

sound & stage

ENTERTAINMENT TECHNOLOGY AND PRODUCTION

ON THE DOTTED LINE

How to draft the perfect events contract »P30

10 MINUTES WITH...

Catching up with Edward Crossan of Solas »P45



Greek GRANDEUR

YANNI MAKES HIS BIG DEBUT IN ABU DHABI

EIND

Reliving an eventful evening at the Events Industry Night Out in Dubai

INFOCOMM MEA

What to expect at InfoComm Middle East & Africa 2016 »P42

PAVING THE WAY

The importance of hiring an event flooring specialist »P36

ROUNDTABLE

The Shure and Sound & Stage ME roundtable »P22



IN SAFE HANDS

SUNIL SAXENA sheds light on the importance planning and managing security for major entertainment events

One thing that I have learnt in my career is that you never get a second chance to create a first impression and in the business of security, there are no second chances.

The better the security team is, the more invisible they are. When things are running so smoothly that you don't even notice the people behind the scenes or the hard work being done to hold it all together, that's when you know that you're running an excellent event.

Successful events don't happen by chance. It takes a lot of meticulous planning, foresight and experience at all levels. While lights, sound and entertainment are the main factors most

events are judged by, every function is an essential contributor to the end result.

In fact, security for one, is the most passively active functions and any shortcoming could mean a bitter guest experience to life threatening hazards.

Contrary to popular perception, event security is much more than just uniformed guards at the entrance and the process involves a series of assessments.

Security planning for any live music event or concert begins from the time it is announced. The factors considered include the profile of the artist or act, which determines the crowd dynamics - one of the most critical compo-

nents of the security design and plan. This part takes place a minimum of four weeks prior to the event along with a complete risk assessment of the venue.

- The crowd capacity of the event;
- Start and end time;
- Age limit and probable visitor age profile;
- Valuable / cash handling at the event;
- Artist profile which determines the crowd profile and age; and
- Fire and safety



These elements build the base for a detailed security plan and a detailed site survey to:

- Identify the key entrances, exits, and other focal and stress points to create a spot plan;
- Establish the workforce and the category of security personnel and safety required; and
- Prepare a security plan and submit to the organiser and authorities to get their approval.

We have over 1,500 trained security staff that are licensed by the local authorities to be deployed for any kind of event. All of them have received special training as per the local authorities to work in line with certain quality standards and are certified to do so.

There is no substitute for experience and the more active your security personnel are, the better they get at their job. Considering the frequency of events undertaken and across all venues, we have specialised teams that we deploy to specific venues owing to their familiarity of the venue specifics.

Event security is needed on a 24-hour basis since our deployment begins during the build-up phase, so we normally have 12-hour shifts that are split between the morning and the main event shift which defines different numbers for crowd management, artist management, pre- and post-event movements, parking and traffic management, and emergency response teams.

The size of the deployment depends on the venue and the crowd dynamics, so for an event ranging from 30,000 to 35,000 individuals, the total number of security personnel begins with a minimum of over 300 trained security staff to man all the key posts.



Sunil Saxena

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Sunil Saxena.

Events security is a mix of manual intervention and technology based solutions. All of our officers are trained in customer care, security, crowd management, firefighting, radio communications and crisis management.

Large-scale events operate on a chain of command, which is run from the Joint Operations Center or Venue Operations Center (JOC or VOC) that houses all the decision makers responsible for running the event.

The JOC has a CCTV panel to monitor the movement of the crowd from external to internal areas. Each of our staff is trained to handle large crowds, and we work through special procedures defined for the event, report to the JOC/VOC, and follow the chain of command through the JOC and the safety officer or the event security director.

Communications is key to an event's security management and helps in shaping it in a more controlled and organised manner. Therefore, pace and clarity of communication is essential to swiftly identify problems and deal with them under the JOC's guidance.

As deputy MD and head of the Event Security vertical, my role besides the business management of the division, involves the supervision of this very planning.

I have personally been involved in the security design and management of various high-profile events across the globe including iconic venues such as The Burj Khalifa, the Rugby 7s, the Amphitheatre in Media City, and the Yas Marina Circuit among others. On an international level, I have overseen the security of international indoor arenas such as The O2 in London and Glasgow's sporting venue SECC. ■■■