

PLASA 2009 Review

20 October 2009

Photos courtesy Louise Stickland



Craig Killian (CES), Mike Jones (MJ Event Gear), Steven Chambers (DJ Steve), Alex Cowan (Thomas), Dylan Bridle (CES) and pictured in front, Robert Izzett (DWR)

PLASA 2009 has come and gone, but we thought you may be interested in hearing feedback from various individuals, both locally and internationally, who attended this annual exhibition.

Congo Blue UK – Declan Randall

As is usual at PLASA there is much of the same and the same faces can be seen year in and year out. This is not a bad thing, mind you – it is good to know that even in the tough economic times that everyone is facing, things in our industry still seem to be well and good.

There was lots of LED and much variation on a theme in that regard, with little really new or innovative, with possible exception of the flexible LED video tiles which are also IP rated (www.displayLED.com). This opens up a lot of scope for some creative video wall/structure design, but I suspect that will more than likely be prohibitively expensive for most of us.

Coolux has introduced some really clever video and media server interface technology which has real potential for some exciting use of video and interactive technology in live events.(www.coolux.de)

From the lighting side, the huge leaps in LED technology are making energy efficient lighting a real possibility. There are moving heads with LED light engines that will rival the current 150w and (possibly the 250w) range of spots, offering good colour and gobo images. The VLX from Vari-Lite is great and is a huge leap forward in terms of LED lighting. I am not quite sure that the beams are as controllable as us theatre boys would like them to be, but this is just a matter of time.

As always, it's a great time to meet up and catch up with everyone and the beer on the TMB stand is worth the visit alone! Till next year, happy lighting!

DWR Distribution – Robert Izzett

PLASA was definitely smaller this year. A lot of suppliers did not exhibit and there were very few Chinese manufacturers! I think it represented the tough economic situation everyone around the world is facing. However the people that were there, both suppliers and customers, were the ones that really wanted to do business! So the stands may have been smaller, but possibly more focused.

Quite a few South African representatives attended including Ofer (Gearhouse), Mike (MJ Event Gear), Steven Chambers (DJ Steve) , Dylan and Craig (CES), Paul (Lucidity), Dennis Hutch, Declan (Congo Blue), Kim and John (Movievision), Simon (Tadco), Freddie (SA Roadies), etc..

As far as new products, Robe's new 700 Beam Light was very impressive, Robe released a lot of new products! Avolites Tiger Touch, LSC Clarity, Varilite VLX and many more.

Socializing over a pint was great....The products are interesting...but it's all about the people!!! My best part was eating Dinner at a dodgy little Italian restaurant with Alex Cohen (Thomas), Lucky Ludlow(TMB), Mike Jones(MJ), Steven Chambers....

At PLASA obviously you get to see all the new products and strengthen ties with your suppliers. But you also get to spend valuable time with existing customers, meet new customers and suppliers, and mingle with the industry.

A special word of thanks to Arkaos and LTM for looking after me while I visited them, and to all the guys from SA who make it such a BLAST!



Freelance Photojournalist – Louise Stickland

The show generally had an extremely upbeat and positive vibe from virtually everyone I spoke to – be they clients, colleagues, fellow journalists and industry acquaintances – and this was just what everyone needed in the vein of being “cautiously optimistic” that the global economic downturn is showing the embryonic beginnings of a turnaround. There was also accompanied by no illusions that this was not going to happen overnight, but that things were looking on the up.

I bumped into many freelancers who have had an incredibly busy year despite the climate, which indicates that if you are talented and skilled at your job, there will always be work out there. At the start of the year, I experienced some knee-jerk reactions – in terms of people cutting their PR – which is always an easy target, but at PLASA, I confirmed work with 2 new clients, which told me that PR is being recognised as a very cost-effective, high value, efficient way of raising profiles and ensuring that names are out there.

All my PR clients exhibiting – Robe, HSL, Lightfactor, MA Lighting, E/T/C Paris, 5 Star Cases, i-Pix, SNP Productions, MILOS, XL Video and Kinesys – so a good cross section of companies working in service and manufacturing – reported a lively show, with high quality visitors and said it was well worth the investment.

I think it was the atmosphere that the industry needed.

Gearhouse – Ofer Lapid

PLASA was an enjoyable experience as usual, however it was apparent to me that the economic downturn has taken a toll on the industry. The show seemed smaller, and although the usual suspects were present, there was a lack of new players. It does seem that R&D budgets are taking a knock as there was very little innovation in new systems for moving lights. I did not see new interesting and exciting products then.



GLP – Kasper Gissel

PLASA09 proved to be a massive success. The advantages of being able to give a live demonstration of the Impression Zoom's feature -set were clear from the start. This has been a fly-away success. By the time we broke the stand after four days' heavy trading we had sold more than 300 units of the newly launched Impression 120RZ (Zoom).

The Impression Zoom differs entirely from other LED moving heads on the market. This is because of its high quality and consistent colour mixing across the different beam angles (from 10°-26°) — plus its very soft edge beam.

Even more valuable than the sales at PLASA was the quality time with customers and specifiers that the company enjoyed. Having the ability to meet and discuss in detail with our rental partners, lighting designers and other specifiers is a core part of the company's philosophy.

