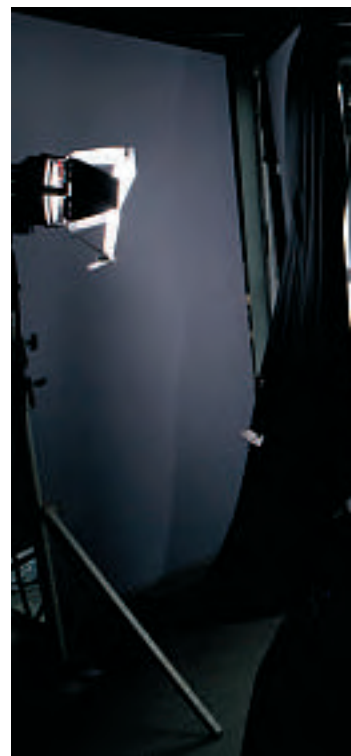


CHALLENGE BEIJING



During the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympic Games, **GlobeCast** provided an array of services to rights-holders and non-rights-holders for worldwide distribution. **David Justin**, CEO GlobeCast Asia, and **Graham Smith**, Sales Director, Global Contribution Services look back on their Beijing experience and ahead to the World Cup 2010 in South Africa, the Commonwealth Games 2010 in Delhi, and then London 2012

The main challenge in Beijing was that it was in China. It was the first time that China saw so many international media flocking to Beijing so from their side there was a bit of a learning curve how to handle these journalists and service providers all arriving at the same time. That probably was the most complicated thing. I think we managed to help our rights holders and non-rights holders in this quite well thanks to our presence in Beijing – our office there has been up and running for several years and we have long-standing contacts with the main telcos, and the BOB. On the technical side, it was the first Olympics where the production was done completely in High Def.

How many broadcasters were originating or transmitting in HD?

In terms of production quite a few, in terms of transmission many less. I would say the broadcasters who had unilaterals, maybe one third of them sent over their content in HD, whereas the live position ad hoc bookings and transmissions were fully in SD.

How much of a change is that from Athens?

[Graham Smith] HD hadn't really exploded in Athens, people were dipping their toe in the water. In advance of Athens everyone had talked about it, had expected it to be a watershed, yet HD has taken a lot longer to take off. Really a big change was that you did MPEG-4 for ATV (Hong Kong). I think that is almost bigger than HD in a way, the change from MPEG-2 to MPEG-4. I think that the GlobeCast Asian office was the first to do transmissions for a major rights-holding broadcaster in MPEG-4 out of a major event, which went extremely well.

[Justin] All our HD transmissions on satellite were done using MPEG-4 and in terms of modulation, DVB S2.

[Smith] We always build our systems, particularly at major events, with a considerable degree of redundancy and diversity in path as well. A lot of broadcasters are coming out of these major events actually via fibre and satellite so that there is not a single point of failure.

Take us through what you offer for non-rights holders at an event like the Olympics...

[Justin] Non-rights holders didn't

“
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have access to images coming from inside the Bird's Nest. What we did in Beijing, we built a complete broadcast base for non-rights holders which was just outside the red line but probably had the best view of the Bird's Nest and the Water Cube. And there in this broadcast base you find pretty much the same type of services that you find in the IBC – work space, studios, live shots - and we go as far as providing logistics like hotel rooms or translators or cars.

So essentially a N-RH can do talking head reports?

[Smith] It's very strictly limited. Traditionally what we've tended to offer is a position with an iconic view – for example, in the case of the Olympics, of the Olympic flame. In Turin we rented an apartment and offered the view from the balcony as a viewpoint on the Olympic flame in Turin. [Justin] N-RH concentrate on slightly different things. The Olympics is about sports but it is also about discovering a country, about countries coming together, so there is quite a bit to say even if you cannot show live the sports events themselves.

What about the issue of piracy?

[Smith] We address the piracy issue



by using a conditional access encryption system whereby we individually address a decoder and therefore only that decoder is authorised to take a particular signal. We do that for all our distribution for any major sports material.

[Justin] The piracy does not take place in the stages where GlobeCast is involved.

How did you find working with the BOB?

[Justin] We worked together quite a bit on the rights-holders side to understand what will be available, to make sure we had everything we needed to answer the needs of our clients. I think we tried to have a common understanding of what was allowed and not allowed and how you should apply to get things done.

[Smith] There was a lot of dialogue on the N-RH side as well because in China the control was a lot tighter than Athens in terms of where you could film and where you could feed from. Any permits that we had to get with 7 BMC were done in conjunction with BOB in order not to break the rules.

What are the key things you have taken away from Beijing?

[Justin] I think it is our biggest Olympics ever in terms of number of clients and breadth of what we offered. The difficult part was working in China but we do about 300 sports events in Asia per year, so we already had quite a bit of experience. I think the Beijing games just confirmed that if you don't have long-standing relationships at different levels and in different organisations you have great difficulties in getting things done in China. Luckily we had these relationships with major telcos, with people in the different administrations, which helped a lot.

Let's look forward to the World Cup 2010 in South Africa and then the Commonwealth Games 2010 in Delhi, and then to London 2012...

[Smith] I think HD will be the norm by 2010, MPEG-4 possibly will be more common as well, and more and more fibre.

[Justin] If you have good quality fibre available, as you will have in London for example, the vast majority of the transmissions will be fibre-based, maybe with one or two satellite backups here and there.

I am still a bit sceptical about the South African fibres so broadcasters will probably take a

▲ Clockwise from left: a GlobeCast non-rights holder studio with a view of the Bird's Nest; GlobeCast master control; David Justin; Graham Smith

much more cautious approach on that one.

[Smith] South Africa is a much bigger challenge all round as the telcos haven't got the experience of the major European telcos. - London will be relatively straightforward because the interconnectivity is there, you've got a major POP in London, it's a tried and tested route. - For the Commonwealth Games we are getting requests in HD.

These Games are a little bit of a mess - a lot of things are still undecided and it's very difficult to plot a road map.

[Justin] In Asia we are definitely very used to that. A few months ago we did the Cricket 20-20 from India where we were awarded the contract one week before the start of the event, and we managed to cover the 59 games in eight different cities over about a month without any technical problem, even though they changed the venue for the final at the very last minute.

Well, you have to think in the Asian way of doing things, and GlobeCast definitely has this experience. There are probably few people who can say that.

David Justin and Graham Smith, thank you. ■