

KKNK festival Oudtshoorn 2015



Main stage at KKNK 2015

Photos by Hans van der Veen

The story goes that some 21 years ago, when KKNK (Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees), the Afrikaans arts festival took place for the first time, the Goth-like techies arrived in their Dr Martens and black attire ready to set up in the town of Oudtshoorn. It didn't take them long, in the heat of the day, to strip down, girls in their black bras and black dyed hair, the boys going shirtless. Huge trucks were used to distribute gear and the crew would climb on top of the cabs and drive through town. A photo of the street procession was taken and made the headline in the local newspapers, "*Duiwels kinders besoek Oudtshoorn,*" (Devil's children visit Oudtshoorn).

The festival, some 1 120 kilometres from Johannesburg and 400 kilometres from Cape Town, is now embraced by all the towns people as accommodation is booked up with people flocking in to see theatre on a big scale – some are hosted in the 'veld' – and to enjoy the big names on stage and wonderful Little Karoo hospitality. This year's festival was hosted from 3 -11 April, where Blond Productions, assisted by MGG Productions, supplied the full technical for the main stage and Kyknet stage.



Stunning images of KKNK 2015 by Hans van der Veen.

Indeed, most South African industry players cut their teeth at the **Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees** ([Afrikaans](#) for [Little Karoo National Arts Festival](#), abbreviated to *KKNK*), many of them returning not for the money, but the on-going experiences: a fine mix of nostalgia, new memories and nose to the grindstone!

Since day one, Pieter-Jan Kapp, better known as Kappie from PJK, has been involved initially as a young technician employed by Production Projects (to date a faithful longstanding suppliers of the festival) and for the past eight years as the technical manager for this annual event.



Kappie explains that in the good old days The National Arts Festival in Grahamstown, established by British emigrants in 1974 and a predominantly English celebration, would host the Afrikaans leg of the arts in the locomotive sheds.



This Afrikaans venue was such a hit that Nic Barrow, a businessman from Oudtshoorn and Andrew Marais, a former PR Manger for Naspers, a South African publishing firm, toyed with the idea of hosting a purely Afrikaans Festival in Oudtshoorn. In 1994, which incidentally saw the first democratic elections in South Africa, planning for KKNK commenced with the first festival was hosted in 1995.

“Oudtshoorn was conservative and when the festival was too rough and people partied too hard, some sponsors would pull out,” smiles Kappie. But instead of dying out, KKNK became as much a tourist attraction in Oudtshoorn as visiting the Congo Caves, and also resulted in the establishment of sister festival Aardklop in Potchefstroom and supporting the Innibos festival in Nelspruit, Mpumalanga.



Kappie says that KKNK is adapted to budget and sponsorship every year, and the generous way rental companies have given back, has ensured a high standard. “If it weren’t for companies like MGG Productions, Blond Productions, The Sound Corporation, SS Stage Structures and Equipment and Production Projects, we wouldn’t have had these pictures,” he says, referring to the photos of the stunning looking main stage. “We saw something different this year. It’s amazing, everyone keeps on giving, and there are no words to thank them,” said Kappie.



Besides the high tech equipment, a remarkable crew steps in. Each year, young blood merges with the old, eager to learn and get the t-shirt. In fact, a couple of years ago, Kappie was approached by a young student named Laurika, who so passionately wanted to be involved with the festival that she offered to work for free. “I looked at this skinny, fragile girl and thought she would not last,” he recalls. “Three or four festivals later though, and she is running venues at KKNK!”



There is a trade secret to festivals though! "It's one thing to learn your trade and know your equipment, but how we determine who will cut the grade is when the ramp comes out and it's time to unload the truck," he laughs.

Blond Productions supply Main Stage



Christiaan Ballot from Blond

For the first year, Blond Productions supplied the full technical for the Main Stage and for the second year the Kyknet Stage at ABSA KKNK. MGG Productions supplied additional equipment and crew. The Prolyte Lighting Grid, with the inclusion of 12 brand new Proluft Aetos 500kg motors, was lit up with a fantastic Robe lighting rig.

Besides the main stage, which included a line up of the top Afrikaans names in music, the entire town of Oudtshoorn was transformed for the festival, some 20 venues created from school halls and churches.



KKNK held in 2013. Lighting supplied by Blond.

"I've worked on 13 KKNK festivals and it's a place in the industry where you can learn a lot," said Christiaan Ballot, owner of Blond Productions. "Kappie has been a great guy to work with and he has taught and mentored us over the years. When I was still studying at Pretoria Technicon, Kappie was already there. Mark Gaylard from MGG also worked on the festivals with me... now years later, we are suppliers. I enjoy going and for me it's something special, the place where it all started, a two week working holiday."



KKNK 2013



There were five days to set up and the stage looked remarkable. It included 48 x Robin 100 LEDBeam, 12 Robe Robin 600 Beams, 24 x Robin 1200 LED Wash, 12 x Clay Paky A.leda B-EYE K20, 18 x Clay Paky Alpha Profile 1500, 12 x Philips Showline SL NITRO 510 & 4 Robe BMFL Lights. Control was via a grandMA2 Full Size, NPU, VPU and grandMA2 on PC for support. Lighting designer and programmer, Hein Stroh from Blond, created wonderful looks and effects which varied from lighting a Full Symphony Orchestra to something more striking for Belgian pop star Dana Winner, Kurt Darren, Karen Zoid and many other performers.



A rocking show, also taken in 2013.

The Lighting grid comprised of Prolite H40, Prolite 52SV trusses. “We have used Prolite for three years and it’s a great product,” commented Christiaan. “Our new motors are silent and reliable.”

Video footage was displayed on 140 VuePix 12mm panels. “The client was blown away!” he added.

“KKNK is always hard work but it’s fun,” ended Christiaan. “Everyone jumps in to make it a success.”

It’s a full circle for both Christiaan and Mark Gaylard, who started off as crew and are now respected suppliers to the event, giving back to something they both believe in.