

## **The Sun at Night**

**by**

**Dan Wilkinson and David Henckel**

The Sun at Night was a large scale, public, kinetic, Audio-Visual scientific/artistic installation.

The piece created a unique opportunity for audience interaction with solar images, in unexpected spaces. The installation created an immersive experience, with a vast, high-definition image of the sun, revolving slowly around a large cylindrical structure. This was accompanied by a bespoke composed soundtrack evoked by the solar activity.

Over the course of two nights, Preston's covered market was transformed into the centre of our solar system with this large-scale public art installation. One year's worth of footage of The Sun was condensed into a 30-minute film, which slowly rotated around a large cylindrical projection screen accompanied by a composed soundtrack.

Around 250 people witnessed the live Preston event.

The work was subsequently shown as part of BBC Stargazing Live outside broadcast event at Royal Holloway University, London in January 2014.

The work was seen by 7000 people at the live event and appeared live on BBC2.

The installation comprised a bespoke 4.5m high cylindrical rear projection screen, with solar images projected from within the structure, resulting in a 4m diameter solar image. The movement of the sun around the cylinder was one of the key elements of the installation which changed the relationship of the audience to the image and the space. The work also referenced how we follow the sun and our historical relationship to it – believing the sun revolves around us.

Due to the sheer scale and unexpected location of the installation, the impact of the imagery and the soundtrack, drew in audiences through curiosity, and therefore helped to engage with audiences who would not normally seek out scientific information and learning.

A contemporary equivalent to the public lectures of Preston astronomer Moses Holden, who used an orrery (model of the solar system) and magic lanterns to educate the public about our solar system, The Sun at Night allowed the public to experience some of the cutting edge solar physics research which takes place at the University of Central Lancashire.

The event also included a talk about the Sun by Professor Robert William Walsh – Director of Research and Innovation at UCLan.

In addition there was a talk about Moses Holden by local historian Stephen Halliwell, an expert on the Preston Astronomer,

On the Sunday evening there was a live improvised performance by Dan Wilkinson, David Henckel and Dr. Jon Aveyard using analogue synthesisers, samplers and found sounds reacting to the footage of the Sun.

This performance was also repeated at the BBC Stargazing Live event in London.

Multi-Disciplinary Work

The Sun at Night was a very successful multi-disciplinary project across a number of schools at the University and included local business partners.

**The Project Team:**

- Dan Wilkinson – Lead Artist
- David Henckel – Lead Artist
- The University of Central Lancashire's Solar Physics Group.  
The research carried out by the solar group focuses on studying the Sun and how the Sun's a
- Leon Hardman – Senior AV Technician from LIS  
Technical director for AV
- Dr. Hadley Brooks - Lecturer in Engineering from the school of Engineering  
Hadley designed the internal structure for the cylindrical projection screen.  
Hadley also liaised with Touchline Fabrication over the manufacture of the screen structure.
- Dr Daniel Brown – Senior Lecturer in Physics and Mathematics from the School of Physical Sciences and Computing.  
Daniel compiled one year of footage from NASA's Solar Dynamic Observatory and provided light curve data which influenced the soundtrack.
- Dr Joanna Heaton-Marriot - Public Engagement Manager at UCLan and also Director of the Lancashire Science Festival.  
Joanna was the project manager for the The Sun at Night.
- Professor Robert Walsh  
Professor Robert Walsh is the University Director of Research and Innovation at UCLan and also the lead of the Solar Astrophysics Group. His research centres on modelling and observing the Sun's outer atmosphere and corona. The work was designed to illustrate Robert's research. Robert presented a talk about the Sun at the Preston event.
- Ann Vanner – Course Leader for Architectural Technology.  
Ann used the project as part of her teaching in terms of practical design and fabrication
- Stephen Halliwell - Stephen is a local historian. Stephen presented a talk on Moses Holden at the Preston event.
- Professor Lubaina Himid MBE - Professor of Contemporary Art, School of Art, Design and

Fashion

Consultant providing mentoring and advice on various artistic aspects of the project.

- Professor Charles Quick – Professor of Public Art Practice, School of Art, Design and Fashion  
Consultant providing mentoring and advice on various artistic

#### **Project Partners:**

- AtoV - AtoV provided the bespoke visual projections of the high resolution images of the sun. They tested the material and projected the visuals at both the Preston and London events.
- Harkness Screens - Harkness Screens provided the bespoke rear projection screen for the project. The material was a specialist material for the very unique context for the project.
- Touchline Fabrications Limited - Touchline Fabrications Ltd of Preston liaised with the University over the design and fabrication of the custom designed projection screen structure. Touchline also erected the structure at both the Preston and London venues.
- Preston City Council - Preston City Council is a district council, working alongside Lancashire County Council as part of a two-tier local government system.
- They Eat Culture - They Eat Culture is a direct creative intervention into the cultural life of Preston, developing the city as an open-to-all cultural venue & a living magazine.
- Operation Soundsystem - Established in 1996 the “North West Heavyweight” OPERATION SOUND SYSTEM is a custom built, hand crafted, reggae & dub sound & record label based in UK.

#### **Aims of the Work**

- To create a large site-specific A/V installation in Preston’s covered market.
- To compose sonic materials that would enhance the visuals of the sculpture
- To create a live collaborative performance Inform and enthuse the public about solar astrophysics
- Create an immersive experiential piece, using solar imagery
- Provoke discussion and debate about the place of the sun in our lives, with respect to issues such as solar energy, space weathers, skins cancer
- Provoke discussion and debate about our place in the Universe and the advances made in scientific understanding, i.e. Earth not at the centre of the Universe
- Hold two public events, engaging with audiences of at least 500
- Engage with a difficult to reach and unexpected public audience

Website: [thesunatnight.info](http://thesunatnight.info)