

LiveDesign

XL Video's High-Def, High Speed 1 Launch

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Working for Flux Events under the technical direction of John Farquhar-Smith, XL Video was the host broadcaster for the Queen's launch of High Speed 1, the high speed Cross Channel Rail Link and St Pancras International Station—the new Eurostar terminal.

XL Video supplied 23 mixed definition cameras and a full broadcast PPU/Barco Encore playback system for the event, with live video directed by Aubrey Powell, along with 384 panels of Lighthouse R16 video screen which tracked 360.9 feet (110 meters) above Platform 9 of the newly restored Barlow shed at St Pancras. The screen split into eight sections and various other configurations during the hour-long show.

XL Video also supplied live camera feeds to the various international news organizations including BBC News and ITN, effectively becoming the event's host broadcasters.

Powell worked closely with the show's overall artistic director Mark Fisher, LD Durham Marengi, and the rest of the creative team: executive producer Jon Teeman and his client London & Continental Railways (LCR).

There were 75 XL Video crewmembers working on the project, coordinated by Natasha Fownes and chiefed on site by Stuart Heaney.

The event was project managed for XL Video by Steve Greetham and Phil Mercer. Mercer states, "The scale of the event and the fact that we were installing a show production into a fully operational CDM regulated building site that is also a working railway station alongside thousands of other contractors created abundant challenges. All these were overcome by determination, some great teamwork from all parties and departments concerned, and plenty of lateral thinking."

The Queen officially declared High Speed 1 and St Pancras International Station open during the first of three identical shows, which was also attended by Prime Minister Gordon Brown and a host of other top VIPs.

XL Video's 23 cameras were located all over the station. These and the broadcast elements of the show were coordinated by Malcolm Whitall. They included 10 cameras with radio backs, two of which were sited inside the cabs of two Class 373 Eurostar trains, choreographed to pull into the station on cue during the show.

The other eight wireless handheld units included a Steadicam, deployed around the show area in places where there could be no wires. XL Video also supplied two jibs, one stationed outside St Pancras, which was one of two exterior cameras. A 33-foot reach Technocrane telescopic tower was positioned at the back of the control platform to the side of the main seating banks.

Two cameras were set up on track-and-dolly in front of the orchestra platform, and three remote units were stationed on each of St Pancras platforms 6, 7, and 8 specifically to pan along with the three trains (one brand new Hitachi Class 395 Bullet train and the two Eurostars) as they drew into the station. The remotes could get a lot closer to the trains at that point than any operated unit would have been able.

Video playback content, supplied by Brand & Deliver and New Moon, consisted of several specially made short films for the show, loaded onto XL Video's hard disk EVS system.

The original plan would have been to have an OB truck parked in the station, but as the technical production developed, it became apparent that there would be no access for this. Instead, the event made the most of XL's "flyaway" fully flightcased "Broadcast truck in Boxes", consisting of a large standard HD video router, audio routing in analog and digital, and a Telex Zeus talkback system to manage all the comms and radio talkback needed for site wide video.

Richard Turner programmed and ran the Barco Encore presentation system at the heart of the show, which processed all the various video inputs and feeds including Powell's live camera mix, the playback material plus a feed from the Queen's personal cameraman, and output them in the right format to the appropriate areas of the screen as it tracked up and down, splitting into 2, 4 and 8 sections.

The screen tracking system was developed for the show by [Wlcreations](#) from Belgium, featuring eight automated tugs driven by a Kinesys Vector system operated by Erland "Spider" Webb.

The Lighthouse panels, offering a total resolution of 2,045 x 576 pixels, were initially built up on an 59-foot (18 meter) platform at the station end of the Barlow shed and loaded onto a special custom trolley system designed by production riggers Unusual. This moved them above all the station's 25,000V OLE power lines and dropped them into place over Platform 9, where they were suspended below the tugs. The panels were all then connected together while in the air.

Mercer commented post show, "It was a historic event and the results were truly spectacular. We were all really proud to have worked with Flux Events on such a world class production."

St Pancras International, the new Eurostar terminal, opened to the public on November 14.