

Big Brother Africa All Stars with Robe

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Courtesy Louise Stickland

Pretoria, South Africa, based Blond Productions are supplying lighting – including Robe moving lights – sound and AV to the new Big Brother Africa All Stars Series, which sees 14 of the most controversial, popular and interesting housemates from the first 4 BB Africa series' battle it out for \$200,000 and their place in the annals of reality TV!

The BB house and studios is at Sasani Studios in Balfour Park, Johannesburg, South Africa.

It's the third time that Blond has supplied technical services for the Big Brother phenomenon, produced by Endemol South Africa for DSTV Africa, and lighting for the studio that hosts the opening and finale episodes plus the weekly eviction shows is designed by Peter Rieck. The set was designed by Dewet Meyer.

The studio is a small space, narrow and tall, and the lighting was required to be flexible and multifunctional, with every single fixture having to work hard and be dynamic to get the coverage needed. The brief included making the studio into a warm, inviting and 'real' environment for the audience and on camera – rather than a clinically and harshly illuminated standard TV studio look.



The

12 Robe ColorSpot 700E ATs and 24 Robe Scan 575XTs are positioned on an overhead trussing rig which fills the ceiling of the studio to provide lighting positions across the whole ceiling to target the stage, walkways and audience.

The ColorSpot 700s are used to light all of the entertainment and performance areas in the studio, with their punchy beams providing perfect camera-candy for wide shots. The Scan 575XTs are primarily used for side and back lighting over the audience, generally adding pizzazz, colour and zappy effects to the proceedings.

Twelve ColorSpot 250E ATs are stationed on the floor – along the back of the stage and catwalk – and used for some cool beamwork and for creating depth and background interest in all shots. They look particularly excellent on the jib shots as the camera swoops around the studio at lightning speed from it's high position.



Blonde's Christiaan Ballot explains that the company has been using Robe products for 4 years, since they first invested in the brand in 2006 to help light the first series of Big Brother in which they were involved. Their Robes have all been supplied by South African distributor DWR and are in constant use on a wide variety of shows and events serviced by Blond.

"They are extremely reliable" confirms Ballot, saying that they have never had any technical problems with any of their Robe units throughout all the 3 series of Big Brother that they have lit.

He thinks the speed and dynamics of the Scan 575XTs is excellent for TV style effects, and he also likes the gobo selection in these and in the 700s (which come supplied with an extra set for more choice). For Big Brother All Stars, the design utilises gobos extensively to create different and unusual beam effects rather than for traditional onto-surface projections.

Peter Rieck is controlling all the lighting from a grandMA full size console.

A big change for the studio rig in this series is its energy consciousness – an element that Blond really pushed for. LED wash lightsources are used extensively on the rig and for set illumination, and this has reduced the overall power consumption and enabled them to dispense with about 200 PAR cans from the previous series.



Blonde is also supplying its new 12 mm pitch SMD LED screen, which makes a large curved centrepiece to the side of the main stage area. This is used for displaying logos, graphics, VT play ins, a camera feed from the OB van from outside the building, covering external action, etc., and also receiving feeds from within the Big Brother House.

All the graphics and pre-recorded VT material for the screen are stored on a new MA Lighting media server which was purchased by Blond – also from DWR – for this series.