

ALL YOU NEED TO ABOUT EUROVISION 2019

VISION

THE OGAE UK MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2019 ②

WWW.OGAE.UK

ISSUE

116



DREAM BIG!

Can Michael go bigger than
the rest in Tel Aviv?

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DEADLINE All contributions for issue 117 of **Vision** should reach the Editor no
later than Friday, 14th June 2019.

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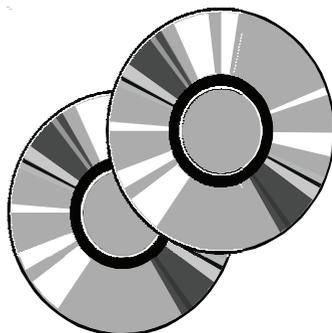
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EDLINES

This is it gang, we're on the home stretch
towards our favourite week of the year.

Of course, if you're one of the travelling fans
who make a pilgrimage to the host city each
and every year, there's a good chance you're
preparing for one of the biggest fortnights
of your 2019, especially if it involves bedding
in to watch and report on each and every
rehearsal.

That's the inspiration behind one of the
features in this issue. There's just so many
ways to experience Eurovision these days.

Perhaps you watch from the sofa and that's
just the way you like it. Maybe Tel Aviv will
be the first contest you attend 'live' and your
stomach won't stop replicating Belarus' 2010
entry in the excitement. You may even be a
recent convert to getting tickets for the arena
each May or have been a welcome sight in
the press centre for years now. We've taken
views from as many different fans as possible,
to hopefully prove that no matter how you
enjoy Eurovision, scrape away the surface
experiences and we're the same lovers of
all things songs and scoreboard beneath,
no matter how many Twitter followers you
may have.

And on behalf of all good OGGIEers, I'd
like to wish Michael Rice luck in Israel with
his massive anthem, *Bigger Than Us*. I
was fortunate enough to attend the press
conference in Salford in the aftermath of his
Eurovision: You Decide victory in February
and a more down to earth lad you couldn't
hope to meet. All he really wanted was a
celebratory crisp butty!

Whatever happens in Tel Aviv, you're
welcome to one of those any time, squire.
Just name your flavour. You're one of us now.

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TEL AVIV BLOG

Your OGAE UK team will be
reporting from Tel Aviv throughout
the two week rehearsal period.

Log on from Saturday, May 3rd 2019
for all the latest news.

www.ogae.uk



OGAE UK CONSTITUTION

Changes are being made to the Constitution by the Organising Committee that need to be approved by the membership. Please read carefully. You can check out the current constitution online.

Changes from the current constitution are highlighted in red text.

Constitution of OGAE UK

1 NAME

The official name of the club is the "Organisation Générale des Amateurs de l'Eurovision - United Kingdom" hereafter referred to as OGAE UK or the "Club".

The Club is a member of OGAE International.

The Club may adopt a secondary local name for use within the United Kingdom, subject to approval by the membership.

OGAE UK is a not for profit organisation administered by, and for the benefit of, its members. Any cash surpluses generated by the Club's activities will be retained and used for the benefit of members.

This constitution governs the workings of OGAE UK and will become valid once approved by the majority of members participating in a vote to be organised in accordance with the procedure set out in the "resolutions" section below.

Changes to this constitution must be approved by the membership by way of a **membership vote**.

OGAE UK's registered address **will be determined by the committee and posted on the OGAE UK website**.



2 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of OGAE UK are:

- To promote interest in and awareness of the Eurovision Song Contest within the United Kingdom.
- To support UK based fans of the Eurovision Song Contest by providing a means of communication and interaction.
- To support worldwide fans of the UK's participation in the Eurovision Song Contest.
- In conjunction with **other OGAE clubs and OGAE International, to maintain and develop** a global network that enables cross-national communication.

3 POWERS

In furtherance of the above objectives, the Management Committee of OGAE UK has the power to:

- Raise funds by means of membership fees, the staging of events, the solicitation of contributions or any other means so as to finance the activities of the Club.
- Open and maintain bank accounts to manage such funds.
- Determine the structure and level of membership fees, along with any related entitlements.
- Publish and distribute a magazine to members, or sell the magazine to non-members, providing information, news and views relating to the Eurovision Song Contest and related events.

- Publicise and promote the work of the Club, organising and participating in meetings, events and competitions etc.
- Work with other groups or organisations with similar objectives, exchanging information, advice and knowledge, as well as providing support whether financial or by way of assistance.
- Contract or retain services of **staff**, volunteers or service providers (who shall not be members of the Management Committee) as are necessary to conduct activities to meet the objectives.
- Maintain a website **and social media presence** to support the activities of the Club.
- Take any form of action that is lawful and necessary to achieve the objectives of the Club.

4 MEMBERSHIP

OGAE UK membership is open to anyone with an interest in the Eurovision Song Contest. Individuals resident outside the UK should have a personal connection to the UK or a specific interest in the UK's participation in the Contest.

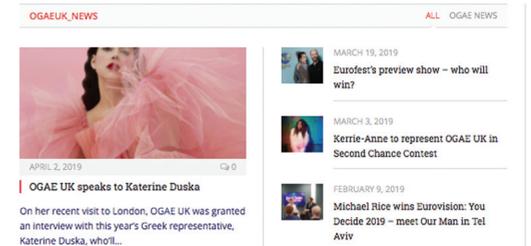
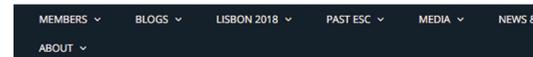
The Committee, as referred to in Section 6, has the right to refuse membership to a new applicant without providing an explanation.

Membership is dependent on payment of the applicable membership fees as set by the Committee. The Committee shall determine the acceptable methods of payment.

Failure to pay membership fees when they fall due may lead to the immediate termination of membership, and the individual concerned would then need to make a new application for membership.

OGAE UK will comply with all applicable laws and regulations relating to the protection of personal data.

In the event that a member is deemed to have brought the Club into disrepute or to have infringed Club rules, they will be given



an opportunity to explain their actions to the Committee within 14 days. Having received representations from the member in question, the Committee may, by simple majority vote, suspend their membership for a period of up to nine months. Suspended members shall not be entitled to receive any of the benefits of membership for the duration of their suspension.

The Committee shall not have the power to expel members. A suspended member may only be expelled by a vote of the membership. The Committee may submit an expulsion order request to the membership at any time. The Committee must outline the case for expulsion in writing and must allow the member concerned the opportunity to provide a written defence. Members must be given at least 30 days' notice of an expulsion vote. A simple majority of those members voting shall be sufficient to authorise the expulsion of a member.

Any member may resign their membership, at any point in the year, by providing written notification to the Secretary. No refunds are given for cancelled memberships.

5 COMMITTEE ELECTION & APPOINTMENT

There shall be seven members of the OGAE UK Management Committee.

OGAE UK shall have the following elected officers:

- The President
- The Secretary & Treasurer
- The Vision Editor-in-Chief
- The Vision Editor
- Three other elected committee members

The President may choose to separate the roles of Secretary and Treasurer but both shall be elected positions.

The committee shall appoint (the roles may be combined):

- Events co-ordinator
- Ticket co-ordinator
- Webmaster
- Social Media co-ordinator
- OGAE competitions co-ordinator

Appointees do not need to be elected members of the committee. If non-elected members are appointed, the committee decides whether to co-opt them as members but there should be no more than two co-opted members permitted.

These officers are elected by the membership. The terms of office shall be three years, commencing **immediately after the AGM** in the year of election. No one individual may serve more than three consecutive terms as President.

In the event that any **elected** position becomes vacant, either by resignation or other circumstances, an election must be held within three months.

When elections are required, the Committee shall appoint a Club member to act as Election Coordinator, overseeing the election process, **assuming the position from 1st June of election year**. This member **must** not be a member of the Committee, should not be standing for election themselves and should act in an impartial and fair capacity.

The Election Coordinator shall organise elections so that the successful candidates can assume their responsibilities **from the**

time of the AGM, or, in the case of elections to fill vacant positions, with immediate effect.

The Election Coordinator shall provide at least two months' notice of elections by posting a notice on the OGAE UK website and by sending an email to members using the addresses recorded in the membership database. ~~Posting on the website alone shall be considered adequate notice.~~

Similarly, the Election Coordinator shall invite nominations by posting on the OGAE UK website and by sending an email to members using the email addresses recorded in the membership database. The Election Coordinator shall allow one month for the nomination process. ~~Again, posting on the website shall be considered adequate notice.~~

Successful nominees must:

- Have been members of OGAE UK as at 30 June and for at least two consecutive years prior to the expected start of the term of office.
- Have been endorsed/seconded by at least two other members of OGAE UK.
- Provide a brief (less than 500 words) summary of their manifesto.

In the event that only one individual is nominated for a particular post, they will be deemed to have been elected, subject to the full agreement of the Committee.

Where there is more than one nominee, the Election Coordinator shall post their manifestos on the OGAE UK website.

The Election Coordinator shall determine the exact method of casting votes, ensuring that the method is fair and accessible. Where possible, votes will be cast electronically over the internet, although provision will be made for votes to be cast by post.

All members as at 30 June shall be entitled to vote.

The Election Coordinator will count and verify votes, advise candidates of the results, and post details on the OGAE UK website.

At least 25% of eligible members must participate for a vote to be valid.

6 MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE & OFFICERS

OGAE UK is administered by a Management Committee (hereafter referred to as the Committee) comprised of the elected officers as per clause 5.

All Committee members must have been members of OGAE for at least two years prior to taking up office.

In the event of gross misconduct, the Committee may suspend any committee member by a unanimous vote (other than the officer in question). In the event that the Committee votes to suspend an elected member, the individual concerned should either be reinstated or an election for that position called within two months of the suspension.

Officers of OGAE UK are unpaid and may not derive any income from their role in relation to the Club. They may however reclaim any expenses incurred specifically and exclusively in relation to the Club. The Treasurer shall establish procedures for the review and payment of such expenses.

7 MEETINGS

(a) Management Committee

The Committee shall meet at least three times each year to discuss actions and developments, and current issues or concerns and to monitor progress of initiatives. Committee members may participate in such meetings electronically, by telephone conference call, or in person.

At least three Committee members, including the President and Secretary & Treasurer must participate in order for a meeting to take place. All Committee members will be given at least five days' notice of a meeting.

The President or **their** designated deputy shall chair the meetings.

Meeting discussions will be minuted and the minutes retained.

(b) Annual General Meeting

The Club will hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) at least once every calendar year and within eight months of the end of the financial year which runs from 1st April to 31st March.

Members will be given at least 30 days' notice of an AGM. Notice shall be given by posting the details and agenda on the Club's website.

All members **as at the date of the AGM**

may attend, and may vote at the AGM by a simple show of hands.

The President or **their** appointed deputy shall chair the AGM and shall have the deciding vote in the event of a tie.

Members unable to attend the AGM may appoint a proxy by sending a signed, written instruction to the Secretary at least ten days prior to the AGM. Such proxies will only be valid if they arrive at the Secretary's designated address at least ten days prior to the AGM.

The following reports shall be submitted to the AGM for approval:

- President's Report – summarising Club activities during the year.
- Secretary's Report – summarising membership numbers and related information.
- Treasurer's Report – an annual financial report.

(c) Resolutions

The Committee may submit specific resolutions to a vote by the whole membership either at an AGM or at some other time during the year. Such resolutions shall include amendments to this constitution, applications to terminate individual memberships or other matters

where the Committee requires guidance from the membership.

Any member who can secure the written endorsement of ten per cent of current paid up members (by way of a petition or similar) may submit their own request for a resolution. The Secretary will review the request and if the required endorsements can be verified, will ensure that the requested resolution is put to the membership within six months of receipt of the petition.

Resolutions should be published in OGAE

UK's magazine and on the Club website at least two months prior to any vote.

The Committee shall determine the exact method for voting on resolutions, ensuring a fair and open process. Votes will generally be cast electronically over the internet although arrangements will be made to accept votes by post.

Results will be posted on the website and published in the Club's magazine. **At least 50% of the membership should vote before they can be deemed valid.**

8 FINANCES

Any money acquired by OGAE UK, including donations, subscriptions and other

contributions, shall be paid into a bank account operated by the Management Committee in the name of OGAE UK. All funds must be applied to the objects of the Club and for no other purpose. OGAE UK will also operate a PayPal account.

Bank accounts shall be opened in the name of OGAE UK. Any deeds, cheques etc. relating to the Club's bank accounts shall be signed by at least two Committee members, except in relation to PayPal where the Treasurer will be authorised to operate the account alone but subject to the requirement to use funds solely in connection with the objectives of OGAE UK.

Any income/expenditure shall be the responsibility of the Treasurer who will be accountable to ensure that funds are utilised effectively and efficiently. Official accounts shall be maintained ~~and the Committee may decide that they should be~~ and reviewed **at least once every committee term** by an independent accountant who is not a member of the Club.

An annual financial report shall be presented to the AGM and distributed to all members (through the magazine).

The Club's financial year shall run from 1st April to 31st March.

The Club may not borrow money or incur debts.

9 AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION

Proposed amendments to this constitution or a request to dissolve the Club must be conveyed to the Secretary formally in writing. The Secretary and Committee will then arrange for the relevant request to be submitted to the membership in accordance with the procedures outlined in section 7 above.

This constitution may be amended by a simple majority vote of members participating in the relevant vote.

10 DISSOLUTION

OGAE UK may be dissolved if deemed necessary by the members. A dissolution request should be put to the members in accordance with the procedures set out in section 7 above. **At least 50% of the membership should vote for any result to be deemed valid.**

Any assets remaining at dissolution, after all outstanding payments have been paid, shall be transferred to OGAE International or to a recognised charity at the discretion of the Management Committee.

Please note that all of the above have to be agreed by the membership. Suggested changes are up for consultation with a vote at a later date. If you would like more information please contact ogaeuk@gmail.com.

OGAE UK – Revised guidelines for tickets

Following discussion at the 2018 OGAE UK AGM, and following feedback from members, the OGAE UK Committee has agreed an updated ticketing policy:

Demand from members is usually very high indeed and we only receive a limited allocation of ticket packages – and allocation of ticket packages is by no means guaranteed – so OGAE UK uses a ballot to determine which members are able to buy the tickets on offer.

To make sure that participation in the ticket ballot is more aligned to the membership year (which ends at the end of October), participation in the primary ballot will only be open to people who have joined the club by 31st October of two years prior to the contest they are applying for.

5% of tickets (up to a maximum of ten, whichever is the lower) will be kept aside for new members, for which a secondary ballot will be run.

As not everyone will have been at the 2018 AGM, and to ensure the change is as fair as possible, for one year only the cut-off point will be 1st March.

Under the proposed rules, the cut-off points for the primary ballot will therefore be as follows:

- **1st March 2019 for tickets for Eurovision 2020**
- **31st October 2019 for tickets for Eurovision 2021**
- **31st October 2020 for tickets for Eurovision 2022.**
- **31st October 2021 for tickets for Eurovision 2023.**

Please note as well that people applying for tickets through the OGAE ballot must be in possession of an OGAE International membership card. Details of how to load this through the **Cardskipper app** will be given to people as they join OGAE UK.

It is important to stress that access to ticket packages are a bonus and not a right, and that membership of our club is about a lot more than getting access to Eurovision tickets.

OGAE Membership Cards

The new electronic membership cards, via the **Cardskipper app**, were rolled out to most OGAE UK members at the end of February. Over 1,000 members have already loaded the card app but we still have hundreds more who have not done so. The issue with photos has now been resolved. If you loaded a photo which is not showing correctly on your card, please try reloading it and the problem should now be fixed. It is very important that as many members as possible load the app as we will be using it to communicate directly with members as well as for event ticketing purposes.

Anyone who purchased an OGAE ESC ticket package will need to show their electronic card when collecting their tickets in Tel Aviv. Similarly, if you wish to buy tickets to the EuroCafe or EuroClub you will need the new card. New discount codes for the official ESC merchandise store have been set up and these will be based on the new card numbers.

