

Sea Patrol TV show, Australia

Barco's projectors present true ocean views on Sea Patrol



“Barco’s FLM projectors gave us a bright and consistent image – just what we were looking for to create a superb TV backdrop view.”

Toby Waley, Technical Direction Company

Technical Direction Company is an Australian rental company that has been around for about twenty years now. When they were asked to create a rear projection setup for the Sea Patrol TV series, they did not hesitate and decided that Barco's FLM projectors would be the best fit.

The story of Sea Patrol takes place in open sea, though some of the scenes are shot in a studio. For this, a rear projection system was set up to provide a 22 meter wide background.

The FLM R20+ delivers 20,000 ANSI lumens light output which is perfect for projecting realistic, high resolution images. Combined with Barco's ScreenSHAPER warping processor, all possible image distortions could be eliminated, which resulted in a bright and consistent image, showing a true ocean view background.

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Sea Patrol is an Australian TV series, built around the lives of the crew members on the HMAS Hammersley, a Royal Australian Navy patrol boat. Since its debut on 5 July 2007, the series has turned out to be a huge success in Australia and the rest of the world. Behind the scenes stars a set-up of six Barco FLM R20+ projectors and six Barco ScreenSHAPERS to simulate the infinite ocean views – a design by Technical Direction Company.



Shooting for the first season of Sea Patrol started in September 2006. Most of the action was filmed in open sea on a real life boat, specially rebadged for the series. However, bridge scenes that did not require other vessels were shot in a studio, on a full size replica of the ship's bridge. To simulate the ocean views, six Barco FLM R20+ projectors were used to create a stunning 22 meter wide rear projection.

Australian leading rental company Technical Direction Company (TDC) took on the challenge to design a projector setup that could provide the crew with highly realistic, high resolution background sea view. Having twenty years of experience in the projection business, TDC was the perfect rental company for the job. To complete the difficult task of high brightness projection on a curved screen, they chose Barco's FLM R20+ projectors.

He continues, "A total of six Barco FLM R20+ projectors were used in a configuration of three stacks of two for even more light output. Each projector provided 20,000 ANSI lumens and were edge blended to provide one continuous 3.67:1 widescreen image."

The result: a stunning view

Projecting onto a curved screen provided the team with an extra challenge with regards to the geometric distortion. To combat this, six Folsom ScreenSHAPER processors were used for warping - one for each projector. This resulted in a picture perfect image, able to show the most detailed views.

Toby Waley concludes: "Thanks to the FLM R20+ projectors, we were able to show a highly realistic ocean view background, fit for a top class series like Sea Patrol."



Ocean views in a studio

When mentioning rear projection, people usually remember the static images in classic movies, often used in driving scenes. Luckily, these days, thanks to technology improvements, this is no longer the case. Rear projection has some distinct advantages over using chroma key (mostly known as greenscreen or bluescreen). A big advantage is that the filmed images look more natural thanks to the possibility of changing the lights in real time in the studio. An extra impulse for choosing rear projecting is the cost as it eliminates the need for expensive post-production.

Creating a widescreen ocean panorama

Toby Waley from TDC explains, "The studio set consisted of a full size replica of the HMAS Hammersley's bridge mounted on a large turntable. The turntable facilitated the rotation of the set against a backdrop of port, starboard and bow facing video panoramas running on a 22 meter rear projection screen. This allowed shots to be captured from any angle on the bridge".

