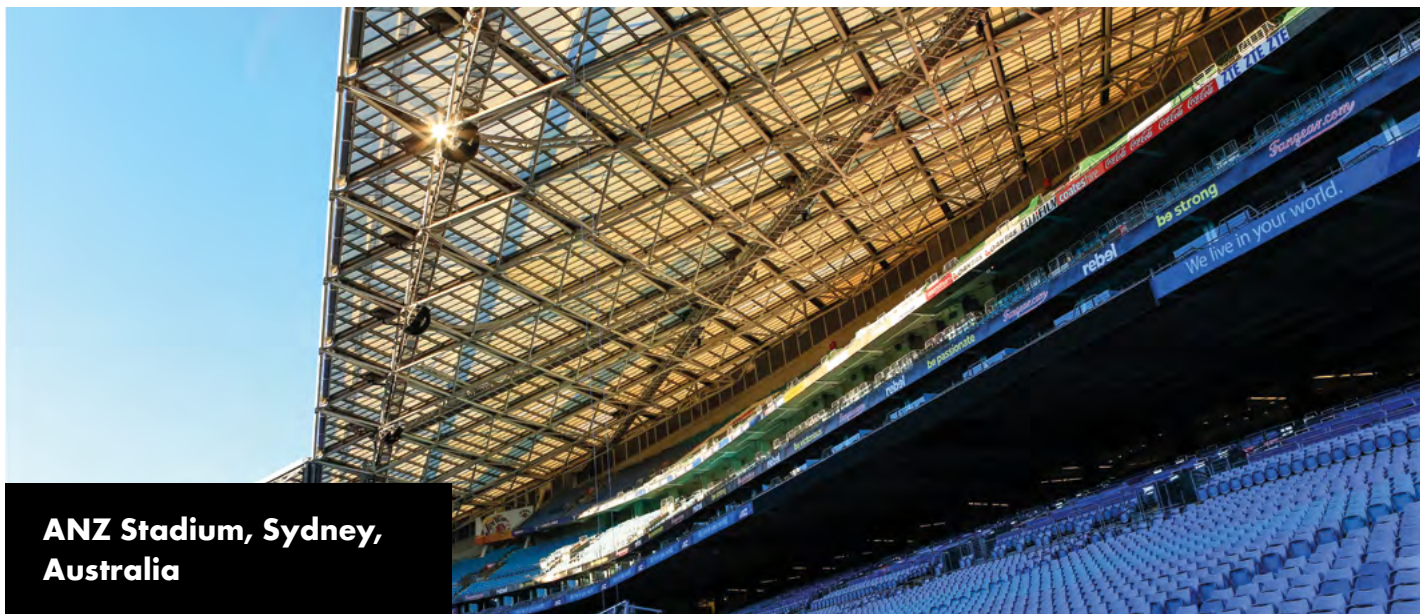


ANZ Stadium, Australia: 2013 - 2016

Then and now.



**ANZ Stadium, Sydney,
Australia**

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Simon Davies,
GM Asset Management, Venues Live

2013

As Sydney's former Olympic home and a major hub for Australian entertainment, the 80,000 capacity ANZ Stadium was looking to enhance its visitor experience and the long term flexibility of the venue.

Simon Davies, General Manager at ANZ:
"Stadiums often host big rock concerts, ANZ certainly does, and the sound systems these shows bring to our venue are really potent.

So we asked ourselves, why can't we do this at ANZ Stadium on a permanent basis, and can we achieve this in an affordable fashion? We wanted to set an example and push audio forward as a priority rather than a background requirement."

Key to Davies' brief was focussing the investment on hardware, rather than infrastructure. "Our customers don't value the infrastructure, but what they experience directly: sound, vision and comfort, all have great importance."

Leading audio designer Scott Willsallen was the appointed consultant. "Having been responsible for the PA design for the opening and closing of the Olympics, Scott has that understanding of using stadium audio to enhance the visitor experience; to use it as a dramatic tool," explained Davies.

To realize ANZ's ambition Willsallen developed an exhaustive bid process. "It was so thorough," commented Davies, "that ANZ Stadium was able to give consideration to arguably every quality audio manufacturer in the world."

Weather resistance, construction integrity, and the depth and ability of the manufacturers' support within the country, were just some of the criteria against which the competition was measured.

"In terms of intelligibility, I challenge anyone not to understand what is said."

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Willsallen: "I also took an integrated approach to the installation process. It is normal for installers to forge relationships with particular loudspeaker brands, but it doesn't follow that the best installer for your project will necessarily have a relationship with the best manufacturer for your project. So I set out to separate manufacturer from installer in the bid process. We got the best installer and the best equipment."

