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ESPRITES for Family Feud

Products Involved

CycFX 4™ ESPRITE®

The first South Africa and Ghana editions of the hit TV game show Family Feud brought to SA and produced by Rapid Blue were recorded in December & January at the Urban Brew Studios in Johannesburg, with lighting designed by Joshua Cutts and supplied by Blond Productions ... including 12 x Robe ESPRITE LED profiles newly purchased by Blond ... making their African TV production debut!

The hugely popular American Family Feud show has been syndicated worldwide to over 50 different countries and is one of the longest-running and most popular TV games shows, having started in 1976. Since 2010, it's been hosted very successfully by Steve Harvey.

Blond Productions, based in Midrand, is a busy South African rental company specialising in supplying lighting, video and audio production to the television, film and commercial sectors.

They asked Josh to come onboard working with Mauritz Neethling as his associate LD and collaborated on a joint pitch with scenic specialist Dream Sets and set designer Michael Gill to present a full technical / creative package to Rapid Blue.

Once their bid was selected, a collective decision was made to use the ESPRITES which arrived just in time from Robe's SA distributor DWR to make the show for which lighting was programmed and operated by Ryan Lombard, who also designed the lighting system.

Some basic style guidelines from the American show were applied to the lighting and Josh also drew inspiration from previous iterations as a formula that had worked well over the years, which included keeping a similar colour scheme. To this, they added some original and innovative aesthetic flourishes making the presentation appropriate for these two African editions.

The two series were shot over a four-week period with up to three episodes recorded per day ... so the pace was hectic!

A Prolyte trussing structure was set up in the studio to ground support the set elements which were very geometric and ordered, with a network of trusses flown in the roof to provide lighting positions.

The ESPRITES were used for all the front light – their high CRI and accurate shuttering was exactly what was needed from those positions.

Josh enjoyed working with the ESPRITES. “It’s a very high-quality LED profile, with a fantastic light output that makes it extremely easy to get great-looking skin tones on camera.”

It wasn’t a beamy show at all. The set architecture defined the space, set a slick tone and included multiple inbuilt LED elements – 6 mm and 2.9 LED and plasma screen surfaces – plus some snazzy LED pixel fixtures integrated onto the set together with multiple LED battens.

The high gloss black floor was very effective and reflective, and placement of light sources was crucial to make this work perfectly on camera.

For Josh, the biggest challenge for lighting was covering the wide area needed to catch all Steve Harvey’s movements – he’s known for energetically using the whole set space – and ensuring that all the different camera angles were covered. Whilst doing that, he had to take care not to over-light and distract from the streamlined and super-cool appearance of the set!

In addition to the ESPRITES, there were 72 other Robe luminaires on the rig.

Forty-eight LEDBeam 100s were utilised for rear up-lighting of columns and other set pieces and for back-lighting the audience; 24 x LEDWash 300s provided general front and back light; 24 x CycFX 4s were positioned for back light onto the contestants.

Blond’s owner and founder Christiaan Ballot is delighted with his latest Robe investment in the ESPRITES. They are an ideal luminaire for Blond with the intensity, high CRI, shuttering, the uniformity of the beam with full hot-spot control and amazing colour mixing.

Apart from all these assets, once he did the maths, the ESPRITE’s transferable LED engine was a financial no-brainer for Christiaan. “Lamp life rapidly gets consumed in the studio by long operating hours and the heat, and 700 hours gets clocked up extremely easily.” He points out that the ESPRITES’ cooling system helps reduces maintenance and increases the longevity of the light source.

Blond already has several hundred Robe moving lights in its inventory, and Christiaan and the team had been keeping eyes on the LED profile market for some time waiting for something good to materialise. "The ROI on these is really excellent, it's a light I can use all the time," he commented, hinting at the fact that more ESPRITES will be on order soon!

Ryan Lombard is equally as impressed with the fixtures, commenting that much of the time, he ran them at ESPRITES at between 15 and 40% intensity, enabling the cameras to stop right down and enhance the depth of field and detail of the set. This was one of the looks that Josh specifically sought to achieve with lighting.

The recording was shot with a colour temperature of 48K and with no tungsten sources at all on the rig.

Ryan operated all the lighting using a grandMA2 light console which also fed the set video and graphics via a VPU into a disguise P3 media server.

The technical director was Rudi Boetha and the Executive Producer was Kee-Leen Irvine.

Rapid Blue producers Kee-Leen Irvine, Ed Worster and Ryan Deacon plus the series' international consultants all commented that the lighting was "absolutely standout."

Blond also supplied an L-Acoustics sound system to the series which is currently airing on E.TV on Sunday Evenings in South Africa.

Christiaan really enjoyed the teamwork and modus operandi of the three companies joining forces to create and working in unison to present a total environment. They have worked with Dream sets and Michael Gill similarly on a couple of previous projects, and it's a modus operandi he certainly intends to peruse in the future.

Photo Credit: Louise Stickland





