

## A tribute to the good times at Solid Studios



Many new friendships and partnerships have been forged during these tough Covid-19 times, such as the feel-good story of Capetonians [Alex Van Dyk](#) from [SOLID Group](#) and [Alan Muller](#) who created Solid Studios that ran from April to the start of October this year.

When the South African lockdown was first implemented, Alex and Alan initially started chatting over the phone about PPE, hoping to generate an alternative income. The conversation turned to how many people were now streaming, and they smiled, talking about newbies to the platform showing up with coffee in hand and dressed in slippers! It dawned on them that if they paired up, created a studio and ran it as if it were a tv paying client, they would achieve broadcast quality.

Alex is the owner of technical supply company Solid Group and had the space to facilitate a studio and the necessary quality gear, including a [Green Hippo](#) Amba+ media server. Alan, in turn, is a lighting designer for EDM and Dance Around the World type festivals, prior to lockdown working on 'We Love Summer' in Maputu, Lee John's Imagination mini tour, Sandsations EDM festival and some of Black Coffee's Africa is not a Jungle. In the industry for close to thirty years, he cut his teeth in the television market, particularly from a lighting point of view, and having worked with great directors over the years, has gained knowledge and skill for both tv lighting and set design.



“Alex and I met in person for the very first time over the Covid-19 period,” said Alan. “We looked at the Solid Group warehouse and decided to design a 10m x 10m studio. Being a television studio, we didn’t need a stage.” Based on the studio’s LED design, the Hippotizer was critical in how they expanded the set. With content playing a major role, they were also able to create abstract shapes and designs with the powerful tool.

“James Rogers, a passionate AV technician, ran and programmed the Hippotizer, while I controlled what content would be used and how,” says Alan. “I love the Hippotizer and it can do everything I need and more. Even when we had clients who were unsure of what they wanted, we could remap without issues.” While various directors stepped in to assist at the studio, like Henré Pretorius and Di Rosen, the crew were superstars. “With very little television experience, previously working at corporates, they really come to the party! They were eager to learn and blossomed. I would also like pay tribute to [Dylan James Edwards](#) who played an essential role in the live streaming component.”





With an emphasis to produce quality, the shows at Solid Studio ranged from DVD recordings, where artists launch their new albums and music videos, to corporate events. The studio hosted, amongst many others, the Shiraz 2020 Decanter World Wine Awards, The Leapfrog Property Group Awards, [Heinz Winckler](#)'s new music video 'Our Nation', the livestream concert by artist @Francois van Coke and Friends and the new music video 'Fall' by [Matthew Mole](#) and Francois van Coke. A highlight for the team was creating content for the [Ladles of Love](#)'s "Africa in Action" documentary which was created for the DSTV Channel and based on a charity campaign that provides 300 000 meals to people every week living in Cape Town, Hermanus and Port Elizabeth.



Solid Studios was also the Cape Town studio for the [#LightSAred](#) live broadcast, a campaign which saw 505 sites and buildings lit in red across South Africa to represent the live events industry. “We decided to put in an actual set and make a proper show out of the events happening on the day,” said Alan. “We didn’t have the money, but we had the skill and the time. For me it’s all about the people and with the amazing people who came on board, like [Dino Moran](#), it felt like old times.”

The pandemic sparked an interest in artists, some who had not recorded in years, and there were many acts of kindness demonstrated on the platform. “Eventually we had to make the decision to take down the studio. When we first began, we were able to cover some of the rent and pay the crew, but as restaurants and venues started opening up again, it has become unsustainable.”





On a positive note, the venture helped everyone to put bread on the table, form new relationships and allow work and creative juices to ease their minds. "I'm sure we will be seeing more hybrid events, and I hope as an industry, we will continue to move forward with safety in mind. I'm so glad we had this opportunity. It was fun, to say the least, and what a team. Thank you!"

Filmed in Solid Studios, 'Fall' is the new music video by Matthew Mole and Francois van Coke. Visit: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h3de0N4\\_MwY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h3de0N4_MwY)

Photo Credit:

@Liam Lynch, Dylan Edwards, Andrew Gorman and Alan Muller.

