

SECURITY WITH A SMILE

Why the Eurovision Song Contest was music to the ears of G4S Norway

IT WAS JUST a simple song, inspired by folk music and a lost love, but when *Fairytale* won the Eurovision Song Contest in 2009 the implications for Norway were enormous.

Since Alexander Rybak, the young singer-songwriter whose performance in Moscow last year won the hearts of the judges, was representing Norway, it meant that the Scandinavian country was automatically invited to host the 2010 Eurovision Song Content.



It had no hesitation in accepting. After all, the eyes of the world – including up to 125 million television viewers – are focused each year not only on Europe's singers and songwriters in the competition's spectacular final but also on the attractions of the host country.

Fortunately for Norway, the impressive new Telenor Arena at Fornebu had opened just three months before Alexander Rybak's musical triumph. Northern Europe's largest indoor stadium, it stands on land once occupied by the old Oslo Airport, to the west of the capital.

As well as being the home ground of Stabæk IF, a Premier League football team, it is also used for other major events, such as concerts when it can accommodate audiences of 25,000 people.

That meant that Norway had a state-of-the-art, multi-purpose venue that was capable of staging the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC). →



EUROVISION
SONG CONTEST
OSLO 2010

But what about the security demands that such an occasion would present to the organisers? The contest, after all, is not only the world's biggest non-sporting live TV event but would also be Norway's largest, in security terms, since it hosted the Winter Olympics at Lillehammer in 1994.

Telenor Arena is well-equipped with security technology, including alarms, access control systems, CCTV and intercom integration, all of which had been installed by G4S Norway's technology division. In addition, it has a contract with G4S to provide manned security in the form of mobile patrols, static security officers and stewards for exhibitions.

So it was not surprising that NRK, the Norwegian public broadcaster, awarded a contract to G4S to provide security for the ESC, working alongside the police, NRK, Telenor Arena's own security administrator and the fire department during the four-month period of preparations and final performances.

It took effect from February through to 15 June, two weeks after the final was broadcast to the world. For the preliminary period, a 60-strong security team was assigned to the contract but that number jumped to 350 personnel by 15 May, in the run-up to the two semi-finals and the spectacular final on 29 May.

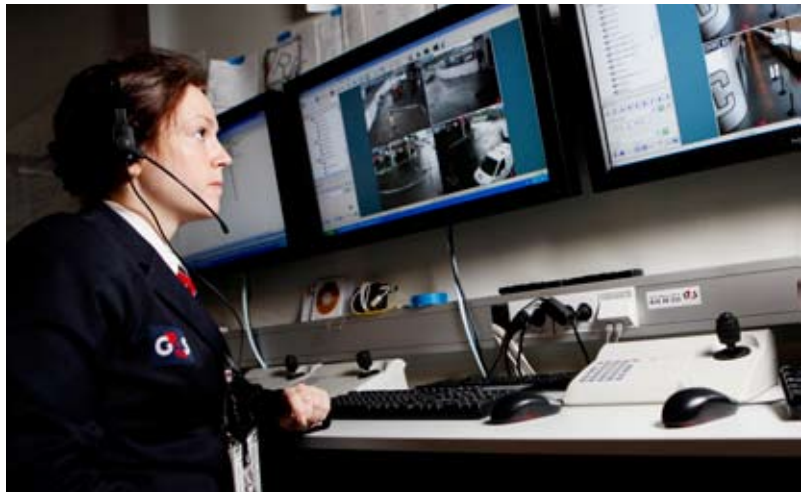
G4S Norway drafted in experienced security officers from other parts of the country to reinforce its regular team at Telenor. Such was ESC's popularity that there was no shortage of volunteers: there were even queues of employees eager to work extra hours in order to make their contribution to the event.

In addition to providing a range of services at the main venue, G4S Norway was also on duty at ESC Village in Town Square, downtown Oslo.

Most people think of the Eurovision Song Contest only as an entertaining television show. The reality, however, is that it is – first and foremost – a live show with a small army of performers, musicians, camera crews and support staff as well as various audiences. As a result, Telenor Arena had to accommodate 90,000 people over the five days during which two semi-finals and then the grand final were staged and broadcast.

Traditionally, those attending the three live shows included foreign visitors, delegations, fan clubs, hospitality guests and VIPs, all of whom had to have their credentials checked by G4S before admission to the arena. Audiences were also allowed to buy tickets to view several dress rehearsals.

"During the live final, 18,000 people were gathered inside the arena," says Christian Rist, G4S Secure



Solutions (Norway)'s event manager. "NRK rented the arena for this purpose and around 700 of its people were actively involved in the event. In addition, between 200 and 250 volunteers and 2,500 accredited journalists were also in attendance: a total of 6,000 people accredited for ESC 2010.

"The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) required 37 accreditation zones in the arena during the event.

The large numbers involved and the complexity of the arrangements set high standards for security control, but G4S was thoroughly prepared so that everything should flow well."

Contingency planning is essential for events on this scale, so a series of exercises were staged, including evacuation, first aid and traffic control to test responses to "worst-case scenarios".

Whilst no one lost sight of security's importance, the G4S team was ever-mindful of the fact that, above all,



the Eurovision Song Contest is a fun event designed to be "a celebration of music, unity and diversity".

"We did our best to make sure that ESC 2010 was an experience that people will look back on with joy," Christian Rist adds. "We put great emphasis on providing good service and security with a smile."

On the day of the grand final, millions of people watching the event in over 45 countries will have recalled the winning performance a year earlier of Alexander Rybak which received an overwhelming number of points, 387 – the highest score any country has achieved in ESC's 54-year history during which 1,200 songs have been performed.

His song, *Fairytale*, ranked number one on iTunes throughout the continent, became the third most sold single in Europe last summer and turned out to be the biggest Eurovision Song Contest hit since Katrina and the Waves won the contest in 1997.



That's a result that all of this year's participants would have been hoping to emulate and only time will tell how much of a boost the Eurovision Song Contest will give to their careers.

As the performers departed and the organisers began dismantling the stage on which this impressive show had taken place, G4S's work was not done. There was valuable equipment to protect and contractors to assist as the business of returning Telenor Arena to its previous appearance continued through to mid-June.

And then, of course, G4S's role at Telenor also returned to normal as its Events team got ready to assist forthcoming exhibitions and concerts, as well as providing a secure presence for Stabæk IF's football fans.

Let us not forget that there was one unrecorded winner at this year's Eurovision Song Contest: G4S. The courtesy and helpfulness of the G4S Secure Solutions (Norway) team will have left a lasting impression on many of those, from all over Europe, who passed through Telenor Arena's doors.

That was certainly the opinion of the contest's spokesman, NRK's Peter Svaar, who congratulated G4S on showing "professionalism and enthusiasm during the weeks of preparation for the Eurovision Song Contest and during the actual event". He added: "We were able to concentrate fully on producing a great show whilst G4S provided security in accordance with our specification." ■

OPPOSITE, TOP:
Norway's Alexander Rybak performs an encore after his performance won the 2009 Eurovision Song Contest and led to his country hosting this year's event.

OPPOSITE, BOTTOM:
Members of the G4S team at Telenor Arena have their eyes firmly focused on security screens during the event, while technicians ensure performances are recorded perfectly.
CENTRE: a warm welcome from G4S for all the Eurovision participants.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ...

→ For further information on the topics covered in this article, log on to www.g4s.com or e-mail magazine@g4s.com