Robe Gets a Hot Date

The latest series of ‘Take Me Out Mzanzi’ – aired on M-Net’s Mzanzi Magic network in South Africa market – was recorded over 6 weeks at Sasani Studios in Johannesburg, featuring a lighting scheme designed by Rob Grobler, with equipment supplied by rental specialist Gearhouse South Africa.

Produced by Rapid Blue, the show has a style book and a specific look that has to be followed, explained Rob, who chose over 130 Robe fixtures to assist him in achieving this task on the lighting side. The methodology by which the various creative departments can arrive at these aesthetic conclusions… is left entirely to the expertise and imagination of the local production teams and professionals.

Beforehand, Rob received research material from Rapid Blue and watched numerous You Tube videos of other editions before drawing up the lighting plot, which featured Robe’s original DL range of LED moving lights, with 12 x DLS Profiles, 24 x DLX Spots and 24 x DLF Washes.

These were joined by 14 x ColorSpot 700E ATs, 36 x Robe LEDForce LED PARs and 24 x Robe CityScape 48s.

The set was designed by Michael Gill and built for the show by Sets Drapes Screens (SDS), from the Gearhouse Group of Companies, following the guidelines of UK broadcaster ITV (Independent Television). The

lighting was largely designed around the set and where possible, Rob and Michael made sure that the two visual elements were harmonised and symbiotic.

The fixtures were positioned all over the trussing to give as much flexibility as possible and make the lighting work for almost any challenge and from any position.

The 20 x DLX Spot and 10 x DLS Profile units lighting the panel members either individually or as a group – depending on the state at the time – were grouped close together … so much so that they had to be individually powered up to avoid bumping into one another!

The DL series is a favourite of Rob's, who has used them for a selection of different TV shows over the last four years. "They are great fixtures for TV – they just work!" he states.

In his first DL experience back in 2013, the lights were straight off the container, cross loaded onto the lighting truck bound for 'So You think You Can Dance', when he had no idea of what to expect!

> "When you start understanding the colour mixing system and how differently the lightsource works alongside the other fixture parameters … you start seeing how they are absolutely perfect for these TV shows".

Robert feels that Robe is currently pushing boundaries in terms of delivering cutting edge technology to the market. "They can certainly be proud of their products," he confirms.

One of the challenges of lighting ‘Take Me Out Mzanzi’ is dealing with the camera angles and the slightly idiosyncratic way in which it’s shot, especially when the host starts moving in and around the 30 panel guests – with the cameras following him.

At this stage Rob has to ensure the general light levels are correct as well as having the flexibility to light each of the individual panel members who are over a large and spread out area.

In addition to that, getting light to where it was needed when obstructed by the set also called for some thinking out of the box and, as a consequence, Rob has already redesigned for the next season.

Rob has enjoyed working on the show. It has been different to other TV game shows he’s worked on – the format is a single player introduced to 30 girls or boys, who attempts to persuade them to keep their panel lights on, so they can choose one for a potential date! It provides an entertaining mix of comedy, jeopardy, surprises and possibly … romance.

The show flow and operation was completely integrated. Once a panel member decided they were not interested in the single person, they would buzz out, and that one button push triggered several lighting and video effects / cues and sometimes also audio triggers. A MIDI platform was used to make this work, linked to a piece of custom software written especially for the game.

Rob used a grandMA2 console for control.

Photos : Duncan Riley