DWR welcomes Stuart Andrews!

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Duncan Riley of DWR Distribution takes pleasure in welcoming Stuart Andrews to the team.

DWR Distribution is pleased to announce the addition of Stuart Andrews to take on the position of projects and operations manager.

“I’m so positive and happy to be back in South Africa and at DWR,” said Stuart, who has lived in Rwanda and Dubai for well over a year since the Covid-19 pandemic. “I think this move had been on the cards for some time, to be honest. I had wanted to change out of the rental and production side of the industry for some time now, and I’ve always been close to the people at DWR; a

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company respected within the industry and one with extremely high standards in terms of service delivery and client management.”

Enjoying a vibrant career in the live events industry for the past thirty years, Stuart initially started working as a sound technician in 1992 while completing a Bachelor of Commerce degree at the University of KwaZulu Natal’s Pietermaritzburg campus. It was a tug of war with subjects like economics and business management on the one side, and his involvement in the student radio station and organizing concerts pulling him in a different direction!

Once he had graduated, Stuart freelanced as a sound technician in Durban for smaller companies until he took on a permanent position at the Wild Coast Sun, taking care of the theatre, show bar and conference centre’s audio requirements. It is also here where he met his wonderful wife Debbie, a dancer in some of the shows staged at the venue, who has remained his pillar of love and strength ever since. The couple moved up to Johannesburg when Stuart joined Caesars Palace, today known as Emperors Palace, and in 2000 they relocated to Dubai for three years, where he headed up the audio-visual department at the Jumeirah International Hotel Group and worked as a Project Manager at Protec (Production Technology). When returning to South Africa in 2003, Stuart joined Gearhouse South Africa for a period of seventeen years, fulfilling various positions from Project Manager, Branch Operations Manager in Durban, heading the lighting department in Johannesburg, and finally appointed as the Johannesburg Operations Manager, a role he fulfilled for two years.

More recently, and just before the Covid-19 pandemic, Stuart joined Sound Stylists as General Manager. “It wasn’t the longest stay, not through choice but just the Covid-19 situation, really. As companies in Johannesburg could not operate due to the pandemic restrictions, I took up contract work with Rwanda Events Group and the BK Arena (Formerly known as Kigali Arena),” he explains. “Then my old friend, Eddie Mulrainey, who runs a company called 3DB in Dubai, offered me a role of a Project Manager, where I worked for the past nine months whilst my family continued living in Johannesburg.”

Duncan Riley of DWR Distribution is pleased to have Stuart on board, appreciating his good nature and expertise to help streamline the company’s operations. “Stuart and I have always had a professional relationship and have remained friends over the years, through thick and thin,

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whether Gearhouse purchased gear from us or our competitors," smiles Duncan. "I've always liked and respected Stuart, and it's really great to welcome him to the team."

For Stuart, the last few years have been a process building up to this moment. "As much as we hated what Covid-19 did and the way governments across the world chose to deal with our industry, it also shook many people, myself included, and changed our perspective of what was important. It made me realize that no job is sacred, no position is guaranteed, and you need to be versatile, agile, and open to new things. I am happy to step out of my comfort zone with new roles and new challenges because I feel a lot more confident. Obviously, during the pandemic, everyone felt worthless when we lost our jobs, cars, homes and our livelihoods. We wondered why we had followed this career for 25 years to just become a 'throw away' industry with no value and no support globally."

But it's a new day and there is excitement in the air. "The industry is getting back on its feet again, it's needed once more, and it's positive to see people working," says Stuart. "There is such a good spirit and while we obviously mourn the companies that fell by the wayside, and we mourn the colleagues we lost; we have come out stronger. You realize what is a luxury and what is a necessity and, when you look at your list of necessities it's quite small. What's important is family obviously, that always going to be an absolute priority, and as long as they are happy and you are together that's goal number one for me, putting food on the table, a roof over their heads and paying the school fees. If I'm happy in the way I can provide these things, even better, and I think I'm going to be happy at DWR, I just feel it. I've known everyone at DWR for years, almost since day one. I remember DWR coming down to do roadshows in Durban and when I was running the Gearhouse Lighting Department we worked side by side with everyone in the company – I have had most of their telephone numbers in my phone for years! Walking into a happy working environment with people I know is so much easier."

Admittedly a bit of a workaholic, Stuart's greatest priority is his family. "I love spending time with Debbie and the kids where we do old fashioned things like picnics and going for walks." Usually, once a week, he takes his daughters to the library, instilling his love for reading. "I am an absolute bookworm," he smiles. "I read a lot of classical literature and over the last five years have explored African writing from around the continent."

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