

Terri Verhoeven of Big Concerts on navigating the new events, entertainment space

 By Ruth Cooper

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This month, we uncover the heroes behind the brands that millions of South Africans take into their homes and hearts every day. We find out more from Terri Verhoeven, senior operations manager at Big Concerts, about managing such a well-known SA company and navigating and surviving the devastating effects of Covid-19.



Terri Verhoeven

■ **How has Big Concerts had to adapt strategies since the Covid-19 pandemic?**

Needless to say, the pandemic has had a devastating effect on the events industry as a whole. The live entertainment industry has been particularly hard hit, especially at the scale that we operate. For me, I would say adapting has been more about survival.

■ **How are you navigating the new digital event space?**

It's been a big shift, in the past, we've predominantly focused on promoting our own events and, with everything coming to a halt, it means we've had to be more creative, coming up with content, keeping our followers engaged while no live events are taking place. We've focused a lot on promoting livestreamed events. This has been a way to keep the fans connected to their favourite artist while staying safe at home.

“ *Being a part of a global company, the pandemic has also highlighted the power that we hold as a collective brand. Combining the social media and communication platforms across 40 countries creates a strong offering to Live Nation artists and clients.* ”

■ **Can you tell us more about your partnership with Health Passport Europe?**

Big Concerts, together with The Entertainment Group partnered with Health Passport Europe to safely re-open the events industry in South Africa using the latest developments in rapid Covid-19 testing. Last year, we successfully hosted our first event, Recharge 2020, using this technology and the event was a great success, representing an important stepping-stone towards a wider reopening of the event industry in 2021.



Big Concerts, The Entertainment Group partner with Health Passport Europe in aim to safely reopen SA's events industry

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🔴 ***What is it like managing such a well-known South African brand?***

I have so much admiration for Big Concerts as a brand and I'm incredibly proud to be part of the journey of such a South African icon. It is certainly an interesting and challenging role at times as it's hard to make absolutely everyone happy when it comes to music tastes, but no two days or events are the same, so it's always fun and inspiring!

🔴 ***What have been some of your highlights while working for Big Concerts?***

There have been many in my 11 years at Big Concerts. One that stands out was meeting Ed Sheeran when he toured here in 2019, I'm such a fan. Then my next would be working on stadium tours, I love the energy of it and getting to work with such incredible colleagues behind the scenes.



Ed Sheeran, Terri Verhoeven

🔴 ***Can you share, with our readers, more about your recent brand campaigns and the rationales behind them?***

We recently collaborated with Jeff Fitness and supported Johno Meintjes with Jeff's 25-hour workout where R350,000 was raised for Gift of the Givers in support of South Africa's frontline healthcare workers. As a brand, we wanted to be involved with this great cause. We just love the energy and zest behind the Jeff brand; the pairing of fitness and music is seamless and, of course, it has been important to us to remain present in the lives of South Africans in a time when we can't all be together in person.



Jeff Fitness to lead Big 25-Hour Workout in aid of SA's frontline workers

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What do you think are the most successful channels for getting your brand message out there?

A combination of radio, digital advertising and social media.

What would you say the future looks like in the eventing space? Are you hopeful for a return to 'normalcy' when it comes to live events? I don't believe in 'the new normal' – I strongly believe we will go back to pushing one another in a crowded venue or trying to get to the front of the barricade to touch our favourite musician. The UK has announced their opening strategy with a few festivals and shows have gone on sale and the response has been incredible! Tickets have been flying. I feel we all desperately want to live without fear again and when we are one day able to have our first concert in South Africa, when it's safe to do so, it's really going to be something to remember!



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What career advice would you give to aspirant young marketing and branding professionals?

For me, it's a combination of hard work ethic, being reliable, passionate and loyal.

ABOUT RUTH COOPER

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