

AVU delivers an unforgettable performance at Disney 100 Concert!



Once upon a recent time, the Incredibles of Don't Look Down Production and Agency brought a magical dose of joy to South Africa through the Disney 100 Concert, held in both Johannesburg and Cape Town. To transform their creative dreams into reality, they required the expertise and imagination of Guillaume Ducray and the AV Unlimited (AVU) team who in turn summoned two superhero-like individuals, Adriaan van der Walt and Renaldo van den Berg.



The live concert featured talented vocalists collaborating with the Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra, presenting scores and songs from Disney, Pixar, Marvel, and Star Wars classics. This unforgettable performance was elevated by the inclusion of captivating video clips and images displayed on an enormous

screen. The event first took place in April at the Gallagher Convention Centre in Johannesburg and was later hosted once again in July at the Grand Arena within the GrandWest Casino and Entertainment World in Cape Town.



“For DLD, the responsibility of producing the centenary celebration of one of the world’s best-loved entertainment brands presents equal measures of opportunity and challenge,” explains Glenn van Loggerenberg, owner and Executive Producer from Don’t Look Down. “Our long-standing AVU partnership has enabled many high impact live spectaculars, but the precise finesse displayed here affirms a technical collective capable of executing DLD’s most subtle creative too.”



Given the critical importance of sound, Adriaan van der Walt was entrusted with the role of sound designer and front-of-house (FOH) mix engineer. “Working with AV Unlimited is a great experience because the planning and

execution are of a very high standard,” says Adriaan. “It is a reminder that it’s not about the size of the company or event but rather about the teamwork of all the incredible individuals involved. Guillaume carefully picks his crew because he has very discerning clients and only wants to deliver the greatest shows possible.”

For the Cape Town leg, the audio incorporated the Grand Arena’s full L-Acoustics K2 system with DiGiCo Quantum 338 at the front of house mix position connected to two SD racks via Optocore. The racks were fitted with 32-bit cards.

“AV Unlimited supplied a DiGiCo Quantum 225 on-stage for monitor duty, connected to two MQ-Racks via MADI,” comments Adriaan. “The 225 received all the stage inputs via the Aux ports on the SD racks, connected via MADI. All microphones for the orchestra, in-ear monitoring for the soloists and a personal monitoring system for the conductor and principals were brought in for the production.”

As the orchestra was slightly smaller for the Cape Town run, there was a total of 74 input channels at the Grand Arena compared to 85 at Gallagher Estate. “The 338 session file is the product of a 225 session file which had to be converted using DiGiCo’s SDConvert software. It resulted in a very quick sound-check as I only had to make minor adjustments to the converted file, things like level and EQ changes. Being able to take a show from one type of SD or Quantum to another model is yet another reason why it is such a popular console among touring engineers.”



Adriaan says the level of detail when working on the DiGiCo platform for a dynamic show like Disney 100, was remarkable. “On a well-tuned PA system, like that at the Grand Arena, you get to experience how responsive the console is. Minor fader movements translated well into blending the different sounds together. With the new Quantum processing, you have all this power on board – it puts DiGiCo in a league of its own. One is really spoilt for choice between SD and Mustard EQ and dynamics – or even a combination of both! On top of this, you have more tools to sculpt your sound: the Spice Rack offers multiband-dynamics as well as dynamic EQ units to add into the mix. Very handy in a busy sonic landscape where multiple instruments and sounds compete with the vocal range.”

The end result was beautiful. “The sound system amplified the orchestra in a very natural-sounding way with lots of detail in the strings and woodwind sections, while still having the warmth of the cellos and contrabasses. Much of the percussive low-end of the timpanis and other drums came from the K2 system. The system has

loads of headroom which helped create very big moments – I like to ride the dynamics of the orchestra, paying close attention to the music and the conductor. As he builds the moments in each piece, I follow him, adjusting the levels to help deliver dramatic moments. My favourite part was mixing the same show five times in a row and then I have toad it's all about teamwork. Thank you to Berquin Hartszenberg and Kyle Freemantle for keeping the stage-end of things under control and for being such great people to work with.”

On the lighting front, Renaldo van den Berg created magic on the MA Lighting platform and from a control point of view, used a grandMA2 light and two grandMA2 nodes to run the system. “I've been a grandMA2 user for over the decade, and it's the only desk I will use until I have free time to move over to grandMA3,” he smiles. “I have started the processes, but once I make the final commitment, I need to make sure that I know it as well as the MA2, which has been a console that has made my life so much easier.”



A combination of lighting was used for the show including the Grand Arena's inhouse Robe LEDWash 600s and 600 Plus, BML Blades, Spiiders, and Pointes which Renaldo says was a great foundation from to run a small to medium show.

“This show was not about lighting, but lighting was important for the audience to see the orchestra which played a big part of the performance,” says Renaldo. “We had to position the lights to not interfere with the projection on the screens as the show relies on beautiful moments in Disney complimented with live music. For certain performances or scores, like the Pirates of the Caribbean, we created lighting effects to wow. This show has such a different format, it's not a music festival and it was really lovely to light and a privilege to once again work with AVU and Don't Look Down.”

