

Gearhouse flies high with Emirates

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Story and pics courtesy Louise Stickland

Gearhouse South Africa's Durban and Johannesburg branches combined resources and skills to provide all technical production – including rigging, sound, lighting, AV and sets – required for the high profile launch of Emirates Airline's new non-stop service between Durban and Dubai.

The show was produced by Emirates with support from The Event Production Company and staged at the award winning Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre in Durban. It was project managed for GHSA by Durban branch operations manager, Stuart Andrews, who comments, "Emirates is a six star client and extremely precise in their requirements. Our local knowledge of the venue coupled with the fact that we could draw on expertise from other areas in the company to supply elements like the bespoke staging, enabled us to deliver these exacting standards".

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The event was divided into three distinct areas, all requiring individual treatments.

The 1300 invited guests, including local VIPs, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Durban and other civic dignitaries, were first welcomed into a cocktail reception – which saw the venue’s foyer transformed into an environment of Emirates First Class hospitality. Once registered, they enjoyed a glass of champagne and music from Durban jazz combo Beat Route.

Gearhouse supplied a 6 x 4.8 metre stage, with a custom backdrop and fascia created by Sets, Drapes and Screens (SDS) which is also part of the Gearhouse SA Group. An L-Acoustics 115 PA system was installed for the band, and the stage was subtly lit with ETC Source Four PARs and i-Pix BB4 LED wash lights. Two plasma screen walls were utilised for moving wallpaper and showing Emirates video clips.

Next, they passed through to an auditorium environment where the main presentation took place. This was a large area with tiered seating, featuring a flown lighting rig over the stage and a 15 metre wide by 4 metre high projection screen at the back of this.

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The show was a slick, action-packed, fast-track introduction to Dubai and the products and services offered by Emirates. It was presented by local TV celebrity Jailoshini Naidoo.

Marcel Wijnberger from Gearhouse Media, Johannesburg, co-ordinated the video, working with Emirates' Manager of Video Communications Mike Siddaway, who had produced all the show content in Dubai.

Content was stored on two AV Stumpfl Wings servers (master & slave) and run in double HD (3384 x 1080 pixels), with two synched picture-in-picture video windows left and right of the screen and a high resolution background still covering the entire surface area. The PiPs showed a mix of playback video footage, live camera feeds and PowerPoint graphics.

A Barco Encore system was used to size and switch all sources to the screen which was fed by four double stacked Christie 18K projectors (2 running live and 2 as hot backup).

The PA was an L-Acoustics dv-DOSC system, complete with a Yamaha LS9 mixer.

Lighting for this and the other two areas was designed by Jason Fritz. The presentation area featured a mix of Martin Professional MAC 2K Profile and Robe ColorWash 700E AT moving light fixtures, plus a selection of conventionals, all programmed on an MA Lighting grandMA full size console and used to highlight the stage and set, and illuminate the room.

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Once the presentation was finished, it was party time! Guests entered an interactive buffet dinner and experienced the international culinary flavours for which Emirates is renowned.



South Africa's favourite current rock band The Parlotones were secreted behind a scenic wall – built by SDS. This was flown out to reveal them, followed by a lively set which delighted the audience.

The stage was lit with Robe ColorWash and ColorSpot 700E ATs plus conventional lights controlled by an Avolites Pearl 2008 console, and the sound system spec'd for this room was L-Acoustics Kudo, with HiQ115s for stage monitors and a Yamaha M7 mixer.

The main challenge for the Gearhouse SA team was time. They got in on Saturday afternoon, and had to deliver all rooms ready for Monday morning rehearsals. "All went very smoothly," reports Andrews, "We all enjoyed a very positive collaboration between the Gearhouse crew and the teams from Emirates and The Event Production Company".