Cardskipper



EUROVISION 2019



Tel Aviv – Israel

The contest at a glance

Semi-Final 1 Tuesday 14th May 2019

Running order	Performer	Song
1	Cyprus	Tamta <i>Replay</i>
2	Montenegro	D mol <i>Heaven</i>
3	Finland	Darude feat. Sebastian Rejman <i>Look Away</i>
4	Poland	Tulia <i>Fire Of Love (Pali Sie)</i>
5	Slovenia	Zala Kralj & Gašper Šantl <i>Sebi</i>
6	Czech Republic	Lake Malawi <i>Friend Of A Friend</i>
7	Hungary	Joci Pápai <i>Az En Apám</i>
8	Belarus	ZENA <i>Like It</i>
9	Serbia	Nevena Božovi <i>Kruna</i>
10	Belgium	Eliot <i>Wake Up</i>
11	Georgia	Oto Nemsadze <i>Keep On Going</i>
12	Australia	Kate Miller-Heidke <i>Zero Gravity</i>
13	Iceland	Hatari <i>Hatrið Mun Sigra</i>
14	Estonia	Victor Crone <i>Storm</i>
15	Portugal	Conan Osiris <i>Telemóveis</i>
16	Greece	Katerine Duska <i>Better Love</i>
17	San Marino	Serhat <i>Say Na Na Na</i>

Also voting: Israel • France • Spain

Semi-Final 2 Thursday 16th May 2019

Running order	Performer	Song
1	Armenia	Srbuk <i>Walking Out</i>
2	Ireland	Sarah McTernan <i>22</i>
3	Moldova	Anna Odobescu <i>Stay</i>
4	Switzerland	Luca Hänni <i>She Got Me</i>
5	Latvia	Carousel <i>That Night</i>
6	Romania	Ester Peony <i>On A Sunday</i>
7	Denmark	Leonora <i>Love Is Forever</i>
8	Sweden	John Lundvik <i>Too Late For Love</i>
9	Austria	PÆNDA <i>Limits</i>
10	Croatia	Roko <i>The Dream</i>
11	Malta	Michela <i>Chameleon</i>
12	Lithuania	Jurij Veklenko <i>Run With The Lions</i>
13	Russia	Sergey Lazarev <i>Scream</i>
14	Albania	Jonida Maliqi <i>Ktheju Tokës</i>
15	Norway	KEiINO <i>Spirit In The Sky</i>
16	Netherlands	Duncan Laurence <i>Arcade</i>
17	North Macedonia	Tamara Todevska <i>Proud</i>
18	Azerbaijan	Chingiz <i>Truth</i>

Also voting: Germany • Italy • United Kingdom

Host Country and Big Five

Country	Performer	Song
Israel	Kobi Marimi	<i>Home</i>
France	Bilal Hassani	<i>Roi</i>
Germany	SIsters	<i>Sister</i>
Italy	Mahmood	<i>Soldi</i>
Spain	Miki	<i>La Venda</i>
United Kingdom	Michael Rice	<i>Bigger Than Us</i>

Eurovision Song Contest Saturday 18th May 2019

Running order (TBA)	Performer	Song
1		
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14	Israel	Kobi Marimi <i>Home</i>
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Voting order

The jury voting order will only be revealed during the live Grand Final. Just write in the countries as they are announced.

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DREAM ON!



Vision editor Hass Yusuf goes on a journey to Israel via Europe and beyond. Here, he previews all of this year's acts.

Additional information by eurovision.tv and <http://natfinals.50webs.com/>



Dare to dream? Why not – and hopefully this year's contest won't turn into a nightmare! Everything finally seems to be going okay – the stage is looking great and apparently it's been confirmed that Madonna is performing in the interval which will mean that all the media coverage will be about her, but hopefully that coverage will spread the word and joy of Eurovision.

Tel Aviv should be a lot of fun – it's the most modern and liberal city in the region. Of course security will be very tight. It's going to be difficult not to get involved in the politics of the country, but hopefully everyone will figure out that Eurovision is actually about bringing nations together 'in perfect harmony' (as the New Seekers once sang).

It's a shame though that money is playing such a big role in the contest these past few years – those of you going to Tel Aviv will have been surprised at how expensive the tickets – and accommodation – are! Eurovision used to be a relatively inexpensive outing, but not any more.

Still, let's enjoy the shows. After a rather slow start with many thinking that it was going to be a lackluster year, 2019 has emerged with some outstanding entries. It's a shame that we're down to 41 countries. Very sorry to see the absence of Bulgaria – they really rediscovered their Eurovision mojo when they returned to the show a few years back. And as for Ukraine – what are they playing at? You could always rely on that country to deliver something exciting. But we should remember that this isn't the first time the country has been involved in some Eurovision controversy! But on a more positive note – welcome North Macedonia! Hurrah! None of this FYROM rubbish. See what happens when countries actually talk – we get compromise.

Anyway, following are reviews and info about all of this year's entries. Let's hope we have a fab contest and that the best song wins – which of course could be Michael Rice's *Bigger Than Us*. Fingers crossed!



ALBANIA

Song: *Ktheju Tokës*
Performer: Jonida Maliqi
Songwriter: Eriona Rushiti



This is a somewhat original haunting and pagan sounding entry. The drum work builds up nicely into an up-tempo number with ethnic overtones. As usual for an Albanian entry it does score highly on the old shout-o-meter, but it's not unpleasant. It's actually quite dramatic with a great delivery from Jonida. She's a bit of a style icon in Albania where she's a singer, actor and presenter. She's appeared in various TV shows and music competitions, so she probably knows her stuff. After four attempts to represent her country, Jonida finally gets the golden ticket. Can it come though its semi? A good staging and performance will certainly help – and it is a song that grows on you. It seems to suggest that you should hold on to your past when things were much nicer.

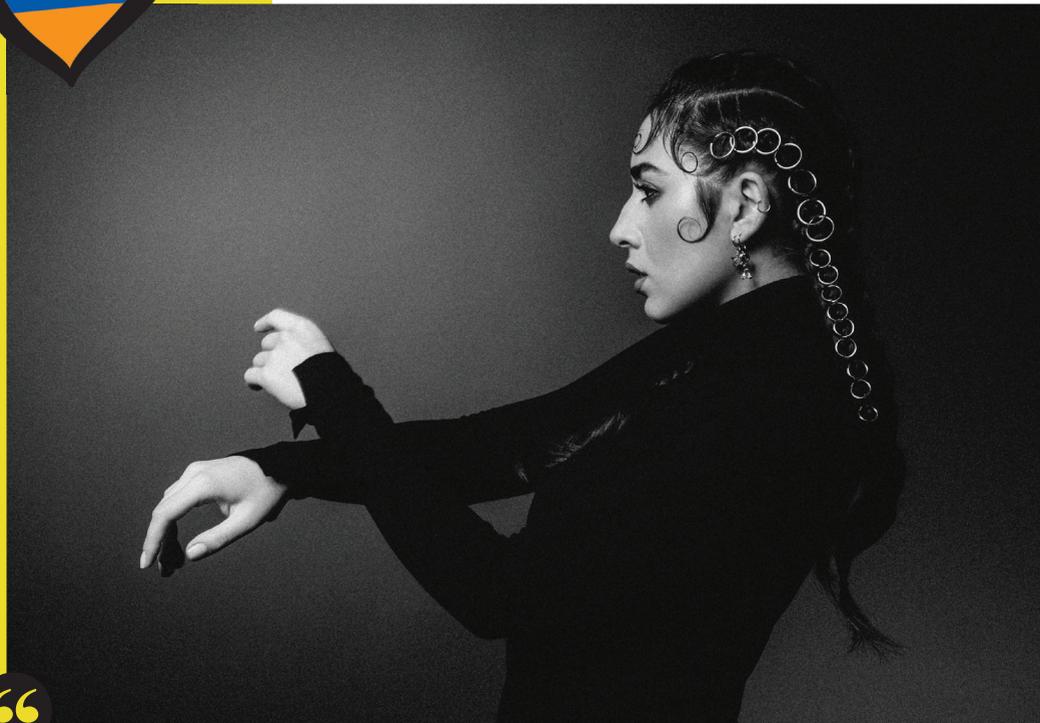
● After a semi-final 14 acts went through to the national final where the winner was selected by a jury.

Image copyright © Edvina Meta

Jonida sings:
You sing and crying
hands, tears are
gathered
You hold them
One day you live
The next you die
So much nostalgia,
so little hope
Alone, no identity
Return to your land
Oh man that let the
heart hostage
Return to your land



ARMENIA

Song: *Walking Out***Performer:** Srbuk**Songwriters:** Garik Papoyan, Lost Capital, tokionine

“

Srbuk sings:

Who are you, what you
really do
When you have to fight
the agony
That's aiming back at you
Who are you
Who you run to Depend,
defend, hope on
Can you function on your
own
Are you from those
Who will swallow down
The pain, disgrace

The country has gone for a contemporary modern number this year. It's a decent effort but really does need repeated hearing to appreciate it. It does lure you into a false sense of security with its many key changes, especially near the end. Srbuk is a decent performer and has had success on *X Factor Armenia* and *The Voice Ukraine*. She's one of Armenia's biggest stars and has been performing since childhood. Her repertoire includes many genres such as – pop, jazz, soul and R&B. A fab performance could see her through into the Grand Final. The song seems to suggest that you should fight for your right against the pain! Fight! Fight! Fight!

● **Srbuk was internally selected.**

Image copyright © AMPTV

AUSTRALIA

Song: *Zero Gravity***Performer:** Kate Miller-Heidke**Songwriters:** Kate Miller-Heidke, Keir Nuttal

“

Now here's a show woman if you ever saw one! Kate is a very successful award-winning performer and songwriter (she helped compose her entry) mixing pop and opera very effectively. This is pure Eurovision and she will no doubt put on an impressive act. If her video is anything to go by, she will be very memorable – but the song is good enough to hold its own. Her entry might be called *Zero Gravity* – but she'll score much more than that and should float easily into the Grand Final. Pop opera lovers will approve of the happy sound, but the song has a serious message about struggling with depression.

● **Ten songs were selected for the national final, where the winner was chosen equally by televoting and a jury.**

Image copyright © Jo Duck

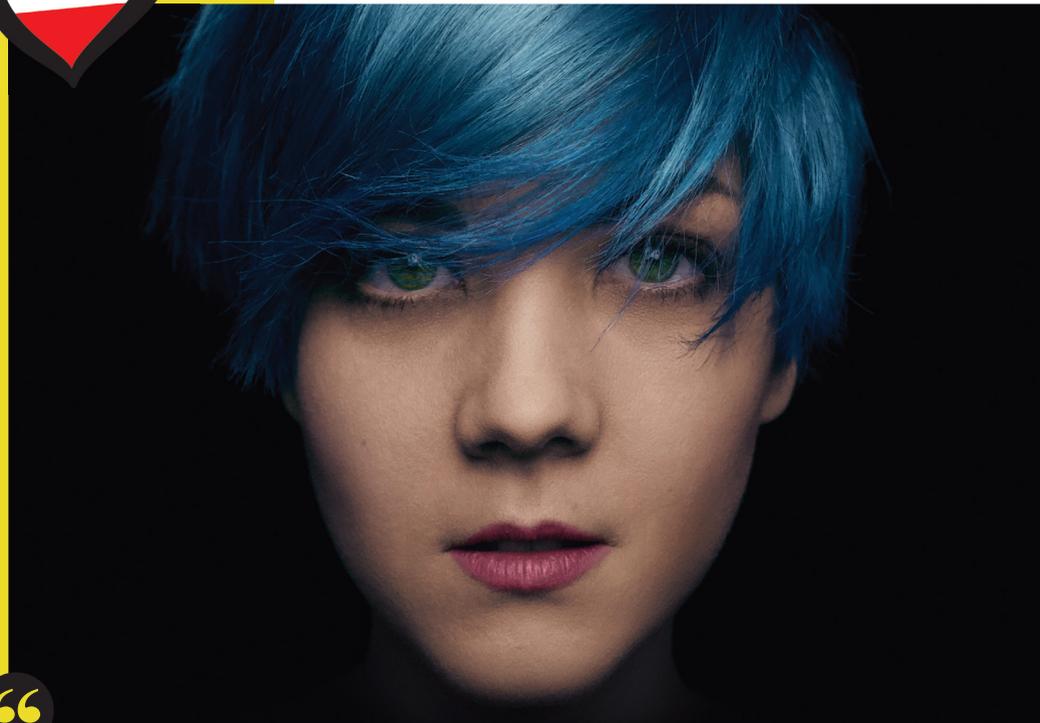
Kate sings:

Hey you (hey you, hey
you, hey you)
It's me again
Hey you (hey you, hey
you, hey you)
Stone in my shoe
I've been aching
Feeling low
You're so heavy
I have got to let you go
I'm going where there's
zero gravity
Zero gravity
Zero gravity

AUSTRIA



Song: *Limits*
Performer: PÆNDA
Songwriter: PÆNDA



“

PÆNDA sings:

Minds got to move but I'm
 so trapped within me
 Expanded all my limits too
 carelessly
 And I'm counting on the
 time to get me back in line
 Cause nothing really
 makes sense no more
 I'm set on hold so I
 needn't be bold anymore
 Cause the face in the
 mirror
 Just couldn't look clearer
 right back through me
 And how I'd like to say
 It will get better tomorrow
 or any day
 Yeah I'm talking about
 you, you

If you like your songs with a lot of angst, then you've come to the right place. *Limits*, written by the performer herself, PÆNDA, is a techno-inspired entry that starts off gently and slowly builds up. The performance really depends on PÆNDA's soulful voice – but the overall effect is quite eerie and somewhat fascinating. It does take a few hearings to appreciate its uniqueness though. The song tries to inspire you to have no limits and believe in yourself. But it sounds like a relationship in trouble, hence the angst. PÆNDA obviously believes in herself – not everyone can get away with a blue fringe. Will it get through its semi? It depends on how much PÆNDA can mesmerise the audience with those emerald eyes... those emerald eyes...

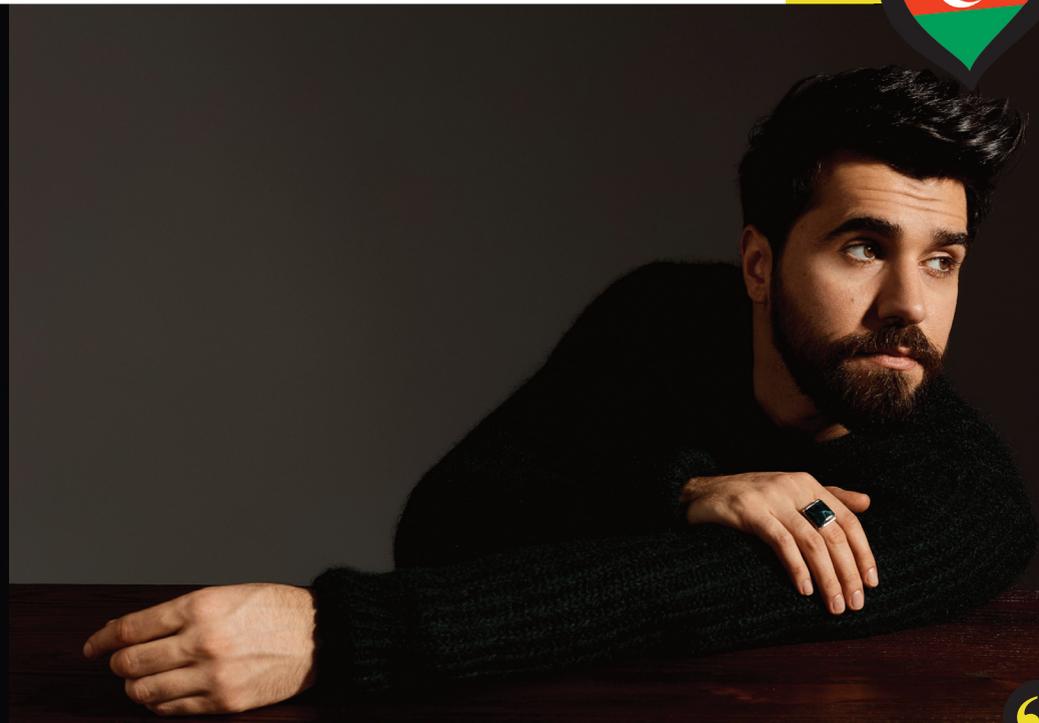
● **PÆNDA was internally selected.**

Image copyright © Wohzimmer

AZERBAIJAN



Song: *Truth*
Performer: Chingiz
Songwriters: Borislav Milanov, Trey Campbell,
 Bo J, Hostess, Pablo Dinero, Chingiz



“

Chingiz sings:

So shut up shut up
 about it
 Out of the mirror
 It's getting clearer
 Then out of the blue
 She crashes the room
 Gotta remember
 She is a killer
 With that freaking
 perfume
 Girl, it's too soon
 It's been so hard to bear
 So shut up about it
 shut up about it

After last year's shock result of not getting through to the Grand Final for the first time, the country isn't taking any chances this year. They've chosen an entry that is extremely modern, toe tapping and extremely interesting. It combines techno with an ethnic sound effortlessly. The song was co-written by the performer, Chingiz. Even though he was born in Moscow he has spent most of his life in Baku, where he started composing his own songs – which lead him to a very successful career – entering *The Voice Ukraine* and even winning *Pop Idol Azerbaijan*. He likes being outside in the fresh air and meditation. He will find inner peace when he gets through to the Grand Final. And if he doesn't... well he knows kung fu, so someone should watch out. It's a bit of a sad song really – yet another break up of a relationship. Quite a bitter one apparently. But he's probably telling the truth.

