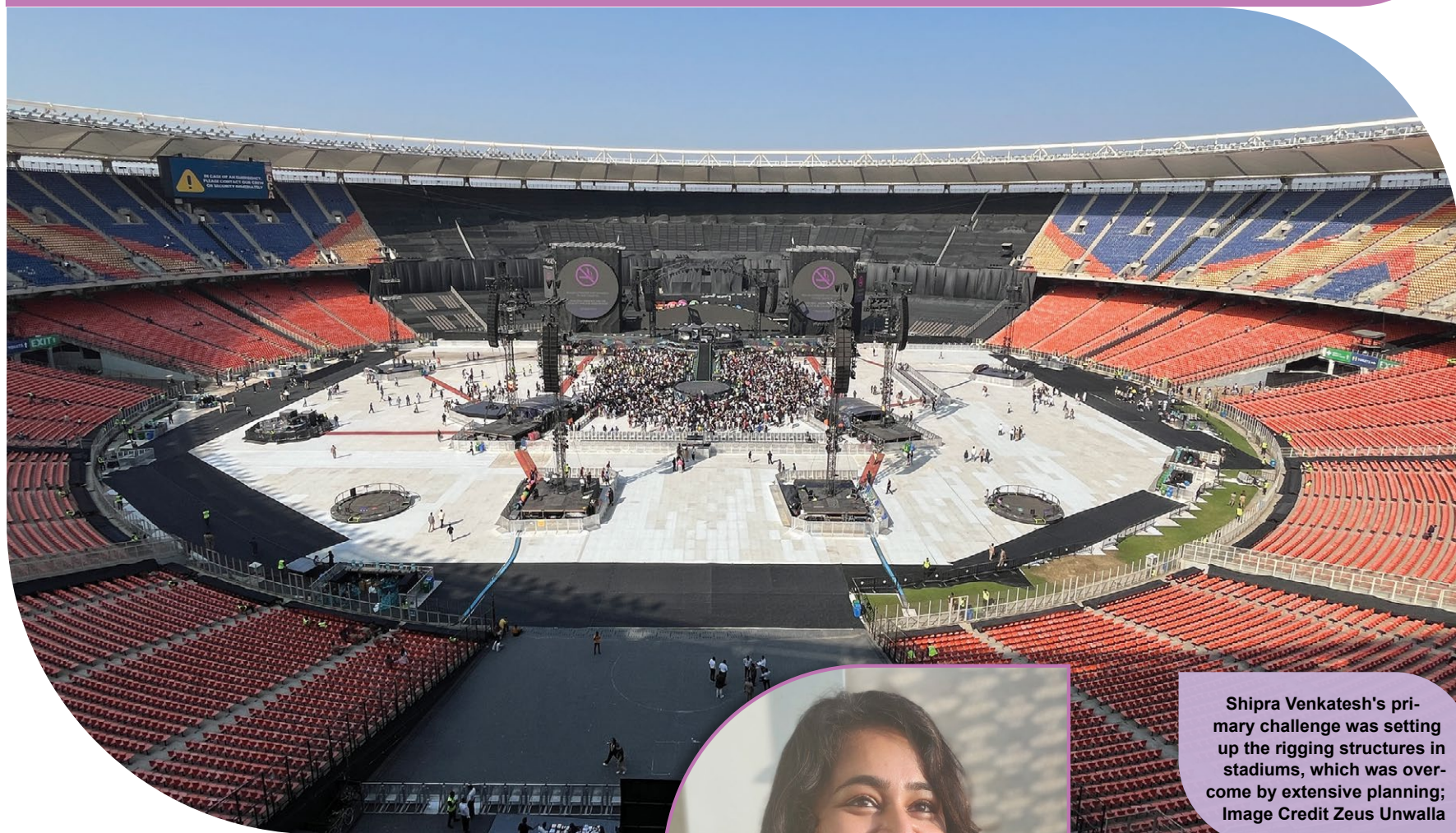


INSIDE THE COLDPLAY SPECTACLE



Shipra Venkatesh's primary challenge was setting up the rigging structures in stadiums, which was overcome by extensive planning; Image Credit Zeus Unwalla

*When Coldplay returned to India for a historic multi-city run, the scale was epic, but so were the stakes. Tasked with transforming sacred cricket grounds into world-class concert venues, **Shipra Venkatesh**, Technical Producer at **BookMyShow Live**, led the charge with surgical precision, creative agility and a deep respect for both turf and tech. In this exclusive interview with **PALM Expo Magazine**, she walks us through the logistical ballet behind one of India's most complex and high-profile live productions to date.*



1. From a production standpoint, what were the unique challenges of executing Coldplay's touring setup in an Indian venue?

