.

“They’ve realized that they’re not going to find a purchaser at a fair price in the near future and they want to make the cabin new again.” One of these, he added, was an all-new interior and flight deck in a 10-year-old Citation Y.

There are some 5,000 Citations in

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JetCorp Wins Challenger 300 Wi-Fi Approval

JetCorp Technical Services of Chesterfield, Mo., has received an STC for the AirCell cabin telecommunications router (CTR) on a Challenger 300. Installation and certification of the CTR provides in-cabin Wi-Fi capability for AirCell’s Gogo Biz in-flight Internet connection.

Gogo Biz allows passengers to use Black-Berry, iPhone and other Wi-Fi-enabled devices to surf the Internet, retrieve and answer e-mails (including attachments) and access their corporate VPN (virtual private network).

A Flying Colours company, JetCorp has completed more than 30 Wi-Fi installations on multiple aircraft types. Wi-Fi installation on the Challenger required just four days’ downtime.

Jet Aviation Basel

Jet Aviation will install Honeywell’s Ovation Select cabin management system in a BBJ currently undergoing completion at the center’s Basel facilities.

The system provides total command of the cabin environment through icon-based touchscreen passenger interface controls; either a drain-rail-mounted personal control unit or wireless hand-held device.

OnAir Keeps Comlux Passengers Connected

Passengers travelling in Comlux The Aviation Group’s new executive Airbus A319s will be able to remain in touch during flights using their personal cellphones, thanks to OnAir’s in-flight connectivity service. With the service, sending and receiving voice calls and text messages, emails and mobile data transfer are possible.

The A319 is the second Comlux aircraft to be equipped with the OnAir service and will go into service in January 2012. The first Comlux airplane to be equipped, an Airbus A320 Prestige, entered service in May this year.

328DBJ Gets Rockwell Collins Venue

Rockwell Collins announced in May the successful aftermarket installation of its Venue CMS on two Dornier 328DBJ executive jets that will fly for charter operator Skybird.

The installation, by independent completion

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TrueNorth is also gaining entrance into the helicopter industry with FAA approval of its Simplon OpenCabin telecom system in the AgustaWestland AW139. The system incorporates such capabilities as Iridium Satcom voice, BlackBerry and PDA data-over-Wi-Fi and cabin/cockpit intercom via True North’s network audio interface unit. The first helicopter installation was by Air Concepts International of Teterboro, N.J.

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The number of private jet interior designers is growing and bringing a fresh perspective to business jet cabins, such as this French “Art de Vivre” creation for the dining area.
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service, said Heck, and Cessna recognizes the importance of customers bringing those airplanes back to Cessna for refurbishment work.

He also took note of the growing number of owners outside the U.S. who bought an airplane in the U.S. and are having it refurbished in the U.S. “There aren’t a lot of facilities outside the U.S. with our experience and expertise,” explained Heck. And, he added, with the continued weak dollar compared with other currencies and that isn’t going to change anytime soon.

Kirk Rowe, president of Innotech Aviation in Montreal, is also seeing growth in green completion work from outside the U.S. “A lot of our business is from outside the U.S.–Europe, the Middle East and Russia–and particularly for Bombardier’s Global Express XRS.”

Innotech Aviation has long been a preferred outfitter of certain of Bombardier’s Challengers and Globals. “We’re now doing five aircraft a year for [Bombardier] one more than in past years,” said Rowe.

Business is brisk enough that Innotech is now building a 26,000-sq-ft hangar that will be capable of accommodating two business jets the size of Bombardier’s recently launched Global 7000.

Growth at Innotech, he said, has been steady year over year. He added, “If the quotes we’re doing turn into contracts, we’ll be pretty happy.”

Denton, Texas-based Jet Works is looking forward to a sustained recovery, according to Marc Johnson, director of sales for VIP aircraft. “We have an MD-87 in the works and a BBJ arriving in July,” he said. “Things are definitely looking up.”

Johnson pointed out that U.S.-based completion and refurbishment centers are more aggressively pursuing clients in the European market, and Associated Air Center, Duncan Aviation, Elliott Aviation, Gore Design Completions, JetCorp (represented by Flying Colours) and Jet Works–just to name a sampling–were all well represented and exhibiting at Ebace.

