The SABC and Cosmolight® bring International Cricket to SA’s TV screens

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Cricket supporters have been at the edge of their seats as the English cricket team, on tour in South Africa between December 2019 and February 2020, play four Tests, three One Day Internationals (ODIs), and three Twenty20 International (T201) matches. Cosmolight®

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Quartzcolor® LED lighting fixtures have been the performers of the day at the SABC, where commentary and live broadcast of the action is aired from their studios in Auckland Park, Johannesburg.

For the past 35 years, Andre Rossouw has worked at the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) as a lighting designer/electrician and head of electrical distribution on outside productions. His role includes the task of streamlining a system that keeps the power on, despite the current instability of the South African power grid.

"The studio, working in unison with a state-of-the-art OB Van, operates via a 80kVA UPS, linked to the studio's backup generators, to make sure we don't go down during load-shedding," Andre explains. A generator kicks in if needed. "All gear, including the air-conditioned OB Van, runs off 55 amps per phase. The studio lighting for the Cricket Test Series uses a minimal 12 amps per phase, thanks to the LED technology being used." The lighting rig consists of 12 Cosmolight® Quartzcolor® Studio LED X6 Plus fresnels, 4 Cosmolight® Quartzcolor® Studio LED X5 fresnels, 3 Robe 600 Spots and 22 Longman F4 Up LED parcans, all operated from a grandMA dot2.





For the Cricket Test Series, the SABC built a temporary set in Studio 7, one of their seven drama studios in Auckland Park, which is hired out to clients requiring studio space when not in use by the broadcaster. The SABC wanted to create an intimate atmosphere, so the television host and guests are seated on a large couch, while an LED touchscreen keeps viewers updated with video clips, stats and data, all streamed in from the director and talented crew pushing the buttons in the OB Van. Andre Rossouw and freelancer Retsepile Botsane were asked to create a 'warm' look and feel on the backdrop, but with sufficient lighting on the presenters for optimal television broadcasting.

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Andre Rossouw and Retsepile Botsane

“We created a morning, lunchtime and evening lighting look, and also a cold look to be used on rainy days so that the set mirrored the action on the field,” Andre explains. The pair work on a MA dot2 console. “The console provides easy access to fixtures and is user-friendly,” said Retsepile, who has worked on the MA platform for the past two years. “I find it interesting working in a studio environment, understanding the backend of television and helping to bring a picture to the viewers at home. I’ve also learnt so much from Andre while working with him on this production.”



Presenter Udo Carelse

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According to Andre, when LED fixtures first entered the market, he would only use them for set or audience lighting. “Cosmolight® has made me confident to not only use LED as keylight but to implement a full LED rig, which I think is what we have achieved in this production. Due to the fact that the LED fixtures consume so little power it was possible to incorporate it onto the UPS system. This is a big plus point for us as we can maintain broadcasting during load shedding. Tungsten is phasing out, it’s gone,” he goes on to say. “And the cost-saving implications and reduction in maintenance are phenomenal. A chip costs half the price of a bulb, and you gain a life of 50,000 hours compared to a 400 hour ‘lamp’ life. It’s a major saving.”



The SABC first invested in Cosmolight® five years ago. “The fixtures are robust and can handle

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the bumps thrown at it during transportation and rigging for OB productions,” said Andre. “The greatest advantage is being able to run at low intensity while maintaining the colour temperature. If we had a 2K running at 30%, the colour temperature would drop. The lights also feel a lot brighter than normal tungsten. They are very reliable, and we’ve not had one go down. I can leave the units burning the entire day, yet the room temperature in the studio remains cool, which is such a pleasure. Another big plus for us was the noise factor on microphones. We have tested and placed microphones on boom poles right up against the fixture, and still experienced no noise. We could not find any ‘lamp zing’ as we would on the normal tungsten fixtures.”



DWR Distribution is the authorised local distributor of Cosmolight® lighting technology in South Africa. Kevin Stannett, Cosmolight® product representative at DWR says, “In the past, the challenge was to get LED to be as good as tungsten, and I think we are at the point where it is better than tungsten.”

Catch all of the cricket action, and beautiful production work, on SABC until February 2020.

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