

Insane at Miss Soweto 2020

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For the fourth consecutive year, Vimal Rawjee of Insane Sound and Lighting was appointed to supply the full technical for the Miss Soweto beauty pageant hosted at the Soweto Theatre in Jabulani, Johannesburg. The hybrid-event, accommodating one hundred guests and recorded for television, gave Vimal the opportunity to 'share the love' and hire extra hands – you couldn't have found a happier crew working on a production – while incorporating his 12 brand new Robe Lighting ESPRITE™ Profile LED fixtures with control on a grandMA2 and content running off a Green Hippo Karst media server.



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Having not worked on a large-scale production since the Covid-19 pandemic, the experience was a mixed bag of adrenalin and nostalgia. “The nerves,” says Vimal Rawjee, owner of Insane. “I was scared but excited, it has been a while! But I have a good team of guys who always step up and make my craziness happen as best we can, and this really was a milestone for us.”



Vimal also assisted with the artistic direction. Over the years he has become well accustomed to those 1am moments, where after a few scribbles, it’s off to Sketch Up and then, walla! A concept is born. “What I have learnt from Koogan Pillay, a master at Big Set Design, is to sit in the

audience and see what you are designing. All I want is for my client to walk in and say 'wow'. To my advantage, I have many toys to throw in to make my shows amazing. At Insane Sound we have grown from my granddad's garage to a well-equipped warehouse that has enabled us to meet international tech riders."



Courtesy Vimal Rawjee

The equipment used on the Miss Soweto event over the past four years has grown from two 6000 lumen projectors to now include over 200 LED panels. "While we are the main technical supplier, we sub hire from Bass Mechanics and ShowQuip, which is my way of spreading the love, and we are also responsible for the set design, content and the running of the show," he adds.

Lighting equipment included 12 Robe ESPRITE LEDs, 8 Robe LEDBeam150 Beams and 4 MAC Quantum Wash fixtures, while 212 LED screen panels were used for a striking backdrop, lighting control via a grandMA2 and content running off a Green Hippo Karst. The semi-circle Prolyte Stage included 70 Prolyte stage decks.

“Our new ESPRITE fixtures were used on the show,” he adds. “This was their first outing, and they were not stage shy! They did an amazing job and added so much to the production, even cutting through the LED panels. We didn’t get to use them to their full potential but lighting designer, Shaniel Lallao, was as impressed as I was.” The ESPRITE luminaire by Robe is the new workhorses of the industry and has a fast-change, low-cost, transferable light engine ingeniously solving the problem of performance longevity for those preferring the higher brightness of white source LEDs.

The Hippotizer was used for content on the panels. “Thanks to Mfundo Masikane who ran the AV, and Dylan Jones from DWR Distribution, we were able to use the machine to its full potential,” said Vimal. “Strangely enough, my client now also knows how to use the Hippotizer and just loves it!”



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Dylan Jones provided the Hippotizer technical support. “This was not a simple set up with all the LED screens, left, centre and right, making a single canvas,” Dylan explained. “Vimal had an interesting approach to making a panoramic background for the event. Each part of the show had a different look that completely changed the set for the Miss Soweto event. The idea really

worked well, with one of the backgrounds transforming the square-like structure into a banqueting house, where oversized chandelier set-pieces hung from above and really created glamour for the participating contestants.”

Working at The Soweto Theatre was very different from former years, with all safety precautions in place due to the Covid-19 pandemic. “I have to commend Lebugang Mnisi, the theatre’s Technical Manager, who was so helpful and full of vigour with his ‘get it done’ attitude,” said Vimal. “With some of the theatre’s crew self-isolating, the Soweto Theatre called on the Roodepoort Theatre’s Melony Eksteen and Ntombikayise Tshabalala to assist (both theatres fall under the Joburg Theatre Complex). I would have these two individuals at my side at any show, they were so helpful, enthusiastic and just made my set up that much easier.”



The entire working team put in extra effort, pleased to be able to work. Vimal explains, “Lighting operator Shaniel Lallo was super enthusiastic to be behind a desk again, while Bass Mechanic supplied an LED screen! They are always there to assist with whatever I need, and even helped with a last-minute com generator. Crewsaders Event Crew really pushed hard, and within five hours we were loaded out. A big thanks also to Ramesh Singh and Darlington Kwanda who worked extremely hard to make the set and technical come together. Supplier DWR Distribution popped over to visit and we had a few laughs, they helped with a technical issue, and then we laughed some more, but I am also thankful to the entire DWR team including Duncan Riley, Keith Pugin, Dylan Jones, Marlene Riley, Schalk Botha, and Robert Izzett.”



Vimal Rawjee of Insane with Duncan Riley of DWR

This was an occasion where Vimal really stepped in as a guardian to those working on the event. “We have been given a gift so that we can help others,” he reflects. “Sometimes we have to juggle between clients and budgets, our crews and suppliers. Do what is best for your people and make sure they have enough to live decent lives (food, homes and school fees). While it’s great to put on these shows, my reward is knowing that I helped so many others survive another month

and that is what makes me proud to be Insane.”

The high-profile event saw Thobile Steyn crowned as the Queen of Soweto.



Photos: Vimal Rawjee and designerphoto.co.za