The first unique challenge was the fact that we were in cricket stadiums. As you know, cricket is religion here and the pitch is the shrine. Much of the stage, consoles and delay towers were built on grass. And so, it was all of our top priority to protect the turf and pitch. It became an integral part of our planning at every level. We tried to optimise the production schedule to the best of our ability to reduce the number of hours the grass would be covered. We only covered the pitch and built on it one evening before show day!

I'm happy to say all our efforts paid off. India and England were able to play a match at the **Narendra Modi Stadium** only weeks after the Ahmedabad shows!

Further, with these stadiums comes the unique challenge of never having hosted so many people in the field of play. Ensuring safe and comfortable ingress and egress of attendees and creating enough access points, became a priority for the team at BookMyShow Live.

2. Could you elaborate a bit on the power aspect of the Show? How did you execute it?

The last show in India of a comparable scale was **U2's Joshua Tree Tour**. Back in 2019, U2 brought down literally everything, including megawatt generator containers!

This time around, it was very different. The whole show was locally powered with 8 x 500 kVA Aggreko generators for audio, lighting, video, rigging, and utilities. All the generators ran in sync with a robust load bank system. The power distribution was also very detailed, with lengthy cable runs and close to 30 power distribution units. All generators were supplied by **Brite Technology**, and all power distribution was handled by **Third Wave Power**.

The Coldplay crew was very meticulous and detailed in their planning, ensuring all tech disciplines had their own PDUs, everyone had the right connectors, and that all the cables followed a very specific path. The understage area is a village of its own, and there could not be huge cables cutting across just anywhere.

It was challenging and a lot of fun at the same time, and now I'm looking forward to more copper cables and less aluminium in India.

3. Considering the 3rd show in Mumbai was on Jan 21st and the first show in Ahmedabad on Jan 25th, how did you manage the quick turnaround?

By a lot of planning and then some more!

The load-out of Mumbai and the load-in to Ahmedabad was thought out to the T. We left no stone unturned, from identifying the fastest routes, to no-entry timings, to even the size of truck that would be most efficient. Even the order of the trucks entering and leaving the venue was planned, as was which equipment gets packed up and leaves first.

It also helped a lot to have the same teams do both sets of shows, as everyone already had their learnings from Mumbai to implement in Ahmedabad. All fixtures, motors, cables, etc. were labelled to go to their exact place in Ahmedabad. While the Mumbai shows were on, we had separate teams in Ahmedabad setting it all up and getting as much done as possible to ensure a smooth and seamless load-in and build of the stage tech.

All of it was really an exercise in efficiency and I am so happy to say, everyone came through.

4. What was the scale of the rigging operation, and how was it planned and executed to meet the production requirements?

All the rigging material, accessories, and hardware for the shows were sourced locally within India. The scale was substantial, close to 130 hoists were deployed, there were 22 x 2 ton hoists; 16 were for the tour video screens and the rest for audio.

To ensure smooth operations, particularly given the complexity of multiple departments working simultaneously, the team provided around 30 hoist controllers. This decision was critical, as each technical discipline be it lighting, audio, or video, needed its own dedicated set of controllers to avoid bottlenecks and maintain an efficient build timeline.

Over 100 emails and countless hours of planning were exchanged between teams to make sure all elements were in place well ahead of production load-in. Team SNL Pro played a pivotal role in delivering the rigging on time. Additionally, strategic investments were made to bring in and introduce new rigging hardware, such as STAC chains, into the Indian market, a move that not only supported this production but also raised the bar for future large-scale events in the country.

8 x 500 KVA sync generators plus about 30 x Power Distribution Units were used to power all audio, video, lighting, SFX, rigging & utilities; Image Credit Zeus Unwalla



