Crown Gospel Awards

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There was a mixture of excitement and nerves when Black Coffee were awarded technical supplier for the Fourth SABC Crown Gospel Music Awards held at the Durban International Convention Centre (ICC) in November 2011. Lighting Designer, Michael Broderick cautiously stepped in behind the grandMA 2 light console, his first time lighting for television. He needn’t have feared, the end-result looked spectacular.

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Before being awarded the job, Brandon Bunyan from Black Coffee gave Michael Broderick a call. “What do you know about television lighting,” he asked Michael. “Nothing, but I’m keen to give it a try,” came the answer!

“Brandon designed a really cool set,” explained Michael. While it was a large area Michael, with his considerate nature and philosophy of “Less is more,” did not want to hire in any unnecessary lighting.



There was the usual pressure setting up and Michael was concerned about not having enough programming time.

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Michael is meticulous and takes the job at hand personally, adding his signature to any work done. “I hoped it would be enough,” recalls Michael. “I spoke to Dave Whitehouse at DWR and asked what to look out for with television lighting. I also spoke to Nic Michaletos (Nicklelight), and his advice made me stay on the right course.

The technicalities of television lighting were vague to Michael, and he stuck to what rang true to him, something that looked visually attractive. He also believed that as most of the performers would have dark complexions, he wanted to maintain the warmth of the skin tone and decided not to go with “cooler light.” As a back-up, he had rolls of gel on standby should his theory fail. It didn’t.

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As Francis Reid once said, “Light is nothing until it hits something.” This was a concern for Michael. The stage had many LED screens, but this was not a conventional set and other than a handful of performers there was nothing to light. With the brightness of the LEDs, it was also difficult to see light beams and being a Televised event haze had to be kept to a minimum. Eventually the cameramen requested that the LED screen’s intensity be reduced. It was dropped to 7% output and lighting could come through!

“In retrospect I would have placed fixtures differently, but time was against us,” said Michael, “All in all I was happy with the end result”. This included the television director.

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Michael loves what he does. “The set up can take forever, never mind the second guessing over the selection of colour filters and then there is the long drawn out process of focussing. But when I bring up a fader, something happens and I go into another place, a place of complete abandonment, which I love. The day that stops, I’ll change careers. Once you sit behind the console and begin to see the possibilities that lie at your fingertips, it’s an amazing place to be.”

The grandMA2 light was the console for the Fourth SABC Crown Gospel Music Awards. “I love it,” said Michael. I still don’t work on it often enough to know it completely and I’m envious of your Nick Britz (DWR) who knows it so well.”



All the FOH lighting

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instruments were made up of an assortment of blondes, fresnels and parcans.

8 x Robe ColorBeam 700 lights were on the stage floor. “They were incredibly impressive,” said Michael. The 24 x Robin 600s were used for top, side and back light.”

An additional 12 x Robe ColorSpot 575s were used as backlight and hung at drop down intervals, while 12 x Robe ColorWash 700s were also used for side and back light.

“I was impressed with the Robin 600s,” said Michael. They were very useful and worked beautifully.” Michael found the ColorSpot 575s battled to punch through, and also lost intensity when mixing colours.

“Could I have done better,” Michael asks himself. “Yes, but over time I’ve realized you can’t beat yourself up too much about it and sometimes there are unforseen parameters, some things that are beyond your control. I added as much creativity and beauty as I could, and then I learn from what I could not achieve.”

The show was broadcast on SABC. The show looked amazing, the photos speak a thousand words. Well done Black Coffee and Michael Broderick!

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