

Girl power at Battle of the Bands!



The Best Lighting Designers at this year's St Mary's Battle of the Bands were all young ladies. The annual competition was hosted on 17th May at The Edge Theatre at Saint Mary's, Johannesburg and was made even more exhilarating with two celebrity judges attending the finale – Prime Circle's Marco Gomes and The Parlotone's Neil Pauw!



DWR Distribution were proud to be a sponsor for the fourth consecutive year, supplying lighting gear and audio for the event along with prizes for the best young lighting designers. The rig included 2 Robe MegaPointes, 6 Robe Robin LEDBeam 100s, 8 Robe Spikies, 4 Robe CycFX8 and 2 Robe DL4 S Profiles all controlled on a dot2 XL-F. For the sound requirements, a DiGiCo S31 was in control along with 2 Quest HPI18LP band-pass 18" sub bass, 2 HPI12S" Powered Full Range Speakers and 1 Quest QA3004 Stereo Power Amplifier 1100W.



DWR were proud to present each of the 13 up-and-coming lighting designers with a DMXKing dongle. The winning group also received tickets to attend one of Australia's most successful theatrical export, Dein Perry's Tap Dogs, which will make its way to the Teatro at Montecasino in August. Thanks to Alistair Kilbee from Gearhouse Splitbeam, this will include a backstage tour of the production.



"Eight bands entered this year, and while I have never been involved in Battle of the Bands before, I was impressed with the variety of genre and song," said Sasha Ehlers, the Edge Manager, who for the first time headed the competition from technical to project management. "I love that we are obviously nurturing future talent, but I also love that we are able to introduce concepts, ideas and abilities to kids at a young age that many would usually only experience after school. I also love it that the kids are able to be challenged, scared and overwhelmed but are guided to realize what they are capable of."



Usually each band competing in the competition is lit by their own operator. This year, small groups of three or more students lit each band instead of an individual. Ehlers explains that the lighting designer girls were grouped together as many of them were new to lighting and the dot2 and they are mostly very young. "They were tentative to go on their own but really wanted to be a part of it. We felt that as an educational institution, rather than prevent them from participating we would let them all learn together. It worked out extremely well as many of the girls are stepping up to assist with school lighting projects and are so driven and passionate."



Marco Gomes (Prime Circle) , Neil Pauw (The Parlotone's) and Duncan Riley of DWR.

With the attendance of Prime Circle and the Parlotones, the hype was even bigger. "It is so inspiring for the students to know that people in the industry are willing to watch and applaud them – not just mom," grinned Ehlers. "They definitely brought their *A Game* to the table."



Jannie de Jager from DWR played an active role in the event with assistance on the technical side, and also judged the lighting design category. "Every year I see so much passion in the students," he said. "The amount of energy they put into their Lighting Designs really puts a smile on my face. The industry is built on hard work and passion, and this is where it all starts. The judging criteria was very strict this year but this is all relevant because of the competitive nature of our industry. The manner in which the students conducted themselves was on a professional level, without parallel. And yes, passion is where it all starts, and skills will come later."



As always, there were students who stood out. “I was super impressed with Erin Kersten, a 14-year-old grade 10 student who has never done lighting before,” said Ehlers. “She was so nervous, but I think she excelled and needs to be nurtured as we move forward. This is a phenomenal experience for so many students. I especially appreciate that some do not have access to this equipment and experience at their schools have an opportunity to learn and be exposed to it here. I know that one particular girl from Parktown Girls would like to pursue lighting design as a career.”



Congratulations to the grand winners. In the lighting design category, first place went to Saint Mary's Zaneli Steeneveldt, who was assisted by Ghita Economakis and Sanam Soni. In second place, St Mary's Erin Kersten was assisted by Ella Roseveare, Amy Leishman, Jordan Dart and Caitlin Bloom. Third place was awarded to Parktown Girls, a joint effort by Leia Singh, Lailah Naidoo and Roxana van Weely.