Like King’s, Jet Works’ exterior paint is one of the busier shops. “Last month was the first time we’ve had an empty paint slot in a long time,” said Johnson.

“I was at Ebace last year and it was a positive show,” said Robinson Aircraft Interiors v-p of sales and marketing Shadd McKinney. “This year was even better.

“Our pipeline is absolutely packed full,” he said of the Fort Worth, Texas-based interior components vendor. Fortunately, he added, “We took advantage of the hull during the recession to build a new 78,000-square-foot facility and we’re in a position to handle everything from cabinetry to upholstery to electrical buildup for customers from anywhere in the world.”

McKinney is at least as optimistic regarding an industry recovery as representatives of any of the other completion centers and vendors interviewed for this story. Maybe more so. “In 2010, the industry was stabilizing. 2011 is looking fantastic and 2012 is going to be even stronger,” he declared.

“Last year was the low point, and this industry is now at the beginning of a seven- or eight-year upward.”

A Hawk 800 interior by Elliott Aviation is highlighted by a two-tone veneer table with accent trim plating.

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and refurbishment specialist 328 Support Services of Oberpfaffenhofen, Germany, makes the 328DBJ (Dornier Business Jet) the first European-manufactured aircraft to fly with Venue, according to Rockwell Collins. Dave Austin, Rockwell Collins’s v-p and general manager of cabin systems, emphasized Venue’s “flexible design,” which allowed installation despite a short lead time. “No other HD cabin management system spans such a wide range of aircraft,” he added, “from a forward-fit position on the King Air 350 to airliner conversions for executive use.”

Avidor 300 Gains Traction

Airceil’s Avidor 300, powered by Thrane & Thrane, has been selected for 12 factory airframe programs, including those at Bombardier, Cessna, Hawker Beechcraft and Gulfstream. Avidor 300 provides global data connectivity for e-mail and light Internet service at speeds up to 332 kbps.

Avidor 300 allows crew and passengers to send and receive e-mail with attachments, surf the Web and access a corporate VPN, as well as use their personal Wi-Fi-enabled laptops, tablets, electronic flight bags and smartphones. They can also place and receive voice calls using integrated cabin handsets.

After-market certifications for the Aviator series have recently been granted for the King Air 200, Citation CJ1 and Bombardier Challengers. Addition certification programs are under way for the Falcon 2000EX, Falcon 2000LX, Embracer Legacy, Beechcraft King Air 350, Cessna Citation XLS, Gulfstream IV and DC-8.

Thrane & Thrane

Avidor 200 Finding Favor

A King Air 200, fitted with Avidor 200 powered by Thrane & Thrane, was on display at the Ebace convention in May.

The system delivers Internet and e-mail to WiFi-enabled smartphones, tablets and laptops at data transfer speeds up to 158 kbps—not a particularly high transfer rate, but reasonable in these economic times at a cost of approximately $15,000.

The package includes a short-throw antenna and larger VHIF unit also mounted atop the fuselage. According to Andy Beers, Thrane & Thrane’s director of aero sales in North America, some 100 units have been shipped to date. It has been certified in the King Air 200, Cessna Citation models 500 through 560, and the Citation CJ1. Hawker 800 and 800XP retrofits are also being considered.

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Systems’ Select cabin management system. The system is going into a Falcon 50 as part of a cabin refurbishment project and includes several of Flight Display’s iPad arm mounts, a Blu-ray DVD player and two 15-inch LCD bulkhead-mounted monitors.

Passenger control units are installed at every seat to offer passengers full access to the audio/video options.

Somewhat out of the ordinary, according to Flight Display, it is considering production of a 3-D system that would facilitate an air-to-air, military aircraft refueling simulation.

What appears to be a mailing tube lined in aluminum foil is actually the interior of an MD-87 lined with a thermal/sonic barrier. Technicians at Jet Works Air Center are installing wiring before fitment of overhead and sidewall panels, flooring and cabinetry.

Side-facing divans and warm veneers at the bar area create a comfortable atmosphere in this Boeing Business Jet outfitted by Pats Aircraft. Pats also provides extended-range auxiliary fuel systems for the BBJ.

Ruag Geneva is performing the first European installation of Flight Display CMS. Ruag is now building a 26,000-sq-ft hangar that will be capable of accommodating two business jets the size of Bombardier’s recently launched Global 7000.

