

New Rover Walks on Water

The Rover 800 Series, a product of the new high tech and robot infested manufacturing lines at Cowley near Oxford, was revealed in sparkling fashion when introduced to dealers as part of its pre-launch publicity. The "show" began on the Continent in Montreux in mid-May before moving to the NEC in Birmingham and finally Harrogate Conference Centre.

Described by BL chief Harold Musgrove in distinctly glowing terms the new flagship carries more than a few hopes and dreams, and it could well prove to be the car that keeps the company afloat. Appropriately, the launch was something special, with a brief to reveal the car through water, without getting it wet.

L+SI talked to lighting designer Andrew Gardner, who described how the revelation was achieved.



Andrew Gardner.

the casement ceiling, and downlighting for the tiered seating was in an orange/amber mix. Walking in to take one's seat, the effect was of clean blue banner strips against black, leading into the warm amber seating area.

"Inside the auditorium, the stage itself was one giant square pool, positioned to put one apex downstage centre. Built into it, a track running upstage carried the revolve and car, and rolling tracks carried the many fountain jets of the water sculpture.

"The pre-reveal sequence was a choreography display of water sculpture performed to the sounds of Handel. Side lighting created a very delicate image, while backlight and toplight filled the water fountains with a multitude of changing colours and effects. Projectors and gobos were used upstage to backlight the fountain arches, and when break-up gobos were used in the horizontal, the water was shredded into thousands of straws of light and dark.



Looking from upstage centre to downstage centre, showing tracking revolve in the tank.

"Vertical mirror blinds acted as front tabs, closing in from either side seconds before the reveal, and the fifty per cent transparent quality enabled the closing patterns of water and light to be seen through it. The reveal followed on immediately, once enough dry-ice and smoke had been pumped into the pool behind the tabs. As the mirror curtains opened, changing patterns of water and low key lighting were employed to mask and 'tease-reveal' the car as it travelled from its hidden upstage position to downstage centre.

"To complement this sequence, a fine waterscreen was pumped into the air downstage and the Rover logo was back-projected onto this. The effect of the water rising and falling created the logo image, dropping down at the last moment to reveal the car itself. As the car revolved, lit in congo blue, certain patterns of water fountain tracked back upstage on either side to form a cyclorama of water, and a projected rainbow image on this completed the framing of the car as it turned and finally came to rest in bright white light and full colour-lit water surround.