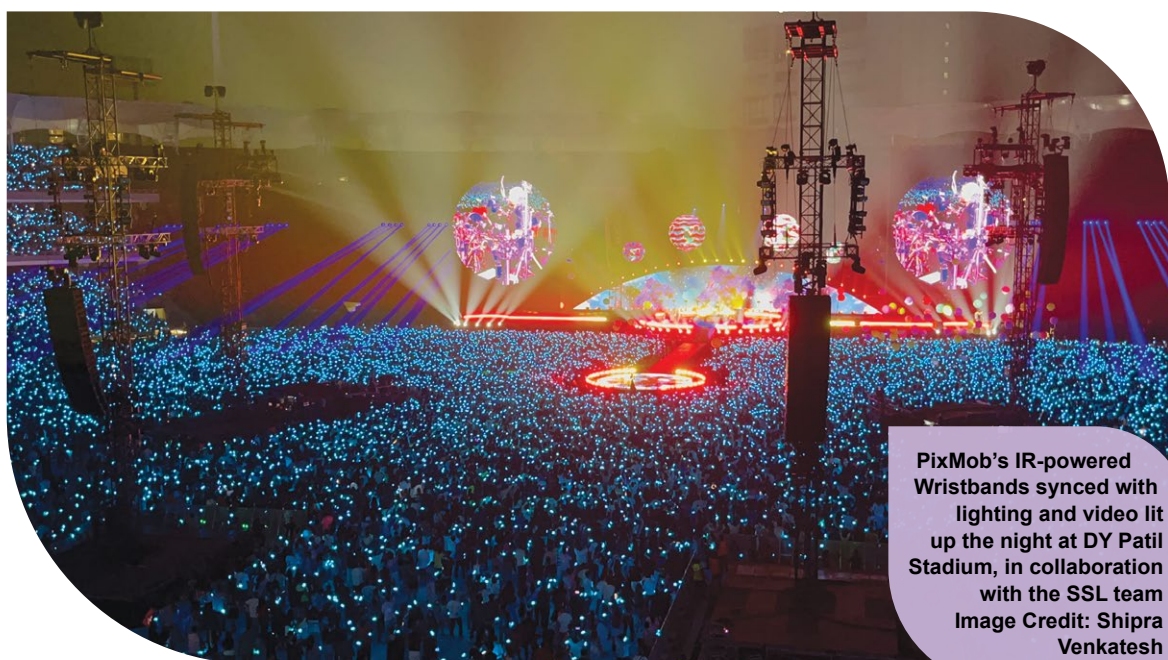
5. What was the scale and configuration of the PA system used, and how closely did it follow the band's global touring spec? How did you manage systems integration between Coldplay's touring audio gear and the local infrastructure?

The tour requires or travels with the **d&b GSL Main PA** rig with flying **SL subs**. So, there are no deviations there. Locally, we supplied the D&B SL subs and all the delay & 270 hangs which were **L'Acoustics**. The tour also travels with their own FOH drive rack which takes care of all systems. It integrates both the main & delay hangs. The drive racks distribute audio signals & control data to the amplifiers. However, it all needs to be networked as per the IP addresses assigned. The Coldplay team had supplied us with detailed documents with signal distribution for the amps: the IP address for each amp & the audio signal routing was clearly specified. This is how they ensure familiarity, standardisation and consistency on every show.

6. What preparation did the local audio team do?

The preparation included checking every box for physical damage or any other issues and this included drivers & flying hardware. They checked and prepared all amps and networked them as per received documentation with appropriate IP address. Speaker cables were prepared in bundles & labelled as per hang. The cables were also packed & transported as per each array with appropriate numbers & colour codes. This ensured a very quick turnaround time on site. The same process was repeated for the Ahmedabad show.

7. Were there any format bridging or clocking challenges? Was there any audio-over-IP networking involved (Dante, AVB, MA-DI-over-fibre)? If so, how was the network structured and monitored?



PixMob's IR-powered Wristbands synced with lighting and video lit up the night at DY Patil Stadium, in collaboration with the SSL team Image Credit: Shipra Venkatesh

The band control package included a Prodigy MP which handled all signal distribution - this was the front end for EQ of all the hangs. All systems were routed through the MP which acted as the sole clock for the entire show.

There was no audio over IP Madi/ Dante or AVB used for the whole system. They preferred AES as the main input to the Amps & Analog backups to the Amps.

8. What tools and processes were used for system design, alignment, and tuning?

System design was carried out using Soundvision for the L-Acoustics system, and ArrayCalc for the d&b audiotechnik system. SMAART software was used for time alignment, while the Prodigy.MP (by DirectOut Technologies) processor handled EQ and delay times.

