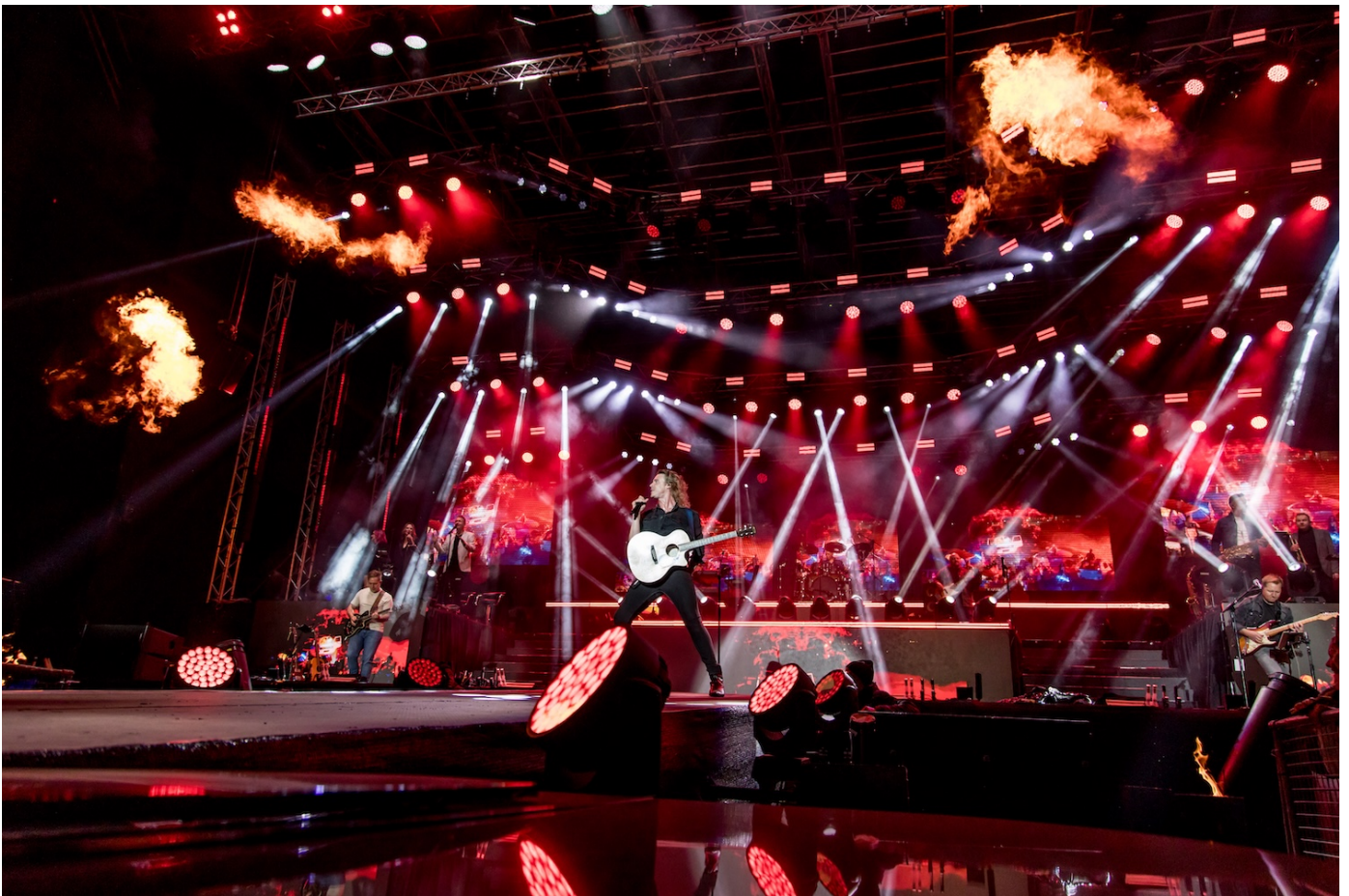


Innibos 2024: Unforgettable Lighting and Sound Experience

Posted on May 30, 2025



The Innibos National Arts Festival always has a special charm, and the 2024 edition was no

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exception. Held from June 27 to 30 in the Lowveld (*Mbombela*), it featured vibrant markets with homemade goods, stunning art, captivating books, engaging drama, and incredible music.

