

The Showroom



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“The nothingness (die niks), the wide open spaces and the deafening stillness...balm for the soul at sunset.” This is the magic of Prince Albert, the gateway to the Great Karroo – Prince Albert home page

In the charming town of Prince Albert, The Showroom, a new theatre, opened her doors on the 22nd November 2013. The 150-seater incorporates Philips Selecon Profiles and Fresnels, Philips Strand 200 Plus control and dimmers, Le Maitre Hazers and Longman F1 LED Parcans.

The project was the initiative of resident filmmaker, Johnny Breedt and his business partner, Charon Landman. Significantly, Breedt had worked on the movie adaption *Mandela: The Long Walk to Freedom*, and of course the movie's release, the death of South Africa's beloved Nelson Mandela and the opening of The Showroom, all coincided within days of each other.

It's not every day someone decides to establish a new theatre, and as far as locations are concerned, there could not be one more breathtaking or remote.



A new place for the arts in Prince Albert.

Johnny Breedt describes the series of events that led him to finally own his own theatre; something which he says has been a life-long dream.

“Years ago I did a film in the Karoo with Katinka Heyns entitled *Paljas*, and I had travelled through Prince Albert during that time and felt this place was special,” said Breedt. “Little did I know that I would end up living here sixteen years later. At first my wife Yvette and I used to come here on our annual holiday once a year if we were lucky. When we finally decided to move to Cape Town, due to my work commitments, we changed the plan slightly and opted to relocate to our holiday home instead. Geographically this made sense as it was close to

Cape Town and Yvette was able to start her own business here. The country life was really what we were longing for and Prince Albert suddenly made a lot of sense for our new home.”

Breedt trained in theatre design and qualified at the Tshwane University of Technology, but had to go straight to the army after completing his studies. “Here I discovered film when I was drafted into the Film Unit and my career took on a new direction. After working in the film industry for 25 years, I finally decided that I wanted to explore my passion for owning a theatre.” His career also included working at the State Theatre, the Breytenbach Theatre and Alexander Theatre. He was the production designer for the heartfelt and sobering award-winning film, Hotel Rwanda and the TV series No1 Ladies Detective Agency.

Prince Albert seemed the perfect place as it had very little in the form of performing arts and entertainment for the local residents”, he says.

So he aptly went about buying some old theatre chairs and second hand equipment, bought a property in the industrial area and planned to erect a second hand steel building there, which he had purchased in Johannesburg. “Charon Landman, a local businesswoman who was formerly from Johannesburg, asked if she could be involved with the theatre and so a new partnership was formed.”

They pooled their resources and ideas together and when the current premises went on the market, which happened to be a former restaurant, they knew they had found the right location for the theatre.

“Charon comes from a successful construction background and so she understood the concept of design and project management,” said Breedt. “Along with my technical and creative background as a film production designer, we made a formidable team. Charon trusted my creative input and I relied heavily on her business acumen. We are both leaders and ‘control freaks’, but we seldom differed on anything. Charon was also an inspiration to the team of workers who tackled this project and her positive energy was important during the construction phase of this project.”



Needless to say, the busy activity on site was noted by the local residents. Linda Jaquet wrote an article in The Prince Albert Friend, the town’s community newspaper, “There is a great deal of curiosity about the current makeover of what used to be Celestino’s restaurant on Church Street,” the story opened, and she went on to explain that the family favourite restaurant that fronted a cavernous storage area was to be transformed into The Showroom, a theatre with full cinema surround sound, live acoustic sound and state-of-the-art theatre lighting.

Breedt came across DWR Distribution through one of his former university lecturers. “She put me onto a couple of companies, one of which was DWR. Here I found Dave Whitehouse who went out of his way to accommodate our needs. Dave met with us at DWR and did a full demonstration of the equipment he was proposing. Thereafter he flew down for a weekend and did a full inspection of the premises.”

After supplying a suitable equipment list and agreeing on a price, the installation commenced. ‘The team from

DWR descended on the Karoo and were absolutely brilliant,” said Breedt. “Led by Eazy Moeketsi, they worked through the night and finished the installation in a short period. During this time they also installed dimmable LED house lights and gave us in-house training. The thing that I really like about DWR is that they are always available to answer any questions or to give advice, even months after the installation. We look forward to adding to our system and doing business with DWR in the future.

“What a great little town,” Moeketsi commented, who was assisted by colleagues Gideon Mpofu and Mandla Ndlovu. “We arrived at 8 o’clock at night and we knew it was different because all the shops were closed.” Johnny Breedt arranged hamburgers for supper that night, and every evening thereafter, the hostess at the local restaurant kept her doors open till late to accommodate the team. Without fail, the guesthouse owner would pop by daily to greet the DWR team and to find out how their day went.



It was a straight-forward install and the only challenge was the roof of stage. “It wasn’t very high, so we hung the lighting on clamps and then balanced the lighting bar. Other than that, it was easy,” said Moeketsi.

The curtain rails were supplied by Rob Young – he himself found fell in love with Prince Albert and was most tempted to stay.

“A big thank you to Johnny Breedt and Charon Landman for this opportunity,” commented Dave Whitehouse from DWR. “The whole process was one of those feel good ones! Great clients who fully understood their goals and were determined to achieve them. From the moment I arrived in Prince Albert for the initial site visit the welcome I received set the tone for a memorable process. Truly a refreshing experience.”



For more information, be sure to visit The Showroom’s Facebook page, and if ever you’re passing through Prince Albert, make it your prerogative to stay over even for just one night. You never know, you like Breedt who has lived there for six years, and owned the house for 16, may decide to make it home.

www.showroomtheatre.co.za

Lighting Kit

6 x Philips Selecon LED Profiles

6 x Philips Selecon Fresnels

18 x Longman Par LEDs

6 x Longman Stagebars

1 x Philips Strand Lighting Sixer Controller to control House Lights

House lights comprising 38 x 5m LED Strips (10 x 12 Volt power supply; 1 x LED Longman Controller)

1 x Philips Strand 200 Plus to control stage lights

2 x Philips Strand 6 pack dimmers

2 x Le Maitre MVS Hazer

1 x Huey Power Distribution unit