9. Could you enlighten us on the lighting aspect of the production?

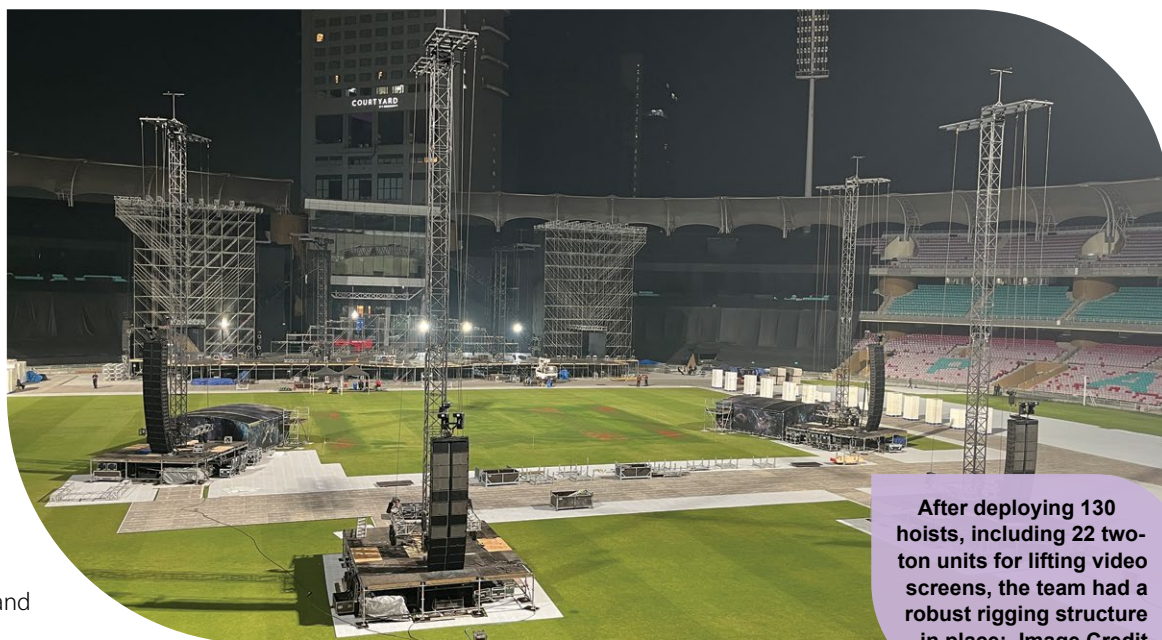
One of the most satisfying outcomes of the Coldplay shows was the introduction of a large number of Robe fixtures into the Indian market. India has never before seen this scale of Robe inventory.

When we proposed Robe Fortes and MegaPointes to the Coldplay lighting team, they were very happy to have more powerful fixtures than originally specified. This was the confirmation SSL Media Tech needed to make the big move. The introduction of hundreds of Robe Fortes and MegaPointes and a sizeable number of Robe Spiiders and RoboSpot systems in the country is of great significance. Around four days before the Ahmedabad shows, the goal of achieving a 360-degree lighting setup for the Narendra Modi Stadium was introduced. Given how iconic the shows were shaping up to be, this was something both the Coldplay crew and our team were keen to realise. With a lightning-fast turnaround, Team SSL was able to make it happen.

A total of 350 fixtures were deployed, a combination of Raytheons and W600 washes. With the outer stadium diameter close to 1 kilometre, the team used fibre optic cabling, multiple DMX nodes, and distribution panels to ensure consistent, delay-free communication across the entire stadium.

10. Which local rental and technical teams did you collaborate with, and how did you ensure they met Coldplay's production standards?

“Apart from meeting Coldplay's production standards, this whole project made me realise how far we have come as a country to be able to smoothly host such massive shows.



After deploying 130 hoists, including 22 two-ton units for lifting video screens, the team had a robust rigging structure in place; Image Credit Zeus Unwalla

standards?

- Audio (L'Acoustics) – SNL Pro
- Audio (d&b) - SOUND.COM
- Lighting – SSL Media
- LED – SSL Media
- Rigging Equipment – SNL Pro
- Rigging Support – Omniterra
- Generators – Brite Technologies
- Power Distribution – Third Wave Services
- SFX & Pyro – SNL Pro
- Stage Scaffolding – Videas Event Production
- Ground Production – Production Crew (Mumbai), Team Limelight (Ahmedabad)
- Overall Logistics – Buhariwala Logistics

I think the most important decision we made was to not experiment when it came to suppliers. We worked with only the best in the business and those who already have experience working with global artists.

Every crew member spent hours in their respective warehouses prepping gear. Not a piece of equipment came on site that wasn't already checked and labelled.

Apart from meeting Coldplay's production standards, this whole project made me realise how far we have come as a country to be able to smoothly host such massive shows. From seeing where this industry was 15 years ago to where it is today, the growth is remarkable and commendable. And we have our entire community to thank for this.

We should all pat ourselves on the back.

Special Thanks:

Siddhesh Susvikar, Lighting Crew Chief, SSL Media
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Zeus Unwalla, Head of Production, BookMyShow Live