

## SuperSport Studios' LED upgrade



The SuperSport Studios in Randburg, South Africa, have made a bold conversion from tungsten to LED technology in four television studios. DWR Distribution was commissioned to supply and install the new lighting equipment which included dot2 consoles. DimBright Electrical formed part of the installation team. The new studio lights went live in February; which is one of their busiest broadcast periods; in time for big sporting events like Super Rugby and UEFA. **Photos by Duncan Riley**

Broadcasting across the African continent, SuperSport is a group of television channels, owned by MultiChoice, presenting sports coverage on the DStv platform.



Robert Marawa

"The key word for me has always been colour temperature," said Jacques Barnard, Vision Control and Lighting

Supervisor at SuperSport. “Joshua Cutts, our LD and I have wanted to ‘up’ the colour temperature for some time. Just over a year ago, we did a test. We put blue gels on our key lights and it proved that the concept worked. We equalised all the visual plains to the same colour temperature.” In September 2016, the Company OK came for the LED upgrade, with low maintenance and a cost saving the crucial influencing factors.

“The studio needed a technology upgrade,” said Joshua Cutts from Visual Frontier, an experienced lighting designer who has worked at SuperSport for a number of years and who ensured the transition retained the studio’s look and feel. “This was going to be our chance to take technology up a level so that we would not be left behind. With that came the added bonus of solving our design issues of colour temperature.”



Studio One

While SuperSport Studios already had sufficient lighting, the various light sources such as the back screens, LEDs built into the set, generic light fixtures and coloured lights shining down onto the set, differed in colour temp and as a result appeared different. Now all the light sources have been aligned. “We’ve been very happy with that,” said Joshua.



Jacques Barnard (SuperSport), Kevin Stannett (DWR), Joshua Cutts (Visual Frontier) and Duncan Riley (DWR)

“The reason we decided to change light for light – for every generic 2K fresnel we had to get an X5 which is a 2K version in LED) – was because our design principles were working,” he adds. “We had sufficient lights, we had the correct lights and style of lighting that we wanted, but we just needed to make them cold and more advanced. We were confident that LED technology in studios had come far enough to switch over. That said, I think on the first day Jacques and I were anxious just because we were going to a slightly unknown territory. We had done all the research and all the tests, but as human beings we get nervous.”



Duncan Riley of DWR agrees. “A day that was nerve wrecking for me was when Jacques phoned before the project could go ahead, and asked me to bring one of the fixtures to the studio. I think in a way it was unnerving because everything pivoted on this. This was a big step and Jaques needed to put his mind at ease. We got an equivalent in a tungsten and LED fixtures to carry out a trial using the camera and light meters. He walked away going okay cool, this is the right way of doing it.”

The test indicated more than enough lumens. The colour temperature was marginally higher than expected, but this ended up being positive and actually assisted in the environment according to Jacques.



SuperRugby

The installation was completed within three weeks by DWR Distribution who sub-contracted DimBright Electrical to assist. “It’s important to mention the weekly meetings with the SuperSport and Multichoice Projects department,” said Duncan. “I was very impressed because if there was a problem it would have been picked up early.”

Jacques from SuperSport complimented the level of proficiency, attention to detail and the expertise of the installation team. “We have an internal rating system for projects within the Multi-Choice Group and the DWR Install team received an almost unheard of high score for this project. They did it in a record time, we had no snags, and the initial feedback has just been positive. Visual Frontier’s design team Paul Modise and Mpho were really switched on. Paul ensured that everyone understood what was going on, that the lights were in the right

place and had the right addresses programmed on the console. He also helped the SuperSport team learn the desks.”



The picture on television speaks for itself. “There is a difference and you can see it,” said Jacques. “As much as our initial thoughts were colour temperature, there are added benefits like lower maintenance, energy saving, reduced heat in the studios and the opportunity for our staff to grow and learn new gear, particularly on the new advanced control system.”

The equipment supplied included a new control system with MA dot2 consoles. “We also installed numerous QuartzColor Fresnels; Philips Strand SoftLight 300S TV Panels and some Robe Robin DL4S Profiles, along with Robe Robin Spikies. Philips Strand Relayrack panels were installed for all the power distribution,” said Kevin Stannett, Sales Representative at DWR. “The DMX network was redone with 9 LSC Splitters. They are going daylight on all four studios which basically means there is no need for gelling old tungsten fixtures. The SoftLights are fairly new to the industry and are amazing to create a soft, even wash in studio.”

As much as SuperSport is in the business of continuity lighting, they’ve added a few clever bits of technology. The DL4S and Spikies will allow the lighting department more creativity when working alongside the production team.



The DL4S help texture the set whenever needed and help fill in on different presenter positions should there a new face in the studio last minute. “The units gives the freedom to pick up things, while the Spikies are just there to add fun, to do their job and to wiggle and waggle,” said Josh.

The Quartzcolor surprised everyone, feeling like a 1k or 2k. The level and focus was there too, so it was an easy swap over. “We have more level with the same amount of fixtures than before. Not only are we running the key lights at a lower level, but it has allowed us to close the camera’s iris – that in turn increases the depth of field and subsequently makes camera operation easier,” said Jacques.



The Arena

"It was an unforeseen benefit, that these lights seem to be more robust in producing more LUX. Levels are balanced and we have pretty pictures consistently."

DWR's Gareth Chambers and Jannie de Jager presented dot2 training to the SuperSport in-house team. The dot2 has afforded a bit more freedom in terms of controlling the RGB units on set, or when controlling the new movers added to the rig for special broadcasts.



A project is only as successful as the people behind it and it has to be mentioned that Jacques successfully pulled all specialists together and made sure that the design team and install team were heading in the same direction. "He was a massive part of the project and I don't think it would have been as successful without him," said Joshua.



Training at DWR with the SuperSport Studios team

"The way the project was handled made it fair to all suppliers who were quoting," ended Duncan. "Thank you for this opportunity. It was a privilege to work with Jacques and with Joshua and his team. We trust that this will be the start of a long-term relationship. I'll be honest, we may have a light that will fail, it is technology after all. But It's how fast we as a distributor can come up with a solution ensure the SuperSport investment carries forward."