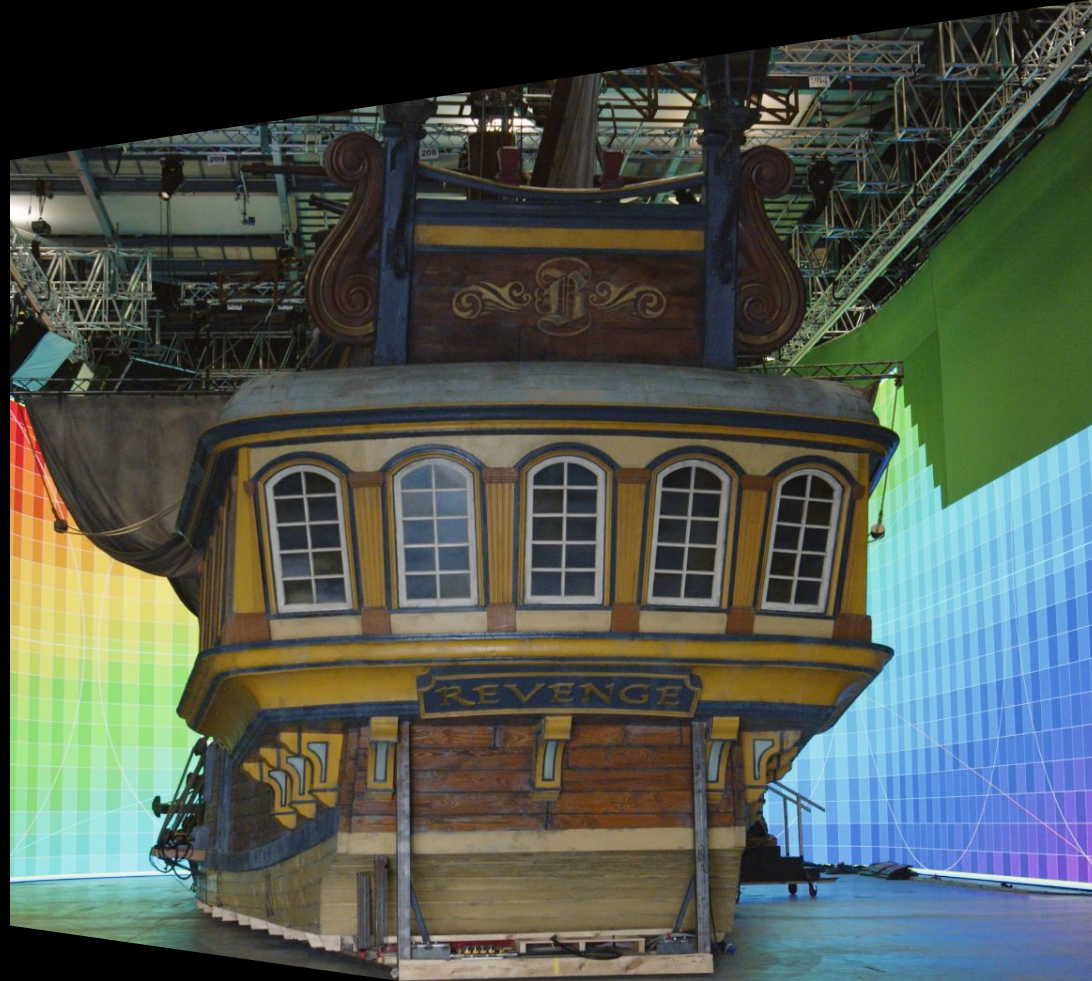


CASE STUDY

Disguise turns the tide for Our Flag Means Death production



Summary

After a critically-acclaimed first season, the team behind Our Flag Means Death was looking for opportunities to streamline production costs while delivering a second season that lived up to the opening run of episodes. After moving the production of the show to New Zealand, the producers sought the creative and technical services of Disguise Nz.

Instead of taking the cast and crew to the sea for filming, Disguise created a custom virtual production set with a sprawling LED backdrop that could project scenery live behind the actors during filming along with additional scenery and props. This novel approach to the shoot enabled the team to bring speed, precision and budgetary control to a story that was predominately set on the open ocean.



The challenge

Olivier Jean, VP Supervisor at Disguise understood the biggest challenge of all - to ensure that the change in filming location and team added value to the production, yet still kept the show consistent with Season one. Season two needed to look and feel like the breakthrough run of episodes that fans already loved.

Adding to the challenge was a very short pre-production period. Jean's team were already deep in pre-production on Time Bandits, another Waititi-produced show, when they began talks around working on Our Flag Means Death. There were only 60 days between those early conversations to the start of the shoot itself. Jean and his team needed to develop and test the VP workflow, undertake system design, and build a content pipeline. In Fact we had just less than 2 weeks on-set to tune the system, do calibrations and stress test our pipeline. Leveraging Disguise hardware really allowed us to feel confident about what we could expect from the system.