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Startups signal growing refurbishment demand

If start-ups are indicators of a healthy completion and refurbishment industry, there is cause for optimism in an industry that has been hard hit over the last several years. Recent months saw the creation of new centers, design, vendors, and consultancies as well as expansion by existing MRO facilities to include cabin outfitting.

Aero Comfort, a completion and refurbishment specialist in San Antonio, has opened a 10,000-sq-ft hangar adjacent to San Antonio International Airport. The new facility supports cabin completion and refurbishment. Aero Comfort also serves as an outsource vendor for a variety of high-end cabinetry, upholstery, carpeting kits and panel upholstery for airplanes and helicopters.

Virginia-based BaySys Technologies’ MRO and completion and refurbishment facility is moving ahead with plans for an executive cabin completion and refurbishment center in Casablanca, Morocco. The agreement with Royal Air Maroc and “a strategic regional investor” was signed in the fall 2010.

The new center, said BaySys founder and CEO Steve Walton, “will provide a much-needed capability to the Gulf and Middle East regions, as well as serve the needs of the European client base.”

Inairvation is the recent off-spring of a partnership of four completion and refurbishment industry companies with the goal of designing the next-generation environments for top-level business jets.

The alliance includes the Innovation Business Unit of Lufthansa Technik of Hamburg, Germany; List components and furniture of Edlitz-Thomasberg, Austria; Design Q of London; and Schott lighting and imaging of Mainz, Germany. The parties will act under the common Inairvation brand to “share their knowledge and assist each other in gaining access to new markets.”

“We believe that the Inairvation alliance will revolutionize the way in which cabin systems are integrated into the interior,” said Andrew Muirhead, director of the Innovation Business Unit.

JCB Aero has moved into its new cabin completion and refurbishment center in southwest France. The 53,800-sq-ft hangar, representing a $3.91 million investment, is the first step in establishing a presence in the cabin outfitting industry. The company has plans for a second hangar of the same size, where it will build its own cabin components, primarily cabinetry and upholstery. JCB Aero is also providing interior components as an outside vendor.

In December, JetTech Aerospace completed acquisition of Cascade Aerospace’s Spokane, Wash., facilities and has been approved by Boeing as a completion center for its BBJ line. JetTech was founded by former Cascade executive Bret Burnside for the purpose of acquisition and now boasts a 61,000-sq-ft facility at Spokane International Airport. The hangar is large enough to accommodate two ACJs or two BBJs simultaneously.

The first BBJ rolled into the center in December 2010 and the outfitted airplane is scheduled for delivery in November.

M&D Aviation has teamed with Avocet Aviation to create a new completion and refurbishment center in Sanford, Fla., with a 56,000-sq-ft hangar.

M&D Aviation has teamed with Avocet Aviation to create a new completion and refurbishment center in Sanford, Fla., with a 56,000-sq-ft hangar.

M&R Associates Design offers this Airbus A350 high-tech cabin design proposal that includes two large “floating” OLED screens. One of the main concerns in the design “is to avoid the feeling of apprehension and sense of restricted space.”

Duncan Earns Service Mark for iCabin Application

Duncan Aviation has received Service Mark approval by the United States Patent and Trademark office for its iCabin, an integrated iPad application for wireless control of cabin systems in a Falcon 900 using an Aircraft CTR Wi-Fi source and an interface unit to communicate instructions to Honeywell’s MH CMS.

According to Duncan, the customized iPad cabin control interface does not affect any existing functionality or tie up system resources. The Lincoln, Neb.-based MRO completion and refurbishment specialist says it is “the first of many iCabin systems that Duncan plans to deliver over the next several months.”
Lufthansa Offers a Good Night’s Sleep

Lufthansa Technik’s VIP and Executive Jet Solutions Division is now offering what it claims is a new standard in sleep comfort in the form of its Flexidreamer mattress for executive aircraft. The claim is based on Lufthansa Technik proprietary and patented development and “not only sets new standards in comfort but also satisfies all aviation authority requirements.”

The mattress features a core of foam material with a newly developed fabric covering. The design, says the Hamburg, Germany-based completion and refurbishment and MRO specialist, allows adjustment in firmness to suit individual preferences. It also comes in different standard sizes and can be customized to nearly any contours, permitting designers considerable flexibility.

