

THE GLASGOW 2014 COMMONWEALTH GAMES CLOSING CEREMONY



THE BRIEF...

To **WRITE** / **DIRECT** / **CREATIVELY LEAD** the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games Closing Ceremony to a live audience of 50,000 alongside a simultaneous live BBC1 television broadcast.

The show needed to be nimble and think on its feet due to the 17 hour bump-in and the lack of any rehearsal or dress rehearsal at Hampden Park itself.

It would also need to find a way of hosting up to 4000 demob happy athletes!

THE IDEA...

Okay, so at the time this felt like the big one. And like anybody who has had the privilege of directing one of these, they will also know that a closing ceremony gets about a quarter of everything that an opening ceremony gets... if you're lucky. That includes time, budget, attention, (until opening has opened and then look out) team size and space.

However, I'm a great believer in viewing what others may see as problems actually as potential opportunities. We needed a controlling idea that could work in any circumstance and flex in response to the unforeseeable.

It didn't take much discussion before the phrase POP-UP FESTIVAL established itself as the way to go. What if it rains? *It's okay, it's a festival!* What if some of the mass cast have temporarily lost their minds? *It's okay, it's a festival!* What if a drunk athlete get's up on stage and tries to dance with team Kylie? *It's okay, it's a festival!* You get my point.



We didn't plan shoddy by any means but we did devise a system that could go a little more with the flow. And incidentally, we also devised a system that was utterly inclusive and welcoming - no matter how inexperienced the cast member. What, Davie's fallen over again!? *It's okay, it's a festival!*

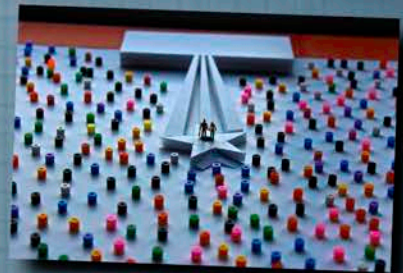
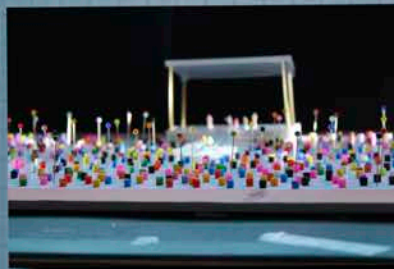
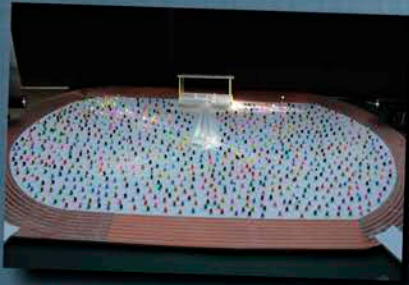


CONCEPT ARTWORK...

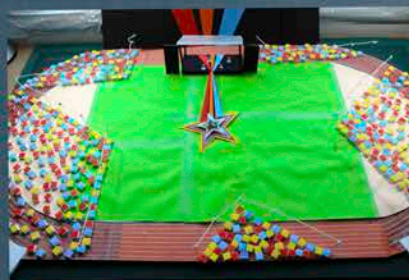
The festival scenario gave me all the answers I needed when it came to the look of the thing. Tents to make shapes with, flags to give us height and rucksacks to keep all manner of necessities in to keep the cast happy.

Put them in the tents! Heh?

Every so often an idea really hits you as funny and functional. We had been worrying a lot as to where to put the athletes pre-show. *Put them in the tents!* I heard myself saying. Everybody laughed and then continued to worry about where to put the athletes pre-show. Hmmm.

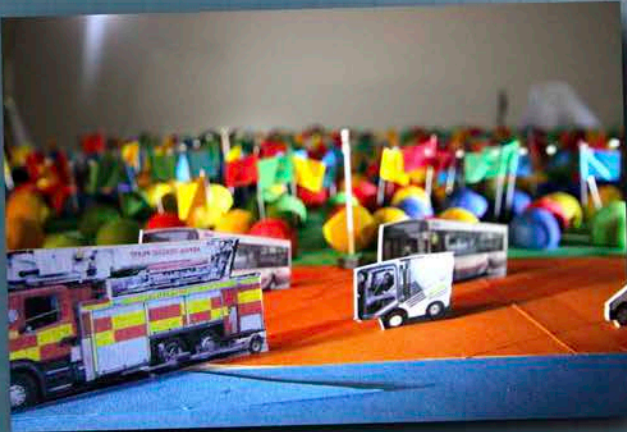


No matter how shit, I build everything every time because I need to know how it all fits together. Over Christmas 2013 I went tent and model mental.



