

The Brixton Light Festival delights!

The Brixton Light Festival delights!

Posted on February 10, 2022



The Brixton community, young and old, came together for the amazing Brixton Light Festival parade hosted on 6 February 2022. Residents dressed up as Creatures of the Light, and the 232-meter high Sentech Tower, commonly known as the Brixton Tower, was lit with Robe lighting fixtures and graced the Johannesburg skyline.

The Brixton Light Festival delights!



Named after a suburb in London, the Johannesburg based Brixton dates to 1902 and is located near the suburbs of Auckland Park and Melville. The light festival is a celebration held free of charge by Brixton residents for Brixton residents. The community-led parade winds through the streets and is highlighted by singers, dancers, bands, mimes, art and photographic displays. The African Reclaimers Organisation (ARO) whose trollies are usually used to collect recyclables, pulled floats made from recycled materials by Shade. Tamzyn Botha from Shade, members of the Brixton Community Forum and David Gouldie from Urban Edge played a key role in orchestrating the event.

Resident Fried Wilsenach, a sound designer from The Working Dog who has been in the pro-audio industry since 2005, oversaw the technical requirements of the event, and lit the Brixton Tower, together with longtime colleague and esteemed lighting designer, Oliver Hauser. They teamed up with DWR Distribution's Duncan Riley who sponsored the use of a Robe FORTE, Robe ESPRITE, 2 Tarrantulas and a MegaPointe. DWR also paid the wages for 17 technical crew, most of whom have had little work over the past two years during the Covid-19 pandemic. Gearhouse Splitbeam was on board as the technical supplier and provided various lighting fixtures scattered across the route also lighting up the local Joburg Water Tower.

The Brixton Light Festival delights!



In his garden, Fried and Oliver set to work, positioning the Robe fixtures on top of the garage's concrete roof which is overlooked by the Brixton Tower. "We thought lifting the fixtures up the ladder to their projection positions was going to be a challenge, but the FORTE was surprisingly light for its size," said Oliver.

They wanted to create something unique for the Brixton Light Festival 2021, postponed from December 2021 to February 2022 due to the onslaught of Omicron and the 4th COVID-19 wave

The Brixton Light Festival delights!

that hit SA. “Lighting the iconic Sentech (Brixton) Tower, a focal point that could be seen from kilometres away, was the ideal opportunity to show off the festival which had never been done on this scale before,” said Fried.



By Alet Pretorius

Two Robe Tarrantulas were deployed to colour the tower’s globe and stem. “The ability to focus the wash light at a distance of 240 meters onto a surface measuring 232m high, was impressive,” he comments. “A MegaPointe was added to give an additional punch on the globe and top antenna, while an ESPRITE and FORTE fixture created texture on the column. We were astonished by the output and optics of all the fixtures.”

The Brixton Light Festival delights!



By Alet Pretorius

The biggest challenge was the weather. The event was again postponed, by a day, after a torrential storm, with up to 90mm of rain, took place on the Friday before show day. This meant that all parties involved had to shift their calendars at very short notice. The other concern related to power. “Because of budgetary constraints we couldn’t afford the luxury of distributed generator sets, and electricity to power all the fixtures along the route extended from residents’ homes, a logistical task that left us at the mercy of domestic power infrastructure,” said Fried. “The loads were calculated and for the most part, LED lamps were deployed to avoid circuit overload. Thankfully the national power utility announced earlier in the week that load-shedding would be reduced to stage 1.”

The Brixton Light Festival delights!



Photo Credit: Alet Pretorius

At last, the countdown began as people, dressed up in fairy lights, wings and costumes gathered in Putney Road at 7 pm. To great applause, the Brixton Tower came to life with colours and moving effects, and the parade set off. The atmosphere was electric, and one couldn't help wondering if this was the kind of community former President Nelson Mandela imagined when thinking about a new South Africa.

The Brixton Light Festival delights!



“Being involved in this project is just uplifting,” Fried adds. “This is a community event, put together by residents and the help of professionals within their network. It was funded and supported entirely through fundraising and sponsorships by companies and individuals who believed in the value it adds to society. It was a contribution to the spirit of the community.”

The creative energy that encompasses Brixton and its residents is addictive. “It’s a unique neighbourhood and we do our best to create a safe and healthy community,” he concludes. “I also really love the colour temperature and quality of the natural light in Brixton. The sunsets here are the best in Joburg!”

The Brixton Light Festival delights!



Production Credits:

Production Management:	Mark Shaerer & Sophia Welz
Creative Director:	Tamzyn Botha (Shade)
Technical Director:	Fried Wilsenach
Lighting Design:	Oliver Hauser & Fried Wilsenach
Show Caller:	David Gouldie
Stage Manager:	Toni Morkel
Safety Officer:	Steve Ndlela

The Brixton Light Festival delights!