

Golden Jubilee, Buckingham Palace

. Taking an open brief from event LD Durham Marengi and show producer Major Sir Michael Parker, The Projection Studio's Ross Ashton was brought onboard by the event's main contractor Unusual Services Ltd. He was commissioned to create a storyboard and artwork for a stunning 15-minute projection show – the first time Buckingham Palace has ever been used as a projection surface. The show also contained fireworks, pyrotechnic effects and dramatic lighting, but it was the scrolling projections that stuck in everyone's heads – impressing the world's media and onlookers alike. The Projection Studio has projected onto many different surfaces, from the giant cranes at the Harland and Wolff shipyard in Belfast to the Tower of London. Buckingham Palace was another great challenge, as well as a "Beautiful building" with which to work.

The first site visit established that the Palace wanted the projectors positioned very specifically – to be as concealed as possible. Armed with this info, plus the help of a subsequent visit, a camera obscura test with the proposed lenses and 6 x 7 roll film tests, The Projection Studio was able to calculate the required throw distances to the nearest millimetre, plus image size, coverage and various other parameters. The 10 PIGI 7K projectors were run as five pairs, located just inside the forecourt, butted up to the railings, lined up with the Palace pillars. They utilised 18 cm lenses, rotating double scrollers on the front and each projected an image 32 metres wide. Control was PIGI 6 software running on a PC.

The music track was completed just 7 weeks before the show, leaving a very tight deadline to create, source and compile the artwork into scrolls. Ashton also had to present his artwork ideas to the Golden Jubilee Committee for approval. Once they gave it the thumbs up, The Projection Studio's combined resources worked furiously to meet the immovable deadline. The scrolling footage encompassed plenty of distinctive images depicting the last 5 decades – from flower power to pink Cadillacs, space scenes, rotating records and children's faces projecting the future of Britain.

Images, paintings and art from various schoolchildren at the Ponsborne St Mary's infant & Junior School was incorporated into the scrolls, along with photography of children from Heston Community School. Ashton's toughest job was ensuring the artwork held people's attentions, interest and excitement levels for the fast-moving 15 minute scrolling montage, with most tracks only lasting 30 – 40 seconds. He needn't have worried. The reactions of press and public were astounding. High impact projection on this scale is still relatively rare in the, and watching the reactions and results was a truly incredible experience! The building was a great projection surface, but every other technical aspect was challenging! The projectors were all off-centre (for unobtrusivity), all were keystoneing, and all were at ground level – none of these conditions are ideal for large format projection. The artwork was therefore keystoneed and distorted to correct the effect. While Ashton was dealing with the creative aspects, his colleague Paul Highfield sorted the logistics of getting equipment to site, technical co-ordination and health and safety. Highfield also designed special projector cradles, (built by ESS), that ensured the machines pointed upwards at exactly the right angle as soon as they were lifted into position.

The most memorable image of the Queen's Golden Jubilee celebrations was undoubtedly the amazing projections onto the front of the Palace by large format projection specialists The Projection Studio

Photos Ross Ashton / Louise Stickland / M. Robinson / UK Press