CONCEPT ARTWORK...

It's a wondrous, humbling and a slightly odd thing to go from shed (my office) to stadium.



REHEARSAL STRATEGY...

We had over a thousand volunteer cast members who were beyond my wildest dreams in terms of enthusiasm, professional application and an unstoppable quest for mischievous fun.

I had 24 performance captains.

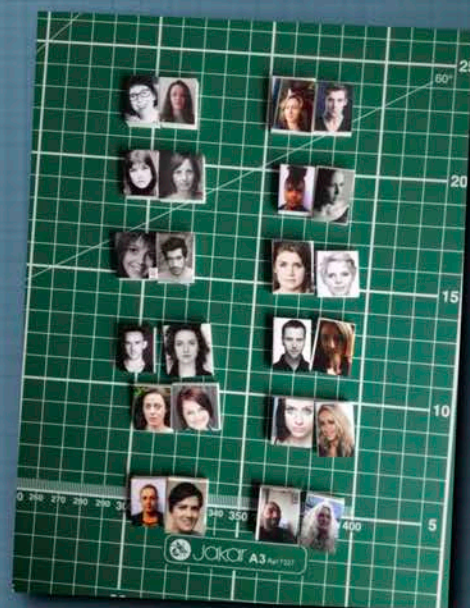
It went something like this...

Week 1 - alongside your brilliant choreographer, EJ Boyle, take 6 of your captains and make all the physical material for every song that Lulu, Prides, Deacon Blue, Dougie Mclean and Kylie would sing - 11 in total - about 38 minutes of seriously full on dancing.

Week 2, days 1&2 - now add your 6 fully loaded captains to the remaining 18 captains and share the material for them to master. Then on days 3,4&5 do and make everybloodything else - protocol, Commonwealth flag carrying, 1500 tent moving, 350 flag wrangling, 200 strong Pipes and Drums military band, area learning, ethos engendering.

