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South African lighting designer and programmer Andre Siebrits has steadily built his expertise on grandMA3 consoles, contributing to large-scale productions across the country and even abroad. With a deep understanding of the system, Andre recently added a Luminex GigaCore 10i — a Gigabit Ethernet switch supplied by DWR Distribution — to his setup, and it has made a significant difference to his workflow.

“To be honest, I got quite a wake-up call when MA Lighting visited South Africa last year and saw that we had a dumb switch at front of house—just for programming and to connect laptops and things like that. They strongly discouraged it because it actually has a huge impact on networks,” says Andre Siebrits. Due to the way it handles packets and gets them to the right place at the right time, a managed switch like the GigaCore 10i is designed to support the most advanced lighting and AV protocols out of the box and is the backbone for a converged network, allowing multiple applications to co-exist on the same network.

“Luminex and MA speak with each other—it recognises MA stations, allows you to monitor networks and sessions—so going from a dumb switch to a managed switch, Luminex was the obvious choice.”



Andre Siebrits

A dumb switch is a basic device that simply shares the network with anything you plug into it. It sends all network data to all connected devices, without any filtering. Because MA Networks are so advanced, this can cause problems by overloading the system with unnecessary data going everywhere instead of just where it's needed.

"That doesn't really affect a two- or three-universe show," says Andre, "but since we started breaking 100 universes last year, network integrity has become a serious consideration. It's no longer just about connecting two consoles and a couple of NPUs. It's something you have to manage properly. Going with a managed switch is amazing because we have so many different protocols running—some things need Art-Net, some need sACN, some need NDI, I need to receive audio over the network like Dante—so if you don't have managed switches, you end up with a pile of switches at front of house."

He adds that with technical supply companies like MGG and Stage Effects recently moving their entire lighting system onto the Luminex platform, it makes even more sense. "When I'm in pre-viz or prep, I can



set up my switcher, and it's ready for plug-and-play on site. Now I can arrive at FOH and everything is already set up the way I like it. I know where my Dante goes, where MA Net goes, where ArtNet and NDI go. It's all plugged in. I speak to the network people, we set up all the VLANs the same, and that's a huge benefit."

With several major shows, stadium setups, and ongoing pre-production still ahead this year, Andre is simply grateful to have a switch that reliably meets his needs.

A key influence in this move to Luminex came by the person of Kyle Freemantle. Prior to joining DWR this year, Kyle worked on large-scale shows in South Africa, developing powerful networking systems.

"Having worked regularly with Kyle over the years, I phone him a lot," smiles Andre. "He was the one who pushed the network infrastructure, and it really made a difference. Yes, we paid our school fees, and yes, there were learning curves—but in the bigger picture of shows, it really made things so much easier. For example, on stadium shows, instead of having to run copper lines to the RoboSpots, Luminex DMX nodes speak RoboSpot language, and you can have it all running on the backbone we're already using. So Luminex and lighting just go together—especially if you use MA."

It's not out of reach for smaller companies to start investing. "Even if you're a small company, one day you'll want to take on bigger things. Making one big investment at a time isn't easy, but if you start now with at least a properly managed front-of-house system, you can scale from there," Andre encourages. "You can start small because everything is integratable and built from there. That's why I went for the 8-port. For my FOH solution, it's enough. MGG needed larger units, but it's all cross-compatible—almost plug and play—and it just works."

DWR Distribution support Luminex in South Africa and is excited about the future of what this product and the likes of Luminodes and LumiSplit can offer to the industry.