

Eyes on Dubai

Alexander Preston previews the latest instalment in *Inflight's* event series.

Inflight Middle East is returning to Dubai on 8–9 February. Held at the Dubai World Trade Centre, the *Inflight* Pavilion, Workshop and Awards continues our relationship with Aircraft Interiors Middle East (AIME), and once again brings together the region's in-flight entertainment and connectivity (IFEC) community to discuss the current and future issues, challenges and innovations transforming the aviation industry's investment in the passenger experience, with a distinct focus on the Middle East.

Once again, the *Inflight* Pavilion is an opportunity for leading IFEC manufacturers and suppliers to highlight their latest product developments.

As Gogo – who will be showcasing 2Ku, comprising its entertainment products, Gogo Vision and Gogo TV, and discussing its capabilities in Connected Aircraft Services – explains, exhibiting in the Pavilion is “a key opportunity to get our products and services in front of airlines in the region and discuss the benefits that our world-leading connectivity technology, 2Ku, can bring for their airline”.

Gogo adds, “The Middle East region is a huge part of our growth plan.”

Another company that sees opportunity in the region is digEcor. According Paul Thorpe, VP global sales: “This is a market where we believe we can truly narrow the passenger experience gap between the large and the smaller airlines through a coherent portfolio of affordable solutions. Having established some good relationships over the past three years, we are now ready to expand into this exciting market.”

This will be the third year that the company has exhibited at the *Inflight* Pavilion. “digEcor's focus is on cabin technologies and targeting them towards the improvement of in-flight passenger experience, so this is an excellent forum for us to communicate those advances and our approach to market,” Thorpe says.

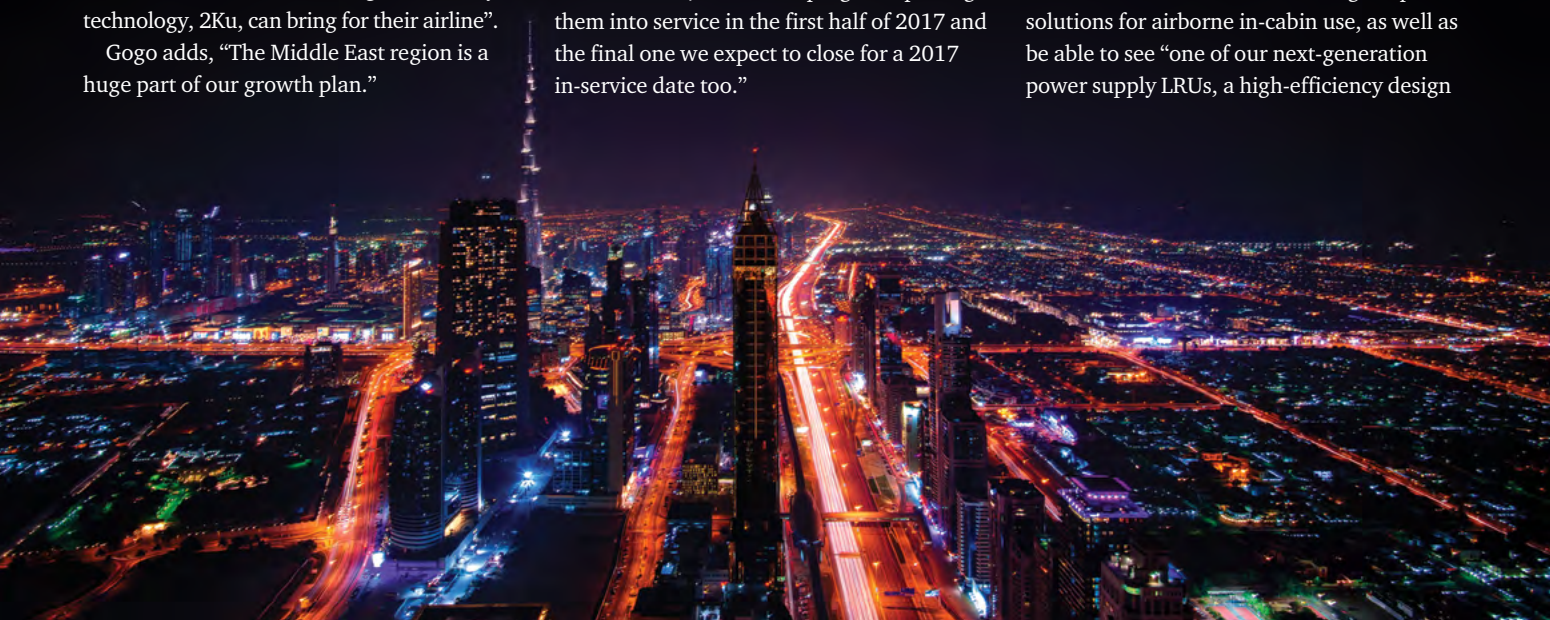
Visitors to digEcor's booth will be able to see its recently selected, fully integrated in-seat 2.1A USB power solution, which is light, economic and does not encroach on passenger foot space, says Thorpe, adding: “Five of our nine product lines are already in airline service, three have programs putting them into service in the first half of 2017 and the final one we expect to close for a 2017 in-service date too.”