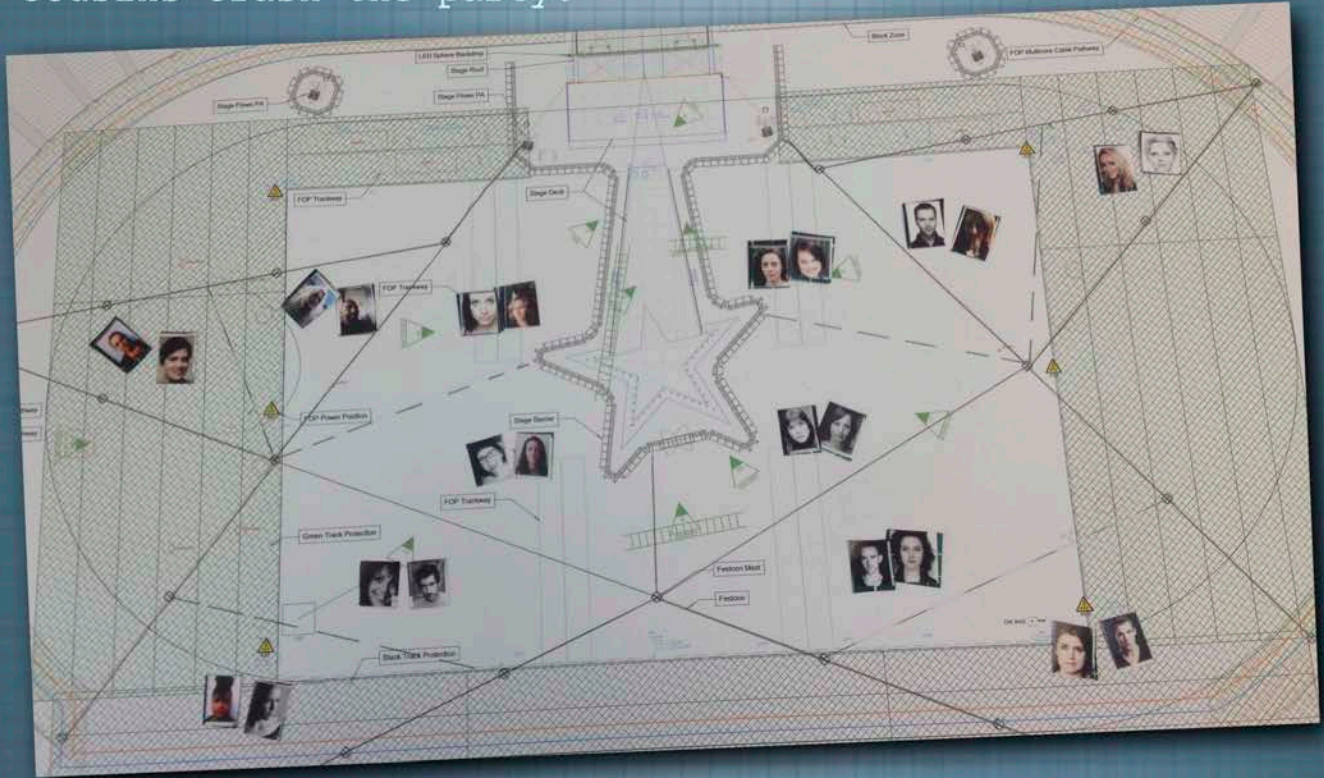


And I wanted to take care of all involved in families. So I needed parents.



REHEARSAL STRATEGY (CONT) ...

Still Week 2... We divided the team into parents and neighbourhoods and then did the maths on child numbers. Big families these – 48.2 kids per parent team. Perfect. Just wait until the three and a half thousand athlete cousins crash the party!



Week 3 & a bit of 4 – Yeehaa, here we go. 11 (yes 11 days not weeks until the show!) of rehearsal followed. And of course we were interrupted slightly by 11 days of running and jumping in between (I can say this because I am a sports nut).

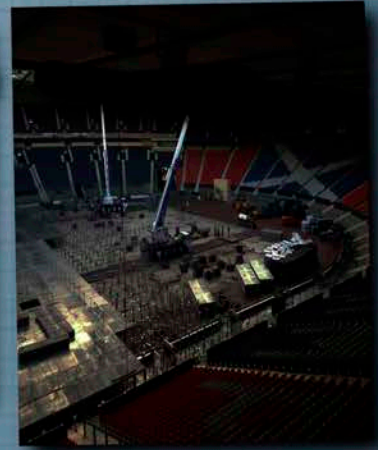
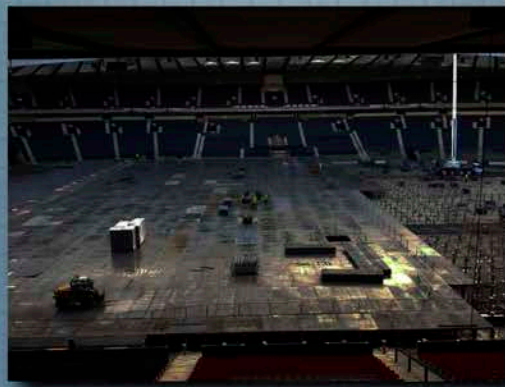
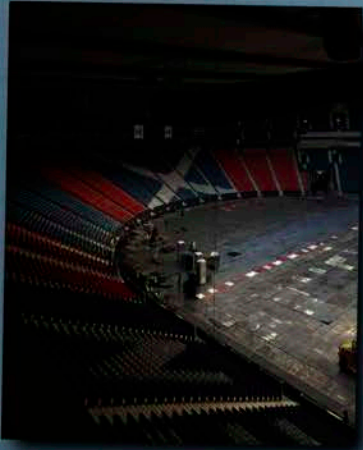


BUT HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE IN SUCH A MODEST AMOUNT OF TIME?

REHEARSAL STRATEGY (CONT) ...

Principally because of the brilliance of the cast and the team. And also because I'd already made this show many times in many ways over the previous 13 months. In short, I'd already rehearsed the shit out of it.

This included sneaking into Hampden stadium 3 months before the show when the light levels were symmetrically the same as show time. Me and my choreographer EJ then played the soundtrack and imagined the show in real time.



It also included detailed story boarding and shot listing.