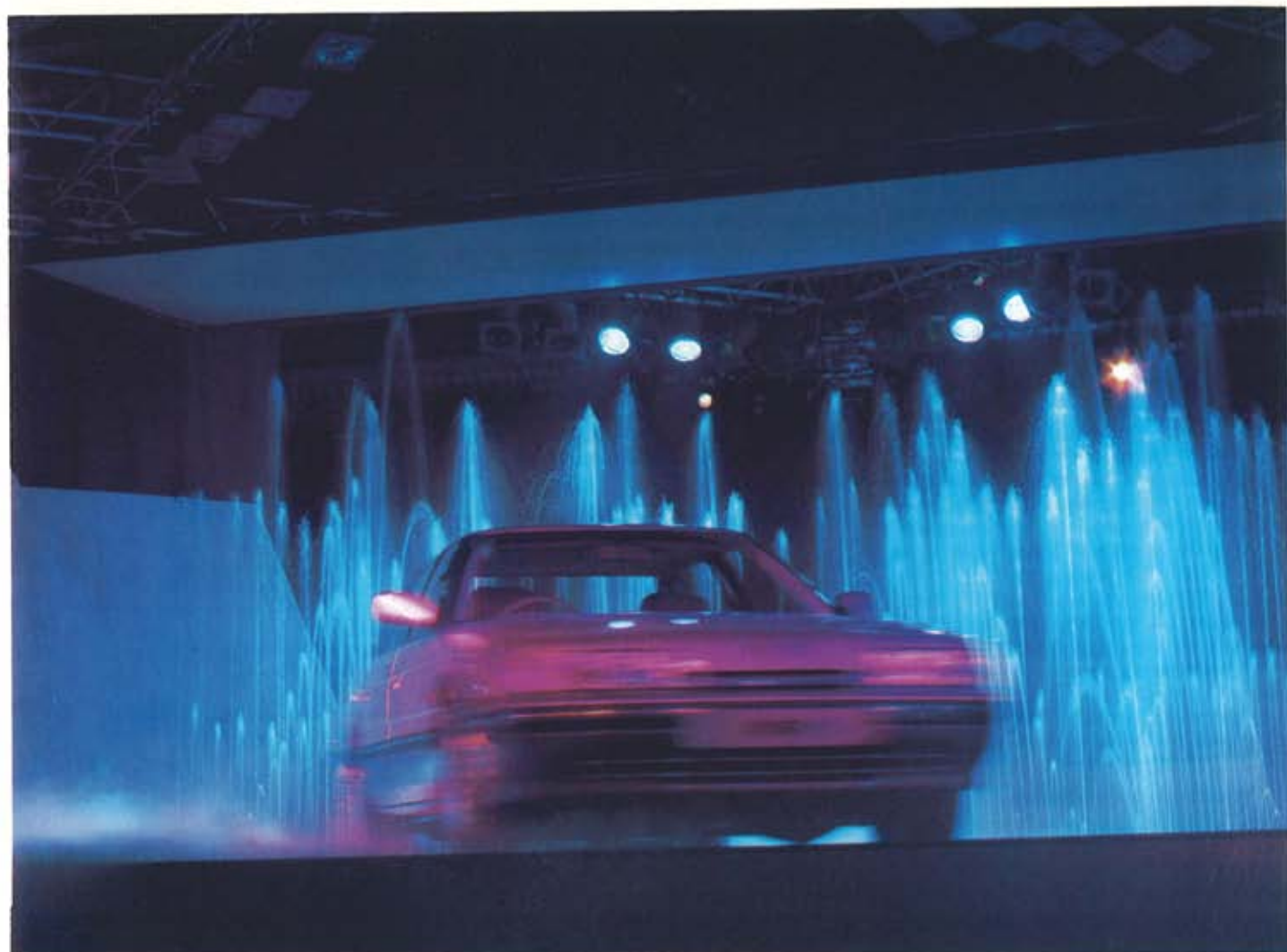
"The entire sequence of pre-reveal and reveal took many hours of careful plotting with a stopwatch until finally, in the early hours of the morning, we managed to get the water right, the lighting right, the set right, and most important of all, the car in the right position! The many facets of the reveal which needed such careful co-ordination were only achieved through great patience, especially on the part of one of the finest and certainly the most patient of crews that I have worked with."

The fit-up had started on May 1st, and

The concept for the presentation involved the transformation of an underground car park in Montreux into a high tech quality environment, with reception areas, exhibition areas, and theatre presentation auditorium. "It was decided to use water fountains to create differing sculptured patterns which could be lit with various effects," he explained. "The lighting design brief also covered the specific areas of reception and auditorium.

"Vertical mirror blinds formed the reception walls and the entire roof area was covered by a suspended ceiling of casement. Three 18 foot diameter revolves mounted on plinths had shallow rubber-lined water tanks incorporated into them, and a car was mounted on each. Mirror blinds on circular tracks concealed the cars and tanks while delegates arrived and passed into the auditorium, and purpose-made curved aluminium barrels supported 24 short nose black Par 64/5s around the outside of the ponds. These were focussed alternately on to car and floor area around the plinths. The mirror blinds were lit with 16 short nose Par 64/5 floorcans per revolve—all concealed in a moat surround at the base of each pond. Blue and white worked well, reflecting off the mirror blinds and showing radiating beams on the black carpet flooring. The result was a reception area of clean line, which was also pleasing to the eye.

"Two tunnels led from the reception area into the auditorium, and they were created by using pale grey casement banners stretched on angle to form Toblerone-shaped entrance ways, each banner uplit in moonlight blue from a short nosed Par 64/5 floorcan concealed in a continuous groundrow panel. More moonlight blue uplighting was used on



The new Rover 800 is revealed.



suspension points were the first priority, closely followed by all the overhead stage truss and lighting, so that the water tank could be assembled, and installation of the fountains begun. Once the lighting multicores (about 4,000 metres of them) had been run in to the various lighting positions, the 2,000 square metres of casement ceiling could be installed. The set and seating area followed, and finally a control room was built to house the Kliegl lighting board.

