

**INTERVIEW WITH ADAM
BASSETT PARTNER AND
PRINCIPAL DESIGNER AT
WOODROFFE BASSETT DESIGN**

**ROYAL EDINBURGH
MILITARY TATTOO**



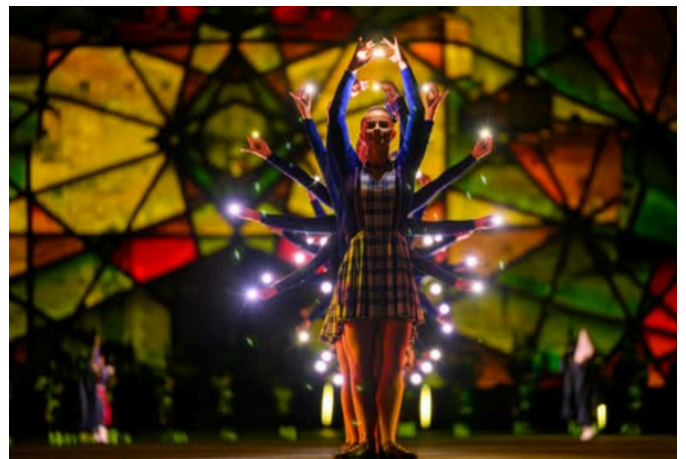
**Can you describe your approach
to designing the lighting for the
Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo?**

This year marks the 75th edition of the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo, and we're working under the new creative director Alan Lane. The overall vision is tailored towards creating a theatrical experience, that celebrates 75 years of the tattoo. There is a lot of narrative and storytelling—both historical and modern which need to be woven into the show. This change has influenced our lighting design.

We've adopted a different approach, not just creatively but also in terms of equipment selection and how we configure our lighting rig.

**You have an extensive range of
GOBOs—what is the creative
concept behind this?**

This is a particular design decision. We want to create a continuation of the texture and feel of the castle projection onto the esplanade. We're utilizing gobos in a quite specific way. So, for example, there's a section of the show where there's a stained-glass window projection on the castle, which is projected by video. We are then extending that with custom gobos into the Esplanade using lighting. This becomes a very functional way of connecting the two spaces but also allowing us to light maintain sufficient key light for the performers.



What influenced your fixture choices for this show?

The fixture selection has evolved over the past few years, with us refining our equipment choices to optimize the use of the space. There aren't a vast number of options available for lighting positions, so we've had to work hard to ensure we achieve the best possible placement of fixtures in each location.

In recent years, all our equipment has been upgraded to be IP-rated, as inclement weather is not un-suprisingly quite common! Having an IP-rated setup is now essential and consequently, our fixture choices have been influenced by the need for IP ratings.

For instance, the lights installed on the side of the Esplanade are larger than we would ideally prefer; they protrude more than we would like. Nonetheless, this is a compromise we've made to ensure the equipment maintains its IP capability, balancing practicality with aesthetic considerations.

What are the biggest challenges you face while designing lighting for this show, and how do you overcome the outdoor venue element?

The biggest challenge related to rain isn't the equipment itself anymore; it's actually the surfaces we're lighting. For example, when the castle is wet, it appears dark because its surface changes, affecting its luminosity and how projections and light appear.

Similarly, the esplanade also darkens when wet, but it becomes more reflective. This means that the angle of incidence and the reflection of light from one side can bounce into the eyes of the audience on the opposite side. Managing these considerations is a constant challenge.

What are your memorable or standout moments of the show?

This year's show features some surprise moments, including the introduction of drone technology for the first time. This activation is designed to embellish the celebration of the 75th anniversary. The drone display will not only enrich the visual experience within the arena but also extend the show's reach beyond its traditional boundaries, engaging the city on a broader level.

Additionally, the show is introducing the pragmatist. Over the past three years, the show completely removed the narrator, creating a purely visual experience where the audience was invited to interpret and understand the show on their own. While this approach had its strengths and challenges, it's now evolved into a hybrid model.



The show is reintroducing narration, but this time it's a pragmatist that weaves the narrative throughout the show, featuring recognisable characters that guides the audience on their journey.

This approach brings a strong theatrical sensibility, and how we extend the theatrical drama by segueing all the pieces together in and around this leading character, who takes you on that journey both visually and narratively is compelling.

