

Robe at The NAMAs 2018



Production designer and technical director, Micky Lehr and his team from Eventplus wanted to make a truly spectacular impression for everyone at the 2018 Namibia Annual Music Awards (NAMAs), so they combined the best Namibian talent and resources, supplemented with some hand-picked regular collaborators from neighbouring South Africa ... and an impressive mix of ideas and imagination to ensure a show-stopping event.

For the first time, Kurt du Preez was asked to design the lighting for this, the biggest and highest profile music show in Namibia, and around 140 Robe moving lights were prominent on the rig at the Dome in Swakopmund.

These were supplied by leading Namibian companies dB Audio and Mikel-Jes Productions plus MJ Event Gear from Johannesburg. All of these rental specialists have committed to Robe as their primary moving light brand.

Eventplus managed all the event's technical production and artistic direction for their client, NAMA executive producers Tim Ekandjo, from main sponsor and mobile telecoms operator MTC, and Jandre Louw from Rockstar Television.



The NAMAs 2018 was broadcast live on Namibian national TV and saw the work and creativity of some of the best and most talented artists, performers and music producers rewarded in 24 different awards categories, interspersed with 12 unique live performance showcases.

It was a buzzy, hi-octane show and Kurt's brief was to light the event catching that vibe and energy – assisted by an enthusiastic live audience and featuring a heavily LED digital set design, created by Micky – ensuring that it looked great on camera and for the hundreds of thousands tuning in to watch as well as all those lucky enough to get a ticket to be there in person.

The Dome venue measures 65 metres wide by 95 metres long along the long edge and has an apex height of

21 metres plus a decent weight loading of around 25 tonnes, so Kurt was able to get plenty of lighting positioned exactly where needed above the stage and elaborate set.

The look of the show took a diversion from large square expanses of LED and instead presented a more creative yet equally digital and exciting environment, with blocks of LED above, around and at the back of the performance area.

Upstage a 15 metre wide by 5 metre long LED backdrop split into three sections. This lifted to allow artist entrances and also moved into different formations to vary the overall aesthetic.



There were also three prominent rectangular box trusses in the air running upstage / downstage, one along the centre and two to the sides, also filled with LED, effectively elongating the space and completing the LED 'surround' picture, but as all of this was fragmented, it made it less uniform and more interesting.

The house band was also located behind a semi-transparent LED surface upstage.

Kurt's Robe fixtures therefore had to compete with all of this luminosity, so he chose from among some of the most powerful of the Robe light sources currently available.

Twelve BMFL Spots were positioned above the band at 15 metres high to clear the set at the back, and shoot through with long-range, intense dramatic beams ... for which they worked a treat!

Four BMFL Blades were utilised to key light four different areas on the stage.

Twenty-four Spiiders, which formed the main back / overhead lighting package were positioned to effortlessly illuminate the entire stage, with 18 specifically as back light washes and six taking care of the forestage and forward sections of set as well as the VIP lounge area on the house left side and the presenter area on house right.

The 50 x LEDBeam 100s were arranged in 10 rows of 5 on trusses used for sparkly-wiggly, whizzy effects onstage that made excellent back-of-camera candy.

Sixteen miniPointes and 16 x LEDWash 300s were positioned at the back on trussing totems, also for beam effects and alternative angled camera-candy.

Kurt dotted 12 x Pointes around the rig, six above the lounge area and six above the presenters, all shooting straight into the camera, where their funky range of effects were highly visible.

The only other lights onstage for show were 64 x LED PARs.



"It was totally a 'fun' rig," enthused Kurt, who needed all this versatility to cover the large line-up of top Namibian live acts punctuating the awards presentations throughout the marathon four hour telecast!

The lighting challenge was to get maximum variety and dynamics from the rig and ensure that each act had an individual styling and lighting treatment. With a long show ... it was important that no-one suffered from 'visual fatigue'!

Two grandMA2 light consoles were used for control.

Another challenge was that everyone and all departments had to be well organised. The nearest large town was state capital Windhoek, so any "last minute" sourcing / collection from there entailed a 700 Km round trip trek through the dust and blistering heat – and incredibly arid beauty – of the Namibian desert!

As Eventplus and Micky Lehr have now been involved with the NAMAs since 2015, this basic groundwork and preparation was extremely smooth.

He also had the continuity of the same small core production team as for the last three years, including his son Max Lehr who has stage managed since 2016 and this year also took on the role of Production Manager, working closely with assistant stage manager Dylan Jowett as site coordinator. The technical producer since 2015 is Jessica Newton.

Micky explained how the process starts from the initial client meetings and ideas, which they take on-board and collaboratively assist in transforming these into practical and feasible design concepts.



As much as possible they try and make the NAMAs an "all Namibian event" which entails having excellent relationships with the two main rental companies in the country – dB Audio and Mikel-Jes.

However due to the stature and scale of the event, there is still an equipment shortfall each year, so it's necessary to cross rent kit and selected expertise from SA, hence MJ supplying some additional BMFLs, all the

MA2 control plus some rigging, motors and controllers. Other smaller suppliers from both Namibia and SA were also used to complete the full equipment specifications.

This was Kurt's first time working in Namibia, even though SA is a neighbour, an experience he thoroughly enjoyed, especially the still strong European influenced culture in Swakopmund which was established by German settlers in 1892. He describes the people, beer, food and general environment as "awesome"!

Eugene Naidoo was the television director. He and Kurt had worked together just a few weeks previously on the SAFTAs (South African Film & Television Awards), so it was good to be collaborating again. "We have a great synergy" stated Kurt, "and I know the sort of shots and angles Eugene is looking for at certain moments and how he likes these to be lit".

Joining Kurt at FOH was sound engineer Fried Wilsenach and Jesaya Johannes the AV and video engineer, while Adam Kirby mixed monitors and kept all things audio in check onstage.

The NAMAs is the largest event on the Namibian entertainment calendar and there is a massive pressure to ensure it's delivered to outstanding quality and expectations. "The goal is always to create a cool and stylish showcase for Namibian artists that's on par with any major international music awards show," concluded Micky.

Eventplus is renowned for producing engaging and outstanding events and part of their own brief is to challenge all the production disciplines each year, galvanising the teams so everyone can learn and grow from the experience and enhance their knowledge and understanding of how to deliver a grand spectacle safely and correctly to international standards.

Photos : Micky Lehr, Eventplus