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## Wrapping the Friendly Skies

By Jeff Wooten

**R**emember the classic airline slogan: “Some people just know how to fly™?” These days, you can also say: “Some people just know how to wrap.” That should be the motto of full-service Media 1 spin-off Wrap This, Inc. ([www.wrapthisink.com](http://www.wrapthisink.com)), headquartered in Orlando, Florida, and with new locations in Melbourne and Jacksonville, Florida (and plans for additional branches in 2009.)

In fact, the company’s wrapping of a twelve-passenger Pilatus PC-12 just proves that there really is “something special in the air™.” Wrap This recently installed a second wrap on this plane—an 85 percent

full wrap actually.

Fred Hudson, owner of this multi-million dollar airplane, is a long-time client of Wrap This. The company had previously wrapped Hudson’s entire fleet of furniture delivery trucks. “We completed thirty identical twenty-six-foot-long box trucks at a pace of two per week for fifteen weeks straight,” says Wrap This President Dale Salamacha.

The combination of top-notch installation and on-time delivery led Hudson to ask the company if it’d also be interested in wrapping a personal plane he had recently acquired (the Pilatus PC-12). After some back-and-forth coaxing, Wrap This agreed to work on the project.



Wrap This did both wraps for the Pilatus PC-12. In late 2007, they performed an installation that they considered a “test flight” wrap. This one consisted of just straight colors—deep red and metallic gold 3M wrapping cast vinyl. “This was more of a partial wrap, with the graphics coming just over the sides,” explains Salamacha, chuckling that they decided to stay as far away from the area directly in front of the turbo propeller. “We also didn’t wrap far under or over the plane’s fuselage.”

The initial wrap proved a bit challenging. The plane featured some pre-existing painted blue stripes, which wreaked havoc on the red 3M vinyl. “The material wasn’t fully opaque,” says Salamacha. “You could see the stripes completely under the wrap.”

Wrap This arrived at the solution of “laminating” the red-colored vinyl directly to the 3M IJ 180C-V2 digital media, since it had a grey-backed adhesive. “While this method worked beautifully for opacity, we were concerned about the additional 2-mils of material thickness, as we wanted to keep the wrap

as thin as possible, for obvious reasons,” says Salamacha. “But on the up-side, we were now working with a product that had the ease, repositionability, and air-release of 3M 180 with Comply.”

Wrap This laid the entire roll of “laminated” red vinyl down horizontally over the plane’s surface and hand-trimmed it in the contoured shape they wanted. Next they cut the metallic gold stripes on their DuraCut sixty-inch plotter and applied it over the red base.

Once finished, they had to go back and trim out all the screw heads. The reason: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) mechanics perform annual checks, and all panels must be removable, if deemed necessary.

Satisfied with the job they’d done, Wrap This told Hudson the aircraft was ready for pick-up. By the end of the weekend, Hudson called and informed them that he’d flown to the Bahamas and that there wasn’t a single problem with the wrap. Mission accomplished!

Seven months and 150 flights later, the wrap still looked as if it had been finished yesterday. “There was no lift-

ing, peeling, or fading,” remarks Salamacha, noting that the aircraft can reach speeds up to 400 miles per hour.

At this point, Hudson requested another spectacular wrap for his plane. “He was ready to go a little crazier,” says Salamacha.

Since the aircraft frequently flew over ocean water, this past May, Wrap This Designer Jason Wissig put together “underwater”-themed artwork for the new wrap. Wissig utilized seventeen different aquatic-themed photos and successfully merged them together using Adobe Photoshop CS. (*Note:* After looking at the underwater graphics, shop members affectionately nicknamed this plane “Underwater Airlines.”)

Wrap This printed the graphics using two of its Mutoh Toucan LT inkjet printers. “The artwork was of such high quality that, from two feet away, it looked like you were completely immersed in photographic liquidity,” boasts Salamacha. “[Fred] reviewed the graphics and loved them. However he wanted us to add a custom treasure chest over the wings (since his nickname is

‘Southern Pirate’).”

While the Wrap This installers were at the SheltAir aircraft hangar at the Daytona Beach International Airport removing the previous vinyl wrap, the company’s designers were back in Orlando printing out the graphics. This time Wrap This printed vertical panels on 3M IJ 180C-V2 with 3M 8518 high-gloss over-laminate at fifty-four inches and double-laminated all the seams. “This clear gloss was as shiny as a urethane clear-coated paint and made the plane look brand new,” adds Salamacha.

The new wrap required only two installers (Pete Dow and Chris Cortes). “They stripped the first wrap, cleaned the plane, and laid the new wrap down—all inside five days,” says Salamacha.

This time, Wrap This was ready to cover more ground (or rather surface area) with the graphics wrap. They ended up reaching all the way up to within 1/2-inch of the nose (inches away from the

turbo propeller) and stretching it from the passenger windows to well under the bottom of the plane.

Once the vinyl had been laid down, something about it still nagged the Wrap This crew. “It just wasn’t quite perfect,” remembers Salamacha. “To give it the final touch, we decided to wrap all the passenger windows with 3M perforated window vinyl. This gave it an awesome, uninterrupted flow!”

The plane has since flown over fifty flights and still looks beautiful today. According to Salamacha, reaction to this plane has been *nothing* short of incredible! “We’ve had several people take photos on their cell phones of them just standing in front of this plane,” he says. “[Airplane wraps] is an amazing new field of application, and we’re sure it will gain popularity in the coming years.”

Before getting started on a project of this type, Salamacha stresses that aircraft wraps are definitely *not* for begin-

ning wrappers and must be carefully designed and applied in conjunction with FAA regulations. However the rewards for undertaking projects of this type can be expanded to elsewhere in one’s business. “Keep in mind, that once a wrap has been successfully completed on a 400-mile-per-hour aircraft, your clients can be assured that their 3M wrap, correctly installed, will never pose a problem on their Chevy work van,” explains Salamacha.

Currently Wrap This Orlando steadily produces sixty vehicle graphics projects per month, handles fleets of commercial vehicles of 600 or more, and has recently landed an account with over 1,800 vehicles spread nationwide! This past year, they also partnered with 3M to help them facilitate the logistics of its new Marine Wrap Warranty for boats. However they feel they’ve broken new ground with this aircraft wrap. For Wrap This, “there’s no better way to fly™.”

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