Along with the Impression 120RZ, two other new products were showcased; the Volkslicht, which is a compact Rebel LED moving head priced at budget driven shows which don't want compromise, and the Meisterstuck, which is designed to meet lighting designers' quest for quiet LED based optics without compromising on colour or beam quality, and with a zoom range from 7° to 28°.

Feedback for all new products was incredible.

Lighting Designer & Freelancer – Denis HUTCHinson

I'd missed PLASA for four years, so was hoping to find that I was way out of date – truth is I'm not! Lots of the same though a much smaller exhibition than I remember. That said, there were some interesting products: the new ROBE Plasma lamps are extremely interesting particularly when used with warm colours which are always a problem with conventional discharge fixtures; the new CLAY PACKY 700 Alpha series must be the most compact fixtures I've seen in ages; the moving light stabiliser developed at the RSC is amazing – moving lights hung from cable not truss barely swing when the head is moved around; and there is a new scenic truck that was demonstrated on a 'rake' of about eighty degrees that moves to a pinhead every time! A lot beyond our economic range here, but fun to know about...

LSC Lighting Systems – Pete Floyd

PLASA remains the worlds Premier showcase for new products within our industry but given the current economic climate there was without doubt far less foot traffic than previous years but the quality of visitors was very high and the decision makers were all still in attendance at the show.

LSC Lighting had a tremendous success at PLASA 09 with the launch of CLARITY, our software based lighting and media controller. I can honestly say that everyone that had a demo on the system was completely blown away by it. I encourage each and every one of you to download the free version from our website and check it out for yourself!

As a manufacturer it is very important to have representation from your distributors at a show of this calibre and it was great to see our new friend and colleague Robert Izzett from DWR bringing customers onto the LSC booth and introducing them to the LSC product range. Thanks Robert and we'll see you at the World Cup in June.! Sorry, not the World Cup, I meant the LSC product Training Workshop at DWR.!!

LTM – John Jones

LTM booked PLASA 2009 after a busy 2008, then the market changed. We looked earlier this year at reducing the size of the stand but in the end kept to the original plans.

PLASA 2009 was great, busy except for Sunday which was quieter than previous years. The new LoadGuard hoists which were shown were received well, lots of conversations with clients who had permanent installations to complete.

Having Windhoek on our stand helped with the South Africans, the look of amazement and appreciation was a delight to behold.

Lucidity Technical Production Services – Paul Newman

PLASA for me was interesting this year as it seemed that the little innovation that had happened was in lighting and LED. Although LED products were in abundance my focus was not just on lighting and sound but also to see what was on offer in the way of video and media playback control systems. Although not necessarily new on the market the Hippotizer system was cool. Talking as a “non-lampy” I thought Robe’s new Robin Plasma fixtures were impressive. From an audio point of view I quite liked the Nexa PS range upgrades and the Digico products.

It was also great to catch up with people I hadn’t seen in a while from both here and abroad. All in all a worthwhile trip.

MA Lighting – Michael Althaus

PLASA 2009 was a great opportunity to show the latest status of grandMA2, of introducing the MA VPU and to meet and catch up with everyone. Although PLASA was smaller and less busy this year, the quality of our visitors was as high as usual. After the economic downturn at the beginning of 2009, one can feel a certain turn.

Regarding our product solutions – our new MA Video Processing Unit (VPU) in particular received much attention, and will for sure open up more flexible and creative ways of integrating video into show designs – controlled by grandMA. The second point of interest was for sure the grandMA2 range. grandMA2 became really popular since its introduction to the market and we are proud that 2009 has already seen a lot of high-profile projects running with the grandMA2.

MJ Event Gear – Mike Jones

I think PLASA was definitely smaller this year, you can see the recession has hit companies hard., Bandit's stand only had Guinness, no beer, very upsetting for me(only joking). I met lots of suppliers and made some good new rental company friends as well as suppliers, it was great to see all the old mates and catch up, after all it's all about the people not the kit.

LED products and screens have come a long way and there is some nice stuff out there, the new Chroma Q Batten was cool. Lightlock by Total Solutions was something I think all LD's have wanted somewhere in their lives.

It's just all very expensive at the moment and really hard with the economic climate we are going through and everyone and his dog has the same problem, suppliers are offering bigger and better deals to make it look more attractive and they to are battling.

I just hope rental companies in South Africa don't prostitute (for the lack of a better word) themselves and next year in 2010 we are all renting our kit at R1 a day because the clients are used to this.

I also hope that rental company owners in South Africa buy what they need and not over fill the market for 2011 as this will also hurt our business as it has in other country's where they have had huge events such as soccer world cups and Olympics.

I hope we all use each others kit first, buy what we NEED second and then pull in containers from sister companies overseas to assist with all gigs happening over that time. I mean what would you do with 30 roofs after world cup or 60 LED walls? (Doesn't make sense does it?)

All in all a very positive PLASA, very exciting with World Cup looming and all suppliers are now even more interested in South Africa (which is a good thing).

I feel very positive about next year and wish this year was over already.