If required, appropriate notches and strap slots can be incorporated in the mattress to accommodate safety belts.

Goodrich Ramps Up for Platinum HD CMS

Goodrich, which completed its purchase of a majority of DeCrane Aerospace assets last year, has introduced its Platinum HD cabin management system.

The system, which featured two Blu-ray players in demonstrations at the Ebace show, offers 1080p resolution and comes with monitors ranging in size from 12 to 42 inches. The first customer Boeing Business Jet to be equipped with Platinum HD is to be delivered in the third quarter, according to Mike Hammers, head of Goodrich Cabin Electronic Systems business development.

Aircell Picked for Citation Line

Cessna Aircraft has picked Aircell to provide air/ground connectivity for its three larger aircraft—the Citation XLS+, Citation Sovereign and Citation Ten.

Hardware includes the Aviator 300 satellite communications terminal developed by Denmark’s Thrane & Thrane and Aircell’s own Axcess cabin communications system. The Aviator 300 will support global voice and data at up to 332 kbps.

It will permit passengers and crew to use Wi-Fi-enabled smartphones, tablets, and electronic flight bags to send and receive e-mail with attachments, surf the Net and more. It will also allow them to place and receive voice calls using the Axcess cabin handsets.

OHS Aviation Showroom and Cabin Configurator

OHS Aviation Services, a Berlin-based specialist in cabin interior refurbishment and detailing, has added a new showroom to its in-house upholstery and cabinetry workshops and two paint facilities.

“The showroom is at the core of our new company premise...where customers are given in-depth advice about new options in the area of interior design,” said managing director Ornulf Hilarius. A “cabin configurator” adds virtual reality to the process.

The investment of more than €1 million, explained Hilarius, allows OHS to respond more quickly to increasing demand, and to occupy a full-service provider niche, “from polishing scratches to leather repairs for single items right through to complete refurbishments.”

Townsend Leather Group of Johnstown, N.Y., recently appointed OHS a “preferred provider.” With that, OHS is expanding its range of leather goods and leather care products and services.

Fly Comlux Adds A320 To Charter Fleet

Just two years out of the box, Comlux America has delivered its first executive completion of an Airbus A320 Prestige. The twinjet was designed by Comlux Creatives and has joined the charter fleet of Zurich-based Fly Comlux.

The main cabin features a lounge with L-shaped divan, two club seats and a dining table for six guests. The center cabin section contains a private compartment that doubles as a lounge by day and a bedroom by night. Also part of the suite is a dedicated lavatory with shower.

The 19-passenger airplane was designed specifically for use in the Middle East market, with separate middle and economy class seating.

Among cabin amenities are so-called “mood lighting,” high-speed Internet access, iPod and iPhone docks, touch-screen controls and a GSM in-flight cellphone communication system. Comlux America and Fly Comlux are divisions of Comlux The Aviation Group of Zurich.

Jet Falcon Cabin Refurb Is In Fashion

A new Jet Falcon cabin interior refurbishment program for the Falcon 2000 is not only fashion forward, but also timely in terms of market demand.

In fact, Jet Aviation in Basel has already outfitted more than 120 Falcon 2000s in executive fashion. And as those and hundreds of other Falcon 2000s come due for inspections and upgrades, Jet Aviation expects to see customers planning a cabin refurbishment during that downtime.

The Jet Falcon refurbishment program was introduced in late 2010, and at the Ebace show in Geneva in May, Jet Aviation was showing a cabin mockup to promote the idea.

The program offers three distinct cabin interior upgrade options—Classic, Style and Fashion—all of which are designed to ensure cost-effective cabin refurbishment, while reflecting customer style preferences and minimizing down time.

Based on a customer request, Jet Aviation has also introduced an extension for the right-hand table on the Falcon 7X, “to make it more conducive to working and dining.”

Jet Aviation’s “Style” is one of three distinctive interiors as part of its Jet Falcon cabin refurbishment program for the Falcon 2000.

The extension fits over the existing table and reduces the space between the number-three seat and the table. The extension mounts securely and can be finished to match the existing table. It is also hinged to allow passengers to get up and into the aisle without first removing the extension. The underside of the table is padded to prevent damage to the original table surface.

