Newzroom Afrika’s brand new home

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In celebration of its second year live on air, Newzroom Afrika has relocated to a new address in Oak Avenue, Randburg and has relied on the original set design team, headed by Michael Gill Designs, to deliver a polished set that shoots extraordinarily well for television.

Newzroom Afrika management appointed Ryan Toerien as Project Manager who managed every aspect from air-conditioning and construction to the professional installation of equipment. Joshua Cutts of Visual Frontier, assisted by Paul Modise, were the appointed lighting designers while DWR Distribution supplied and installed the lighting equipment assisted by The Install Crew.

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Ryan Toerien

Newzroom Afrika is a 24-hour television news channel (channel 405) on Multi-Choice’s DStv satellite pay-TV service and has become an authoritative source for delivering local and international live reports and breaking news

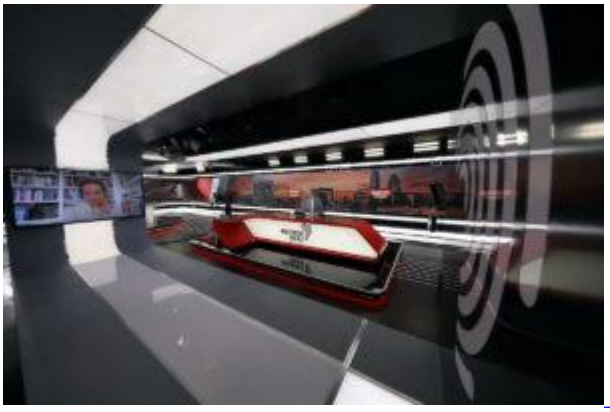
The new set includes three distinctive zones including the main news area, a couch set up that can double as a standing area and a round table set up, enabling the presenters to comfortably move from one space to the next. To create depth of feel one can now shoot from one area to the next along the length of the studio or from the front from side to side.

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Joshua Cutts comments, “It was a big challenge to light the newsroom set because of the ceiling height and the architectural design. We had to come up with clever angles to use light as both an architectural fitting and studio light. I opted to go completely soft because it’s news. We chose an architectural lighting fitting that we adapted to make useable in a studio environment. I think it worked well in the end and the lights match some of Michael’s design. It was a great project.”

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Project Manager Ryan Toerien added that “The key to the entire project was meticulous planning and working closely with the set team, the broadcast team, and the contractors, and eventually it all came together.”

The set’s new monochromatic colour scheme testifies to the growth of Newzroom Afrika. The studio’s former iconic red desk was brought upon from the Linden Studios and is still the focal point of the central news area of the set.

Michael Gill said he had to use every trick he has learnt in television design over the years (i.e., using massive foreground elements to create depth of feel as well as forcing the perspective dramatically) to create what we see in studio today.

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Ryan Toerien, Duncan Riley (DWR), Michael Gill (Michael Gill Designs) and Kevin Stannet (DWR)

For Kevin Stannett from DWR Distribution, the job was all about overcoming challenges, tight time frames, and budget, but he enjoyed the flexibility of working with Ryan, Michael and Joshua. “This was not our first rodeo together,” Kevin smiles. “On this project, we probably spoke three times a day. Schedules changed, contractors changed, but constant communication ensured that we made it happen. Unlike in a theatre environment where the audience is 15m away from the stage and the sets are not lit up, we had to hide everything from the bolts, which we had to paint black, to hiding the connectors and cabling. It really was something so out of the ordinary for both my colleagues, Keith Pugin and Andi Rodgers, and I. Tracks were bolted into concrete slabs. We had predetermined rigging points and they were installed before the set. I take my hat off to Josh for those measurements. Even with 20 years of experience in this industry, I couldn’t initially visualize what he was trying to create. I hadn’t yet seen the 3D model of the set but once the set started coming in, those lighting channels all made sense and why they were there, the backlight, the sidelight.”

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On a significant project like Newzroom Afrika, it was important to have a team that could be trusted. “I know this sounds like a plug, but if DWR is meant to do something, you know it will happen and it will happen properly. In the same way, Michael knows that he can rely on certain suppliers, and if SDS needs to do something they’ll do it. On these big projects that’s the important thing, stick with the suppliers you know so that there aren’t any surprises.”

Says Duncan Riley of DWR, “It was an honour working with the team again. We could conceptualize what the other parties would require due to past experiences and initiated certain plans to ensure all parties were happy before being asked. Most important is that the client, Newzroom Afrika, represented by founders Thabile Ngwato and Thokozani Nkosi were extremely happy with the result. Thank you for trusting us.”

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