

SARA invest in Absen and Green Hippo for on the job training



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Exposing young industry players to the latest technical equipment, SARA, the South African Roadies Association, have invested in an Absen D3V Indoor / Outdoor LED screen consisting of 150 panels and a Green Hippo Karst+ Media Server, to drive the content, from local distributor DWR Distribution.

SARA is a non-profit training organization based in Newtown, Johannesburg, providing young students with skills in lighting, audio, staging, power, rigging, AV and production. An On-The-Job Training program gives students hands on tutoring both locally and internationally.

Freddie Nyathela is the heart behind SARA and he has fought to get the program off the ground. Students with limited resources are given the opportunity to join the entertainment industry and many reputable technicians have passed through his establishment.



"I grew up in Soweto and still live in Soweto in Orlando West," said Freddie who to this day lives a humble existence, catching local taxis to get around each day and putting every penny back into SARA. As a youngster, he surrounded himself with musicians and started off as a "roadie" for the band Harari, where Sipho Hotstix Mabuse was the drummer at the time. Freddie continued with the band, specializing in audio and touring as a roadie. After the unbanning of political organisations in South Africa, Freddie remembers attending a "musicians" meeting held at the Market Theatre in Newtown, Johannesburg in January 1992. "I could hear them talking about musicians and their role in the new South Africa, and I thought, what about us roadies?" As a result, the

idea to establish SARA was born and the organization was registered in 1995. Credit has to be extended to SARA's international friends in Ireland, Netherlands, France, UK, Denmark, Norway, Australia, USA and Germany, who over the years have assisted SARA, especially with on-the-job training opportunities.

The investment of a new Absen D3V Indoor / Outdoor screen and Green Hippo Karst+ was funded by the National Lotteries Commission (the NLC). "The equipment is crucial for SARA's On-The-Job Training," said Freddie. "The purpose of purchasing this equipment is not to compete with anybody's business or with any hire companies. The main focus is for students to touch, to play and to have access to hands on training with the latest technical gear. We will also assist some of the SARA graduates who have set up their companies and need gear for an event. They don't have large budgets and we will loan it to them at a minimal rental fee."



Schalk Botha of DWR says the Absen D3V's ability to produce a high-resolution screen for both indoor and outdoor applications make it a great choice. "The screen is simple to operate and easy to set-up thanks to its simple slot-&-lock mechanisms and maintenance is made easy with the magnetic LED modules and quick release control modules," said Schalk. "Key features include the built-in curving mechanism and the high output white face LEDs, producing 4 000 NITS of output and sporting an IP65 front rating." DWR presented training to the students and were pleased at their positive response.

With a total of 3 outputs, as well as two ZooKeeper monitor outputs, the Hippotizer Karst+ will drive content and any shows with ease.

"The Hippotizer Karst+ is a great choice for SARA because it allows them to gain experience and receive training on a Media Server used by some of the top companies in the Industry," said Dylan Jones from DWR, who represents the Green Hippo brand.



"I've known Freddie for a long time, and what he wants to do is try and expose people who would not typically get the opportunity, to work on professional equipment so that when they get to the work environment, they will be able to say, 'I understand that this is an LED screen, I know what it does and how it works,'" said Duncan Riley of DWR. "Freddie has built a bridge where people with limited resources are trained up and equipped to work in the industry."

SARA recruits 30 students every year. "Our main goal is to give young people wings so that they can fly on their own, so that they won't bother us," Freddie laughs. "That's it! We take them away from negative elements and give them direction, a purpose and a new outlook on life. We go through interviews so that we are sure to get the right people with the right attitude."



Duncan Riley (DWR) with Freddie Nyathela (SARA)

Students pay a small fee of R500 for the entire year and cover their own transport costs. That said, for many students the year is a sacrifice as they study and still have to continue to support their families at home. "That is why we offer on-job-training opportunities, where they work and get paid, helping them to survive," said Freddie. And once the year is complete, SARA students don't struggle to find employment. "The industry know they are different and capable because of the formulae the training is based on, a syllabus comprising 30% theory and

70% practical.”

Freddie sees 2019 as the turning point. The SARA premises in Newtown have been paid off, again by the support of National Lotteries Commission, and they have also been allocated funds by the National Department of Arts and Culture to complete much needed renovations. DWR Distribution have made a commitment to present a range of training courses from lighting to audio, fixture service workshops and a list of other topics, to the enthusiastic students.

“I don’t own SARA, it’s not in my name and the purpose was never to make money for myself,” said Freddie. “It was just about having a vision. The other thing that would personally make me happy, is to see a crew out there, a mix of black and white young people. Meaning, the best for our generation, no matter what the colour.”