● **Chingiz was internally selected.**

Image copyright © Alexandr Porubaymykh

BELARUS

**Song:** *Like It***Performer:** ZENA**Songwriters:** Yuliya Kireyeva, Victor Drobysh

“

ZENA sings:

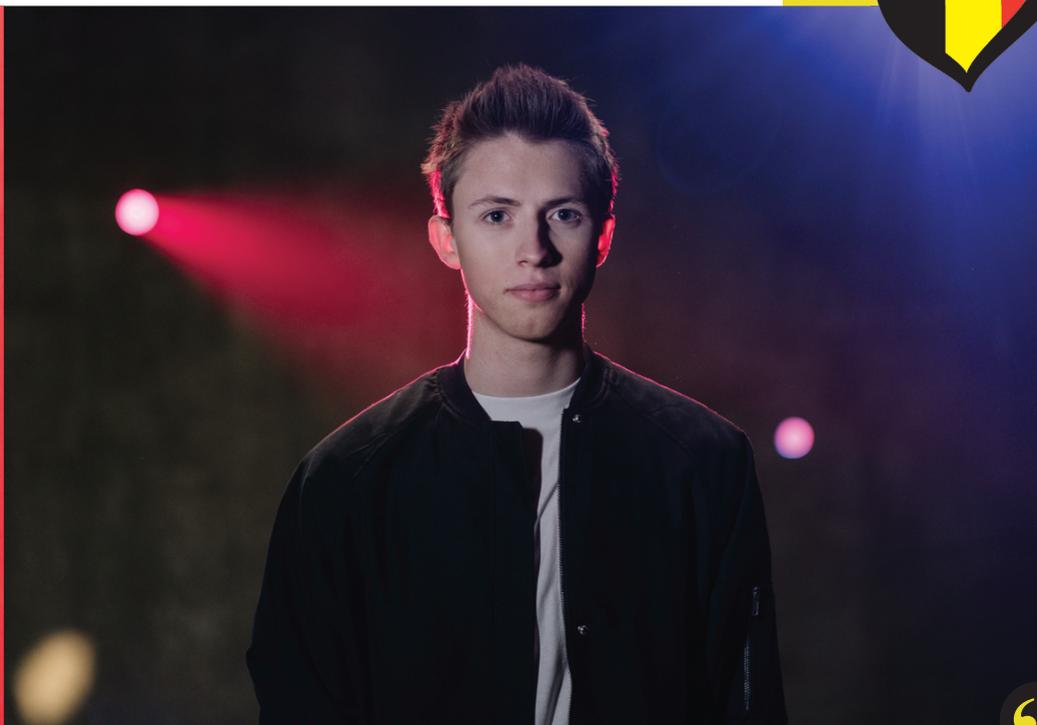
Uuuuuh what should I do
It's up to you, karma
Uuuuuh I wish I knew
Give me a sign, karma
Just to remind you
I don't give up
I won't give up no
I'll always try!
Yes, you gonna like it
Yes, you gonna like it
Let me in your heart
Yes, you gonna like it
Yes, you gonna like it
Let's break the rules
Yes, you gonna like it
Yes, you gonna like it

ZENA is another performer who likes her name in capitals. Unlike her namesake though she couldn't really be described as a warrior princess – but certainly a pop princess. And *Like It* is indeed an up-tempo pop/dance song with a nice beat. But that's about it really. Unless the stage act is really remarkable it may struggle to get out of its semi. Still, ZENA knows what it's like to be on the Eurovision stage – as a host and performer for the junior version. She's also a big social media star as well as having a string of record releases and music videos. The lyrics of *Like It* seem to suggest that she won't take no for an answer and that her partner is gonna like it! Fancy.

● **Ten songs were selected for the national final where the winner was chosen by a jury.**

Image copyright © BTRC

BELGIUM

**Song:** *Wake Up***Performer:** Eliot**Songwriters:** Pierre Dumoulin, Eliot Vassamillet

“

Eliot is one of the youngest performers in this year's contest. He had a hand writing his entry, *Wake Up*, with Pierre Dumoulin who composed Belgium's successful entry, *City Lights*, a few years back. And you do notice the similarities – which is all rather fab. It's got a great up-tempo electro-beat and Eliot's soulful vocals just add that right sense of angst. Eliot does look a bit solemn despite the upbeat tempo, but that all adds to the uniqueness of the song. Eliot loves British pop (we like him) and came to prominence on *The Voice Belgium*. Despite his musical career, he's still studying at school. *Wake Up* sends a message of tolerance, friendship and wanting a better world. Hopefully everyone will wake up and help put the country back into the Grand Final again.

● **Eliot was internally selected.**

Image copyright © Wouter Stuyf

Eliot sings:

I wake up every night
I can't find anyone to pray
somewhere in the light
Changing all up
I'm afraid, on the side
Looking out for the lines
to say
Someone has the light
Feeding our fire
I came to fight I came to
fight over you
Don't want your lies don't
want your lies I need truth
I came to fight I came to
fight over you
No one will cry, no one
will cry if it's true
I'll wait for the sign

CROATIA

Song: *The Dream***Performer:** Roko**Songwriters:** Jacques Houdek, Charlie Mason, Andrea Cubric

“

Roko sings:
I have a dream
A dream as beautiful as it
is extreme
I know it's not as crazy as
it may seem
So I don't ever wanna
give up on this dream
Open your heart
And you'll arrive at
where the dream has to
start
To pull a world together
out of the parts
And turn this war into a
hopeful work of art

Despite his young age, Roko has performed in many national and international music festivals – and came runner-up in *Croatia's Got Talent* in 2011 where he was mentored by our old friend, Jacques Houdek (Croatia 2017), who also co-wrote *The Dream*. Roko has been playing the piano since the age of seven, but has also developed into a powerful singer. He certainly gives the old shout-o-meter a run for its money. *The Dream* is a powerful, if old-fashioned, ballad that starts off slowly and builds up to a strong climax sending a positive message of love and hope – certainly a nice sentiment of peace over war. A powerful performance from Roko will be needed to achieve his dream of reaching the Grand Final.

● **There were 16 acts at the national final with the winner chosen equally by televoting and a jury.**

Image copyright © Damjna Fiket/Marko Kosutic

CYPRUS

Song: *Replay***Performer:** Tamta**Songwriters:** Alex Papaconstantinou, Teddy Sky, Viktor Svensson, Albin Nedler, Kristoffer Fogelmark

“

Now there's a good reason why this song is called *Replay*, because if we're all honest, it sounds very much like a replay of last year's Cypriot entry, *Fuego*. Not that that's a bad thing! Originality can be over-rated sometimes. In some ways *Replay* is even better than last year's entry – it's another enthusiastic up-tempo dance number. It's got a great electro dance beat that is quite infectious. No doubt there will be loads of sexual innuendo and bare flesh in the performance. Hopefully. Well the song is all about hanky-panky under the sheets. Listen to the lyrics then go and take a cold shower. Tamta is a bit of a tour de force in the industry – originally from Georgia, she settled in Greece, came runner up in *Greek Idol*, a judge for *X Factor Georgia* and *X Factor Greece* and has performed in various musicals. She's also a bit of a fashion icon – but more importantly an ambassador of breast cancer prevention. Can Cyprus do one better than last year and win the contest?

● **Tamta was internally selected.**

Image copyright © Kynthia Kindeli

Tamta smooches:

You got a problem
2 am I'm in your head
Let's just be honest,
tonight
Only I can solve it
Ya twisting turning in
your bed
Them sheets need my
body, tonight
That's when you call me
That's when you call me
Say u feeling lonely
Early in the morning,
early in the morning
Time is moving slowly
We keep it undercover
I know you miss the taste

CZECH REPUBLIC

Song: *Friend Of A Friend***Performers:** Lake Malawi**Songwriters:** Jan Steinsdoerfer, Maciej Mikolaj Trybulec, Albert Cerný

“

Lake Malawi sing:

Can you hear it?
There's someone behind
the wall making the same
sounds
Can you hear it?
It sounds like you and me
when we're making love
Who is it?
You said you wish they
weren't taking such a
long time
She was my neighbour
when we were thirteen
She moved back in...
There's not much
between us now
D'you know what I mean?

The Czechs are certainly on a roll. Last year they achieved their highest placing and this year they have the potential to do even better. *Friend Of A Friend*, performed by the group Lake Malawi, is an infectious uplifting up-tempo dance number with a great beat – very refreshing and modern. Their front man, Albert Cerný, who co-wrote their entry, is full of energy and very charismatic – he's the one falling over himself. He's won several music awards for his work. As you can tell from his accent, the band are very influenced by Britpop and have spent time in the UK, and are very popular at home and neighbouring countries. *Friend Of A Friend* is all about young lust and getting the girl. Typical young types... The band's many voting friends will make sure it gets through to the Grand Final. Summer in Prague anyone?

● **Eight acts were chosen for their national final which appeared online for a number of days. The winner was eventually selected equally by an international jury and a mobile phone app.**

Image copyright © Tomas Gal

DENMARK

Song: *Love Is Forever***Performer:** Leonora**Songwriters:** Lise Cabble, Melanie Wehbe, Emil Lei

“

It's a lively bouncy number from the Danes this year – a very sweet and charming number with an infectious beat. It's nice to have a song with an upbeat message – love indeed is forever. Well, maybe not forever, but let's give Leonora the benefit of the doubt. She's also a bit of a linguist as the song contains four languages, English, Danish, German and French – she's sort of spreading the love. That ought to gather a few more points. But languages and singing aren't the only talents that Leonora possesses – she's a national figure-skating champion to boot! A song won the contest a few years back with an ice-skating champion on stage. Can history repeat itself? Possibly, as this act should slide into the Grand Final.

● **Ten songs were entered to the national final, where the winner was chosen equally by SMS/mobile app voting and a Eurovision Fans jury in two rounds of voting - the first to select the top three and the second to select the winner.**

Image copyright © Thomas Cato

Leonora sings:

Travel the world to see
The ruins of what has
been
Learning our history
But still we don't take
it in
Why we make it tough
The world has had
enough
Don't get too political
And who are we to judge
It doesn't take too much
Only just a miracle
Love is forever
Love is forever and
everyone
Love is forever

ESTONIA

Song: *Storm***Performer:** Victor Crone**Songwriters:** Stig Råsta, Victor Crone, Fred Krieger, Vallo Kikas, Sebastian Lestapier

“

Victor sings:

All my life I've wondered why
I keep fighting all the tides
For a million reasons that I find
But I might, I might be all wrong
I've hit highs and I've hit lows
But somewhere down the winding road
It felt like I could lose it all
But I might, I might have been wrong
A storm like this
Can break a man like this
But when it all calms down
We're still safe and sound

Those Swedes get everywhere don't they? But who's complaining? The Estonians have put their faith in a singer who has *Melodifestival* experience, Victor Crone – and who has a great voice – and who has collaborated with Stig Rasta (of *Goodbye To Yesterday* fame) in producing a song that will stir up a nice brew in Tel Aviv – *Storm*. It's an impressive up-tempo anthemic number with a country twang. The song is all about weathering personal problems and emerging triumphant! It's all very encouraging with a feel-good factor. It should breeze into the Grand Final. But Victor will remain calm as he tries to meditate twice a day – when he's not travelling around the coast of Sweden in his motorboat, playing tennis, or training with the Estonian ice-hockey team. How does he find time for Eurovision?

● **After two semi-finals, 12 acts made it through to the national final where the winner was chosen in two rounds of voting. In the first round the top three were chosen equally by televoting and an international jury and in the second round the winner was chosen entirely by televoting.**

Image copyright © Stina Kase

FINLAND

Song: *Look Away***Performers:** Darude feat. Sebastian Rejman**Songwriters:** Sebastian Rejman, Ville Virtanen

“

Darude (Ville Virtanen) is an extremely successful music maker and DJ, especially in the trance genre. He's probably the most internationally recognised performer in the contest this year. Apparently he's Finland's biggest musical export – and we all thought it was Saara Aalto! Joining him on stage is singer/actor Sebastian Rejman, who also helped pen their entry, *Look Away*. He seems like the perfect singer to convey this up-tempo techno-rock number with a few decent key changes. The song appears to suggest that we should accept the truth and cope with the realities of life. And the truth of the matter is that this is a decent entry, but has it got enough of an edge to get out of its semi?

● **At the national final Darude feat. Sebastian Rejman sang three songs where the winner was chosen equally by televoting and an international jury.**

Image copyright © Anton Sucksdrorff

Darude feat. Sebastian Rejman sing:

There's something going on
And I can't turn my back on it anymore
How can we go to sleep at night
And lay there in our beds
When we know what's going on
With the world today
Is it in my head?
Am I the only one?
Is it in my head?
Where the war has just begun?
We look away
Look away

FRANCE



Song: *Roi (King)*

Performer: Bilal Hassani

Songwriters: Emilie Satt, Jean-Karl Lucas



“

Bilal sings:

I am free I create who I am
 You don't have to ask so I
 am I am me
 The same one since I was
 tiny
 Even though I got stared
 at I got judged
 I cry, I got out, and I smile
 You put me in a box, want
 me to be like you
 I'm not in society's codes I
 can bother a few
 At the end of the day you
 cannot change me boo
 So, let me fly away
 I'm not rich but I'm
 shining bright
 I can see my kingdom

Young Bilal is a singer/songwriter and social media star with a rather distinctive image. He likes to place himself out of the 'box'. Certainly *Roi*, written by the duo Madame Monsieur (who wrote and performed last year's French entry) helps him achieve that. The song is about accepting the way you are – no need to conform to banality or care what people think. This is quite a powerful song with a strong message and brings in elements of pop and French chanson (even though most of the song is sung in English). As for Bilal, are we going to witness another Conchita moment? This has the potential to do well for France. Let's see if Bilal will be crowned the winner.

● **After two semi-finals, eight songs made it to the national final where the winner was chosen equally by televoting and an international jury.**

Image copyright © Dorothée Murail

GEORGIA



Song: *Keep On Going*

Performer: Oto Nemsadze

Songwriters: Diana Giorgadze, Roma Giorgadze



“

Oto sings:

Keep on going
 Keep on going forward!
 Walk much!
 Seek!
 Find!
 Keep on going!
 They sing somewhere!
 sing heartedly!
 Wires!
 They are singing!
 Wounds!
 Sing after all!

You can't fault Georgia with brave choices – you can never predict what their entry may sound like. This year they've gone for a powerful moody ethnic sounding rock number. Oto has a great voice (the poor shout-o-meter), but clearly gets the message across – the theme of the song suggests we should all strive to achieve our goals. Oto is an accomplished singer appearing on loads of music talent shows including *Voice Of Ukraine* and even winning this year's *Georgian Idol*. We have to be honest and say that this sort of song usually struggles to get out of the semis, but it's a worthy effort that does belong in the Grand Final.

● **After five elimination shows, four acts made it through to the national final where the winner was chosen by televoting and Facebook Messenger.**

Image copyright © Giorgi Tsaava

GERMANY

**Song:** *Sister***Performers:** Sisters**Songwriters:** Laurell Barker, Tom Oehler, Marine Kaltenbacher, Thomas Stengaard

“

Sisters scream:

I tried to stop your fire
Turns out that I couldn't
I'm tired
Tired of competing
I tried to hold you under
But honey you kept
breathing
When you said you wanted
the world
I said you couldn't too
You were walking right
beside me
But I left no room for you
Calling you my enemy but
my enemy's right here
It was my mistake to try
and break that power that
I feared

Oh dear, the old shout-o-meter has blown a fuse! Well that's what you get when you get two performers shouting at each other – a double whammy! The song is decent enough but there seems to be little chemistry between the 'sisters'. Both performers have had successful careers so far, appearing on numerous talent shows and releasing songs as part of bands or as soloists. *Sister* starts off quietly and slowly builds up and up with a lot of emotion and angst. On first impression it may suggest that it's an advert for sisterhood but is actually about sibling rivalry – but eventually realising your mistake. The Germans don't seem to have built on the great success they had last year, but luckily they're already in the Grand Final.

● Seven songs were selected for the national final and the winner was chosen equally by televoting, international jury and an international Eurovision fan jury.

