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FIRST ORBIT: A GLOBAL VIDEO CELEBRATION OF YURI GAGARIN'S FLIGHT USING THE ISS

Abstract

12 April 2011 marks the 50th anniversary of the first human spaceflight when Yuri Gagarin launched on Vostok-1. During his 108 minute journey he became the first person to orbit the Earth and to see it from space. To celebrate this historic flight, documentary film maker Christopher Riley conceived the idea for an ambitious public outreach project - recreating Gagarin's view from his spacecraft using contemporary footage filmed from the International Space Station (ISS).

In collaboration with the European Space Agency and the Expedition 26/26 crew, the orbital path of the ISS has been matched as closely as possible to that of Vostok-1. This has enabled ESA astronaut Paolo Nespoli to record high definition footage through the new cupola viewing port of the same vistas of the Earth that Gagarin saw on his flight. These have been assembled together with the entire audio of Gagarin's mission (released for the first time by the Russian State Archives) and an original score by composer Philip Sheppard to produce the 105-minute film *First Orbit*.

In order to achieve the maximum impact for the anniversary, *First Orbit* is to be made available for free to the global community. Partnering with a variety of space-related organisations, e.g., Yuri's Night, YuriGagarin50, the International Space University and others, the film has been promoted all over the world. Public showings will take place at more than 100 locations around the globe on 12 April. In addition, the film will be available to view online via streaming or to be downloaded by individuals and groups and to be watched by anyone, anywhere in the world, increasing its outreach effectiveness manifoldly.

This paper will describe the genesis of *First Orbit*, the co-operation with ESA, the filming from the ISS, the means by which the international hosting and streaming was established, the promotion of the film internationally, the global coverage and impact of the film. These will all be critically assessed and the benefits of the project described, together with good practice identified and lessons learned.