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ETIHAD AIRWAYS UNITES INNOVATION WITH HOLLYWOOD GLAMOUR FOR VIRTUAL REALITY MOVIE

Etihad Airways has released its highly anticipated 360-degree virtual reality film starring Academy Award winning actress Nicole Kidman. This marks the first time that a Hollywood actor has ever starred in a fully immersive virtual reality movie.

The five-minute feature, titled 'Reimagine', is a major coup for the innovative national airline of the United Arab Emirates, and immerses its viewers in a fully experiential journey following Nicole Kidman through one of its new Airbus A380s flying between New York and Abu Dhabi.

The airline has used cutting-edge technology and multidisciplinary mediums in the feature to bring to life its acclaimed guest experience and hospitality story by engaging the consumer in various sensory interactions onboard the virtual flight. Each scene in the film takes on a theme intended to stimulate the senses of light, sound, motion, and conversation.

Nicole Kidman, Academy Award winning actress and Etihad Airways' brand ambassador, said: "The film is a culmination of Etihad's vision to tell the airline's story in an extremely innovative way and a commitment to engaging with the public as has never been attempted by an airline before. It was a great challenge but one which has definitely paid off and it was great to be part of such an exciting project."

Throughout the experience, the viewer meets and engages with a number of characters including the actress herself, her film director, an opera singer and even an Emirati guest with a falcon in First Class. The journey also provides personal interactions with the Savoy-trained Butler in The Residence, the airline's luxurious private three room cabin, the inflight Chef in First Class, the Food and Beverage Manager in Business Class, and the Flying Nanny, trained by the Norland College in the United Kingdom.

Media release



Peter Baumgartner, Etihad Airways' Chief Executive Officer, said: "We want to share Etihad's story in a completely new way, using technology to make our consumers a part of the narrative and to experience an Etihad Airways A380 flight first-hand, from anywhere.

"The film demonstrates how, as an innovative brand, we continue to break down the barriers of convention and lead the way in intelligent communication and best practice not just within the aviation industry, but across the fields of marketing, communication and technology."

The adventure takes the viewer through the twin-decked aircraft and covers its luxurious interiors including Economy Class, Business Class, and First Class, before concluding with a focus on Nicole Kidman enjoying the unique features of The Residence.

Shane O'Hare, Etihad Airways' Senior Vice President Marketing, said: "In December 2014 we completely reimagined the travel experience with the launch of our new A380 fleet, setting a new standard in innovative design, service and technology. This was followed in 2015 by a tremendously successful advertising campaign starring Nicole Kidman.

"This immersive VR film is a massive step-change in the way we present the Etihad Airways brand and product to the consumer using highly innovative new mediums. Based on the success of our recent campaign with Nicole, the decision to take this partnership to the next level was an obvious one."

The film, which has taken more than six-months to produce, was filmed exclusively in Abu Dhabi, and utilised state-of-the-art VR technology in its creation. An Etihad Airways A380 was used for three days and fully customised prior to filming; overhead lockers, seats and other sections of the aircraft's interior were removed to allow for the installation of cutting-edge Red Dragon cameras, which were used to perfectly capture the actress' movement through the aircraft. Hundreds of individual lights were required to ensure smooth and uninterrupted shots.

Etihad Airways collaborated with the Barbarian Group, a subsidiary of Cheil Worldwide, and the creative digital production company MediaMonks to produce the film. The feature was directed by the renowned husband and wife directing duo Anthony Atanasio and Valerie Martinez. The film used pioneering filming techniques to ensure a seamless production with no warping or stitches, achieving unrivalled VR results.

Media release



Ola Björling, MediaMonks' Global Director of VR, said: "As the most multidisciplinary medium there is, virtual reality relies more heavily on craft and execution than anything that has gone before it. We believe the display of artistry in every facet of this production is setting a new benchmark for live-action VR."

The Virtual Reality film will be available on a dedicated website vr.etihad.com from 09.00 (UAE time) / 07.00 (Central European time) on 27 May and will be followed by an updated version in stereoscopic sound on 17 June. To guarantee the full experience, viewers will need to download the Oculus VR app on the airline's dedicated website and view the film using a virtual reality headset, such as Oculus Rift or Google Cardboard. Viewers will also be able to watch the film as a 360 degree video on YouTube.

On 29 May, Etihad Airways will host a red carpet premiere and roundtable discussion for 'Reimagine' at its headquarters in Abu Dhabi. Tune in on Facebook Live via the Etihad Airways Facebook page at 12.00 (UAE time) / 10.00 (Central European time) to take part and pose your questions to some of the key players behind the film.

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About Etihad Aviation Group

Etihad Aviation Group (EAG) is a diversified global aviation and travel group comprising four business divisions – Etihad Airways, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates, Etihad Engineering, Hala Group and Airline Equity Partners. The group has minority investments in seven airlines: airberlin, Air Serbia, Air Seychelles, Alitalia, Jet Airways, Virgin Australia, and Swiss-based Darwin Airline, trading as Etihad Regional.

From its Abu Dhabi base, Etihad Airways flies to, or has announced plans to serve, 117 passenger and cargo destinations in the Middle East, Africa, Europe, Asia, Australia and the Americas. The airline has a fleet of 122 Airbus and Boeing aircraft, with 204 aircraft on firm order, including 71 Boeing 787s, 25 Boeing 777Xs, 62 Airbus A350s and 10 Airbus A380s. For more information, please visit: www.etihad.com