Another returning exhibitor this year is Zodiac Inflight Innovations, who values “the unique opportunity to establish and continue relationships with the region's growing airlines”.

Visitors at the booth will experience both its award-winning RAVE Centric system as well as the successful RAVE Wireless system. “On display will be some of our latest innovations. We are constantly working to bring a home-like experience to the aeroplane and with our RAVE product line we partner with airlines to do just that.”

First-time exhibitor Pascall, a subsidiary of Data Device Corporation, will showcase its airborne power capabilities. Pascall is a long-established supplier of power solutions for in-flight entertainment (IFE), connectivity, personal electronic device (PED) power and seat actuation systems, and its line-replaceable units (LRUs) and embedded power units are used by many in-cabin system integrators.

As Pascall's Phil Brace explains, visitors to the booth will be able to see a range of power solutions for airborne in-cabin use, as well as be able to see “one of our next-generation power supply LRUs, a high-efficiency design



SITAONAIR was one of the companies recognised in the 2016 *Inflight Awards*.



in a vent-free housing, ideal for supporting PED power (high-power USB) applications”.

The Middle East is a leading region in passenger growth, with a number of premium operators and low-cost carriers. Pascall power solutions have been used in both line-fit and retro-fit systems for these carriers. “We are very pleased to be able to exhibit at the 2017 *Inflight Pavilion* alongside the integrators who specify and use our products,” says Brace, adding, “We look forward to seeing all of our customers again and continuing to promote our ‘reliable airborne power’ capabilities.”

Another new exhibitor being welcomed to the Pavilion is Latecoere. As Patrick Fretelliere, head of sales, comments, “We consider that airborne video technologies are ... key elements for passengers’ experience and entertainment.

“Not only they are useful for airlines’ operations and safety, there are many areas for added value to be demonstrated.

“The *Inflight Pavilion* is the ideal location to speak about innovation, new concepts.

“I did attend this show over the past several years and I have been always impressed by its growing popularity and the variety of visitors.”

For Latecoere, the objective of their presence is not necessarily to physically showcase a lot of equipment and materials. “We are mainly trying to make sure that

visitors understand who we are and our expertise capability,” says Fretelliere. “The main target for our presence is to grab the attention, enter into contact and have an open discussion on airlines’ problems that could be minimised through our systems.”

The *Inflight* team is looking forward to welcoming a number of senior professionals from across major carriers, IFEC manufacturers and suppliers to the two-day Workshop, where the latest product innovations and developments in business strategy will be addressed.



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Panellists during one of the sessions of the 2016 two-day *Inflight* Workshop.

The opening session, *The balance of power*, will look at what one of the latest developments in in-seat power, inductive charging, can learn from its consumer electronics counterparts. On hand to discuss whether this new trend is simply aesthetic, or whether traditional AC/USB outlets will eventually be phased out, will be Peter Schetschine, general manager at KID-Systeme; Ramzi Mansour, director of business development and strategies at JORAMCO; Dennis Markert, director of

business development and technical services at Astronics; digEcor's Paul Thorpe; and Phil Brace of Pascall Electronics. As Brace says of his participation, "The subject of in-seat power is very interesting. In both line-fit and retro-fit areas, a number of system types and configurations is possible. As the PED suppliers release the latest smartphones, tablets and laptops, we see changing USB standards, inductive charging possibilities and the ongoing discussions regarding the future of 110V AC provision in the cabin. As a

long-time frequent traveller, often working while flying, it is great to see in-seat power options installed across a diverse range of airlines, many of which are also equipped with high-bandwidth connectivity systems, which is another subject altogether!"

