

New Mandela Museum in Mthatha

Posted on November 11, 2009

11 November 2009



Many Joburgers have already seen the stunning Mandela exhibition which the Apartheid Museum created to coincide with Madiba's 90th birthday. The exhibition resides in the temporary exhibit space at the Apartheid Museum and consists of larger than life high resolution text and image panels combined with a good selection of films which depict the various stages of his colourful life. The films, created by Angus Gibson of Bomb are shown on a range of flat panel monitors and projectors and using a combination of audio devices to suit each area. Digital Fabric designed the AV systems which were supplied and installed by Sonic Factory, based around Alcorn McBride equipment.

New Mandela Museum in Mthatha



Since the opening of the exhibition in late 2008, it has been duplicated in Sweden and is set to travel to two more European countries, however a recent development saw the Nelson Mandela Museum in mThatha commission a version of the exhibition, especially modified to fit into their unique museum spaces. The essential mix of AV and printed panels was to remain the same, modified in size and layout to fit a series of smaller spaces, however one of the main differences was that the museum in mThatha lacked an exhibition lighting system.

Working with old friends DWR Distribution, Digital Fabric began planning for a lighting system that would meet the specific criteria of the museum. Central to these was the fact that the museum is housed within a historical building making wiring and mounting a challenge. The system would therefore need to hang off fewer points and use less power than an ordinary low voltage track system might.



The hanging problem

was resolved immediately by opting for lightweight lighting bars which would house the wiring and require hanging points at 3m centres. Working together and considering many options the team came up with a luminaire solution based on LED modules shoehorned into PAR16 fittings. The LED technology used makes use of a 3 lamp module with a higher output than a standard MR16 dichroic.

The result is a system employing 400 fittings, two dozen or so metres of LED ribbon and around 300m of lighting bars. The real coup is that the entire system draws less than a small hairdryer – around 1500W and assuming that the LED's behave, should do so for the next ten years without needing attention. Digital Fabric's Gavin Olivier comments, "This is the first really smart application of LED's that I have been a part of. I have dabbled with various products, but these make real sense. It's good to see LED technology getting to the point where we can spec it and feel confident about the performance".

New Mandela Museum in Mthatha



The LED modules were supplied by Giantlight while the installation of the lighting and AV was handled by a team from Sonic Factory and DWR. The entire project was only finalized four weeks before opening and with every single piece of mounting hardware custom, the challenge was on. The equipment was flown in while steelwork was being manufactured and the entire system was driven down to mThatha for installation in less than a week. Gavin again, "The crew was amazing, real proof of what can be achieved when companies pull together. The DWR and Sonic Factory guys, 10 in all and led by Sonic Factories John Petrie, pulled a rabbit out of the hat in an impossibly short time frame. The combination of the AV and lighting add a level of sophistication to the new exhibition and the clever mounting arrangements mean that the technology stays in the background where it belongs".

New Mandela Museum in Mthatha



The Mandela Exhibition was officially opened on the 30th October 2009 by the Museums chairman Kader Asmhal.