You have collaborated with Neg Earth on this show since 2022, what is it, that stands out for you working with Neg Earth.

We have worked with you on many projects, and it's great to have a lighting company that has the capabilities, the resources, and the equipment we need. It's a very easy dialogue. You work with us to create the best solutions.

When we transitioned the lighting rig from its previous setup before I became involved, it was a significant uplift – not just because increased budget allowed for us to do more but also because we wanted to ensure we were making smart technical choices that carefully considered the unique environment and requirements of the show. Four years ago we worked closely with Keith Duncan (REMT Head of Lighting) and NEG Earth to achieve this and each year since we have been supported by NEG to refine and further improve the technical delivery and system design.

It's been a very good, comfortable, collaborative relationship from both sides - we have to make our budget go a long way and Neg very much helps us achieve that.

How important is the lighting in the show?

The primary goal of lighting is to functionally light the space, so the acts are clearly visible to the audience. Of course, this is a fundamental requirement for any show. But the other layers are the spectacle, the theatricality, the drama, the atmosphere, and that is not solely laid at the door of lighting. That's a sum of all the parts, including how lighting interacts with video, costumes, choreography, staging and music. It's all of these factors – a playbook of any great piece of theatre.



What is it about the Royal military tattoo that you like?

There's something quite special and unique about it. It's unlike anything else we do. It's a special place, and an incredible committed group of people and above all its fun!

Many people invest a considerable amount in ensuring that the tattoo represents everything it aims to achieve. It also has a special place for me, being local to Edinburgh. It's quite nice to do a show that doesn't involve me getting on a plane.

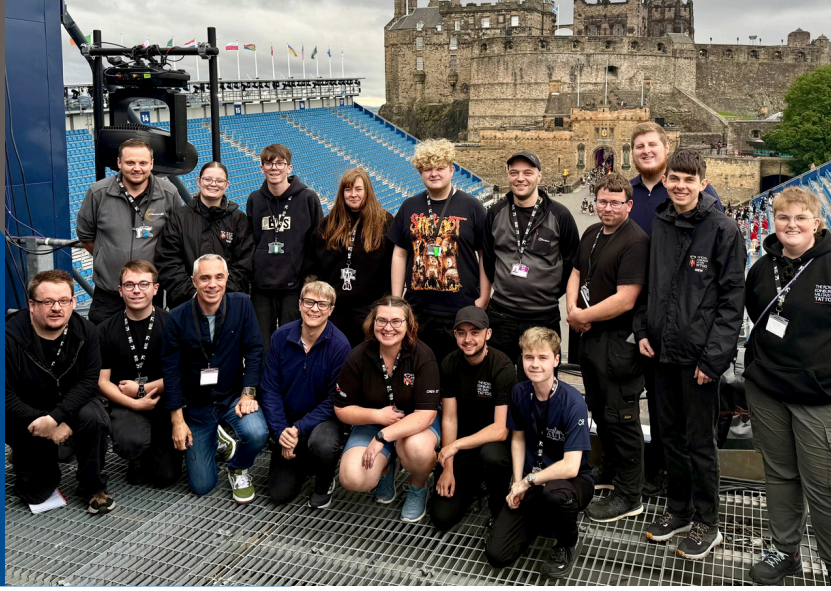
Do you have any advice for aspiring lighting designers interested in working on large scale shows?

I could look back across my career and look at what the opportunities I've had and how I have tailored those to ultimately pave the way to what I do now, and the business we run, and the number of projects we get involved in.

I think if I could sum it up in one piece of advice, it would be to take every opportunity that presents itself, sometimes a good experience, other times less so but more often than not it leads somewhere unexpected and it is very rare it does not support you on your way. Some of the most unexpected alleys lead to great things.

If you can take the challenges each opportunity presents head on and work your way through the fear and self-doubt, you normally come out the other side with a positive, that builds your experience, your confidence and your connections. Over the years, these experience collect and ultimately pave the way for a successful and enjoyable career.





Neg Earth Lights extends heartfelt gratitude to Woodroffe Bassett Design for their generous support and invaluable input during this interview. We especially thank Adam Bassett for offering his thoughtful perspectives on the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo.

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