Image copyright © NDR/Hendrick Luders

GREECE

**Song:** *Better Love***Performer:** Katerine Duska**Songwriters:** Katerine Duska, David Sneddon, Leon of Athens, Phil Cook

“

This is just simply fab. Katerine is a very successful Greek/Canadian singer/songwriter who will put Greece back on the Eurovision map after the country's unjustified poor result last year. She co-wrote *Better Love* – and you couldn't ask for anything better. Besides excellent styling she's got a lovely sounding voice – a very soulful rasp that really adds to the atmosphere of the song – which as the title suggests advocates more understanding and keep on loving. And it's the sort of entry that even the old shout-o-meters approves of – an infectious electro-pop number that you want to listen to over and over again. Let's all look forward to hearing it at the Grand Final. If it doesn't succeed it will be a Greek tragedy!

● Katerine was internally selected. Hurrah!

Image copyright © Efi Gousi

Katerine sings:

Live for the mess
Make me feel ageless
No pain, no gain
Teach me carelessness
And I'm about to see all
that's made up
And everything they want
from us
No pain, no gain
Once bitten, make way
And I can't hide it
I won't fight this Yearning
feeling inside
Gotta get
Better love, better love
All that we're after
Way to love, who you
love

HUNGARY



Song: *Az En Apám (My Father)*

Performer: Joci Pápai

Songwriters: Ferenc Molnár,
Joci Pápai, Ferenc Molnár



“

Joci sings:

My father has brought me
up like the winds
Gentle songs he breathes,
tales he sings
He used to live where all
the roads come to an end
Forever and a day for my
life couldn't amend
Strings resound in my ear
with his heart
Behold him now with
aging time in the face of
mine
His faith is mine -
confessing it makes me
proud
Forever and a day his tune
I keep humming aloud

Welcome back Joci. He got a great result back in 2016 and has the potential to do even better. Ethnic songs don't always achieve great success, but Joci, who co-wrote his song, knows his audience and subject. The composition is a powerful soulful folk-sounding ethnic entry paying homage to his father and Romany roots. It's a sentiment many can probably relate to. And it's reinforced being sung in Hungarian – which sounds perfect. (More power to the native language!). The song further resonates with Joci having a young son as well who seems to be following in his father's footsteps. Hungary has had great success getting through to the Grand Final – and it deserves to again.

● **After two semi-finals, eight acts went through to the national final where the winner was selected by two rounds of voting. In the first round a jury chose the top four songs and in the second round the winner was decided by televoting.**

Image copyright © TV2

ICELAND



Song: *Hatrið Mun Sigra (Hate Will Prevail)*

Performers: Hatari

Songwriters: Hatari



“

Hatari sing:

Debauchery
unconstrained
Hangover uncontained
Life's purposeless
confusion
The void will swallow all
Hate will prevail
Every joy derail
Just treacherous illusion
Fraud, futility
All that I saw
Tears ran raw
All that I gave
That I once gave I gave
you all
Universal obfuscation
Unilateral execration

'Allo, 'allo, 'allo – what's all this then? Is it time for a bit of slap'n'tickle with a bit of S&M bondage all thrown in? This ought to wake up Europe. Hatari – who consider themselves anti-capitalistic, BDSM and a collective art-form, composed their entry and took their national final by storm. And it is well justified – even if you ignore all the S&M stuff, the sounds the group makes are very unique. It goes from harsh and demonic to high-pitched angelic. This techno-extravaganza could either crash out or win the whole thing. The group try to convince us that they're anti-establishment, and urge us to join them on a nihilistic journey. Let's hope it ends up in the Grand Final. Reading their statements you could be forgiven if you get the impression that they're taking the proverbial – but who cares if it means Eurovision in Reykjavik!

● **After two semi-finals, five acts went through to the national final where the winner was chosen in two rounds of voting. In the first round, the top two acts were chosen equally by televoting and a jury, and in the second round the winner was selected by televoting.**

Image copyright © Lilja Jons

IRELAND

Song: 22**Performer:** Sarah McTernan**Songwriters:** Janieck van de Polder, Marcia Sondejker, Roel Rats

“

Sarah sings:

I see 22, oh when I think of you
Lately, that's all I do
Don't you know that I'm always driving by
Want to come home to you
Now I know, I've always been afraid to say
How I feel
But this's got to change
Every time I'm with somebody I'm confusing him with you
Anywhere I go reminds me of the things we used to do

Sarah has some Eurovision credentials – she tried to represent San Marino last year (who had an international audition process), but here she is actually representing her own country. Her other credits includes coming third on *The Voice Of Ireland* in 2015. Her song, 22, is basically a dream of a romantic past with him who lived down the road at number 22 – and can't get that number or the ex-beau out of her head. The song is an engaging up-tempo toe-tapping pop offering – somewhat old-fashioned, but very uplifting. Fingers crossed that if this gets through to the Grand Final the producers will place it at song number 22 (and hopefully not end up in that position at the end of the night).

● **Sarah was selected internally.**

Image copyright © RTE 2019/Lili Forberg

ISRAEL

Song: Home**Performer:** Kobi Marimi**Songwriters:** Inbar Wizman, Ohad Shragai

”

Kobi sings:

I've been running barefoot to the mountain tops
Nothing comes as easy as it goes
I can hug the water when it snows
I feel the sun upon my skin
And I am someone, I am someone
You pulled my heart, I took it in
It made me someone, I am someone
And now I'm done, I'm coming home

The host nation has gone for something completely different this year – no upbeat K-Pop, up-tempo clucking – instead we have an extremely powerful male singer with a very emotive ballad. Kobi delivers the song in an exercise that shows how it should be done. The song was especially written for him – to obviously bring out the best in him. And it gets across the message of the composition perfectly – a personal struggle of belief and acceptance. Of course some may say the title, *Home*, is more political – reflecting the Israeli homeland and its right to exist. It matters not, as this is one of the best ballads in the contest. Just get the young man a better-fitting jacket please than the one he wore in his video!

● **After 34 shows (!), four performers made it to the national final, where after singing in duets and a wildcard entry, the winner was eventually chosen equally by a six-member judging panel/three juries and a mobile phone app.**

Image copyright © Ronen Akerman

ITALY



Song: *Soldi (Money)*
Performer: Mahmood
Songwriters: Dardust, Mahmood, Charlie Charles



Mahmood sings:
 Mum, don't worry, I'm on
 my way home
 You will be disappointed
 by a liar
 It looked like love to you
 but it was something else
 He drinks champagne
 during Ramadan
 On the telly they are
 airing Jackie Chan
 He smokes shisha. He
 asks me how I'm doing
 He asks me
 How are you doing?
 How are you doing?
 How are you doing?
 You already know how
 things are going

Mahmood was born Alessandro Mahmoud to an Italian mother and Egyptian father. He took part in *San Remo Giovani* (newcomers) 2016 and won that contest this year which meant he could enter the main contest – which he did – and won! *Soldi* has already become a massive hit. Rap songs don't generally do that well in Eurovision, but the tide is slowly changing – and this song with its 'cloud rap' and R&B notes give it an unusual edge. Every year we seem to say this could be the song that wins it for Italy again – but it could actually happen this year. Happily *Soldi* is sung in Italian, which always sounds fab – even though it is quite a sad and solemn story. As you can guess from the song's title, it suggests that money is everything and which pulls people apart.

● **Mahmood won this year's San Remo Festival and therefore had the right to represent his country at Eurovision.**

Image copyright © Attilio Cusani

LATVIA



Song: *That Night*
Performers: Carousel
Songwriters: Sabine Zuga, Marcis Vasilevskis



Carousel is a Latvian indie pop band that began as a duo and eventually turned into a quartet and are currently working on an album. No doubt Eurovision will be a good advert for them. Their entry, written by band members, is a charming and gentle folksy number. Its main problem is that because it won't be in your face like other entries it might get lost when voting starts. The lyrics seem to suggest a story of a lost love but out of the night can come the comfort of light and reconciliation! Let's hope that the sun will shine on their semi-final night.

● **After two semi-finals, eight acts went through to the national final where the winner was chosen equally by a jury and televoting/online voting/spotify listens. How very modern.**

Image copyright © Alga Redmane

Carousel sing:
 It was a lonely night
 No stars were shining,
 there was no light
 One troubled thought
 broke through
 And coloured my world
 so blue
 Love, where are you
 Love, I need you
 Love, all night through
 Where are you my love,
 oh
 I travelled through the
 time
 It felt for me like doing
 a crime
 My mind did crazy
 things

LITHUANIA



Song: *Run With The Lions*
Performer: Jurij Veklenko
Songwriters: Eric Lumiere, Ash Hicklin, Pele Loriano



“

Jurij sings:
 If you want to see
 Just open your eyes
 If you want to breathe,
 let's go outside in the open
 Out in the open
 There's no need to stay
 locked up inside
 This kingdom is yours
 and this kingdom is mine
 Let me show you
 Just let me show you
 Ooohhh there's no need
 to be afraid
 You don't got to hurt
 away
 Cause we got a love that
 can't be caged

Jurij's been very busy getting his name across various talent shows such as *Lithuania's Got Talent*, *The Voice Of Lithuania* and *We Are One Blood* – but now he's hit the jackpot with Eurovision. Mind you he has appeared on the Eurovision stage as a backing vocalist in 2013 and 2015 so he knows what to expect. He has great vocal range – going from sweet and gentle to something with a higher pitch – making him one of the more interesting voices in the contest. And he puts that voice to good use on *Run With The Lions* – an electro up-tempo anthemic entry with a good beat and good key changes. The message of the song is to be brave and strong – don't let anything stop your aims or who you can love. With a memorable stage act this can get into the Grand Final.

● **After two semi-finals, eight acts went through to the national final where the winner was selected equally by televoting and a jury.**

Image copyright © EBU

MALTA



Song: *Chameleon*
Performer: Michela
Songwriters: Joacim Perrson, Paula Winger, Borislav Milanov, Johan Alkanas



”

Yet another youngster in the contest this year – but Michela has a rather powerful voice – which proved useful when she won *X Factor Malta* – though she developed her talent in the Baltics and London. *Chameleon* is a rather strange entry – an up-tempo dance number with a techno beat along with Latin-like sound. It sorts of lives up to its title with many changes and genres – but it all meshes nicely together. The song's message seems to be don't let yourself be constrained – get out there and do your thing. Let's hope Michela just doesn't merge into the background on her semi-final night.

● **Four acts got through to the final of X Factor Malta, where the winning prize was entry to Eurovision. The winner was chosen in three rounds of televoting with one contestant being eliminated at the each round.**

Image copyright © Johnathan Brincat

Michela sings:
 I'm bluer than the ocean
 I'm golden like the rising sun and
 I'm red with hot emotion
 And when they try to hoid me down
 Inside a box I find my way out
 I'm keepin' it in motion
 When life brings me trouble this I know
 I never walk away no no
 never walk away no no
 no no
 We are technicolour
 watch us go
 And we never walk away
 no no

MOLDOVA

**Song:** *Stay***Performer:** Anna Odobescu**Songwriters:** Georgios Kalpakidis, Thomas Reil, Jeppe Reil, Maria Broberg

“

Anna sings:

Hold on, even with the
wind we'll make it
Be strong, keep the fire
burning inside
Go on, as I breathe in you
Look into my eyes, fly me
high right up to the sky
Stay, until I find a way, to
be together
Forever's here to... stay
No matter what they say
It's now or never, it's
forever
This time, we can try to
keep our story
This crime, we can stop
from breaking apart

Our singer found solace in music when her father died when she was a young girl. A graduate in pop jazz, Anna achieved a great musical CV entering and winning various musical competitions, at home and in neighbouring countries – and even became a vocal coach. Her entry, *Stay*, is an emotive ballad with a decent electro-beat. Anna's voice gives the shout-o-meter a good run, but there are enough key changes to keep the interest going. The message of the song seems to be never give up – stay strong and fight for love – that sort of thing. A powerful stage show will be needed to progress out of its semi.

● **Ten songs were selected for the national final where the winner was selected equally by televoting and a jury.**

Image copyright © Margarita Cernel

MONTENEGRO

**Song:** *Heaven***Performers:** D mol**Songwriters:** Adis Eminic, Dejan Bozovic

“

D mol is a young vocal group of six singers that was formed at the private music school of Daniel Alibabic – who was a former member of No Name, (Serbia & Montenegro 2005). Despite their young ages, all the members of the group have had a lot of experience in the world of music – lots of recordings, TV shows and the like. Their song, *Heaven*, is an up-tempo emotional saga of nice harmonics with an ethnic backdrop. It's got a charming quality about it, but gets annoying when all six singers insist on singing a line or two – but nevertheless, they sound good together. The entry is basically a love song – being in heaven after falling in love. It's a decent effort but does it have enough of a hook to get it out of its semi? Well D mol will be in heaven if it does.

● **Five songs were selected for the national final where the winner was chosen in two rounds of voting. In the first round the top two were chosen equally by a radio station jury, an international jury, a Montenegrin jury and SMS voting. In the second round the winner was chosen by SMS voting.**

Image copyright © Miodrag Markovic & Isidora Mijanovic

D mol sing:

Life was once so lonely
Heartbreak was the only
Thing you left for me
My life
My life was so empty
And love was the furthest
Furthest thing from me
Fallin' I'm in heaven
Fallin' I'm in heaven
Falli' Straight into your
heart
Fallin' I'll catch you while
you're
Fallin' I hear your heart
Callin' Into my arms
I'm in heaven

NETHERLANDS

**Song:** *Arcade***Performer:** Duncan Laurence**Songwriters:** Duncan Laurence, Joel Sjöo, Wouter Hardy

“

Duncan sings:

A broken heart is all that's left
I'm still fixing all the cracks
Lost a couple of pieces when
I carried it carried it
carried it home
I'm afraid of all I am
My mind feels like a foreign land
Silence ringing inside my head
Please carry me carry me
carry me home
I've spent all of the love I saved

Music didn't play a big part in the town where Duncan was born, but he found solace in it to get away from the bullying he endured as a kid. He learned how to play the piano and write poems and by the time he was 16 years old he won a talent show – and hasn't looked back. His song, *Arcade*, which he co-wrote, is based on a personal story of someone he loved but who died at a young age. So the message of the song is rather personal and suggests the vulnerability of life (as swimming naked in his video suggests), but the composition itself is proving to be popular. It's a mid-tempo ballad full of great emotion – helped by Duncan's vocal range. This should do well – it certainly deserves to.

● **Duncan was internally selected.**

Image copyright © Paul Bellaart

NORTH MACEDONIA

**Song:** *Proud***Performer:** Tamara Todevska**Songwriters:** Kosta Petrov, Sanja Popovska, Robert Bilbilov, Lazar Cvetkoski, Darko Dimitrov

”

Tamara sings:

Girl
They will try to tell you
what to do
How to look, smile, act
and move
All the rules are made
for you to lose
But baby let me tell
you something
Girl
For every tear the
world makes you cry
Hold on to me, I am
always on your side
Don't be afraid to
spread your wings
and fly

Same country, new name! Welcome North Macedonia. Tamara is one of her country's leading and best-selling female artists and has won various musical awards. Being raised by a family of musicians obviously helped. She's dedicating her song, *Proud*, to her two children and believes everyone should fight for their dreams and believe in themselves. So, that clearly is the message of the song – an emotional ballad sung perfectly by Tamara. This is one of the classier songs of the contest this year. While it might get the shout-o-meter worried, it packs a powerful punch which deserves to be in the Grand Final.

● **Tamara was internally selected.**

Image copyright © Cedimir Popovski

NORWAY



Song: *Spirit In The Sky*

Performers: KEiiNO

Songwriters: Alexander Olsson, Tom Hugo, Fred Buljo, Alexandra Rotan Henrik Tala, Rüdiger Schramm



“

KEiiNO sing:
 Can't you stay
 Stay with me into the night
 Stay, I need you close
 You can go back when the sun rise again
 Just stay tonight, just stay
 Have you seen my spirit
 Lost in the night
 The violent nightshade
 They took away my light
 They call us nothing
 My name is nothing
 Come see me
 Please see me
 Cause I've been running
 with the demons now

It's time for a fan favourite now. KEiiNO mixes electro-pop with Nordic folk melodies and joik, the traditional form of song of the Sami people. *Spirit In The Sky* is inspired by the Sami belief that nature gives you strength in times of trouble – which is clearly the message of the song. The band co-wrote their song and it has been a huge hit already. All three performers have had successful careers – and now they're in Eurovision! Who could ask for more? The story of the song is perfectly captured in this excellent up-tempo uplifting pop song with a great chorus and ethnic Sami backdrop. Go for it Norway – the Grand Final beckons! You'll be dancing to this song for years to come...

