MGG heroes at Comic-Con Africa

Comic-Con Africa, a three-day event showcasing comic books, science fiction/fantasy related film and television, as well as similar popular arts, was hosted for the very first time in South Africa at the Kyalami International Convention Centre in Midrand, Johannesburg. MGG was appointed as the main technical supplier for the sold-out event, enjoyed by over 45 000 superheroes, villains and sidekicks.

Geeks, gamers and superheroes were spoilt for choice with an enormous exhibition area (just ask any of the visitors what their step count was for the day!), and were enthralled by gaming panel discussions, cosplay contests and a chance to rub shoulders with celebrities like Travis Fimmel of Vikings fame.

MGG meticulously executed the technical setup for Comic-Con Africa, that included a main stage, four prescreening rooms, two VS gaming areas, kids' entertainment area, an MTN outdoor stage which included a VIP and screening area, and lastly, audio for both multiple exhibition floors and the food zone. Professional gear was utilised all round, which included Robe and Claypaky lighting fixtures, Prolyte trussing, Absen LED screens, L-Acoustics PA and DiGiCo audio consoles that both amplified and magnified an exhilarating event.
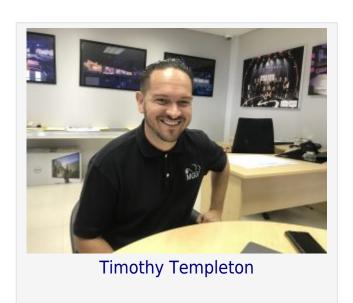

"Getting these shows and putting them together really excites me," said Timothy Templeton, MGG's Technical Production Manager for Comic-Con Africa. "For me, eighty percent of an event depends on pre-production planning. This is also where you rely on the crew, and we would not have been able to accomplish, what I feel was a professional and seamlessly executed event, without them. The crew are a band

of brothers if you will. They have a competition culture which is great to see, and it's all about team effort."

Timothy Templeton

Not put off by the magnitude of the event, Tim segmented each location to run independently, the crew of thirty-five plus knowing exactly what was required of them, from the four-day set up to running the event. Attention to detail prevented any challenges on site. All equipment was labelled according to the allocated venue areas. Obtaining an extra day for rigging, made things even easier.

Comic-Con Main Stage

The main stage seated an audience of a thousand and carried a tangible air of excitement! This was the popular platform for South African cosplayers to jump in boots, wigs, body paint and all, as they represented characters from cartoons, comics, films, tv series and video games. The main stage area included panel discussions, Q&A sessions and interviews with celebrities in the comic book industry, such as the comic book writers, illustrators and a few international stars like Kevin Sussman (The Big Bang Theory).

"We deployed an Absen 2.9mm LED Screen (8m x 3m) which looked really cool," said Tim. "We used a DiGiCo SD11 at FOH for audio." Robe Robin LEDWash 600s and Clay Paky Sharpy's hung off Prolyte V40 truss were used for beam work. Robe LEDBeam 150s were positioned on the stage floor. They are great little fixtures!"

Pre-screening Rooms (x 4)

Absen 2.9mm LED Screens and L-Acoustics audio were used in all four pre-screening rooms. L-Acoustics ARCS Wide and

Focus coupled with SB 18m subs were located in the largest of the four pre-screening rooms. L-Acoustics 12XTs coupled with SB 18m subs were placed in the remaining three smaller pre-screening rooms.

"The sound reinforcement for those rooms was important, while the visuals had to be high res," he explained. "While the Absen 2.9mm hit the button I also absolutely loved the L-Acoustics and we were pleased to receive positive feedback from the international guests."

VS Gaming Arenas (x2)

The CSGO and DOTA2 gaming arenas both captivated and mesmerized all spectators, pro-gamers and novices alike. Pro Gamers were pitted against one another in heated battle in enclosed, soundproof booths, while spectators had a view of the game taking place on the ultra hi res Absen 2.9mm screen. "What is interesting about the gaming is that it's a serious, competitive event and includes panel discussions, commentary during the game and post-match
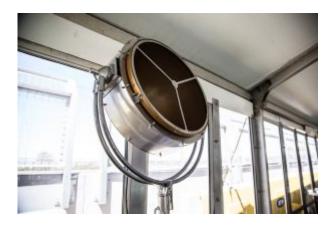
discussions, just as you would see for a regular football game aired on television," said Tim.

MTN Zone Stage

The outdoor MTN Zone proved to be a popular venue with MGG erecting their Prolyte Arc Roof for jam-packed entertainment that included live music and SA's favourite DJs. This zone also consisted of a VIP area, a screening area and hosted exclusive gaming competitions. A Vuepix 12mm LED screen was used for the backdrop of the stage while grandMA controlled the lighting aspects of the show.

Food and Expo Area

In addition, MGG had the responsibility for providing the audio solution for both the exhibition and food areas. "One thing that technically stood out for me was the comms solution that we put together for this," said Tim. "We covered an area of three floors and over 400meters. It was very stressful, but worked brilliantly in the end." MGG used the Clear Comms FreeSpeak system and integrated it with a wired comms system.

"There was an international expectation and scrutiny on the event," ended Tim. "Being Comic-Con's first event on the African continent, there was pressure to meet the global standard." The MGG technical team certainly did.

Photos: Anriette van Wyk