The new solution would be based on the medium size d&b audiotechnik V-Series line array system, specifically the Vi installation models.

"The Vi loudspeakers have several compelling features," continued Willsallen, "in particular the fact that they are fully passive. Given the restrictions of pre-existing rigging points and cable infrastructure we had a limited circuit count of just eight channels at each point. Being passive meant we could put in more boxes at each position - that's a huge advantage."

Although we put in double the number of loudspeakers than were here before we actually have less amplifiers - the d&b system is very efficient in that respect."

Despite taking two years to conceive, it took just a month to install the system and without any interruption to scheduled events. Finally, the sonic results were revealed to the various



officials from the five professional sporting codes that regularly play at ANZ.

"They all quickly understood the benefits and potential of the new system and were excited by what they heard," said Davies. "The ability to impart even more emotion to the games was an obvious benefit to them."

The thing with all sports is that people come because they want to have fun. By communicating directly through the high quality sound system that Scott has produced for us we have a way of enhancing the fun and drama. That's the ANZ Stadium vision and we believe this is the future for sport."

2016

Three years on and the ANZ Stadium is owned by the Government of New South Wales. Simon Davies is now GM Asset Management for Venues Live, who manage the ANZ on behalf of the NSW Government. Here Davies recalls his key objectives, and explains the difference improved sound quality has made for ANZ Stadium and its customers.

"At ANZ we always strive to make the visitor experience as enjoyable as possible. We had already made great strides in this direction with choice and quality in the food and beverages we offer, and we had added large scale LED video screens in each corner of the stadium; a first for Australia. But we wanted to raise the level of excitement; we wanted something that would make the experience truly immersive."

Since the d&b system was installed, how has audio impacted on the level of excitement and emotion in the stadium?

"I think the clubs and spectators have taken the new system for granted and they like it; but can you measure that? We have been to other stadiums in and around Sydney and there is no comparison in terms of sound. Our patrons do notice the improved intelligibility; we have no complaints about not being able to hear what is going on."

We have four or five Rugby League teams, the AFL and States of Origin games played here; they all provide some level of

"As far I was concerned, the d&b system was the best choice. I'm no expert, but the shootout process convinced. It put this system head and shoulders above everything else."

Simon Davies

GM Asset Management, Venues Live

entertainment to accompany their games: cheerleaders, performance acts, bands. Some have their own production guys to run their shows for them. These are professionals and understand the sound system and they definitely appreciate it. That's the best measure I can give."

Has the new system reduced the number of complaints from fans?

"Completely and absolutely. Before we would have a handful, maybe twelve to fifteen complaints - worst case. Now the only complaints we get are from the broadcasters and that's more about hosting positions down on the field when they want to snatch those pitch side interviews during half time. We get few if any from our patrons about clarity of sound. I don't recall any in the last three years. In terms of intelligibility, I challenge anyone not to understand what is said."

ANZ's alterable seating and field geometry make for a complex stadium; is the d&b system easy to reconfigure?

"Absolutely. We engage PA People to run the system; they ran the old system so they know the stadium well in all its forms. But PA People set it up for all events, the clubs just come and



plug in and input their content. So control is stable and efficient."

How have visiting concert productions responded to the house system?

"We have had a number of concerts since the system went in and it's used in various ways. One of the biggest challenges is alignment; generally, the stage is set at the south end facing north so the east and west systems can be a challenge. Taylor Swift was here most recently and her guys fed the complete north end system as a delay and that had never been done before; they were happy with the result. I thought it sounded really good.

Overall it's been great. Rugby League stage their grand final here and maybe have Billy Idol or Rod Stewart perform pre match. In previous times they would bump in a floor system at pitch level. The last couple of years there's been none of that; they use our house system and are very pleased with it."

What about maintenance scheduling, cost, efficiency, weather resistance and IP rating?

"PA People lower the system every six months, clean the bird mess off the speakers and test everything. There are no issues there. It's also an opportunity to check and test the winches, something we have to do by law annually."

"Every event has an operational check; the PA guys walk through the stadium to that monotonous piece of music they play over and over again to do their listening check.

Maintenance costs have definitely come down; checking costs haven't changed, but repairs and faults have reduced significantly, if not been completely eliminated."

The ANZ was one of the first stadiums in Australia to install an LED screen in all four corners.



Photography courtesy of Scott Willsallen

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> System: Vi8, Vi12, Vi-SUB