Terofora Features Something Stone Cold

As growing numbers of business jets include refrigerator/freezers as part of galley equipment, new products are introduced to enhance the dining experience.

A couple of years ago, Connecticut-based design “incubator” Terofora, with home stylist Tara Riceberg of California-based Tweak, introduced the whiskey stone, a means of keeping expensive, aged spirits chilled but not allowing them to become diluted. Soapstone is non-porous, notes the company, and will not trap flavor or aroma from one round to the next. The frozen soapstone blocks do not melt and are more efficient chillers than ice.

Now the company is introducing the Ekke Shot Glass, which also takes advantage of soapstone’s inherent ability to retain cold. Stored in a freezer, or simply prepped there for a few hours before use, they are perfect for preserving frozen vodka or, when warmed first, for keeping sake at the proper temperature.

Each glass holds two ounces (a pony shot) and is hand-polished by Amit Stoneworks in India. A gift-boxed set of four “glasses” sells retail for $40. A gift box of 9 Whiskey Stones retails for $20.

StandardAero Installs Pro Line 4-to-Pro Line 21

StandardAero Business Aviation announced at the Aircraft Interiors Expo in Hamburg, Germany, it has completed the first Rockwell Collins Pro Line 4-to-Pro Line 21 cockpit upgrade on a Falcon 50EX.

According to the Tempe, Ariz., maintenance, repair and overhaul center, it is authorized to perform the work at any of its four MRO facilities—Springfield, Ill.; Augusta, Ga.; Las Angeles and Houston. Pro Line 21 features four configurable 8- by 10-inch LCDs that display Rockwell Collins’s integrated flight information system (IFIS). With IFIS, pilots will have access to high-resolution electronic charts, XM graphical weather, including lightning data, satellite images and winds aloft. Also part of the retrofit is Rockwell Collins’s flight management system with wide area augmentation, as well as GPS localizer performance with vertical guidance approaches.

PPG ‘Green’ Paint Promises Savings

PPG Industries’ aerospace business has introduced a chromate-free coating that, according to the Pittsburgh-based coatings specialist, “reduces environmental impact, lowers aircraft weight and provides a smooth, glossy and highly durable finish.”

Regional operator Jazz Aviation in Mississauga, Ontario, was the first to take advantage of the green coatings technology, according to Ron Nakamura, PPG general manager and business manager for aerospace in Canada. The paint was applied by Springer Aerospace of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario.

On the Jazz Aviation Dash-8 twin turboprops, Nakamura said the weight savings was 30 pounds, and he also noted that the chromate-free pre-treatment and primer formulations require no special handling or waste disposal.

Jet Aviation Ramping Up To Meet Demand

Jet Aviation has signed another BBJ2 cabin completion contract with an unidentified customer, even as the Basel,
Switzerland-based center gears up to meet growing demand for single-aisle and twin-aisle airliner reconfigurations.

Jet Aviation has completed more than 30 such interior outfitting projects over the past 15 years and this year expects to deliver several executive aircraft, including a Boeing 747-300, a Boeing 757-200, two Airbus A340s and an Airbus A319.

"Interest in customized completions of both widebody and narrowbody aircraft continues to be high," said Eugen Hartl, v-p of sales, market development and customer services for Jet Aviation’s completions business unit.

Flying Colours Foresees More Business

Canadian independent completion and refurbishment specialist Flying Colours of Peterborough, Ontario, is anticipating a growth in business from outside the traditional North American market. The company was at Ebace to promote its MRO, completion and refurbishment work, but in particular the outfitting of green Challenger 850 large-cabin aircraft under contract with manufacturer Bombardier as well as with end-users. Flying Colours’ most recent delivery was a completed Challenger 850 to Hong Kong aviation services provider Metrojet on behalf of a private owner.

Ateliers Pinton Brings Weaving To Bizav

Les Ateliers Pinton of Felletin, France, is bringing more than 100 years of the Pinton art of weaving carpet and tapestries to business aviation. The firm was at the Aircraft Interiors Expo in Hamburg with samples of its work, including examples by renowned designer Ulrika Liljedahl, who draws inspiration from the plants and minerals. Since 2008 Liljedahl has created a unique collection of carpet designs, mixing modern materials and yarns such as rubber, metal threads and vinyl with silk and wool blends.

