



Robe for Idols SA 2017

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The twelfth season of Idols South Africa wrapped up with a stunning finale at Carnival City Big Top Arena in Johannesburg, broadcast live on the Mzansi Magic network with a highly vocal audience of 3,500 packing into the venue ... and lighting designer Joshua Cutts of Visual Frontier choosing nearly 200 Robe

fixtures to be at the core of his rig.

As always the challenge was to make this final season look better and different than before, and with over 80 million votes cast across Series 12, a lot of eyes are on it and production values have been honed accordingly to reflect the intense public interest and impress fans. A skilled and imaginative creative team once again united to produce amazing results.



Technical production – lighting, sound, video, set and rigging – was delivered by Dream Sets for producers SIC Entertainment and the series, which also included nine elimination rounds recorded on the Drama Stage at the State Theatre in Pretoria, was directed by Gavin Wratten.

The popularity of this and other singing / talent contests in South Africa, highlights how a diversity of music, song and lyrical based entertainment is integral to the culture and heartbeat of the country.

Throughout the 2016 Idols final series, there was a big emphasis on lighting supported by video – rather than the other way around – and this continued at Carnival City, with a framed half-circle of LED screen upstage and the rest of the set architecture and lighting positions following this curvature.

Two side arches flanked the centre stage and screen with half-circle trusses flown above the audience together with a series of large arches – from 10 to 20 metres in diameter – complete with inbuilt lighting and LED strips hung at different intervals emanating from the stage and embracing the audience. All of this involved the crowds and brought a great depth to the performance space.

The judges' platform was some 25 metres back from the stage, right in the centre of the auditorium.



Josh wanted punchy beams on the half-circle trusses and decided on 36 x Robe Spikies and 48 PARFect 100s which were alternated. These helped create a layering beam effect reaching right across the space which looked very cool, especially in the wide camera shots.

BMFL Blades were the fixture of choice for the main front light positions, having used them very successfully as key light on other shows like The Voice and Afrikaans is Groot he knew they were solid. "They are a FANTASTIC light" he enthuses, "I can zoom wide and divide the stage up into slices with the shutters ... and they have a perfect colour temperature for cameras".

Eighteen LEDWash 800s deployed on various different trusses were used for the general base wash across stage and set. It's one of Josh's go-to wash luminaires and he comments, "I love the brightness and the vitality of the saturated colours".

Another fixture that is always reliable and has withstood the test of time on his designs ...is the trusty ColorSpot 2500E AT, with 16 at the back of the main performance stage for primary specials.



Josh made the most of the house MMX Spots which were also augmented with some from Dream Sets making a total of 14, which were handy for break-up effects and beam specials. “They are bright and cost-effective” commented Josh, “and I still like the quality and finesse of their output”.

This year, director Gavin Wratten decided to open the final broadcast with a 1 minute lighting and pyro extravaganza ... a dream scenario for any lighting designer, although also a little nail-biting to be put right in the spotlight, however this enabled Josh to show off the true full-on shock-and-awe potential of the rig, and for one minute Carnival City was transformed into a banging European-style EDM immersive visual experience!



Josh programmed and operated the 2016 final series shows himself and also supplied the playback video content which was stored on a Pandora's Box media server and played back via his grandMA2 console.

Photos : Duncan Riley