● Ten songs were selected for the national final where the winner was chosen in three rounds of voting. In the first round the top four acts were chosen equally by televoting/internet voting/app voting and ten international juries. In the second round the top two acts were chosen by televoting/internet voting/app voting and in the third round the winner was chosen by televoting/internet voting/app voting. Phew!

Image copyright © Julia Marie Naglestad

POLAND



Song: *Fire Of Love (Pali Sie)*

Performers: Tulia

Songwriters: Allan Rich, Jude Friedman, Sonia Krasny, Nadia Dalin



”

There's much drama from the Poles this year with this rather ethnic offering. Tulia are made up of their namesake, Tulia, Joanna, Dominika and Patrycja. They sing their song in a unique style of Polish folk called 'spiewokrzyk' (pronounce it as you like), which means 'white voice' or 'screaming sing'. And very unique it is. The group came to prominence with a Depeche Mode cover and have gone from strength to strength appearing in various musical festivals and producing a platinum selling album. This composition really shows off the diversity of Europe, so hopefully it will do well in the contest. The lyrics seem to suggest the power and passion of love. And why not.

● Tulia were internally selected.

Image copyright © Grzegorz Golebowski

Tulia sing:

Sitting on an iceberg
 Waiting for the sun
 Hoping to be rescued
 Cold and alone
 Fire! Fire! Fire of love!
 Burns in you, burns in me
 Burns us alive
 Love me now! Love me now
 Harder and harder
 Take me there, be the air
 I need to survive

PORTUGAL



Song: *Telemóveis*

Performer: Conan Osiris

Songwriter: Conan Osiris



“

Conan sings

I broke the cell phone
Trying to call heaven
To find out if I kill
'saudade'
Or if I'm the one who
dies
Who kills who, who kills
who, kills?
Who kills who?
I don't even know
When I find out I won't
call anyone else
If life calls, if life sends a
message,
If life doesn't stop and
you don't have the
courage to pick up

Heh, heh, heh, heh... This is clearly revenge for putting the country in final position when they hosted the contest last year (even though their song was superb)! Take that Europe and stick it up where the sun don't shine! OK, maybe that's a bit OTT, but OTT is how best to describe this act by Conan Osiris. Conan is an all-round entertainer – he's a singer/songwriter, dancer and producer. He also worked in an iconic sex shop in Lisbon. (Well that's different.) *Telemóveis* was a runaway winner at the national final – and easy to see why – such an unusual and original act with a sense of the orient. Sort of. Surely this must go through to the Grand Final. It's pure 'Eurovision' – and will be remembered for years. No idea what it's about – something to do with death and phones. Doesn't matter – just go with it.

● **After two semi-finals, eight acts went through to the national final where the winner was chosen equally by televoting and seven regional juries.**

Image copyright © Royal Contemporary

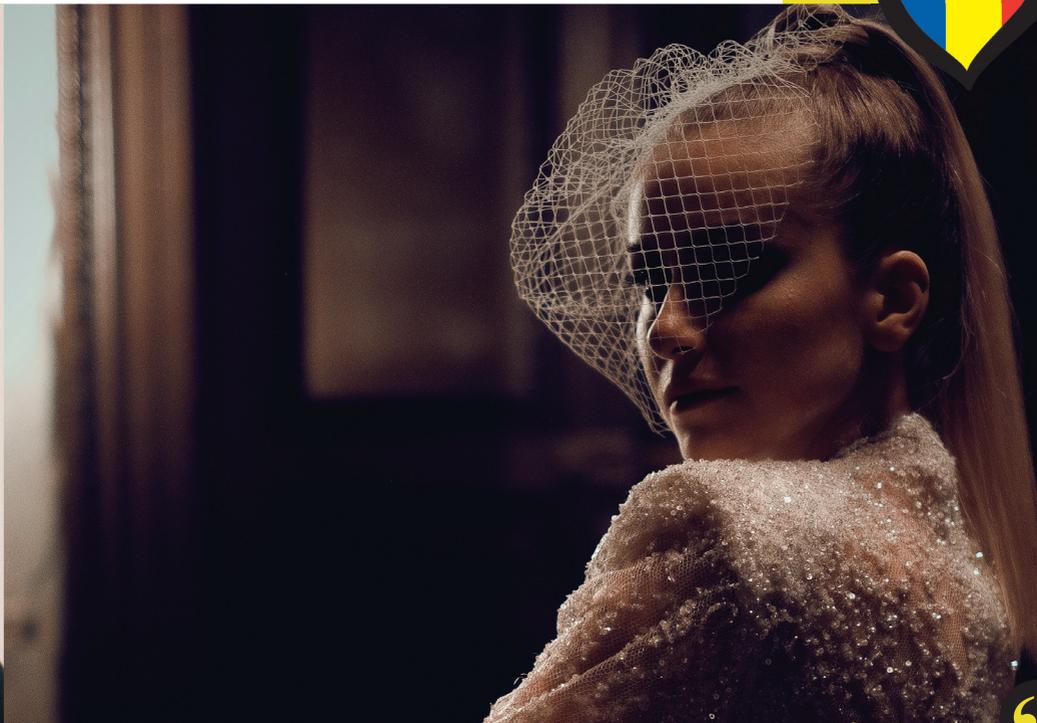
ROMANIA



Song: *On A Sunday*

Performer: Ester Peony

Songwriters: Ioana Victoria Badea, Ester Alexandra Cretu, Alexandru Serbu



“

Ester sings:

You left me
On a Sunday
And I still remember
That day in September
Yeah you left me
On a Sunday
Made sure there's no way
To forget that day
say ey, ey, ey, ey, ey
Loving you is a hard
price to pay
ey, ey, ey, ey, ey
Watching the smoke
Rise from the ashtray
Filling the room with pain
It's still in my veins

Ester, who co-wrote her entry, *On A Sunday* (though it could've been any day of the week...), began to study jazz singing at the age of eight and has gone on to have a successful career as a singer/songwriter. *On A Sunday*, gives us a dark message that love can become dangerous in the hands of the wrong person. Last year Romania failed to get through to the Grand Final for the first time, with a rather excellent rock number, so it's difficult to gauge if this up-tempo soulful and moody entry will fair better.

● **After two semi-finals, 12 acts went through to the national final where the winner was chosen by a jury (6/7) and televoting (1/7). Why did they bother with the public vote?!**

Image copyright © Cat Music

RUSSIA



Song: *Scream*

Performer: Sergey Lazarev

Songwriters: Sharon Vaughn, Dimitris Kontopoulos, Philipp Kirkorov



“

Sergey sings:

I can't stay here longer
 You cannot make me cry
 So I will leave you to wonder
 What will become of our lives
 I'll swallow hard
 Fall apart
 Break and bleed but
 You won't see
 Tears won't fall
 While pride stands tall
 Maybe they can't be heard or seen
 But tears aren't quiet things
 They scream
 They scream

Sergey is back, which means the Russians are serious this year! They're taking no chances of not getting through to the Grand Final again. And quite honestly they have a great chance of winning the contest again. While *Scream* might not be that high in the fan charts it will be very popular where the votes really count. And you know the stage act will be magnificent! Sergey's credentials are top-notch being a highly successful singer/actor/presenter/businessman. You name it, he's done it or won it. *Scream* is a dark and moody melodramatic offering sung excellently by Sergey – and hello again shout-o-meter – but it all makes sense. It has a powerful chorus and soundtrack that resonates with the dark sadness of the message. Can we go to St Petersburg this time please?

● **Sergey was internally selected.**

Image copyright © Danill Velichko

SAN MARINO



Song: *Say Na Na Na*

Performer: Serhat

Songwriters: Serhat, Mary Susan Applegate



“

Serhat sings

You look sad and lonely, is something wrong tonight
 Why this rush to run away, things will be all right
 Just be strong and look at me, hear me when I say
 Who cares that you're outta love, it happens every day
 All your dreams have gone away, no matter what you do
 Love all colours of this life and to yourself be true
 Don't forget my number, call me anytime
 I will always tell you life is beautiful and fine

While Turkey might still be sulking, at least this Turk loves to embrace Eurovision. And welcome back Serhat – who this year has co-written his entry. Serhat is a successful singer/songwriter, music producer, TV producer and presenter and a qualified dentist! Something very useful to fall back on then! He missed out on the Grand Final last time, but he may have better luck this time with *Say Na Na Na*. Those of us of a certain age will probably appreciate this more as it reminds us of those hazy days of discotheque. It's brash. It's corny. It's old-fashioned. It's up-tempo. It's bouncy. And it's magnificent! It's just a great fun uplifting nonsense dance number that should just be accepted for what it is! It so deserves to be in the Grand Final! Alas, the tone-deaf and stuck-up juries will probably reject it...

● **Serhat was internally selected.**

Image copyright © Cem Talu

SERBIA

Song: *Kruna (Crown)***Performer:** Nevena Bozovic**Songwriters:** Nevena Bozovic, Darko Dimitrov

“

Nevena sings:

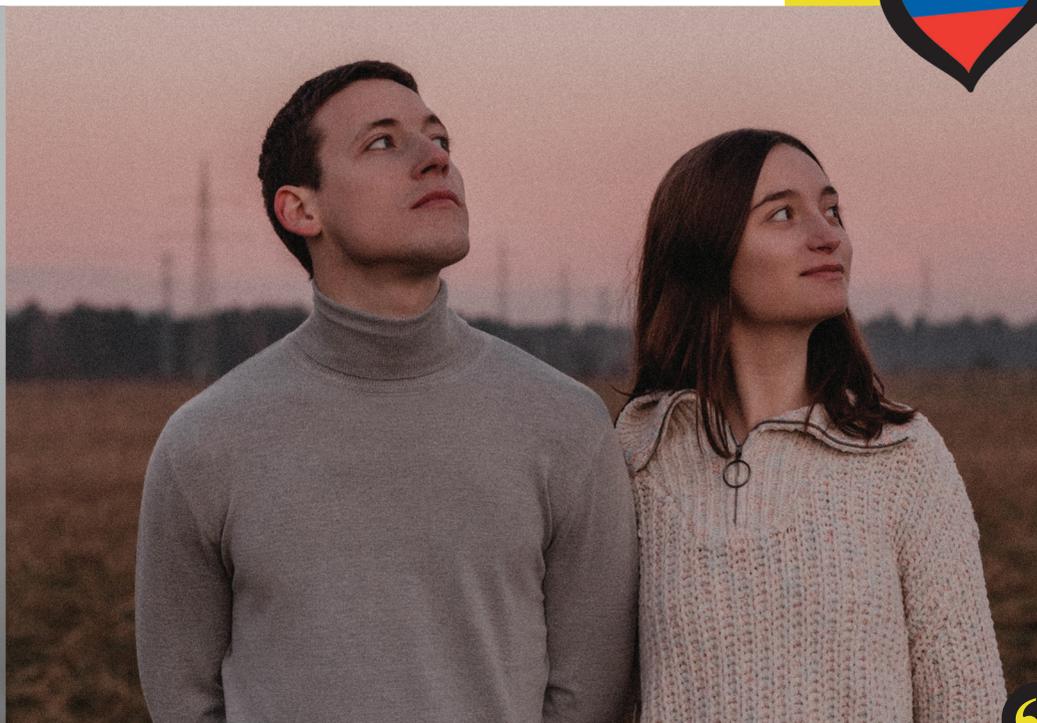
The look creeps
 The only thing my soul
 appeases
 Oh, I love you
 The night is long
 Without you, I feel sad
 Give me your hand
 Never let it go
 Everything for you
 give myself to you...
 Let the world hear me
 now
 I defend you with my life
 know, that forever
 I will love you
 The crown is yours
 My love I want you to
 know

Nevena's got Eurovision form – entering the junior version in 2007 and being part of the band, My 3, who represented Serbia in 2013. And away from Eurovision she's won various musical awards and also appeared on *The Voice Of Serbia* – so the lady can sing. And she does so excellently with her entry that she co-wrote. *Kruna* is a passionate love story – a powerful rock-like ballad full of ethnic flavour. Such angst needs to be rewarded with a place in the Grand Final (though the shout-o-meter may not agree). It does, however, need a rather impressive stage act to get it noticed. Sometimes a good song just needs that little help.

● After two semi-finals 12 acts went through to the national final where the winner was selected equally by SMS voting and a jury.

Image copyright © Alex Zivkovic

SLOVENIA

Song: *Sebi (Self)***Performers:** Zala Kralj & Gašper Šantl**Songwriters:** Zala Kralj & Gašper Šantl

“

These two performers became a duo in 2017 when they met up on Instagram (exchanging videos). They've had a lot of success since then releasing various records. They say the desire is tell stories with their songs and their ability to write and interpret each other's music – usually involving gentle narration with soft, melodic vocals. *Sebi* succeeds in that – a mid-tempo electro-ballad with an interesting beat. It certainly adds something different and modern to the contest and deserves to do well. The song suggests that you should remain true to yourself.

● Ten acts were selected for the national final where the winner was chosen in two rounds of voting. In the first round a jury selected the top two acts and in the second round the winner was chosen by televoting.

Image copyright © Ana Santi

Zala & Gašper sing:

When your mind is full of
 thoughts
 you can listen to my
 heartbeat
 When your burden is
 heavy
 you can come to me
 Ask what keeps me
 going forward
 Is it distance and success
 Like a leaf blows with the
 wind and resists it
 I go with the flow and
 resist it
 You can't always see the
 stars
 just stay true to who you
 are

SPAIN



Song: *La Venda (The Blindfold)*

Performer: Miki

Songwriter: Adrià Salas



“

Miki sings:

You rock because you
love yourself
You love yourself, your
mind is in shape
You choose yourself
because there are roads
I tell you: there is
something else
The blindfold fell already
and only joy remained
The blindfold fell already
and new days will start
The blindfold fell already,
stirring up fantasies
The blindfold fell already
and you'll become what
you wished

This is a lively effort from Spain this year. The talented Miki (once a frontman of the cover band Dalton Bang) knows how to deliver this up-tempo dance number combining nice elements of rumba and Latin pop. It certainly is an infectious entry that has the potential to do well for Spain. Some may consider it typically Spanish, but it's more than that. Its feel-good factor will make it memorable – and it's nice to have something traditional and festive in the contest. No time for a fiesta here! The message of the song suggests that you should get real and open your eyes! Anyway, this ought to have them dancing in the aisles. How very groovy.

● **After a semi-final ten songs were selected for the national final where the winner was chosen by televoting.**

Image copyright © Jose Irun

SWEDEN



Song: *Too Late For Love*

Performer: John Lundvik

Songwriters: John Lundvik, Anderz Wrehov,
Andreas Stone Johansson



“

Singer/songwriter John Lundvik achieved great success in last year's *Melodifestival* coming third. This year he won the whole thing with *Too Late For Love* that he also co-wrote. It's already a massive hit so will do extremely well in Tel Aviv. Its infectious up-tempo sound with a great gospel-like soundtrack is very inspiring. It should do well with both the public and juries. John has had a lot of success over the years with many interesting projects – and he has of course co-written the UK's entry this year, *Bigger Than Us*. Is it too late for love? Nah – as the song suggests there's always a way. Will Sweden go all the way to the top again? It has a great chance.

● **After five semi-finals 12 acts went through to the national final where the winner was chosen equally by eight international juries and a public vote – at the latter the voting was via a mobile phone app where users were split into one of seven age groupings (7/8) and televoting (1/8).**

Image copyright © Sotarn

John sings:

Hey, how you been
I wonder do you ever
think of me
Say, am I wrong
To wonder if it could be
you and me
Is it too late for love
Mhmmh
Is it too late for love
I wanna know
Is it too late for love
I can't take no more
Is it
I could be the sun that
lights your dark
Maybe I would lit your
world with just one spark
I could make it burn for

SWITZERLAND



Song: *She Got Me*

Performer: Luca Hänni

Songwriters: Laurell Barker, Mac Frazer, Luca Hänni, Jon Hällgren, Lukas Hällgren



“

Luca sings:

I noticed her when she arrived
Kind of lady that mama like
But mama she ain't here tonight
Gettin' rowdy rowdy
When she poured out a little spice
Got the whole place on a vibe
Monday night into Friday night
Gettin' rowdy rowdy
She let her body Talk
She make the party Stop
She gettin' naughty

The Swiss are finally back big time! *She Got Me* is a superb up-tempo electro-beat dance number with an excellent Latin feel. And they couldn't ask for a better performer than Luca who first achieved great success in 2012, aged 17, when he won Germany's version of *Pop Idol*. He was the first non-German and youngest ever winner. Though he came from a musical background he trained as a bricklayer – so he doesn't mind getting his hands dirty – well the song, (which he co-wrote) is all about dirty dancing! Besides his musical career, he creates clothes for his own model label, does modelling himself and publishes his own magazine. He also won the German TV show, *Dance Dance Dance* (stop it Luca!) But more importantly he's an ambassador for children suffering from epidermolysis bullosa (fragile blistering of the skin). Back to Eurovision, this Swiss entry should dance its way into the Grand Final. There isn't much of a message in the song – just getting randy at a party. Remember those days?

