

TRAVERSING THE SKIES

BY GWENDOLINE SIM

The iconic actor shares his acting and aviation ardour with MillionaireAsia, opening up on the legacy he would like to leave behind.



Mention piercing blue eyes, cropped jet-black hair, the strong cleft chin, and smooth dancing moves in a certain movie that became an icon of the disco sensation in the 1970s, and the name John Travolta comes to mind. A popular aviation celebrity and an award-winning actor, John has had a decorated career spanning over three decades. Here in Singapore recently, he was at a press conference with Breitling to mark the launch of the limited edition Navitimer Blue Sky.

Fanning a passion for aviation since he was a child, John is an experienced pilot with over 6,000 flight hours to his credit and has 11 jet licenses. Along with his acting career, he also serves as brand ambassadors for Breitling and Bombardier, further cementing his strong ties to the aviation industry. As such, it was no surprise that he arrived in Singapore in his own plane, the Bombardier Challenger 601.

Remarking somewhat amusedly, he said, "I do live on an airport. My home

houses a Boeing 707, a Challenger jet and Bombardier jet, and frankly I can just leave the bedroom and walk into a plane and come to Singapore, which is kind of what I did. It's really my daydream as a child, just to live in a home that is on an airport. So the runway is right next to the house and it's a fantastic allusion."

The airport in question would be Greystone Airport, which is located next to Jumbolair Aviation Estates in Ocala, Florida, where Travolta and his wife, Kelly Preston, are residents. An exclusive gated community for aviation enthusiasts; it has a runway that measures 76.2 metres wider than the runways at JFK or Los Angeles International Airport.

John's childhood fascination with flying started when he used to watch airliners fly over his house, and he used to collect airline tickets and schedules. This led to him earning his pilot's license at the tender age of 16 in 1970. Then, he would put forward all his income from his pay cheques into his flying lessons. The baby of the family, he was the youngest of



six children, with his parents, Salvatore, a former football player who was a partner at a tyre company, and Helen, a drama teacher, actress, and director, who "was the kind of mother who would put them to sleep with scripts, instead of fairy tales," he said in a 2008 interview with James Lipton, on the show "Inside the Actors Studio".

A true blue aviation fan, this enthusiastic pilot has "an obsession with all the planes I grew up with, including this generation of 50s airliners," and continues to seek for greater heights in his

aviation career. Envisioning a future where supersonic corporate jets and hypersonic airliners would be possible, he hopes to be able to contribute to a programme that can bring this idea to fruition.

"Before I pass on, I would love to see these planes, I think it would be very exciting. We've lost a little bit since the retirement of Concorde, and we all miss it. There is no reason why we can't have something that at least leads to this idea, something challenging in the future, a good thing for all of us," he said with conviction.

The Travolta Legacy

Currently travelling the world with his family, for business and for leisure, Travolta seemed a world away from the recent turmoil that has dogged him. For him, being a Breitling ambassador, a watch that is inherent with heritage, has also led him to reflect on what kind of legacy he would like to leave behind.

"I would like to leave a legacy as a person who has done a lot of good, entertaining movies that will go on for another 100 years, and also as an aviator," he said. Adding on, "I would like to be

remembered as achieving something, that was probably unique, 11 jet ratings in one lifetime is an achievement, and to try to balance two careers, as an actor and as an aviator is a pretty tough task, but I have done it, and I commit myself to both very seriously. I think if all those ideas could be legacies, then I'd be very happy."

Weathering the past turbulences, Travolta, which means "high voltage", as his father, Salvatore had once told him, looks forward to "leaving his children a hope of a future that means a lot to them and the world they live in." ▲