Hybrid Pro Cleans Up Business Aviation

Brush and Clean, a Fort Lauderdale manufacturer of commercial carpet and upholstery dry cleaning systems, has announced Hybrid Pro, a carpet and hard-floor cleaner designed for aviation. It comes in two models, the Hybrid Pro 25 and 45, both designed around counter-rotating brushes to scrub and lift dirt, grime and cleaning compound “to instantly produce dry, clean surfaces.”

According to Brush and Clean, the cleaner works on carpet and equally well on PVC, tile, grout, natural stone, rubberized and non-slip safety floors. The cleaning speed is 6,000 sq ft per hour on carpet and 9,000 sq ft per hour on hard floors.

Brush and Clean says the dry-cleaning compound consists of renewable, natural materials that are pH-neutral, non-toxic, biodegradable and free of phosphates.

New Versa-Pure QC Filter Is ‘a Breakthrough’

The new Versa-Pure QC filter is “an important breakthrough,” claims Versa-Pure founder and president Richard Williams. Not only does it meet all EPA standards, said Williams, but it also offers a 50-percent weight saving and as much as 60 percent less in labor costs for canister replacement.

The new composite canisters, which come in two sizes, include an automatic shut-off to the water supply when they are being removed and allow inlet flow when installed. If necessary, said Williams, canisters can be changed one-handed at arm’s length.

Sanitary bypass connectors are supplied for periodic distribution system sanitation and for sanitary protection when canisters are not installed for any period of time.

Associated Delivers 21st BBJ Completion

Associated Air Center of Dallas, a Boeing Business Jet-approved center since 1998, delivered its 21st BBJ completion earlier this year. Associated’s organization designation authorization (ODA) was responsible for the supplemental type certificate.

The installation included multi-channel Aero H+ satcom. The thermal/acoustic package from Aercon Engineering of Van Nuys, Calif., reduced average cabin noise to 52 dB (SIL). Also installed at Associated was a cabin humidification system from Dynamo Aviation of North Hills, California.

The new BBJ, according to Associated, is the first Boeing Business Jet to be based in the Philippines.

CTT Systems Wins Contracts for Cair System

In March, CTT Systems of Nykoping, Sweden, received an order for its CTT Cair cabin humidification system to be installed in a Boeing 777 executive aircraft for an unidentified client.

Less than a month later, CTT picked up another order for the same system to go into an Airbus A319 being outfitted by Comlux America in Indianapolis. The Cair system was installed earlier in an executive Airbus A320 outfitting by Comlux America and now in service with the Comlux Aviation charter service based in Zurich, Switzerland.

CTT also has an order for its Cair system for installation in a Boeing 747-8i in executive configuration.

Greenpoint’s Aeroloft Passes Certification Test

Aeroloft, a private rest area above the main deck of the new executive Boeing 747-8i, recently passed structural strength and durability testing, according to designer Greenpoint Technologies.

The latest certification test established “that the robust design, engineering and manufacturing accommodates the load borne during flight.” The Kirkland, Wash.-based company’s Greenpoint Products and Services division expects to receive EASA certification in time to begin deliveries in the fourth quarter, according to v-p of engineering Bruce Kay.

As with other independent completion and refurbishment centers, Greenpoint is ramping up its airliner reconfiguration business. The company recently welcomed its 18th Boeing Business Jet, a BBJ3, following modification work by Aviation Technical Services in Everett, Wash.

Lufthansa Technik Gets Contract for China BBJ

Independent completion and refurbishment specialist Lufthansa Technik will be providing cabin outfitting on a new Boeing Business Jet destined for corporate service with the new Beijing Airlines, a subsidiary of Air China.

The center’s Hamburg facility will be the second stop in the BBJ’s journey to China. The first stop is Pats Aircraft Systems in Georgetown, Del., where an auxiliary fuel system is to be installed to increase the range of the executive twinjet.

According to Walter Heerdt, Lufthansa senior v-p of marketing and sales, 2011 has been a busy year for the cabin outfitter, which has already delivered three Boeing 737s. As of mid-May, the hangs held an Airbus A340, an Airbus Corporate Jetliner and a BBJ2.

