

LCD Case Study — St Mary's Cathedral

Here's a slightly left-of-field example of the extensive (and striking) use of LCD panels in a large 'venue'. St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney is the most famous edifice of the catholic church in Australia. It's a magnificent cathedral that's been undergoing extensive renovations and additions over many years. In the first half of 2005 St Mary's has had its audiovisual infrastructure overhauled... and what an overhaul it's been! Under the project management of Arup, and the expertise of Rutledge Engineering, a whole new, full-blown, broadcast quality video system has been installed from scratch. Pan and tilt cameras are used to capture key goings-on during the course of the service and thanks to some painstakingly-installed cabling (both copper cables and fibreoptic) back to a video switcher, a televisual layman can operate the system — switching between camera feeds, hitting preset camera positions, etc etc.

But, of course, for our purposes, of most interest are the LCD panels. The main purpose of the new video system was to augment people's participation in the services when they're stuck in the nave (or outer) aisles. Thanks to huge structural pillars, these people's line of sight to the altar and pulpit are often totally obscured. Meanwhile these display panels provide them with



all the visual feedback they need — almost like windows through the pillars. If it wasn't visually striking enough to have 11 video screens in a cathedral, they've been oriented in portrait mode. Which sets off the scene beautifully.

There is a variety of 'back end' ways to successfully have an image presented in portrait mode. But the Barco Solaris LC40 40-inch display is one of the few on the market that does the switch from within the unit. That way the 4:3 cameras (via the video controller) simply feed the screens a standard picture from which it extracts the relevant centre detail for portrait mode.

The Barco was also selected because of the relative ease in which its bezel could be colour-matched to the sandstone of the columns. As it turned out (after some experimentation) the display looked better with a more standard charcoal coloured surround. "The cathedral gets a lot of tourist traffic when it's not used for services, so we found that the screens remained switched off for long stretches. And during those downtime periods the screens actually looked like empty picture frames... They didn't look natural at all. So we went back to the charcoal colour," commented Rutledge Engineering's Nick Orsatti.

It's fascinating to see how the latest in display technology can be integrated into grand old building so sympathetically and practically. A lot depends on the placement of the device, the expertise of the wiring, the low-profile bracketing and of course the visual content (an Eminem video clip is obviously not going to work as well as a view of the stained glass windows). «