

Skulls and Roses... lighting and set proudly SA

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The Indian reality tv show, Skull and Roses, was shot recently in South Africa's Knysna Forest. Commissioned by Amazon' Prime Video's India streaming services, the show sees couples compete against each other, love and wit the deciding factor on whether they sleep in an appalling prison or enjoy a night in paradise...a posh castle based on the beach.



Specializing in television and reality series productions, Peter Rieck of Rieck's Lighting in

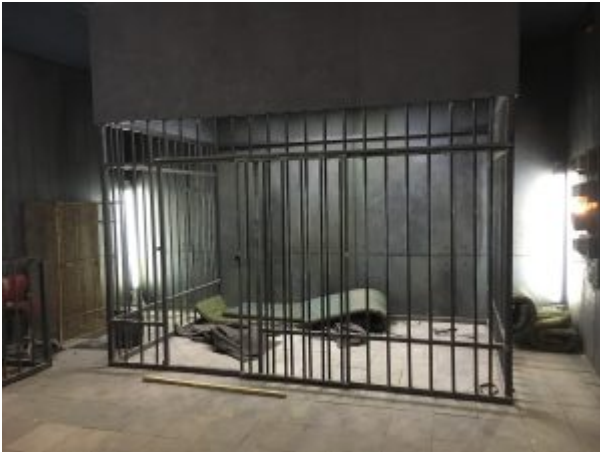
Johannesburg was appointed to supply all the lighting for the film shoots that took place at Skull Island, a grim jail and prison yard. The convincing set was built by Sean Hoey of Dream Sets. A team from India were responsible for the basic soft lighting at Rose Island.



The lighting grid was 'in the middle of nowhere' out in the Knysna Forest. There was one week for set up, four weeks to film and another week set aside for strike. "The set looked very realistic," said Peter. "Between Sean and I, we created an elimination area. I put up the trussing while Sean and the Dream Sets team built wood structure around the truss." Contestants who did not come out tops, ended up having to crawl through tunnels to enter the prison yard and once there, had dinner served in a pig trough and then slept in holding cells.



The Indian production team wanted all lighting gear to have a low power consumption, thus utilizing LED as a lighting source. “They did not use any conventionals for face lights,” explained Peter. “Because they wanted everything to be LED, we supplied 120 x Longman F4 Ups, 30 x Longman FacePars which lit up the perimeter of the prison, and 48 Longman Battons for back light, front light and the set dressing. To cleverly create “search lights” from the four prison guard towers, 4 Robe Spiders were utilized. In addition, 6 Robe Spikies created effects at the elimination area. For the finale, all lighting equipment was utilized to create a party look as the winners were announced. Control for the show was on a dot2 console. “I showed the operator from India how to get around the dot2, and while he had never been exposed to MA before, he took to it easily,” said Peter.



It was a lovely experience, both for Rieck's Lighting and Dream Sets, to work with the international team. "They did things completely different to what we are used to, and they were very practical in making many of their own props and lighting adaptations," said Peter "As an example, where I would usually use a 2k light, they used an LED parcan, placing a LEE filter frost in front of the unit to diffuse it. They would then take black cardboard and tape it around the LED to create a snoot after which each light would be focused."



The crew worked long hours, the very first elimination ending at around 5 o'clock the next morning. "While language barriers stopped us from always understanding each other, we managed to create a great looking show." And while Peter was not the lighting designer on the show, both he and Sean put in the added effort, in the end doubling up their services as both consultant and project manager. "We ended up being a support and helped to come up with joint plans. Together we all made it happen."



Sean Hoey loved working with the Indian Team and in fact still keeps in touch with some of the guys, due to a mutual love for cricket!

