

Asia's biggest sporting event commanded its greatest ever audience and demanded its best ever presentation. **Tim Goodyer** reports on the live and broadcast set-up at the Doha Asian Games

**WITH MORE THAN 10,500**

athletes from 45 nations competing in 29 field events and 429 related sports, the 2006 Asian Games staged in Doha, was the biggest multisport event to date outside the summer Olympic Games, and the largest sporting event ever held in the Middle East. It's a long way from the first games in New Delhi in 1951, where 489 athletes from 11 countries competed in a modest six events.

This time it took 1,000 global event specialists from across the world, working under the Doha Asian Games Organising Committee (DAGOC) from purpose-built facilities in Doha, to arrange the spectacular opening and closing ceremonies, with specialists from Australia, Canada, the UK, Asia and the Gulf all playing their part. Held at the magnificent Khalifa Stadium, the festivities opened with a song written specifically for the games and performed by the king of Cantopop – Hong Kong star Jacky Cheung – followed by another from 19-year-old Indian singer Sunidhi Chauhan, appearing off the back of a 12-date tour of the US. This was followed by Lebanese singer Magida El Roumi performing a duet with Spanish opera tenor José Carreras, marking the first time the two artists have appeared together and heralding the arrival of the games' torch.

The ceremonies also involved more than 6,500 costumes, the product of two years' research into the customs of the various cultures that were part of the games 'family', with international designers working closely with local people to ensure the authenticity of the Arabic aspects of the costumes. The resulting collection of designs came from Doha, Sydney, Melbourne, Shanghai, Bangkok, Cairo, the US, Damascus, Vietnam, Japan, Hong Kong, India, Bali, South Korea and the UK. 'This is the culmination of several years of planning for the biggest ceremony Asia has ever known,' said Ahmed Abdulla Al Khulaifi, deputy director general of the DAGOC. 'More than 8,000 artists from the Middle East, Asia and around the world, have contributed their creative skills to realise Qatar's dream of making the Doha ceremonies unforgettable for generations to come. We recognised the need to bring on board inspiring Asian, as well as international, skills in order to encapsulate the wide range of athletes and backgrounds represented throughout the games.'



**Clockwise from top: The Doha Asian Games; Games10 Riedel Performer C3 at Sound Control in the Khalifa Stadium; Speaker placements inside the Khalifa Stadium; Presentation manager Ollie Hammer at the Beach Volleyball competitions with Riedel Artist 1000 control panels.**

The DAGOC called on Australian company David Atkins Enterprise to conceive, create and produce the opening and closing ceremonies for the Games. DAE's portfolio includes the Sydney 2000 Olympic opening and closing ceremonies, and the Manchester 2002 Commonwealth Games handover ceremony. The preparations necessitated the building of a Ceremonies Compound at Sport City, which included an administration building, dance studios, rehearsal spaces, workshops, cast-holding facilities and an outdoor rehearsal area equivalent in size to the stadium's field of play.

The Khalifa Stadium had been radically redeveloped as part of a capital works programme for the ceremonies and the games

themselves, and is effectively a brand new stadium (see *Pro Audio Middle East*, March-April 2005). From a roofless 20,000-seat venue, it has been transformed into a 65,000-capacity international standard stadium with a floating roof and a delicate lighting arch, which carried the lights, speakers and fireworks used during the two ceremonies. Consultation and design of the audio systems was entrusted to Australian Scott Willsallen – who was also responsible for the Athens Olympics in 2004, and the Melbourne Commonwealth Games last year, among other high-profile projects. Maintaining their successful partnership, the sound systems were provided by fellow Australian operation Norwest Productions, under the guidance of



project manager Adrian Riddell, with Bruce Jackson taking the role of audio director. The installation principally comprised of an L-Acoustics Kudo system, supplemented by Adamson Y-10 cabinets for delays in the balconies. In total, there were 110 Kudo boxes (with their K-Louvers adjusted to 80°), divided into stacks of four or five high – seven stacks of five speakers served two sides of the arena with five stacks of four speakers on the remaining two sides. This was completed by MTD108a coaxial speakers with L-Acoustics 108P self-powered speakers for monitoring at the console position. 'The consultant was convinced that L-Acoustics Kudo was the best-adapted product for this project, and able to respond to the specific needs of this operation and implementation,' said Mr Jackson. 'This is also because he had already worked on the Sydney, Athens and Commonwealth Games. The L-

Acoustics Kudo boxes were all ground-stacked. The nice thing is that they have a very low-profile, so we can stack one or two boxes higher than with other cabinets.'

In addition, the sound system made use of a selection of Lake units and the new Dolby Lake digital loudspeaker processor, providing routing, crossover, equalisation, limiting and protection of the system. 'As is typical with the opening and closing ceremonies of the Olympics, we always use a very widely distributed sound system,' explains Mr Jackson. 'For that purpose, the comprehensive remote control over Ethernet of the Dolby Lake Processors makes them invaluable. It's also nice that Norwest Audio already had a significant suite of Lake Mesa equalisers and Contour processors. We ended up with a very complicated network, but it's so easy to put together using Ethernet. What's also nice is that you can prioritise the inputs, so, for example, they can be set up to run on the digital network but you can also run an analogue backup. The DLPs can be set to either automatically switch, or switch on command across to the analogue input, so it makes a secure, failsafe system.'

In total 10 Dolby Lake Processors, seven Lake Contour and seven Lake Mesa Quad EQs were used over an Optocore network. The opening show was run to time code, with all the audio being played out from a Merging Technologies Pyramix digital audio workstation system.

Although the Khalifa Stadium was the focus of the opening and closing of the games, it was only one of more than 40 separate venues used – among them, the Aspire Dome, is largest multi-purpose indoor sports dome in the world (see *Pro Audio Middle East*, March-April 2006). Designed by French architect Roger Taillibert, the 73,000-sq-m facility is adjacent to the Khalifa Stadium and opened its doors in November 2005 as part of Doha's Sport City. It houses an indoor athletics stadium, a 6,000-seater football stadium, Olympic-sized swimming and diving pools, and seven multi-purpose sports halls – although the games pools, and seven multi-purpose sports halls – although the games used only part of the facilities, which are otherwise primarily used by the Aspire Sporting Academy. For the games, Aspire hosted the badminton, wushu (a Chinese martial art), wrestling, kabaddi (an