MGG was once again chosen by the Production Team's Johan Ferreira (Lighting Designer, Technical Director and Producer) and Murray Lubbe (Production Manager, Music Producer and Sound Engineer), to build a large format outdoor stage and provide the technical. Each year, they outdo themselves, perfectly matching the needs of artists like Droomsindroom, Dr Victor & the Rasta Rebels, Spoegwolf, Elvis Blue, Francois van Coke, Juanita du Plessis, Karlien van Jaarsveld, and the Mzansi Youth Choir. The lighting rig had 382 fixtures, and the sound system delivered a loud 116 dB at FOH, with DiGiCo and Fourier Audio Transform Engine playing a key role in the fantastic audio experience.

Johan Ferreira has been part of the festival since 2005, and he has worked on the main stage since 2007. "The evolution of the main stage lighting design has been massive over the festival's lifetime," Johan shares. "We started with a lighting rig that was mostly generic with a few moving heads. The show structure was also completely different from what we have today. However, from the beginning, our mission was to create a main stage show that stood out. This mission made us push the stage and lighting design each year, and I am very proud of what we do at Innibos today. The production evolved from a couple of fixtures to hundreds of fixtures, and ironically I think we use less power today versus the parcan rigs of 20 years ago! Although this was the second Innibos since the pandemic halted everything in 2020, this year truly felt like the festival was officially back, running the way it should be."

Johan's first step was setting up the iconic stage design that specifically targeted the Afrikaans market. "Murray Lubbe contributed brilliant ideas this year, giving the stage a fresh, new look," he says.

Next, Johan focused on the lighting design, aiming for an open feel that showcased the stage's height and scale. He used angled trusses, and raked from front to back, creating a unique look compared to traditional straight trusses. Dedicated performance positions were also set, ensuring each had its own look and feel. Throughout, Johan emphasised creating visually engaging backgrounds, ensuring every audience angle or camera shot remained dynamic.

Many crew members have been with Innibos since its start in 2004, and MGG has handled the technical management for the past nine years. Each year, their goal is to find better, safer, and more efficient methods to ensure the success of the country's largest outdoor musical festival.

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Pre-planning takes eight to ten months, during which Project Manager Günther Müller relies on MGG's Department Heads to brainstorm and explore new enhancements for the show.

"What really stood out was the dedication of everyone behind the scenes," says Günther. He ensured the crew's well-being during setup, showtime, and strike, focusing on a healthy and supportive environment. He organised sunblock, wood for fires, and braais, emphasising the importance of every role, from mic placement to lighting operation. "Building strong friendships, things like sharing stories around the fire keeps the MGG team together and fosters our unique culture."



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Audio is crucial for this event, and MGG was eager to test their DiGiCo Quantum 338s and new Fourier Audio Transform Engine purchased from DWR Distribution. This allows Murray Lubbe to fully use his audio plugins, aiming to replicate the studio sound in live performances. “The new system lets me bring much of what I achieved in the studio to the live setting,” Murray comments. The transform engine is unique because it combines the host PC for plugins and audio server all in one box, enabling the engineer to process 64 racks of VST3 plugins at once via DANTE with low latency.

This was a first for the festival where DiGiCo was used for both Front of House and monitors in one ecosystem. Thanks to the DiGiCo Quantum Pulse software upgraded on the consoles, channel counts were not a concern at all. Prior to the update, multiple consoles were needed for the demanding channel count. The DiGiCo Pulse software was welcomed by the monitor engineer, Gert Watson, who managed this demand on a single console—a significant milestone for the concert.

