

## MA3 drives Idols South Africa



Lighting designer Joshua Cutts was thrilled to drive a grandMA3 for the Idols South Africa 2018 finale hosted at Carnival City in Johannesburg.

Hot on the heels of American Idols – the singing competition which has enjoyed 16 seasons since initially being aired in 2002 – Idols South Africa has completed its 14<sup>th</sup> season with season 15 already confirmed for 2019. Remarkably, the viewership in South Africa has grown, and while 2017 was thought to be record breaking year with 98 million votes, this past season saw 142 million votes!



The dream team worked together for the ninth consecutive year and comprised of Dream Sets, who were the full technical supplier headed by Project Manager Eben Peltz, lighting and set designer Joshua Cutts from Visual Frontier, and the producers, [sic] Entertainment with Gavin Wratten once again the Executive Producer and Director. The broadcast was aired on the Mzansi Magic Network.



Going back to the drawing board, Joshua sat down with Gavin Wratten and sketched some shapes. “We had done circles and squares before and we wondered what shapes we should do this year,” Joshua recalls. “We started with triangles which we found were not enough of a shape. So, we extended them and made them abstract triangles. I had to think of a way to make them interlink amongst each other. It was less about a

construction of major set pieces and rather about using existing stock to achieve something.”

The end result was the tallest set the team had ever created in Carnival City's Big Top Arena, reaching almost 13m high. “The set is a Prolyte trussing structure,” said Joshua. “It was a challenge to rig, but I gave the drawings to Eben Peltz from Dream Sets and he and the rigging team built it perfectly, exactly as per my drawing, which I find amazing. Eben and I know each other so well that we can preempt what the other is going to do. I know what will help him in his job and he knows what challenges I might give him, so we work together to solve it.”



Using a combination of equipment supplied from Dream Sets and Carnival City's in-house gear, the lighting fixtures included Vari-Lite VLZ Washes, Robe ParFects and LEDBeams dotted over the unusual triangular shaped trussing structure. The full list of lighting gear, including SL Nitro Strobes and trusty Robe Pointes, can be found at the end of the story. “I drew the set before drawing the lights, so I actually shot myself in the foot, thereafter spending a lot of time trying to work out the correct position, correct backlight and front light angles! But once I figured that out, I got to drive the MA3 for the first time!”





Deciding that Idols would be the ideal opportunity to test the MA3, Joshua approached Duncan Riley of DWR Distribution, the MA distributors in Africa, and he enthuses what a cool experience it was. “Still running on MA2 software, it’s still the same desk for now but with new hardware. It worked out pretty well because I broke my arm before we loaded in, and only had one arm to program with. The console was small enough for me to reach every button with one arm (he laughs).”

From a hardware point of view, Joshua says the new console rocks. “I was very impressed with the work MA Lighting have done on the buttons, faders, and the whole tactile experience, which I think is what they wanted to achieve,” he said. “The buttons were softer and easier to use, the faders were more responsive and the touch screen very accurate. The MA3 integrated well with my MA2 light, the NPUs, VPU’s and 8-Port Node. It worked seamlessly with the system and never gave any problems.”





Should the MA3 software be available, Joshua certainly hopes that it will be his console of choice for Idols South Africa 2019.

With his arm not working as it should, and Idols being such a high-pressure show, Joshua was grateful to ask Christopher Bolton to assist him. "I decided to fly Chris Bolton up from Durban to help me programme," explained Josh. "It's the first time I've done that this year. I operated because I know the show so well, but he helped me get the information into the desk which was the tricky part. We used full on time coding. Because it's such a tight show and we've been doing it so well for such a long time, Gavin Wratten and our team worked very closely together and integrated a new system called CuePilot throughout the season."

CuePilot is an automated camera switching software which receives a time code, and meant that Gavin could pre-plot all the camera shots beforehand. "When the music director pushed 'play', the preprogrammed camera shots were on point, enabling my timecoding to sink up with the camera shots with the director. Gavin knows exactly what he wants and now everything happens on the beat on time. CuePilot is phenomenal and Gavin used it to great effect."





Andre Siebrits from Visual Frontier was tasked with managing CuePilot from a technical and networking point of view. He was able to master the software and help create a smooth experience for all the crew using CuePilot.

The end result looked spectacular. A heart-felt congratulations to the winner of Idols 2018, seventeen year old Yanga Sobetwa from Delft, Cape Town.

### **Lighting Equipment List:**

24 Robe Robin Pointes  
12 Vari-Lite VLZ Spot  
16 Robin 800 LEDWash  
16 Robin ColorWash 2500  
8 Robe ColorSpot 700  
6 Robe ColorBeam 700  
12 Robin MMX Spot  
24 Robin LEDBeam 100  
40 Robin ParFect 150  
124 Longman LED Parcans  
20 Longman LED Batten  
14 Showline SL Nitro Strobe  
1 grandMA 2 light  
1 grandMA 3 light  
2 MA NPU  
1 MDG ATMe Hazer

12 Beam Lights

100 Martin Scepton

***Photos: Anriette van Wyk, Kief Kreativ***