

MTV Europe Music Awards 2002

The organisers ran their slickest show to date with the help of an online management system.

Mike Fletcher reports

Pamela Anderson mislaying her luggage and a host of competition winners needing accommodation at the 11th hour were two of the logistical headaches faced by the organisers of the MTV Europe Music Awards 2002 in Barcelona.

UK travel logistics company Events By Appointment (EBA) joined forces with eventbookings.com and MTV parent company Viacom to manage more than 6,000 rooms at 14 hotels, as well as handle more than 1,000 return tickets to the ninth annual ceremony in November.

The event is held in a different city each year. This year's chosen venue was Palau Sant Jordi, which was used to host the gymnastics competition at the 1992 Olympics, and the show was compered by rapper and producer Sean 'P Diddy' Combs.

MTV Networks executive producer Richard Godfrey says: "Barcelona celebrated the 150th anniversary of architect Gaudi during 2002 and the local authority was keen to integrate the show into its marketing strategy for the year. MTV Spain is a small but growing channel and the support we got in promoting the event all over the city was enormous."

EBA has worked on eight of the nine ceremonies, the exception being Stockholm in 2000 when it lost out to another company. Straight after the Swedish event EBA, together with eventbookings.com, made a single pitch for the 2001 and 2002 shows in Frankfurt and Barcelona.

Up-to-date analysis

Philip Haines, eventbookings.com managing director, says: "For Frankfurt, MTV was able to see via the Web an up-to-the-minute analysis of flights, hotels and who was footing the cost. This year we added a few bells and whistles to improve the online system."

Viacom travel manager Tracy Randel says the partnership with



Smooth operator: the show took place without a hitch despite being the biggest event of its kind ever held in Spain

eventbookings.com ensured that the contract returned to EBA. "The online capabilities suit the culture of MTV and its do-it-yourself mentality. It enables in-house travel coordinators to check arrangements and make them feel like they are their own travel agents," she notes. "It worked well in Frankfurt and allowed us to manage costs as they unfolded. We expect the updated systems to have worked even better this time around."

As soon as the contract was secured, EBA managing director David Battley and his team began touring hotels to establish how many rooms were available and develop relationships. Knowing the venues and their staff makes it easier to sort out any accommodation problems on the night.

EBA coordinators were allocated blocks of rooms nine months prior to the show. Battley says: "The hotels impose deadlines and we have to either confirm the bookings or release the rooms. We originally secured 7,000 room nights, but our final commitment was nearer 6,000."

While Monarch airlines provided one charter flight on the day of the MTV Europe Music

FACT FILE

MTV Europe Music Awards 2002

Client: MTV Networks Europe

Logistics: Events By Appointment/eventbookings.com

Venue: Palau Sant Jordi, Barcelona

Date: 14 November 2002

Sponsors: D&G, Vodafone Live, Foot Locker Europe, American Express Company

Stage area: 1,300sqm

Back stage area: 7,000sqm

Production: Sold Out

Security: Ronnie Franklin

Official airline carrier: BA

Awards, British Airways (BA) and Iberia battled it out to be the official carrier for the event.

"We had a very flexible deal in 2001 with Lufthansa but there were still points that could have been done better. We went to two airlines with a wish list and BA was able to go that one step further," says Viacom's Randel.

Two-week build-up

The event's build-up began two weeks before the show and all 12 artists performing on the night went through two days of dress rehearsals. The 7,000sqm backstage area for all the acts including Pink, Robbie Williams and Enrique Iglesias, featured a temporary structure that had been attached to the back of the venue.

Show highlights included Whitney Houston's comeback performance and re-enacted scenes from Eminem's film *8 Mile*, which has been a surprise hit in the US.

MTV Networks' Godfrey says: "It is a huge challenge for everyone involved to make an event like this work in different cultural environments. It was the biggest show of its kind in Spain and all those involved in its smooth running should be applauded." ■