The BBJ2 is for Freestream Aircraft and the project is expected to start late next year. The interior is being designed by MW Aerospace’s Marc Newson’s London-based Aviation Design Studio. Lufthansa has also recently signed a new contract to outfit an A319 for an Asian customer. The aircraft is expected to arrive in Hamburg early next year.

Lufthansa delivered the last of two A340s outfitted for the
German government earlier this year and has some Bombardier Global 5000s remaining to be finished on that particular contract. This year, Lufthansa also expects to take in an A318 Prestige for completion.

**Falcon Teams With DesignworksUSA**

Dassault’s new Falcon 2000S begins with the basic Falcon 2000 platform, but that’s pretty much where the resemblance ends, from high-Mach blended winglets to the next-generation Pratt & Whitney Canada PW308C engines to the EASY II cockpit redesign. But for the passengers, it is the cabin that will catch the eye.

The interior was designed in collaboration with BMW Group Designworks USA, which was also responsible for the award-winning interior option for the Falcon 7X.

Standard in the cabin is Rockwell Collins’s Venue CMS, placing more intuitive controls in the hands of passengers. The entertainment system will be HD with wide-screen monitors as large as 19 inches. A special app will allow passengers to control all cabin functions via an iPod Touch or iPhone.

**Vision Systems Means Solar Protection**

Vision Systems of Brignais, France, has introduced Noctis, what the aircraft cabin interior specialist describes as innovative shading that allows passengers to “instantly and uniformly control at any level, light and heat intensity entering the cabin.”

Also recently developed is the company’s Comfort Shade Dual featuring two electrical shades in a single system “for optimized solar protection.” The first rolled shade is designed for ultraviolet limitation and the second for blackout. It can be operated directly from the passenger seat or by the cabin management system controls.

An additional feature is an anti-jamming mechanism with manual unlocking device in case of emergency. The non-pleated shades can be customized through a broad choice of colors.

**ACJC Offers HD, Multimedia Interface**

Airbus Corporate Jet Centre (ACJC), a Toulouse-based specialist in ACJ business jet cabin completion, claims to be the first to offer its customers full HD quality on up to four screens in each private area simultaneously, either from a local HD source, such as a Blu-ray player, or from an external device with an HDMI plug, such as a video game console or laptop. The HDMI format system developed by ACJC with its partners allows distribution of video signals from four internal or external sources to four outputs, with no degradation.

ACJC recently delivered its first executive cabin completion for Chinese customer Deer Jet, the largest private jet charter provider in the People’s Republic of China.

The twinjet ACJ cabin was designed and outfitted by ACJC and features a forward private office with en suite lavatory and shower. The private office can be configured as a bedroom with deployment of a foldout sofa. The suite includes a 43-inch monitor.

The aft cabin contains 20 full-flat “cocoon” seats, all of which are electrically actuated and all of which are equipped with individual monitors.

--K.J.H.
Lufthansa Technik makes Nice with HD

Having Lufthansa Technik show up at an aviation trade show is a bit like having Santa Claus show up at the company party with a bag of toys, and this year’s Ebace was no exception.

It began in 2009 with the opening of the Hamburg, Germany company’s new Innovations Business Unit where, according to LHT chairman August Henning-sen, “Concepts for future standards in aircraft cabins will be created.” In just the last few months, there has been an ergometer (stationary bicycle) approved by the EASA, a new and more comfortable executive aircraft mattress and a much-improved emergency cabin strip lighting system.

Nice. And at this year’s Ebace Lufthansa Technik showed off its networked, integrated cabin equipment system, also known as “Nice.” Only this year’s iteration is a major upgrade dubbed “Nice HD.” It offers a significant weight saving, more powerful hardware and, according to Innovations Business Unit director Andrew Muirhead, “the number of new features it will support is a quantum leap over the old system.”

Advanced Cabin Systems

The Nice HD, installed in a Challenger 300, would weigh about 100 pounds less than the original Nice, said Muirhead. The weight loss is the result of a lighter housing, smaller electronics due to progress in chip technology and more integration of LRU (line replaceable unit) features. In addition, the Nice HD system wiring saves another 25 percent in weight.