The solution

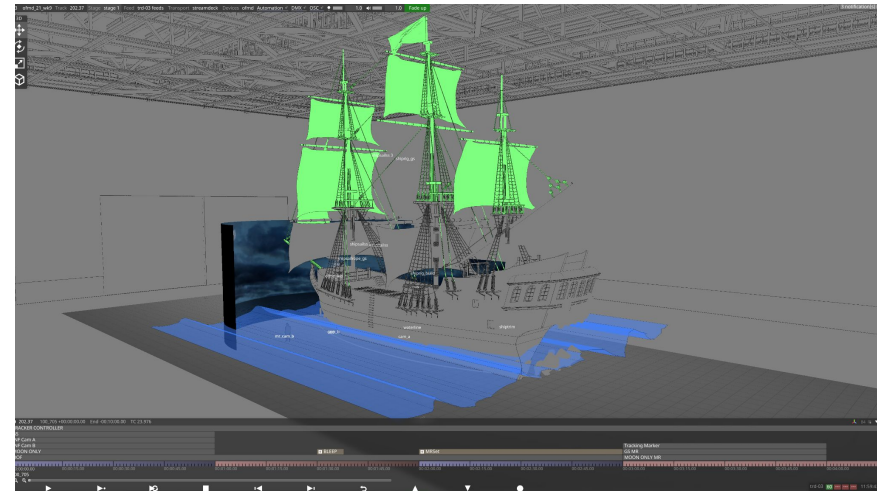
Disguise's services team was key to delivering the quality and efficiency that would allow a smooth-running VP solution. From the very start of the production team's talks with Disguise there was a heavy focus on various workflows and their benefits.

Top of the list was developing a solid and responsive 2.5D content system capable of handling content resolutions of up to 16K x 8K and output 8x4K streams of video in perfect sync, whilst also working in 2.5D to allow for accurate camera based projection. Overall, the LED volume was about 420 sq m or 4500 sq ft, and consisted of 1673 Roe BP2 panels. It was 45m in linear length, up to 10.5m high. NEP Sweetwater delivered the LED panels and processing and power infrastructure whilst also doing a perfect build of this volume in less than a week. Despite numerous hours spent in Pre-Viz, it was impressive seeing the build come to life in the studio.

The curved screen that stretched behind the actors and provided the projected backdrop acted as a focal point for the team's work. The flexibility of the Disguise platform allowed experimentation until every aspect was perfect. A hybrid 2.5D workflow was developed to allow re-projecting the content from the camera perspective, whilst also using the camera tracking info to accurately represent the ocean, the horizon line and the sky. This workflow ensured that the horizon appeared flat. The team could then dial-in any "sea state" by sifting the content in relationship to the camera to simulate the natural sway one would observe at sea. Having camera tracking and this workflow allowed the team to quickly setup two or three camera frustums as and when the scene required it. Overall, the team made extensive use out of frustum content from an interactive light perspective and worked with the gaffer to help with the overall illumination on-set.

"We also had to become weather enthusiasts," says Jean, "learning about how to use clouds in storytelling so that we could convey the journey of the characters through their movement."

So important were realistic clouds to the production that the production team held a weekly 'cloud appreciation hour' to help them consider how the sky should appear in backgrounds during filming. The team then built a database of clouds, skies and 3D oceans that could be used interchangeably within the Disguise workflow. They could quickly adapt the set to whatever they felt was needed for the day's shooting.



Results

The Disguise team were able to bring the show to life with exciting content delivered on stage.

“We provided quick turnarounds of content in preview. There was no delay between seeing the content for the first time and delivering it on the LED. Our ethos of teamwork meant we were able to deliver a successful show in record time” says Jean.

Our Flag Means Death found a far more efficient way to shoot their nautical misadventures without the need to develop sturdy sea legs. The result was a show that the entire crew could be proud of. Though the production had shifted hemispheres and experimented with a new approach to water shoots, they delivered a second season that felt akin to the first - and was even more critically acclaimed.



"Olivier and the team at Disguise were invaluable to Our Flag Means Death season 2. Their virtual production technology and expertise brought tremendous value and scope to our story. The show would not have worked without them. The Revenge would never have left the harbor to sail the seven seas."

David Van Dyke
VFX Supervisor

Services used

Disguise's Creative Services team enabled the successful delivery of the production through their Virtual Production Services

These included the following:

- VP Supervision
- Technical Direction & Design
- Previz & Techviz
- Technical operation
- Volume Control
- Disguise Operator
- On-Set Digital Continuity
- Selected Scene VP VFX work
- Content & Colour Pipeline



Credits

Virtual Production Supervisor: Olivier Jean

Technical Director: Delainy Kennedy

Disguise Operator: Laura Bell

Jnr Operator & Digital Continuity: Terri

Toxward-Nicolson

Coordinator: Gemma Campbell

VFX Supervisor: David Van Dyke

Gaffer: Sean O'Neill

LED Engineer: Steven Kozakowski

Tracking Engineer: Ross McKay

LED Supplier: NEP Sweetwater

Disguise Server: Xytech X3XR



Get in touch

**Curious to know more about us?
Want to master our production toolkit?
Need support on your project?**

Our team will be happy to speak to you,
whatever your query.

Get in touch

Get Started