

## PRESS RELEASE

10 May 2010

### DARLOW SMITHSON LANDS CONCORDE COMMISSION

**Channel 4, Discovery UK and Smithsonian Channel** have commissioned ***Concorde: The Supersonic Age*** (w/t), a 1x90' film from UK-based **Darlow Smithson Productions (DSP)**.

The film will tell the definitive story of the world's first and last supersonic passenger jet, exploring the defining moments in Concorde's history and revealing the untold story behind the devastating crash of Flight AF4590 in 2000. Ten years on arguments still rage about what caused the crash that helped seal Concorde's fate, but could Concorde still be flying today? What really destroyed the most ambitious dream in aviation history?

From the moment it reached for the skies in 1969, Concorde was instantly iconic. Capable of travelling faster than a speeding bullet on the very edge of space, it flew across the Atlantic in three and half hours. Outperforming military jets, her passengers didn't have to wear oxygen masks and pressure suits but sipped champagne and nibbled canapés.

*Concorde: The Supersonic Age* will delve into the rich - and often troubled - history of the aeroplane; using a combination of archive, drama and interviews, the film will explore its revolutionary milestones, from the Anglo-French contract to build the plane and the key design challenges that were overcome by some of the brightest brains in engineering, to the failure to sell Concorde, as the world of aviation abandoned speed for the newly-released Jumbo 747.

The documentary will reveal the untold story of the circumstances that led to the crash of Flight AF4590 in 2000. It will also examine the modifications made to the aircraft following the crash, and its eventual retirement in October 2003.

Concorde had a turbulent life. She overcame political squabbling to have her scrapped and survived vigorous campaigns to have her banned for noise, pollution and her infamous sonic boom. The film captures the intense pride that this amazing aircraft generated and the deep sense of loss when she was finally withdrawn from service – never to fly again. Concorde's appeal and prestige attracted VIP's from all over the world. Phil Collins, Tony Benn, Lord Heseltine and Sir Terence Conran are just some of the contributors to relive their memories of travelling on the aircraft.

**Tom Brisley, Creative Director, DSP said:** "Concorde was a marvel of engineering – born of the space-age dream for supersonic passenger travel; it was aviation's equivalent of putting a man on the moon. This film will reveal the untold story of Concorde and capture the essence of the enduring affection that Britain has for the aircraft."

**Tanya Shaw, Channel 4 Commissioning Editor, said:**

“Concorde was the embodiment of a design dream: technologically without rival, and aesthetically more impressive than another passenger jet. But on July 25<sup>th</sup> 2000, the dream turned to a nightmare, and this film will chart how the crash sparked the beginning of the end for the supersonic dream.”

**David Royle, Executive VP, Smithsonian Networks added:** “This is one of the few cases where humankind has given up on a technological wonder and let it become defunct. Today, a Concorde sits in the Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum, like an extinct flying reptile. Darlow Smithson has brought its sound-breaking story back to supersonic life.”

*Concorde: The Supersonic Age* is a Darlow Smithson Production commissioned by Channel 4, Discovery UK and Smithsonian Channel. It will be executive produced by Julian Ware and Tom Brisley, written and directed by Christopher Spencer and produced by Charlotte Surtees and Alex Kiehl for DSP. It was commissioned by Specialist Factual Commissioner Editor Tanya Shaw for Channel 4 and David Royle and Chris Hoelzl for Smithsonian Channel. The executive producer for Smithsonian Channel is Charles Poe; Dan Korn will executive produce for Discovery UK.

It will be distributed by Endemol Worldwide Distribution.

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**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

**ABOUT DARLOW SMITHSON PRODUCTIONS:**

Darlow Smithson Productions (DSP) is one of the world’s leading independent production companies.

DSP has an unsurpassed reputation for producing high quality television programmes for UK, US and international broadcasters, and has achieved worldwide industry recognition for its ground-breaking output.

The company is proud to have received more than 40 industry awards, including recognition from BAFTA, The Peabody Awards, The Royal Television Society and the US Academy of Television, Arts and Sciences.

From its base in London, and offices in New York and Singapore, the team works across a wide range of non-fiction television – from prestigious single feature-length documentaries, to flagship series and from long-running popular formats to high end factually-based drama.

Recent high profile productions include *The Diary of Anne Frank* (BBC One/Fr2), *Thriller in Manila* (More4), *Miracle on the Hudson* (Channel 4/Discovery US), *The Beckoning Silence* (Channel 4), *Killer in a Small Town – The Ipswich Murders* (Channel 4), *Richard Hammond’s Engineering Connections* series 2 (Natgeo Int/BBC Two), *Megastructures* (Natgeo US/ Natgeo Int), *Convoy* (History Canada/Natgeo Int/Channel 4/Smithsonian Channel), *Stephen Hawking’s Universe* (Discovery Channels).

DSP has unrivalled experience in high-definition production. The company also specialises in the use of advanced computer graphics and quality dramatic re-enactment and is an acknowledged leader in theatrical documentary.

DSP is part of Endemol, a world leading content provider with a global network of 80 companies in 26 countries including the USA, the UK, Spain, Italy, France, Germany and the Netherlands, as well as



Latin America, India, South Africa and Australia. The company annually produces nearly 40,000 hours of original content across 400 broadcasters and cross media platforms.

For more information visit [www.darlowsmithson.com](http://www.darlowsmithson.com).

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**ABOUT SMITHSONIAN NETWORKS:**

Smithsonian Networks (SNI/SI Networks L.L.C.) is a joint venture between Showtime Networks Inc. and the Smithsonian Institution, formed to create channels featuring programs largely inspired by the assets of the Smithsonian Institution, the world's largest museum complex. Smithsonian Channel features award-winning original documentaries, series, and groundbreaking programs highlighting America's historical, cultural and scientific heritage. Smithsonian Channel brings the American experience home in high definition and Dolby Digital 5.1 and is currently available to customers of DirecTV, Time Warner Cable, Charter Communications, Cablevision, Verizon, AT&T, and more. Learn more at [www.smithsonianchannel.com](http://www.smithsonianchannel.com).

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