

## Saturday Showdown for Robe



The Saturday Showdown is South Africa's newest and hottest prime-time TV sports games show. Lighting designer Ryan Lombard was delighted to be asked onboard and he seized the opportunity to use Robe moving lights, including MegaPointes which were a new investment for rental specialist and lighting supplier, Blond Productions.

The show, recorded at Urban Brew Studio 10 in Johannesburg, and produced by Red Pepper Productions for broadcaster Mzansi Magic, is a hi-energy action-packed sport-themed entertainment game show with BIG prizemoney devised to keep sports fans glued to the telly on Saturday nights while the Local and Premier football Leagues took their break!

Ryan took Michael Gill's stunning set design as the show's visual blueprint as he started to think about lighting. The two have worked collaboratively on several recent TV projects and enjoy a great synergy and creative language.



Knowing from the off that major lighting 'WOW' factors were key, Ryan assessed the Showdown environment which included a 'studio' area where the contestants sat and the presenters did their bits, and an 'arena' space

where many of the games were staged. He and his boss at Blonde Production, Christiaan Ballot, both thought of MegaPointes!

Luckily enough, Robe's South African distributor DWR had four of these fixtures in stock ... so they bought these which almost immediately went on the show. They are the first MegaPointes for Blond, although the company has many other types of Robe moving lights in its lighting inventory. If they could have sourced more in time for the show to start recording ... they would have had them, but it was only a matter of a couple of weeks!

However, "just four MegaPointes dramatically increased the scope and diversity of the effects I could produce," stated Ryan, "They are very cool lights, fantastic as a razor-sharp beam lighting or as a powerful profile."

Studio 10 is one of the biggest TV facilities in the Gauteng province and with throw distances of up to 7 metres in the arena part of the space, the beams had to be punchy and have real impact!

Ryan needed to get light everywhere in Studio 10, the entire space was utilised with the set, and where people potentially ended up when playing the games was unpredictable. Being of this genre of TV – with 23 different games over the series – there was also lots of LED and white light in the space with which the 'show lighting' had to dovetail appropriately.

The 13 Showdown episodes were shot back-to-back over an intense two-week period, and each game needed its own aesthetic. Multiple 'reactive' lighting cues were linked with screen graphics and over 300 different AV clips were linked to lighting effects and activated via the grandMA3 lighting console as the games unfolded, so there was a lot of crossover between lighting and video, a challenge that Ryan relished.

The four MegaPointes were rigged in the roof behind the studio area and commentator section. If a team won points or scored a goal, etc., Ryan would use MegaPointe stabs and rays to accentuate the moment and excitement. All the moments needed BIG impact to raise the adrenaline levels for this pacy fast-cut show.

He commented on the "incredible clarity and punch" of the MegaPointe and is itching to use them on larger productions where he can crank up to full intensity! Even in a studio this size, he was sensible in the brightness control – "power is responsibility," he said with a cheeky grin!

The arena / field of play area was defined by two circular trusses – an outer 6 metre diameter and an inner 3 metre diameter, flown above with LCD screens around them and these also provided the hanging positions for the front lights.



Six Robe ESPRITES – also one of Ryan's go-to fixtures for TV lighting – were utilised around the arena to assist in lighting the more unpredictable games positions. Ryan used these as profiles and specials, together with four MMX Spots – one of his Robe 'classic collection' favourites for their excellent gobos and beam potential.

Twelve Robe LEDWash 300s provided core set lighting, augmented with 12 x iSpiiders for additional set and back lighting. These were another recent purchase by Blond, originally for the Big Brother SA and I'm A

Celebrity (Germany) series' shot earlier in the year.

For front lighting and secondary set illumination Ryan picked six 600E Beas, with some vintage Robe ColorSpot 1200E ATs – still going strong – and making a valuable contribution to the bigger lighting picture with periphery beam work from behind the audience.

Other lights on the rig included some older beam lights, some other LED wash moving lights, 60 x LED pixel strip fixtures for camera-candy, plus LED panels, static LED profiles and fresnels and 120 x LED PARs dotted all around the arena creating a 'stadium like' effect.

All of this was programmed and operated by Ryan using a grandMA3 console – the first time he was running fully in full GM3 mode.

Ryan notes that on all fronts and throughout the show, they enjoyed the “fantastic” support and interest of DWR.



The combination of Ryan's lighting and Michael's set resulted in a slick, streamlined and modern multi-dimensional games show for the 21<sup>st</sup> century that was full of visual surprises and fun, as well as catching the sporting action and showcasing the diverse talents of some of the contestants. It was classy, well produced prime-time content.

“The learning curve was huge, especially on the AV and video control side, but I really enjoyed all the integration with the lighting, plus using the new MegaPointes of course, and coming away feeling happy with the show we had produced as well as increasing my working knowledge and experience!” concluded Ryan.

***Photos: by Annie Goetzsche form AnnMade Images***