

VIRTUAL PRODUCTION

Titanic Sinks Tonight | BBC | 4 x 60 minute episodes | Directed by Hugh Ballantyne

We shot the drama using the brand-new virtual production [VP] stages at Ulster Studios in Belfast. Adopting this latest screen technology allowed us to ‘world build’ in an entirely new way.

We broke scripts down and worked with Belfast-based physical and virtual set designers Poli Productions to develop a plan as to how best to shoot the series.

Using a VR headset, I was able to recce locations within a 3D scale model of the ship. Having selected locations and established shooting directions, we could determine what part of each location was going to be either a physical or a virtual set.

Poli productions then built a scale model of each physical and virtual set. We road tested our shooting hypothesis against a scaled version of the VP wall. We could then see how the environment would stand up to the proposed action.

The virtual set was the blueprint from which any physical elements were built to within millimetre accuracy. In this way, both physical and virtual worlds were inextricably linked.

We shot the series over four weeks between two stages on the Ulster Studios site. The first stage was a VP stage and the second a regular sound stage, where our standalone sets and water tank were constructed. We were able to leapfrog between the two studios allowing the team to shoot on one, while the vacant studio could be prepped with new or reconfigured sets, dressing and be pre-lit ready for camera.

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