"By May 9th we had something to light," explained Andrew Gardner, "and focussing started in earnest, or rather Wellington boots. As the majority of the rig was over the water tank stage, and we obviously needed the water fountains to be working to be able to light them, I found myself wading through water, calling instructions to the crew crawling along the trussing to focus, or using a Zarges ladder with 'welly boots' on in the pond itself. Noisy and wet it certainly was, but after the first few lamps had been set, I was totally in love with water as a surface to light. It takes colours beautifully, and gobos and moving effects can be projected onto it. In one sequence we used four high power strobes and the droplets of water hung in mid-air, sparkling like crystal.

"Technical rehearsals followed the focussing, and were long and fairly nerve racking. I did begin to wonder whether we would ever get the car to its correct position in time with everything else, and can't recall the number

of times we ended with the boot facing downstage instead of up, as the music reached its crescendo.

"However, by May 14th, dress rehearsal day, it was definitely getting better. All the different elements were slotting together, and thank God for stopwatches and a good showcaller. The same day saw the first show, and we were rewarded with thunderous applause even before the pre-reveal sequence had finished. The audience loved the reveal, and more importantly, loved the car, too!"

It may be all high tech in the car industry these days, but a bit of "theatrical" magic can still cause wonderment from deal-toughened car men, as Andrew Gardner explained.

"It was in Harrogate that the producer told me he had just heard one delegate saying to another: 'I wonder how they stop the different coloured waters from mixing together as they change shape?'"

"If only he knew!"

Credits

Production company: Hamilton Perry Ltd.
Lighting Designer: Andrew A. Gardner.
Set Designer: Bill Harkin Associates.
Producer: John McDermott.
Production Managers: Chris Venn, Mick Wicks.
Water: Byll Elliot of Water Sculptures of Lancaster.
Account Director: Richard Griffiths.
Stage Manager (Showcaller): Ruth Sallis.
Set Construction: Jonathan Bicknell.
Metalwork: Blackfriars.

Production Electrician: Mike Odam.
Electricians: Gerry Amies, Mark Stitfall, Brian Hunt, Ian Paterson.

Rigging: The Unusual Rigging Company.
Sound: John Neal.
Staging Chief: Christoph Bilinis.
A.V.: Alex Gabriel, John Stilwell.
Cine: Ian Hull.
In total a crew of forty.

Equipment

(by Theatre Projects)

- 16 Par 36 ACL
- 60 Par 64/1
- 62 Par 64/2
- 50 Par 64/5
- 198 Par 64/5 Short Nose Floor Cans
- 24 Par 64/2 Long Nose Floor Cans
- 26 Minnette Profile 650w Zoom
- 8 ADB 1kw Fresnels
- 8 Silhouette 30 1kw
- 6 Patt. 252 Effects Projectors
- 36 Par 46 Rubberlites

Effects:

- 2 Londoner Dry Ice Machines
- 4 Superhilit Strokes
- 1 Strobe Controller
- 1 Rosco Smoke Gun plus 100ft remote
- 2 Slide Carriers with Rainbow slides
- 2 Fleecy Clouds
- 2 Moving Colour Discs

Control:

- 1 96-way Kliegl Performer 2
- 1 96-way Multiplexer
- 1 72-way Avo Racks
- 1 24-way Green Ginger Racks



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Frequency Response (-3dB)	15Hz - 50KHz	15Hz - 50KHz	15Hz - 100KHz	15Hz - 100KHz
Signal to Noise Ratio (DIN AUDIO)	100dB	100dB	100dB	100dB
Input Sensitivity	500mV rms	500mV rms	500mV rms	500mV rms
Input Impedance	100KΩ	100KΩ	100KΩ	100KΩ
Weight in grammes	410	520	420	850
Size in mm	120x78x40	120x78x50	120x78x40	120x78x100
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Weight	2.5 Kilo	3.3 Kilo	2.5 Kilo	3.7 Kilo
Size	7cm = H, 12cm = W, 29.5cm = L	8cm = H, 12cm = W, 29.5cm = L	7cm = H, 12cm = W, 29.5cm = L	11cm = H, 12cm = W, 29.5cm = L

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Auditorium of Grieghallen in Bergen, Norway, during preparations for the 1986 Eurovision Song Contest—see feature this issue.

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