● Luca was internally selected.

Image copyright © SRF/Lukas Maeder

UNITED KINGDOM



Song: *Bigger Than Us*

Performer: Michael Rice

Songwriters: Laurell Barker, Anna-Klara Folin, John Lundvik, Jonas Thander



“

Michael sings:

Hear these words
That I sing to you
I will make it clear
It's me, and you
We can have this love
That we never lose
It's bigger than us
Take my hand and I'll
lead you home
Can you understand
You will never be alone
It's bigger than us
It's bigger than you and
me
It's bigger than us
It's bigger than
everything we see

It seems to happen every year – saving one of the best until last! Ex-McDonalds worker, Michael Rice, rose to prominence after winning the BBC's *All Together Now* in 2018. And this year he goes one step bigger by entering Eurovision! He seems to have the right attitude to represent his country in Tel Aviv. He's obviously a good singer and performer and brings out the best in *Bigger Than Us*. The song itself (co-written by John Lundvik, Sweden's performer this year) is an uplifting up-tempo gospel-like entry that will certainly impress. Many are predicting a decent outcome for the UK this year. It would be nice! The song's message is that love knows no boundaries. You can't argue with that. Good luck Michael!

● Three songs with six acts were selected for the national final where the winner was chosen in two rounds. In the first round the songs were performed twice (by different singers) and a jury selected the best version of each song. In the second round the winner was chosen by televoting and online voting.

Image copyright © BBC/Joe Giacomet

NATIONAL FINAL RESULTS

Here are the results from all the national finals
Source: <http://natfinals.50webs.com/2019.html>

ALBANIA		
Song	Performer(s)	Result
Ktheju Tokës	Jonida Maliqi	228
Rrëfëhem	Lidia Lufi	219
100 Pjetje	Eranda Libohova	181
Karma	Dilan Reka	169
Më E Fortë	Soni Malaj	166
Me Jetë	Klint Çollaku	163
Qetësisht	Elton Deda	156
Leyla	Marko Strazimiri & Imbro	142
Jeto Jetën	Bojken Lako	138
Një Ditë Tjetër	Gjerqj Leka	131
Peng	Eliza Hoxha	127
Dashuria Nuk Mjafton	Alar Band	124
Hije	Orgesa Zaimi	121
Dua Ta Besoj	Artemisa Mithi & Febi Shkurti	113

AUSTRALIA		
Song	Performer(s)	Result
Zero Gravity	Kate Miller-Heidke	135
2000 And Whatever	Electric Fields	114
On My Way	Sheppard	87
Fight For Love	Courtney Act	52
To Myself	Alfie Arcuri	49
Dust	Aydan Calafiore	48
This Is Not The End	Mark Vincent	38
Piece Of Me	Tania Doko	23
Set Me Free	Leea Nanos	21
Data Dust	Ella Hooper	18

BELARUS		
Song	Performer(s)	Result
Like It	Zena	69
Champion	BLGN & Mirex	65
Never Getting Close	Sebastian Roos	62
Can We Dream	Alyona Gorbachova	59
No Love Lost	KeySi	59
Humanise	Michael Soul	59
Let It Go	Napoli	58
Caravala	Aura	55
Running Away From The Sun	PROvokatsiya	55
Run	Eva Kogan	54

CROATIA		
Song	Performer(s)	Result
The Dream	Roko	24
Tower Of Babylon	Lorena	18
Brutalero	Luka Nizetic	13
In The Shadows	Mantra	12
Redemption	Ema Gagro	11
I Believe In True Love	Bernarda	9
All I Really Want	Elis Lovric	8
Ne Postojim Kad Nisi Tu	Jure Brkijaca	7
Don't Give Up	Beta Sudar	6
Vrijeme Predaje	Bojan Jambrošić & Danijela Pintarić	6
Back To That Swing	Gelato Sisters	1
Tek Je Pocelo	Lidija Bacic Lille	1
Indigo	Domenica	0
Tell Me	Jelena Bosancic	0
Nisam To Sto Zele	Kim Verson	0
Tebi Pripadam	Lea Mijatovic	0

CZECH REPUBLIC		
Song	Performer(s)	Result
Friend Of A Friend	Lake Malawi	22
True Colors	Barbora Mochowa	18
Space Sushi	Jakub Ondra	18
Easy To Believe	Pam Rabbit	18
Give Me A Hint	Andrea Holá	12
Don't Know Why	Tomáš Boček	9
Poslední Slova Tobe	Hana Barbara	5
On My Knees	Jara Vymer	5

DENMARK		
Song	Performer(s)	Result
Love Is Forever	Leonora	42%
League Of Light	Julie & Nina	35%
Say My Name	Sigmund	23%
Dronning Af Baren	Humørekspresen	
Kiss Like This	Jasmin Gabay	
That Vibe	Leeloo	
Dancing With You In My Heart	Marie Isabell	
Hold My Breath	Rasmus Faartoft	
Anywhere	Simone Emilie	
Step It Up	Teit Samsø	

ESTONIA		
Song	Performer(s)	Result
Storm	Victor Crone	14 23,270
Pretty Little Liar	Uku Suviste	15 15,498
Without You	Stefan	19 12,380
Strong	Sissi	14
Milline Päev	Lumevärvt. INGA	12
Coming Home	Inger	9
High Heels In The Neighbourhood	The Swingers, Tanja & Birgit	9
Cold Love	Kerli Kivilaan	7
Soovide Puu	Sandra Nurmsalu	7
Believe	Kadijah	6
I'll Do It My Way	Synne Valtri	4
Hold Me Close	xtra basic & Emily J	0

FINLAND		
Song	Performer(s)	Result
Look Away	Darude feat. Sebastian Rejman	244
Superman	Darude feat. Sebastian Rejman	147
Release Me	Darude feat. Sebastian Rejman	89

FRANCE		
Song	Performer(s)	Result
Roi	Bilal Hassani	200
Tous Les Deux	Seemone	156
Là-Haut	Chimène Badi	119
La Promesse	Emmanuel Moire	115
Allez Leur Dire	Sylvan Areg	102
La Voix D'Aretha	The Divaz	92
Comme Une Grande	Aysat	38
Sois Un Bon Fils	Doutson	18

GEORGIA		
Song	Performer(s)	Result
Sul Tsin Iare	Oto Nemsadze	44.13%
Sevdisperi Zghva	Liza Kalandadze	35.51%
Sul Tsin Iare	Giorgi Nakashidze	11.06%
Me Mjera	Giorgi Pruidze	9.3%

GERMANY		
Song	Performer(s)	Result
Sister	Sisters	30
The Day I Loved You Most	Makeda	26
Wear Your Love	Aly Ryan	25
Surprise	Lilly Among Clouds	25
Our City	Linus Bruhn	23
Let Me Go	Gregor Hägele	14
Demons	BB Thomaz	13

HUNGARY		
Song	Performer(s)	Result
Az EnApám	Joci Pápai	26
Nyári Zápor	Acoustic Planet	22
Szótánság	Bence Vavra	20
Holnap	Boqi Nagy	16
Madár, Repülj!	Gergo Szekér	12
Küles	Fatal Error	8
Roses	The Middletonz	8
Hozzád Bújnék	Gergo Oláh	0

ICELAND		
Song	Performer(s)	Result
Hatröð Mun Sigrá	Hatari	72,404 62,088 13,4492
Hvað Ef Eg Get Ekki Elskað?	Fríðrik Ómar	46,417 52,134 98,551
Mama Said	Kristina Bændrendsen	37,973
Moving On	Hera Björk	29,590
Fighting For Love	Tara Mobebe	19,444



ISRAEL			
Performer(s)			Result
Kobi Marimi	79%	Q	215
Ketreyah	68%	Q	165
Shefita	65%	56%	160
Maya Buskila	54%	44%	

LATVIA			
Song	Performer(s)	Result	
That Night	Carousel	2nd	1st
You Make Me So Crazy	Markus Riva	1st	2nd
Awe	Laime Pilniga	5th	2nd
Fire	Double Faced Eels	4th	3rd
Tautasdziesma	Dzili Violets	3rd	7th
	feat. Kozmens		
Cherry Absinthe	Edgars Kreilis	7th	4th
Cutting The Wire	Samanta Tina	6th	6th
Somebody's Got My Lover	Aivo Oskis	8th	8th

LITHUANIA		
Song	Performer(s)	Result
Run With The Lions	Jurijus	24
Light On	Monika Marija	20
Mažule	Antikvariniai Kašpirovskio Dantys	16
Sing!	Jurgis Did & Erica Jennings	14
Your Cure	Alen Chicco	12
Neverpart	Henry & Tommy Modric	10
Ctrl Alt Delete	Jurgis Bruzga	8
Strength Of A Woman	Juna	6

MALTA		
Performer(s)		Result
Michela Pace		1st
Owen Luellen		2nd
Nicole Frendo		3rd
Petra		4th

MOLDOVA		
Song	Performer(s)	Result
Stay	Anna Odobescu	22
I Will Not Surrender	Maxim Zavidia	17
Lies	Diana Brescan	15
Gravity	Lemonique	15
Cold	Vera Turcanu	15
Virus	Tinna Gi	12
La Cinema	Aurel Chirtoaca	5
Sub Pământ	Che-MD ft Elisaveta Ivasiuk	5
Meteor	Marcela Scripcaru	5
Olimp	Siaj	5



MONTENEGRO		
Song	Performer(s)	Result
Heaven	D-Moll	17 62%
Nevinost	Ivana Popovic Martinovic	12 38%
Ja Sam Ti San	Andrea Demirovic	7
Nepogrešivo	Monika Knezovic	4
Uzmi Ili Ostavi	Nina Petkovic	4



SERBIA

Song	Performer(s)	Result
Kruna	Nevena Božovic	20
Nema Suza	Dženan Lončarevic	17
Da Li Čuješ Moj Glas	Saška Jankić	16
Samo Bez Straha	Nataša & Una	14
Moja Bol	Vonder Strings & Ivana Vladovic	13
Bella	Ivan Kuric	11
Radnicki Sin	Lord	8
Budim Te	Majdan	8
Aritmija	Sofija Peric	5
Viktorija	Jana Šušteršič	3
Tugo	Aleksandra Sekulic	1
Lutaš	Ana Popovic	0



SLOVENIA

Song	Performer(s)	Result
Sebi	Zara Krajč & Gašper Šantl	1st= 4,666
Kaos	Raiven	1st= 1,735
Ti ne Poznaš Konzev	Fed Horses	3rd=
Fridays	Ula Ložar	3rd=
Metulji Plešejo	Okusticni	5th
Lepote Dna	Lumberjack	6th
Atma	Inmate	7th
Rhythm Back To You	Kim	8th
Three Bridges	Renata Mohoric	9th
Ne Poveš	René	10th

NORWAY

Song	Performer(s)	Result
Spirit In The Sky	KEiINO	98,324 231,937
The Bubble	Adrian Jørgensen	55,794 162,608
Mr. Unicorn	D'Sound	11,123
Holla	Anna-Lisa Kumoji	6,718
Hold Me Down	Carina Dahl	
We try	Chris Medina	
Sing For You	Erlend Bratland	
Fake it	Hank von Hell	
Feel	Ingrid Berg Mehus	
En Livredd Mann	Mørland	

PORTUGAL

Song	Performer(s)	Result
Telemóveis	Conan Osiris	24
Igual A Ti	NBC	18
Perfeito	Matay	17
Mundo A Mudar	Madrepaz	13
Pugna	Surma	12
A Dois	Calema	11
Inércia	Ana Cláudia	8
Mar Doce	Mariana Bragada	8

ROMANIA

Song	Performer(s)	Result
On a Sunday	Ester Peony	65
Dear Father	Laura Bretan	60
Army Of Love	Bella Santiago	58
Renegades	Linda Teodosiu	42
D A I N A	Letitia Moisescu & Sensibil Balkan	40
Underground	Mirela Vaida	35
Destin	Trooper	29
Right Now	Olivier Kaye	27
We Are The Ones	Claudiu Mirea	19
Your Journey	Aldo Blaga	14
Without You (Sin Ti)	Dya & Lucian Colareza	10
Skyscraper	Teodora Dinu	7

SPAIN

Song	Performer(s)	Result
La Venda	Miki	34%
Muerdeme	María	22%
Nadie Se Salva	Natalia & Miki	14%
Hoy Vuelvo A Reir Otra Vez	Noelia	7%
Todo Bien	Marilia	6%
La Clave	Natalia	6%
No Puedo Más	Famous	5%
Qué Quieres Que Haga	Julia	3%
Hoy Soñaré	Sabela	2%
Se Te Nota	Carlos Right	1%

SWEDEN

Song	Performer(s)	Result
Too Late For Love	John Lundvik	181
On My Own	Bishara	107
Hold You	Hanna Fern & Liamoo	107
Norrskén	Jon Henrik Fjällgren	74
Hello	Mohombi	74
I Do	Arvingarna	64
Chasing Rivers	Nano	64
Not With Me	Wiktorija	64
Torn	Lisa Ajax	62
Ashes To Ashes	Anna Bergendahl	56
Victorious	Lina Hedlund	40
I Do Me	Malou Prytz	35

UNITED KINGDOM

Song	Performer(s)	Result
Bigger Than Us	Michael Rice	3 Q 1st
Bigger Than Us	Holly Tandy	0
Freaks	Jordan Clarke	2 Q
Freaks	Maid	1
Sweet Lies	Kerrie-Anne	3 Q
Sweet Lies	Anisa	0



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Eurovision 2019 is now just a matter of days away, the culmination of an extremely busy few months in the Eurovision world. February in Salford now seems a long time ago, but it's less than three months since we cheered Michael Rice to victory at Eurovision: You Decide. We send him our best wishes and the very best of luck as he heads to Tel Aviv to attempt to claim a sixth victory for the United Kingdom.

Speaking of Eurovision: You Decide, it was great to see such a good turnout of OGAE UK members descend upon MediaCity UK. We'd like to thank the BBC for offering the club a generous number of tickets, but we do recognise that there were a number of disappointed people who were unable to secure a ticket. However we hope that the OGAE UK screening and after-party was some consolation.

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By the time you read this, preview season will have come to an end, and I hope you were able to get to one of the many shows on offer, including of course the UK's very own London Eurovision Party, which OGAE UK has now been an official sponsor of for the past four years.

We look forward to seeing a large contingent of OGAE UK members in Tel Aviv in May – once again we will hold our annual fan party on the Thursday afternoon. But if you're not making the trip to Israel there is still plenty to keep fans occupied in the UK, including the OGAE UK party in Manchester, organised by our own Jason D'Arcy.

It looks like being a very exciting contest, with a particularly high – and varied – standard of songs this year, so fingers crossed for an excellent show. Good luck to all participants, and wherever you're watching the contest, Happy Eurovisioning!

MICHAEL GOES BIG!



Gordon Lewis reports on Eurovision: You Decide 2019 which saw Michael Rice claim his ticket to Tel Aviv with the song *Bigger Than Us*

Salford's MediaCityUK was the venue for this year's Eurovision: You Decide, hosted for a second successive year by Mel Giedroyc and Måns Zelmerlöw - although for Mel it was her fourth time presenting the UK's song selection for "Eurovish"! The process to find a song to represent the United Kingdom had actually started several months before in September 2018, when the BBC launched an open entry competition and members of OGAE UK were once again invited to select a suitable, albeit reduced, shortlist for further consideration. The British Academy of Songwriters, Composers & Authors also ran a similar competition among its own members, with the best songs from

each process then put before a panel of music experts.