The sound system was predominantly an L-Acoustics setup, featuring everything from ARCS to K1. Just before the festival, MGG received eight new KS28 subs and an additional four LA12X units. Kyle Freemantle and Jonathan Green played a crucial role as system techs by assisting in pre-planning, setup, tuning and system management for the festival.

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For performing artists, the platform was nothing but professional. “Quick and efficient sound checks highlight the importance of having the right crew,” says Günther. “In South Africa, only a select group of professionals has the experience for these high-profile shows, understanding artists’ needs before they even step on stage. This expertise ensures everything runs smoothly and hassle-free. The audio team feels like part of the band, with each piece of equipment, from consoles to microphones, playing a crucial role. With Fourier, we aim to deliver an experience that closely mirrors the artist’s studio recordings.”

Johan Ferreira ran the show using a grandMA2 full size and grandMA3 processing units and nodes in MA2 mode to handle the high DMX demands of fixtures like Jolt Bars FX and ROXX Cluster B4

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FC LED Blinders. “The ADJ Jolt Bars have been exceptional—cost-effective yet impactful, especially combined with ROXX,” Johan adds. “The ROXX fixtures are phenomenal with an IP rating for outdoor use and a versatile colour version. While they can be used as crowd blinders, we mainly used them for colour effects that surpass traditional setups. Their LED technology also means no frequent bulb changes during the festival.”

The festival organizers regularly reach out to high school students to provide them with hands-on experience. This year, students interested in followspotting worked with the Robe RoboSpot system alongside the crew. RoboSpot’s main advantage was improving safety by allowing staff and students to operate from the ground, rather than from 8 meters up. The MGG team, who had attended RoboSpot training at DWR, shared their expertise with the students. The system features a BaseStation with a large HD touch screen and Vision and Night modes. Even in a blackout, the camera tracks performers, making the followspotting cleaner and more effective.

“This year was the first time using RoboSpots for Innibos and WOW, it made such a massive difference to the show,” remarks Johan. “Every pick-up was smooth and precise, something that can be very difficult on this kind of show, as there are no rehearsals. I think that the operators were also very happy not standing in a tower freezing in the middle of winter.”

He adds that he loved every piece of gear that was on this show, from the older Robe LEDWash 600 to the newer Jolts. “Everything empowered me to create the best show possible. I created clusters of fixtures in my design and this helped me to create some powerful looks with Robe MegaPointes in the centre and Robe LEDBeam 150s on all the angled trusses. I used the Jolt Panels as well as ROXX for punch from the top of the rig and Jolt Bars on the stage for a sophisticated, subtle line of light or a bright flash when needed for the big moments. I used Robe LEDWash 600s and Spiiders for most of my stage washes – I have always been in love with Robe’s amazing colour mixing.”

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On the visual side, MGG recently acquired a new printer for their fabrication department, which was first used for printing scrims for the Innibos stage. “We even printed and installed the University of Mpumalanga banners, who are partners of the Innibos festivals, ourselves,” says Günther. “It’s amazing that nearly everything—from power and structures to rigging, lighting, video, and audio—came together in-house, with only a few pieces of gear sourced externally. This is a major milestone for us.”

Günther adds, “I was talking with the music directors for the Saturday night’s performance and realised that Innibos was just the beginning of a busy season that would run for the next six months. It’s a long haul, but we often forget how privileged we are to be part of these kinds of

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productions. Sometimes, we need to take a step back and realise it's a lifelong dream for many so, take a moment to appreciate what you've achieved—it's special."

Ends Johan Ferreira, "I had an incredible festival. In such a high-pressure environment it's important to have the right team that backs you. The amazing MGG team with Günther Müller as PM was a joy to work with. The dedication from every person on this team made the show as spectacular as it was. I am humbled to be a part of the Innibos creative team and look forward to the next 20 years!"

Photos courtesy Kief Kreativ