

Plan twice, work once!

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JP de Vernon and Kevin Stannett

DWR Distribution takes pleasure in announcing two new members to the team, in fact, good friends and a pair who have worked together before! A warm welcome extends to JP de Vernon and Kevin Stannett.

JP de Vernon has come on board as the sales representative for Africa and started at the company a month ago. He takes over Johnny Scholtz' position who will now handle architectural sales at DWR. Initially JP will have the hardest task, travelling to Africa and dealing with new clients and people he has never met before. That said, he has just returned from Namibia and already set up good relationships there!

With Dave Whitehouse relocating to the UK, Kevin Stannett joins the team to handle sales in theatres, schools, broadcast, television studios and casinos. "When Dave told me he was leaving DWR and moving back to the UK it broke me," said Duncan. "One evening I phoned Kevin and asked if he would be interested in joining us. I think what is good is that Kevin, a talented lighting designer, has a background to Back of House so he is not trying to sell a product that his not

comfortable with. He will also be able to sell knowing the infrastructure behind products.

“For me it’s all about the people and having the right people. People I can trust and depend on and people our clients can trust and depend on. That’s really what it’s all about. It’s not about product, this can change, but rather dealing with humans who actually care.”

Background

In 1996, at the age of 15, Kevin Stannett started working at The Sound Stage in Midrand. He was obviously too young to have a driver’s license so his dad would drop him off at work. Denis Hutch was the designer there at the time and Alistair Kilbee was Kevin’s direct boss. “It was hard work, I mean, even as a 15-year-old, there was no playing games,” Kevin recalls. “It was a small venue, a small rig, but it was done right. I was a followspotter and we got hammered for any slip-ups!

When Alistair left The Sound Stage to join what was then known as Caesars (today Emperors Palace) he was called back by Richard Loring to be involved with the opening of African Footprint. “Alistair needed someone to fill his position at Caesars so he called me,” said Kevin. “I don’t claim to be anywhere near Denis Hutchinson’s league but indirectly that precision, getting it right, filtered through from Denis to Alistair and then to me and to the two guys that I’ve trained since, both of whom now work out of the country.”

JP in turn, while still at school, started helping out at theatres and rental companies out of curiosity. At the age of 18, he signed up for the Performing Arts Technology course at Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) and fell in love with it. After being at TUT for two years, JP received a phone call from Ivor Jones. “I was like, ‘sorry, who?’ and the voice on the other side said, ‘It’s Ivor Jones from Sun City. He needed an operator and could I start tomorrow,’” JP describes. Still at university, JP got in his car that afternoon and left for Sun City. “I ran the extrav under Reg Habib. I worked with Heidi van den Berg and we got on so well, she was a good girl. I learnt a lot from her and I learnt a lot from Kurt du Preez because he used to come up and work there. It was good.” Three years later JP returned to Pretoria to complete his studies at TUT. JP and Kevin met four years ago when both worked at the Emperors Palace. Kevin, a freelance lighting designer, known for his work with Nataniël, worked closely with JP, the Theatre Services Manager. “When we worked together we always did things proper,” says JP. “We might have discussed things for an hour, but it was done properly, you wouldn’t have to redo it. Between the two of us, there’s pretty much not a solution we can’t come up with. It’s what we’ve always just done.”

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Smiles Kevin, "Plan twice, work once!"

Two years ago, according to JP and Kevin, they joked and said that one day they would work at DWR. For DWR it's ideal how everything has slotted into place. "I look forward to this amazing opportunity," said Duncan Riley. "That these guys chose DWR to be their place is important for me and it's an honour to have them. Yes, there will be days that aren't perfect, but I think it's the right move for everyone and we will all benefit."