In an unexpected change to the usual format, the BBC then announced that there would only be three songs, performed twice by two different singers, taking part in the televised final. An expert panel would be asked to choose the best version of each, before viewers were invited to vote on the final three versions and performers. Once the songs had been previewed on Euro-veteran Ken Bruce's Radio 2 show, the live audience gathered in Salford with a sense of renewed anticipation, no doubt wondering how the revised format would work as the six performers joined Mel and Måns on stage at the start of the live broadcast. The three celebrity judges were also introduced as self-confessed



EUROVISION: YOU DECIDE 2019

Song	Performer	Songwriters	Jury	Televote
Sweet Lies	Kerrie-Anne	Maria Broberg/Lise Cabble/Esben Svane	3	Qualified
Sweet Lies	Anisa	Maria Broberg/Lise Cabble/Esben Svane	0	Eliminated
Freaks	Jordan Clarke	Jon Maguire/Rick Parkhouse/Corey Sanders/George Tizzard	2	Qualified
Freaks	MAID	Jon Maguire/Rick Parkhouse/Corey Sanders/George Tizzard	1	Eliminated
Bigger Than Us	Holly Tandy	Laurell Barker/Anna-Klara Folin/John Lundvik/Jonas Thander	0	Eliminated
Bigger Than Us	Michael Rice	Laurell Barker/Anna-Klara Folin/John Lundvik/Jonas Thander	3	Qualified 1st

Eurofan Rylan Clark-Neal, former JLS band member Marvin Humes and, last but not least, Mollie King who was previously a member of The Saturdays.

Sweet Lies was the first song to be performed, with Kerrie-Anne (32) providing an up-tempo dance version of the catchy song. Wearing a pale gold dress and accompanied by four dancers dressed in black, this was a confident start to the show. Kerrie-Anne's

vocal experience shone through every syllable and note, but her voice was possibly too good for this particular song. Rylan described this as "a real upbeat song" while Marvin considered it to be "controlled perfection". Mollie, who is a presenter on Radio 1, added that she "would love to play this on the radio."

Anisa (31), who has written songs for Ariana Grande among others, was dressed in black and began her

Presenters Måns and Mel



Judges Marvin, Mollie and Ryan



Kerrie-Anne sings Sweet Lies



Anisa sings Sweet Lies



Jordan sings *Freaks*MAID sing *Freaks*Holly sings *Bigger Than Us*Michael sings *Bigger Than Us*

version of *Sweet Lies* while playing the piano. Joined by two backing singers, this was an emotive ballad version of the song with strong vocals that were delivered by a singer/songwriter who was unaccustomed to performing a song written by someone else. Marvin felt that “the vocals were flawless”, with Mollie saying that Anisa’s “vocal control (was) incredible”. Rylan summed up his own thoughts by saying “pull it back and go for it, girl!”.

It was then time for the first elimination, with the judges unanimous in their support for Kerri-Ann’s version of *Sweet Lies* which was therefore the first song to qualify for the public round.

The next song to be performed was *Freaks*, with Jordan Clarke (24) dressed in a military-style jacket for his familiar sounding pop version. The cheeky faced singer was no stranger to music or competitions, having reached the final of *Britain’s Got Talent* in 2013 with his band The Luminites. Unfortunately, Jordan’s experience was somewhat overshadowed by four enthusiastic dancers, but Mollie still thought that he “brought the song to life”. Rylan commented that Jordan would be able to “impress the Eurovision audience” with Marvin concluding “you were absolutely fantastic”.

Three-piece girl band MAID was

the next act to perform *Freaks* in a style that was not dissimilar to Wilson Phillips or Eurovision’s very own OG3NE (Netherlands 2017). Comprising Miracle Change, Blythe Jandoo and Kat Kleve, the 20-something girls dressed in red, white and black made the mistake of admitting that it was their first live performance... and it unfortunately showed. “I didn’t love it, I really (didn’t)” was Rylan’s response, with Marvin agreeing when he said “it wasn’t for me”. Mollie felt that “the harmonies could be slightly tighter”.

Elimination

As the second elimination approached, it seemed a foregone conclusion that Jordan would qualify, but he only received support from Rylan and Marvin.

Mollie, remaining loyal to her own girl band roots, voted for MAID, but it was not enough to save the three girls.

The final song, *Bigger Than Us*, was first performed by 17-year-old Holly Tandy who reached the live shows of *X Factor* 2017 before being eliminated in week four. Wearing a red sleeveless trouser suit, the television broadcast commenced in glorious black and white before the full colour performance was revealed. With two backing dancers supporting her, Holly was by far the most confident singer of the night, providing a country sounding version of the song. “An incredible performance” was how Marvin described what he had just seen, with Mollie adding that she thought Holly was “incredible”. Rylan believed that it was

a song that would “do really well with the juries”.

However, there was still one performance left and it was left to Michael Rice (21) to conclude the first part of the show. Having won BBC One’s *All Together Now* less than 12 months before his You Decide appearance, he was certainly seen as a strong contender for victory. Casually dressed in pin-striped jacket and trousers, Michael’s vocals became stronger as the song progressed, but also sounded desperate at times. The only performer to receive a standing ovation from the three judges, “I feel quite emotional” was Molly’s personal response. “Your voice does the work” added Rylan, before Marvin described Michael as “a proper, proper singer.”

As the third elimination took place, there was little surprise that the judges unanimously gave their votes to Michael, meaning that Holly was out of the competition.

A pre-recorded film featured last year’s winner, Netta, inviting everyone to Israel, followed by clips of the songs already chosen for Tel Aviv, but as so few songs had been selected at the time of You Decide, only Albania, Czech Republic, France and Spain were shown.

As the second part of the show commenced, it was explained that the



SWITZERLAND



Song: *She Got Me*

Performer: Luca Hänni

Songwriters: Laurell Barker, Mac Frazer, Luca Hänni, Jon Hällgren, Lukas Hällgren



“

Luca sings:

I noticed her when she arrived
Kind of lady that mama like
But mama she ain't here tonight
Gettin' rowdy rowdy
When she poured out a little spice
Got the whole place on a vibe
Monday night into Friday night
Gettin' rowdy rowdy
She let her body Talk
She make the party Stop
She gettin' naughty

The Swiss are finally back big time! *She Got Me* is a superb up-tempo electro-beat dance number with an excellent Latin feel. And they couldn't ask for a better performer than Luca who first achieved great success in 2012, aged 17, when he won Germany's version of *Pop Idol*. He was the first non-German and youngest ever winner. Though he came from a musical background he trained as a bricklayer – so he doesn't mind getting his hands dirty – well the song, (which he co-wrote) is all about dirty dancing! Besides his musical career, he creates clothes for his own model label, does modelling himself and publishes his own magazine. He also won the German TV show, *Dance Dance Dance* (stop it Luca!) But more importantly he's an ambassador for children suffering from epidermolysis bullosa (fragile blistering of the skin). Back to Eurovision, this Swiss entry should dance its way into the Grand Final. There isn't much of a message in the song – just getting randy at a party. Remember those days?

● Luca was internally selected.

Image copyright © SRF/Lukas Maeder

UNITED KINGDOM



Song: *Bigger Than Us*

Performer: Michael Rice

Songwriters: Laurell Barker, Anna-Klara Folin, John Lundvik, Jonas Thander



“

Michael sings:

Hear these words
That I sing to you
I will make it clear
It's me, and you
We can have this love
That we never lose
It's bigger than us
Take my hand and I'll
lead you home
Can you understand
You will never be alone
It's bigger than us
It's bigger than you and
me
It's bigger than us
It's bigger than
everything we see

It seems to happen every year – saving one of the best until last! Ex-McDonalds worker, Michael Rice, rose to prominence after winning the BBC's *All Together Now* in 2018. And this year he goes one step bigger by entering Eurovision! He seems to have the right attitude to represent his country in Tel Aviv. He's obviously a good singer and performer and brings out the best in *Bigger Than Us*. The song itself (co-written by John Lundvik, Sweden's performer this year) is an uplifting up-tempo gospel-like entry that will certainly impress. Many are predicting a decent outcome for the UK this year. It would be nice! The song's message is that love knows no boundaries. You can't argue with that. Good luck Michael!

● Three songs with six acts were selected for the national final where the winner was chosen in two rounds. In the first round the songs were performed twice (by different singers) and a jury selected the best version of each song. In the second round the winner was chosen by televoting and online voting.

Image copyright © BBC/Joe Giacomet

RED ALERT! MICHAEL ON THE HOT SEAT

Jamie McLoughlin profiles Michael Rice, the winner of Eurovision: You Decide

There's a clip knocking about on YouTube which shows exactly what the UK has in its hands this year in the form of the country's Eurovision entrant.

Try and find it if you can. It's Michael Rice set to perform on singalong game show *All Together Now* for the very first time.

In a nervous pre-performance interview, he chuckles shyly about his time as a busker and working shifts in McDonalds, exuding a quiet charm that knocks any cynicism right out your bones. Even as he stands before The 100 before the first time (if you've never seen the show, each singer stands before what looks like the world's biggest version of *Guess Who?*. Their aim is to get as many of a century of singers, stacked in rows like an extra-intimidating version of the Luxembourg 1973 orchestra, joining

in with them) he explains his nerves before launching into a version of Tina Turner's *Proud Mary*. A superb version of Tina Turner's *Proud Mary*.

If you've only seen Michael's various versions of *Bigger Than Us* from Eurovision: You Decide and have any lingering doubts about his stagecraft, we urge you, check this out. This is Mr Rice in his natural habitat, no cruise cabaret finger clicking to remind us there's a beat or kneeling front of stage (which he admitted later, almost split his jacket) to address his public, this is how Michael does it when he's left to his own devices. A rumbling soul voice, more natural arm movements and a glorious moment when he chucks in a 'Listen!', as he realises the entire 100 is now in the palms of his mitts, this is how captivating the lad

can be. He was the first contestant to get every single one of the judges on their feet and went on to take the series' £50,000 first prize. You possibly know the rest, it funded a family trip to Disneyland and the opening of a waffle emporium in his native Hartlepool.

If *All Together Now* wasn't going to change him, the UK ticket to Tel Aviv certainly isn't. Perhaps due to the bullying he endured at school, an experience he reclaimed by being part of an official campaign which fights back, the 21-year-old has enthusiastically embraced his new fanbase on social media and isn't shy of sharing his mistakes either. It may rankle some who like their Eurovision artistes to be vacuum-packed record label lovelies but in many ways his 'ordinariness' (for want of a better word) is a big part of Michael's appeal. Let's face it, if the UK needs anything right now, it's a humble representative on an international stage.

But back to the singing, something our act has been blessed with in plenty. A rare talent show stumble on *The X Factor* in his teens – he never made it to the live finals but gave an interesting audition with Whitney Houston's *I Look To You* that saw him through a few of the preliminary rounds – it's fair to say we haven't had a vocal talent of this strength flying the flag for some time.

Bigger Than Us has its doubters but plenty of fans too. Perhaps we'll know when that behemoth of a gospel break kicks in during the first rehearsal whether Michael's our man to finally see us take a left on the scoreboard. He could, he really could. But you can't help thinking the man himself has something Bigger Than That in his sights.

May 18th can't come quick enough. ■



APOCALYPSE WOW!



Every year, **Roy Delaney** keeps an eye out for **Vision** for those songs in the Eurovision selection season which stake out the weird and wonderful netherworld. So join Roy of the ***Eurovision Apocalypse*** website as he says "Let's see what you could have won!"



It's that time of year where we show you all the weird and wonderful songs that, despite standing absolutely no chance of getting to Eurovision proper, brightened up their national finals a treat with their invention, creativity, and in most cases pure strangeness. We have to confess though that there were less of these fabulous frikkis to choose from this year, as every nation seemed intent on discovering their very own watered-down Cesar Sampson. But don't you worry. We delved into the depths and found you ten of the weirdest, most interesting, and utterly unhinged attempts to make it to the big stage in Tel Aviv - and trust us, this lot have strange written through them like seaside rock.

SERBIA

Dženan Lončarević
Nema Suza

Let's start with a song that was a genuine contender. A dark meaningful ballad in the Balkan style, it starts with a mother lovingly knitting a scarf for her piano-playing son, before the focus moves to a bloke in a suit tenderly emoting straight into the camera. But then it gets weird. A giant ball of wool suddenly skips onto the stage and everything gets a bit figurative. It's clearly meant to signify a mother's long painful wait while her loved one was at war, but to the Western eye it treads the fine borderline of heart-rending and a little bit silly. And by the pay off at the end you'll either be crying your eyes out or laughing like a drain - the latter of which would be a shame, because it's a lovely, if not a little old fashioned song.

tinyurl.com/serbsuza



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PORTUGAL

Surma
Pugna

OK, we know what you're thinking about this year's Portuguese entry, but believe us, it wasn't even the strangest thing in their final. Witness this ethereal little beauty. A tiny little girl with heavy make-up and a bowl cut breathily writhes about as almost



nothing happens for the full three beautiful minutes – shy of a couple of people wriggling about artily on the floor. But you still can't take your eyes off it for a single second. It's worth nothing that this won its semi-final jury vote by a mile – a feat

that even Mr Osiris couldn't manage. There's clearly something in the water in Portugal at the moment, and we kinda like it!
tinyurl.com/porsurma



LITHUANIA

Alen Chicco
Your Cure

This one probably takes the gong for the most ill-advised staging concept of the year. A giant man in a wig and a jumpsuit howls and marches about near a friend in a wheelchair engaging in a spot of sit-down interpretive dance. But when it comes to the big chorus he shouts the song's title, casts his hand towards his pal, and suddenly he walks! Cheesy, but kind of effective – and it would have worked a whole lot better if Alen himself didn't sit back down and let himself get pushed about for a bit. Surprisingly it dragged its way through two rounds and got to the final – although they rather sensibly ditched the wheelchair for the further performances.

tinyurl.com/lithchic



FRANCE

Silvàn Areg
Allez Leur Dire

Sometimes you've just got to take your hat off to a cracking staging concept. Silvàn's song here is a wordy, none-more-French jangle that skips about delightfully with a cheeky charm and a knowing wink. But it's his clever use of little cardboard dioramas that puts him at the centre of an ever-changing set of cartoony scenery. It's an absolute delight from start to finish, and a sad loss to the big show – although it must have been strange to watch in real life without the benefit of what we can see on the screen.

tinyurl.com/aregalez

ESTONIA

Cätlin Mägi & Jaan Pehk
Parmumäng

The usually reliable *Eesti Laul* was disappointingly beige this year, but you can always trust them to provide us with at least one little slice of bonkersness. And this one is utterly delightful. Made of nothing but layers of jaw harp sounds and vocal noises, it all starts strangely enough – but then *Laul* regular Jaan Pehk's tiny head appears on Cätlin's instrument stand and it all gets even more stranger. You may not like this song, but its twanginess will stick in your head for days, and the image of Jaan's disembodied head will never leave you.

tinyurl.com/estpehk



BELARUS

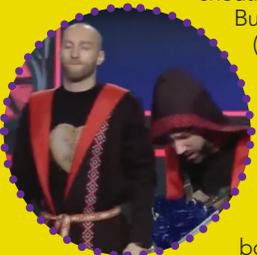
Vitalij Voronko & Artem Soroko
Potato Aka Bulba

If any single song was a loss to Eurovision proper this year it was this little gem.

Two blokes of a certain age stamp about shouting "Potato Potato Aka Bulba" over and over again (although we thought they were saying Acapulco for the longest time), and they're having the time of their absolute lives. It's terrible, for sure, but imagine the whole Eurovision moshpit bouncing around and

singing this at the top of their lungs! It's certainly much more fun than the Madonna-lite thing they actually did send!

tinyurl.com/belpota



MOLDOVA

Alex Bognibov
Love Me Like My Daughter

This rundown is never complete without an appearance from our old pal Mr Bognibov and an awkward appearance on Moldovan breakfast TV. Only this time he's surpassed himself on the poor taste front. And while this is musically probably the best song in his long chequered career of Eurovision attempts, the title alone will make you shuffle uncomfortably in your seat, while one of the recurring dance moves will make you do a little bit of sick in your mouth. Gloriously wrong, in all the ways we expect.

tinyurl.com/moldbog



UNITED KINGDOM

Dië Spanglè
Null Point

And finally, if you're bemoaning our continual lack of choice in the UK's national final process, let's have a look at what you could have won. This motley rabble of Cornish punks caused a minor stir in the national press with this growly little number that comments on our recent poor form in the contest. But despite all the media coverage and their great efforts to contact the BBC, they unsurprisingly failed in their quest to represent us on the biggest stage. Of course, they're wrong – we will win it again at some point, we're sure of it – but they're only saying what a whole nation feels, and they're actually doing it rather well. Come on BBC Eurovision, why don't we mix up the genres a bit next year eh, and silence the grumblers!

tinyurl.com/ukspang



DREAMING OF EUROPOPS!



Daring to dream, that talented designer, **Ben Morris**, has been at it again creating this year's Euro pops! Search for your favourite act.



