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MGG Hits the Road in South Africa

The technical production industry is known worldwide for its resourcefulness and determination, and the Coronavirus pandemic is energising some intrepid ideas to help keep businesses rolling and communities safe and functional during the crisis.

With all conferences and live entertainment work cancelled or postponed, South African rental company MGG based in Johannesburg was looking at their 32 idle vehicles – ranging from 45ft artics to small run-around vans – when owner and MD Mark Gaylard came up with the idea of offering the fleet for moving essential medical and other supplies during the crisis.

MGG is one of the country's leading full production rental companies. The lighting department has a large stock of Robe moving lights – amongst others. In fact, only a few weeks back they were proudly announcing their latest investment in Robe's new ESPRITE LED Profiles ... and then the work industry-wide ground to a halt as Covid-19 spread.

Mark composed a quick Facebook post about the transport fleet which went on his own personal page ... and before long it had nearly 400 shares and people started talking and calling!

It was slowly at first – most of the rock 'n' roll community being used to a pacey environment – but the initial inquiries have started to become a steady trickle of work ... All of which is helping keep MGG's six full time plus their regular freelance drivers busy.

They have had calls to move anything from eggs and other foodstuffs and agricultural produce to steel and building materials. All important medical supplies like hand-sanitising products have been trucked from the docks in Durban, KZN, up to the commercial hub of Johannesburg. They even had a call to move a small business's offices!

"I quickly realised that the general transport and freight business is radically different from moving and delivering goods and trucking services in our core entertainment industry world," commented Mark, adding that "it's highly competitive and a lot of the work gets outsourced to those who don't own their own vehicles. It's definitely not an environment where you can just flip a switch and start moving goods as you might be used to. But it's been extremely interesting!"

The manufacturing side of MGG has also been furtively producing Covid-19 hazard warning signage while there are no shows going on, another area in which they have tried to use the time and talents of the workforce positively.

At the time of writing, SA President Cyril Ramaphosa had just announced that the country is to go into lockdown for three weeks from 26th March in a bid to stop the virus spreading.

Despite all that and the general economic situation even before Covid having been extremely tough in SA for some time, Mark is optimistic about the future of the entertainment, meeting & conferencing

and leisure industries.

"Live events, music, theatre, etc., are very vibrant sectors, and people do love to congregate and enjoy each other's company, energy and an atmosphere. When we come through this I think there will be a massive demand, while there may be some changes in the way we use remote networking technologies, people will still need and enjoy getting together, music fans will still want to experience bands and DJs live, theatre and moviegoers will still want to relax and escape for that time ... we will bounce back!"

Mark also thinks that there's a clear need for quantifying the economic contribution made by the South African entertainment industry - in particular - to the GDP and as a sizable employment sector. In the meantime, while we stay strong and get through the crisis together, he's planning to look after MGG's staff and regular freelancers and ensure that the company is ready to hit the ground running when the lockdown is lifted and business starts flowing again!

Photo Credit: courtesy MGG

