

Lightship Gets Enterprising with grandMA

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Lightship Productions, owned and run by the enterprising Ni-Lou Breytenbach, is the latest South African lighting production, design and delivery specialist to invest in MA Lighting control with the purchase of a grandMA Command Wing, delivered by SA distributors, DWR.

Lightship works across all industry sectors including corporate and live events, TV productions and theatre shows, the latter hailing back to Ni-Lou's industry roots. His varied workload includes designing and programming his own shows, providing operating and FOH co-ordination / support services for others and working as a lighting systems engineer.

Ni-Lou owns some control kit himself - to keep the business agile and flexible - and has developed symbiotic relationships with other rental and equipment suppliers, a main one being Pretoria based Stage Effects run by Theo Papenfus - to help deliver the larger shows.

"With business expanding, the time was right to invest in a powerful industry standard control surface," he explained "with MA being an obvious choice - it's what most top level shows are using".

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Familiar with a competitor lighting control brand for many years, his first proper hands-on encounter with an MA console was at a venue where he had to patch and set-up fixtures that were rented in as extras. He'd never used an MA console before, and within 15 minutes had worked out the basics when it came to testing the lights.

"I figured that if I could do that in a few minutes, never having used the platform before, it had to be good".

As a systems tech and FOH 'babysitter' for numerous international shows and tours, Ni-Lou also noticed that it was "MA, MA, MA" much of the time at FOH. Numerous conversations with both international and South African based LDs confirmed that MA was the default choice for most major shows ... and it reached a point in Lightship's development where Ni-Lou knew they needed to offer grandMA.

He still needed faders - for his busking shows - and also command functions. Price was also a consideration, so the Command Wing was a perfect entry level option for his journey into MA world, with the option to expand on this module with extra components like the Playback Wing.

The Command Wing is a starting point for a system that can be expanded as and when you are ready, with modules that dovetail together practically and elegantly to provide an affordable upgrade path to match your expansion as capital becomes available.

The free MA 3D Visualiser that comes with the console was another big selling point for Ni-Lou - it can import all his CAD drawings, renders and system layouts.

Ni-Lou admits he has much to learn on the new console, but already "you can see that you're not going to run out of options with it," he comments. He especially likes the interactive qualities and the way the screens, main functions like presents - and other 'real-estate' can be arranged to suit personal style and preferences. "It's really logical and has a nice flow," he concludes.

Ni-Lou's industry career started in the theatre on campus at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein, and he also worked as a freelance lighting and systems tech on concerts and music shows in and around the town. He founded Lightship Productions in 2006 and moved to Pretoria in 2010 as the corporate side of his business expanded.