

Meet the Festival Studio by Sound HQ Solutions

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Making a decision to swim rather than sink, Sound HQ Solutions along with Production Manager Sharif Baker, who is also the Chairman of TPSA and spokesperson for #LightSared, have survived the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa with fewer bumps and bruises than many other companies during this tough time. They recently launched their brand new Festival Studio in Muldersdrift, Johannesburg, a hybrid and virtual facility which includes outdoor stages, and are confident that they are able to pull off a variety of festivals and events for their niche gospel, jazz and music

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markets.

Alvin Bruinders, the owner of technical supply company Sound HQ Solutions, started working with Sharif Baker some twenty years ago on MY Joyous Celebration, a gospel powerhouse formed in 1996 to celebrate the political change in South Africa and the peaceful transition into democracy.

“Sharif has been the production manager for Joyous right since its inception,” explains Alvin. “He lived in Durban and then moved to Cape Town. When we worked on Joyous together, Sharif would come to Johannesburg bringing along the Southeaster! He would say things like ‘julle is te stadig’ (you are too slow), and then he’d be gone, back to Cape Town! In fact, Sharif would go back home after a gig but within a week the production schedule, right down to the minute, would be sent for the next show. After a long relationship, it was great news when he called me one day to say he was at a crossroads and that Joyous wanted him to move to Johannesburg on a permanent basis. I replied that it was high time!”

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For the past eight years, the duo has worked closely together. When the Covid-19 lockdown was implemented in South Africa and many companies temporarily shut their doors, Alvin and Sharif jumped into survival mode and formed Vex Hygiene, a sanitizing and fogging company. The unexpected success of this venture enabled Sound HQ to hold onto their staff, build a new storage facility and transform the existing warehouse into what is now known as the Festival Studio. They recently hosted a number of open days where clients were invited to pop in, on the hour, to view the new space, and needless to say, minds were spinning with endless ideas.

“We know, as South Africans and Africans that hospitality is very important,” Sharif explains. “So, the first impression we give our clients when entering the premises is our Green Room or Hospitality area.” Beautifully designed and decorated by Anrika Bruinders, Alvin’s wife, with comfortable chairs and vibrant colours, this lounge setting is the idea chill area for artists waiting

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to perform and also a space where they may be interviewed before stepping on stage. In close proximity are dressing rooms, a catering area, guest production office, a conference or training facility and the main studio.

The Festival Studio breathtaking in appearance, and the stage is kitted out with professional gear from large LED screens to lighting equipment comprising of Robe Robin LEDWash600, Robin 600 E Spots, Robe ColorWash 2500E AT, Claypaky Axcor Beam 300 and Longman F4 UP LED parcans, a Le Maitre MVS Hazer and control on a grandMA dot2 core with button wing. The Festival Studio includes a front of house and monitor desk, and dedicated rooms for audio capture and visual capture.

“The Festival Studio is our interpretation and solution for the fourth industrial revolution,” Sharif explains. “Entertainment is part of our DNA, our hearts, our minds and our souls. Our studio is a showcase of what we do to entertain the senses. The demonstration of what can be achieved in this area has been mind-blowing to clients.”

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The Sound HQ premises is located on a large plot of land, with sufficient space for two outdoor stages. Essentially this means that the Festival Studio is able to cater for 200 delegates indoors and 500 people outdoors, a perfect location to host the regular festivals, especially over December, whilst still adhering to social distancing regulations.

“The one thing I’m proud of being associated with Alvin, is that he has 30 staff, all of whom are still here today. With all the trials and tribulations faced during Covid-19, this has been a massive accomplishment,” Sharif said. “And now, with the adverse challenges of moving out from Winter into Summer, our peak time as the events industry, we have found a way to up our game and do something different. Rather than having a standard virtual studio, we have created a Festival Studio and we look forward to looking after our clients and not sending them away. Welcome to our world!”

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