But don’t expect LHT to reveal all its “Nice” secrets—at least not until the NBAA Convention this fall. “We’re letting the cat out of the bag slowly,” said Muirhead.

The first Nice HD upgrade is scheduled for aircraft installation in the first quarter of next year.

Since more passengers are boarding business jet cabins with their own entertainment, LHT has taken notice and at Ebace introduced its own iPhone and iPad app, which will allow the passenger to control all cabin functions through those personal devices.

Remote maintenance is also part of Nice HD and available as an upgrade to Nice systems already in service. At its heart is a small box with a 3G cellphone connection to LHT maintenance anywhere in the world whenever the aircraft is on the ground, “as long as there is an available cell network.”

“In some cases,” said Muirhead, “the system may recognize an issue and contact maintenance” before the operator even recognizes a problem.

So what is this nifty remote maintenance system called? “Nice Mate,” of course. The first package was installed in late April.

The Innovations Business Unit may not be Santa’s workshop, and Muirhead, lacking beard and belly, might bear only the most faint resemblance to Santa Claus. But he does laugh when he acknowledges that in addition to the “toys” shown at Ebace, there are more still in the bag, “to keep the competition busy.”

–K.J.H.
Pats emerging on its own

Pats Aircraft Systems, best known for its auxiliary fuel systems, is emerging from a major restructuring phase to focus on four core competencies as a stand-alone company.

Georgetown, Del.-based Pats has long been under the DeCrane Aerospace umbrella but found itself an only child when DeCrane sold most of its other assets to aerospace systems and services provider Goodrich last October.

Since then, under the leadership of new CEO John Martin and with the financial backing of Wayzata Investment Partners, Pats has devoted its resources to its core competencies: auxiliary fuel systems; maintenance, repair and overhaul; green aircraft completion; and manufactured products (with the exception of auxiliary fuel systems).

Auxiliary fuel systems have long been a major part of the Pats portfolio, and the company has provided range-extending auxiliary fuel packages on more than 130 Boeing Business Jets to date.

The company holds STCs for auxiliary fuel systems under contract with the Seattle-based manufacturer and has a 100-percent on-time delivery record, according to Martin.

Maintenance and modification continues to be another major core competency, and the company’s Sussex County Airport facility has four hangars capable of housing seven BBJs simultaneously.

Customer deliveries of BBJs began in 1999, and Pats anticipates a growing business as the first executive twinjets come due for the 12-year maintenance check.

“At that point, the interiors of a lot of those airplanes will be showing their age, and we expect to be doing a lot of minor and major cabin refurbishment during the 12-year check downtime,” said Hill. He noted that Pats already has one BBJ in for the 12-year check. Another is in the shop for a sale-driven cabin and cockpit avionics upgrade.

Pats is a Boeing-approved center for green aircraft cabin completion, a job that year and roll out next spring.

Hill said Pats’s green completion strategy is not based on volume, and the shop expects to have no more than two projects overlapping at any one time. “This way, our customers know that we are focused on their airplane,” he explained. “We think it’s the best plan for the customer and best plan for Pats.”

In addition to the restructuring, Pats also expects to see a major rebranding and a new logo, though not before this fall’s NBAA Convention in Las Vegas. Part of that restructuring will also see a dissolution of the DeCrane association.

GAL Aviation begins operations

GAL Aviation began formal operations in April, focusing on two niche markets in the executive industry with two divisions: GAL Interiors and GAL Technical.

Formerly CAF Aviation Consultants and now part of the GAL Group of Ottawa, the new GAL Aviation is based in Montreal, and some 60 skilled craftsmen will occupy its 40,000-sq-ft facilities in St.-Joseph de Beauce, near Quebec City. “With key financing already in place, we feel the opportunity is there to become an important player in this niche market,” said GAL Aviation president Guy Lapierre, referring to the cabin completion and refurbishment requirements for single- and twin-aisle airliners reconfigured for executive use.

Meanwhile, marketing is already ramping up on an international scale, including discussions with possible partners in the Middle East. The company is also transferring STC approvals from CAF to GAL and “integrating the best of the past to create a new future,” said v-p of sales and business aviation Marc St. Hilaire.

St. Hilaire emphasized the experience and resources brought from CAF, pointing out, “We’re not new. We’re better.” –K.J.H.