The theme of innovation continues, with the second session looking at next-generation screen technology in *4K and beyond*. The next generation of video displays will be 4K ultra-high definition, offering improvements in resolution, a wide colour gamut, high dynamic range, high frame rate, less bandwidth use and other benefits.

But how prepared is the IFE market to adopt this consumer technology and is it willing to? What are the technical challenges, and when are passengers likely to view 4K content? Joel Joslin, technical



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Qatar Airways won the 2016 Content innovation award for its Oryx One IFE system. Babar Rahman (right) collects the award from Lars Ringertz, Panasonic (left). Who will triumph this year?



and research and development manager at Stellar Entertainment, and David Withers, chief executive of digEcor, will be among those aiming to provide clarity on this emerging technology.

Commenting upon digEcor's participation in the opening panels, Thorpe says: "Emerging market trends drive new approaches to enable customer satisfaction. We look forward to sharing our views and approaches to those demands as well as hearing the views of others. In these panels the improvement of quality to the passenger and the utility of PEDs will be of most interest."

EXPERT CONVERSATIONS

In-flight safety for passengers, crew and cargo will come under the spotlight in the penultimate session of the day. Joining Peter Schetschne is Securaplane Technologies' Steffen Spell and Latecoere's Patrick Fretelliere, who comments, "Surveillance is a vast subject and is becoming a real concern for most large airlines.

"At the same time, it is impressive to see the limited maturity of current flying solutions versus airlines' expectations. So the aim would be to discuss airline perceptions and expectations of this new range of equipment for their aircraft."

Day one concludes with *Touch and go*, a discussion of the potential opportunities and challenges facing airlines as many move, or consider a move, to a cashless cabin. Zahir Khoja, division head of market development

for the Middle East and North Africa at MasterCard, and Kristian Gjerding, founder of CellPoint Mobile, will lead the discussion on contactless payments.

It's a busy start to day two, as an expert panel including Inmarsat's Ben Griffin, Intelsat's Mark Richman and SES's Gez Draycott is joined by GEE's Doug Murri, Gogo's Mihir Thakkar and flydubai's Daniel Kerrison to discuss the emerging trend of hybrid antennas. What are the implications and costs of Ka- and Ku-band services, and should airlines commit to one band of satellite communications or enjoy the flexibility of being able to switch between bands in flight?

"Any time we have a chance to have an open dialogue about connectivity products and to chat about how connectivity will benefit the aviation industry as a whole, we welcome the conversation," comments Gogo. A lively debate beckons.

Another panel set to be engaging is our interactive content focus, *Interacting up*.

Sharing their insights on innovating with interactive content for both embedded and hand-held IFE systems will be David Dicko of Skylights', (a company *Inflight* first met at last year's event, which has subsequently gone on to enjoy a spectacular 12 months), Cyril Jean of PCom, and GEE's Duncan Abell. The airline's perspective will be presented by Babar Rahman from Qatar Airways.

The final session of the event will hope to answer that perennial question, *Are we there yet?*, as the airline's response to child passengers and their families is raised. Joining Global One Media's Martin Devereux are Qatar Airways' Sonali Amarasingham and Gulf Air's Mohamad ElAassaad. Whitney Houston was right – children are the future (air passengers).

The day concludes with the much-anticipated *Inflight Awards* ceremony, recognising the achievements of airlines and suppliers in eight categories.

With so much to see and hear, this year's *Inflight Middle East Pavilion, Workshop and Awards* is once again not to be missed. ■

Inflight Middle East

Day one: 8 February 2017

11.15–12.00 **Session 1: The balance of power**

13.30–14.15 **Session 2: 4k and beyond**

14.30–15.15 **Session 3: Eye in the sky**

15.30–16.15 **Session 4: Touch and go**

Day two: 9 February 2017

11.00–11.45 **Session 5: A hybrid connection**

12.00–12.45 **Session 6: Interacting up**

13.45–14.30 **Session 7: Are we there yet?**

14.45 **Awards ceremony**

Join us for mocktails and canapés as the 2017 winners are revealed.

Awards categories

- *Inflight* airline of the year
- Innovation in commercial airline cabins
- Handheld and/or wireless IFE system
- Content innovation
- Airline IFEC provider
- Connectivity provider
- Seat-centric IFE system
- Interior retrofit project of the year

More details, including a list of last year's winners, can be found at www.inflightworkshop.com.