LIKE WHAT YOU SEE?
 If you would like to see your favourite Euro pop on a T-shirt, go to:
www.tinyurl.com/europopstshirts
 Or how about a button badge or fridge magnet? Just go to:
www.tinyurl.com/europopsbadges

THE VISION PANEL YOUR TOP THREE

The call went out to new and long-standing members – give us your top three songs from this year's contest in the usual 8, 10, and 12 scoring. And of course we can't vote for our own country! **Vision Panel** chairman **Alasdair Rendall** leads the voting...



NETHERLANDS: Yearning



CZECH REPUBLIC: Happiness

ALASDAIR RENDALL

8 Greece For me this is the strongest Greek entry since 1992. Powerful and memorable – this is this year's dark horse.



10 Netherlands If ever a country was overdue another win it's the Netherlands. Stunning vocals, beautiful song – and you know they'd be a fantastic host country.

12 Czech Republic An insanely catchy, quirky and contemporary pop song. Deserves to be a big summer hit across Europe.

FIONA GUEST

8 Estonia The song reminds me of so many that have gone before, but that is to its credit. It builds quickly into a rousing chorus with a happy bouncy sound, and carries that energy through the whole song, even though the verses are in contrast. I don't often say that I like a man with a guitar, but I do – does that show my shallowness?

10 Germany I love a good duet, and I love a ballad, so put the two together and I'm sold. I love the way the song builds, and the blend of both ladies' voices. I'm also in awe of how she got into those trousers on the video, but that's just showing my shallowness, again!



12 Greece 12 points to Greece? It's not something I think I've ever said before! I really enjoy a song with an echo behind the music, and a song with a great tune, so this one scores on both counts. Katherine has a beautiful voice and a great range, and manages to sing a powerful ballad well. The video has some lovely shots of.... anyway, that just shows my shallowness once more!

MARCUS KEPPEL-PALMER

8 Czech Republic After several years of not 'getting it', just like Hungary the Czechs have now mined a golden seam. Last year they were in my top three, and so too this year. A catchy earworm of an indie-pop record, this is difficult to forget once heard.



Some may complain about the mockney vocals, but I find them endearing. In a year of great videos, this is one of the best. Hopefully Lake Malawi will find many a friend on the juries and among the televoters.

10 Norway For me this is the pick of Scandinavia this year over the already anointed Swedes. This is three minutes of pop-rock-joik and that's no joke. A better version of *Monsters* from last year, this is a lively mysterious outing in a ballad-laden year. I think this will be visually exciting on stage and has a catchy chorus. *Spirit In The Sky* was Number One for Norman Greenbaum, for Doctor & The Medics, and for Gareth Gates & The Kumars. Who would bet against this *Spirit In The Sky* ending up Number One?

12 Netherlands My fave this year is the best of the male ballads. A plaintive yearning vocal allied to a melody that builds insidiously, climaxing in the memorable "loving you is a losing game" line. It's spare and will probably need a good performance for its quality to shine through. One thing is certain, they won't be able to reproduce the video on stage! Here's hoping that *Arcade* will end up with the winning score for the Netherlands.

SHAU CHAN

8 Estonia I was struggling to find a song to award my eight points and in the end I decided to award this to Estonia. I was so happy that Victor won *Eesti Laul* and that said, it has a good catchy melody and with a great voice. I would love it if this qualifies for the Grand Final.



10 Iceland I wasn't sure what to make of this electro/techno song to begin with but after a few listens, this has become one of my favourite entries. Yes it is very daring, with a very strong message to it and most certainly the stand out entry out of all the songs from this year's *Söngvakeppnin*.

12 Netherlands I'm going to award my 12 points to Duncan Laurence. In my opinion, this has to be one of the best entries from the Netherlands in recent years. What more can I say about this song? It's beautiful, simple, emotional and powerful, which are the main reasons I score 12 points.

Some years ending in '9' have certainly been good for Iceland. Remember Selma in 1999 and Yohanna in 2009, both coming second? Could Hatari do one better in 2019?

DAVID ELDER

8 Netherlands This took a few listens to hit me (as many of this year's songs did) but the melancholy and emotive live performance that Duncan gave shortly after the song reveal sent shivers down my spine. This is simply beautiful and deserving of its place as bookies' favourite before rehearsals start in Tel Aviv.



10 Iceland OK, so the screaming may not be for everyone, but I love everything about this. The fact that the whole thing is tongue in cheek, but still delivering a clever message is a perfect package for Eurovision. If Iceland are ever going to win Eurovision then this is surely the one that's going to do it.

12 Denmark I loved this the first time I heard it on the day the Danish songs were revealed. The Danes usually go for something safe and effective, and this is no different. It's simple, catchy, memorable and very 'old school' – which suits me down to the ground!

ROBIN SCOTT

8 Estonia It's very typical of a lot of Scandic music and that style that makes me want to join in. Victor has a strong presence on stage as he is a charismatic performer. It is an easy to remember song and he has the perfect voice for it.

10 Netherlands This is one that brings out insecurities, the feeling of lost love and searching for what's hopefully above the surface and over the horizon. I just hope that the stage performance for Duncan gives the same feeling. That's the hard part and why it's not my Number One.



12 Czech Republic We want happiness and performers like Lake Malawi's lead singer, Albert Cerný, with an infectious positive attitude who simply makes me feel good. Nothing complicated, just a great singer that tells me that there are positive people out there.



SWEDEN: Soulful



SWITZERLAND: Fresh



ESTONIA: Toe tapping



AZERBAIJAN: Hot

BEN MORRIS

8 Cyprus It's hard to argue that this isn't similar to last year's *Fuego*. Cyprus has taken a successful formula and, in my opinion, has bettered it. Personally I think the melody is much stronger than *Fuego*, and Tamta looks less scary than her predecessor. I like the instrumental break which sounds like a group of playful baby elephants taking a break from a similar interlude in Asanda's *Legends*. If it doesn't win the contest, I look forward to hearing it again next year.



10 Greece I'm sure I can't be the first one to wonder why David Sneddon, winner of the first *Fame Academy* and now prolific songwriter, hasn't written for a UK Eurovision entry and has instead co-written this song for Greece. Whatever the reason, the BBC needs to get its act together and employ his services next year because this track is amazing. After a very successful 2000s at Eurovision, poor Greece has struggled immensely in the last five years with a string of dated and uninspiring numbers. ERT has gone for a much more modern approach this year, and perhaps a risky one. Katerine Duska seems a bit of an unknown quantity. The official Eurovision website refers to her 'indie star status' but a quick look at her Wikipedia page shows that her previous singles and album from five years ago didn't chart in the one country listed – Greece. It seems that she has yet to hit the big time, but *Better Love* could do it for her. It's really powerful, and I love her distinctive throaty voice. I'm intrigued to know how the oddness of the video, with its combination of fencing, ballet and Katerine posturing like Elizabeth I in her *Killing Eve* dress, translates to the big stage.

12 Netherlands There seems to be an appetite for intimate and heartfelt ballads, or songs that tell of a personal struggle, at Eurovision in recent years. It certainly seems to work for me, as Germany was my favourite last year and this is joint favourite for me this time round. I like the slightly eerie quality, and his voice is beautiful. He is brave to have written himself a song that regularly slips into a higher register, but he seems to be more than capable of pulling it off. If he is contemplating performing as he appears in his video, let's hope he stands behind a mic stand that is wide enough.

PAUL MARKS-JONES

8 Spain Spain is a party song with a message, which is a bit of change.



10 Poland Poland could only be from Poland and who doesn't like four Polish ladies shouting in harmony?

12 Czech Republic Czech Republic sounds fresh and they perform it well, so I think it'll be another decent result for them!

SELINA HARGREAVES

8 Estonia This song builds brilliantly, it is very powerful, catchy and I find myself toe tapping!! Great song.



10 Germany Wow what a powerful song! I love how the song builds, it is emotionally charged with lots of energy. Love it!

12 Switzerland This has literally been stuck in my head for days! The song is very catchy, fun and entertaining... a great dance song!

NICKY TEARE

8 Montenegro As it's variously described as sounding like a Hear'say album track, a dire 1990s Stock Aitken & Waterman song or a reject from *High School Musical*, this was obviously the song that made me audibly gasp on first listen. Pure and joyful, its appeal perhaps escapes those with a more credible ear. For me though, it goes into a long list of personal favourites alongside the likes of Nina Astrom, Lynn Chircop and Bones that are clearly a bit rubbish, but that I adore anyway.



10 Azerbaijan Perhaps my favourite Eurovision nation of the past decade were cruelly robbed of a place in the Grand Final last year with life anthem *X My Heart*. I'm praying that this emotionally charged power pop classic, set to lead to many very special moments in discos over the course of the next few months, doesn't go the same way.

12 Norway It's a bit of a cheap choice, but this is a truly uplifting slice of pop. In moments of reflection, I think it can't possibly be my Number One and then, each time I hear it, I become convinced it is. The funny man making the odd noises, or important Sami cultural representation depending upon your viewpoint, gives it something extra competitively and certainly amuses.

TOM HUGHES

8 Israel Such a contrast from last year, it's a really haunting ballad. Kobi has a very strong voice which brings a certain emotion to the song. It's certainly the best ballad for me. This is the best host entry for me since Austria sent *The Matchmakers* – so let's hope I've not just given the song the kiss of death!!



10 Switzerland Such an improvement on the last few entries, this has a really fresh sound. In a year when everyone is looking out for *Fuego 2.0* I think this has some elements of it without being too similar. I can see this being really popular come May.

12 Sweden Amazingly catchy, soulful, and a fantastic MF performance makes me think it could be Sweden 2020. It's a real ear worm for me and I think it will do really well.

DARRON COPELAND

8 Azerbaijan You can sort of hear the ethnic sounds in this amazing club song. Very contemporary and modern.



It doesn't hurt that Chingiz is hot, hot, hot, which alone should propel him into the Top Ten.

10 Sweden John Lundvik does it again for Sweden. Great pop/soul and you just can't get that song out of your head. Near perfection.

12 Iceland I was there for the National Final performance and it's absolutely spellbinding! *Hatari* is the one to beat if they can manage not to get thrown out of Eurovision.

JAMIE MCLOUGHLIN

8 Switzerland The best use of the now-prolific Eurovision 'dirty brass' this year. If only *Legends* had had that opportunity in Lisbon...



10 Denmark Yes, it's basically Switzerland 2011 warmed over with a free language garnish – but sometimes leftovers taste so good.

12 Czech Republic "She wuzz mah nay-buh." Because Eurovision needs more mockney (and it reminds me of *The Breakfast Club* for some reason).

THE PANEL TOP TEN

- 12 Netherlands
- 10 Czech Republic
- 8 Iceland
- 7 Sweden
- 6 Norway
- 5 Switzerland
- 4 Denmark
- 3 Azerbaijan
- 2 Italy
- 1 Estonia

So, totalling up the Panel's points, in the usual Eurovision style, here's the Top Ten. Last year we got it very wrong – placing the winner in ninth place. But this is a completely different year, so anything could happen. But good luck to the Netherlands – and of course to the UK (which we couldn't vote for).



Good luck to Duncan Laurence of the Netherlands

SAGI CHAITAS

8 Russia Scream! You may scream your lungs out about "Oh, him again" and be very vocal about this 'Made up song' sounding like a 'how to win Eurovision' bot created, and probably 'how to make a big stage performance' bot will stage, and still its very efficient. Sergey has a great voice and he can perform.



10 Netherlands It's a ballad, it's 'alright', he has a decent voice, but what gets him ten points, is the unforgettable tush. 'Nuff said.

12 Italy, Italy, Italy Exactly as in 2018 where everyone was hailing France as the best political song of the year and I was among the few who thought Italy was much better.. and exactly like 2018, where Netta was the unique modern song with its own great story: This year should be a Solid Soldi! The music is contemporary, the lyrics are

so sincere, Mahmood from the hood vocals and appearance are to die for, and the whole thing is absolutely spot on. He can perform live, and he should be winning by miles. Francesco Gavani? who?

CAROLINE GRIFFIN

8 Montenegro A bit of an outsider, but I love the combining of a modern pop song with a traditional instrument, to give it an ethnic feel.



10 Russia I'm already a huge fan of Sergey Lazarev and I love this power ballad entry for 2019. He could sing the Telephone Directory and I would still love it! Let's see if he can do a 'Dima Bilan' and secure victory for Russia this year, but he'll have tough competition from Sweden and current front runner, the Netherlands.

12 Sweden Will we see Sweden secure a seventh Eurovision victory in 2019? It wouldn't surprise me with this strong entry from John Lundvik, who is also one of the co-writers of this year's UK entry.

LAYLA GEORGE

8 Iceland Brave, startling and a total tune! OK, it's going to divide a lot of viewers but full marks to Iceland for choosing something different, and in native language too.



10 Sweden By far my favourite Swedish entry since *Undo*. Just a good, well-written song, and an equally good singer. But when the 'Mamas' kick in, it really lifts the performance to something special. And it wasn't even my favourite Melfest song!

12 Norway What's not to love? It's fun, it's catchy, it's a typical Scandipop tune but with a bit of Sami thrown in for good measure, and the lyrics also have a positive message. Bound to get everyone singing along in Tel Aviv!

HASSYUSUF

8 Italy I'm not usually a rap lover, but this mix of cloud rap and R&B just gives it a unique sound that is very unusual and rather fab. And what a great performer! Also – let's be honest – anything in Italian sounds great.



10 San Marino Talk about cheese - but it's old discothèque cheese. It reminds me of my younger days – trying to dance but failing miserably! It's got a great catchy tune and certainly has

the best feel-good factor this year.

12 Iceland How very fascinating! The contrast of the demonic and angelic sounds just makes this an outstanding entry. Very unique – and Iceland's best ever. Saucy, but nice... All together now – Iceland to win! ■

EURO QUIZ

This issue we challenge you on the last two contests that were held in this year's host country, Israel – 1979 and 1999



- 1 The Eurovision Song Contest 1979 was held on which date?
- 2 Which act were due to represent Turkey, before that country withdrew?
- 3 Who had the song *Harry My Honolulu Lover* in the UK National Final of 1979?
- 4 Which blues group accompanied Peter Sue & Marc to represent Switzerland?
- 5 Which two countries shared last place?
- 6 Who hosted the 1999 UK Song For Europe?
- 7 How old was Charlotte Nilsson when she won the 1999 contest?
- 8 Philippa, Diane and Francesca were the members of which 1999 act?
- 9 Which act won the 1999 Bosnian national final before being disqualified?
- 10 Which country gave the UK our highest mark in the 1999 voting?

THE ANSWERS

- 1 31st March
- 2 Maria Rita Epic & 21 Peron
- 3 The Nolan Sisters
- 4 Pfun, Gorps & Kniri
- 5 Belgium and Austria
- 6 Ulrika Jonsson
- 7 24
- 8 Times Three
- 9 Hari Mata Hari
- 10 Malta

ELVIS AND EUROVISION

Marcus Keppel-Palmer explores unlikely connections

At the *Harbor Lights 2019* festival, a competition for Elvis Tribute Acts and a festival of Elvis music, I wondered whether there were any connections between the King of Rock'n'Roll and the contest that we all love. At the *Harbor Lights Festival*, 28 competitors battled through two semi-finals and the final to win the right to go to compete in the international final in Memphis, and across the three days various Elvis concerts are recreated. The first of these was Elvis from 1956, and it is instructive to recall that Elvis first came to prominence in Europe in the same year that Eurovision started. In fact, *Heartbreak Hotel*, Elvis' first UK hit, entered the charts just one week before the first Eurovision in Lugano.

Elvis died in 1977, as Eurovision reached its age of majority, but since then his legacy has been kept alive with a plethora of Elvis impersonators treading the boards, delivering a live experience to adoring fans. In 2009, Belgium came closest to having Elvis at Eurovision when Patrick Ouchene sang *Copycat* in the contest, albeit under the name *Copycat* too. The song was all about Elvis referring to blue suede shoes, teddy bear, Memphis and Priscilla (the name of Elvis' wife) but didn't do well, failing to qualify from the semi-final. Although Ouchene had the look and the moves, it seems he wasn't the first choice to sing the song. Rumours had it that Elvis Junior, the alter ego of 2006 World Champion Elvis Presley impersonator Franz Goovaerts, was originally lined up to perform.

Elvis did take to the stage at the Eurovision final, albeit in spirit. Engelbert Humperdinck was a great friend of Elvis and when he performed at the 2012 Eurovision, Engelbert carried with him a good luck charm, a TCB bracelet that Elvis gave to him. TCB stands for Taking Care of Business, Elvis' motto and

the name of his backing band. Elvis personally gave out a very few of these priceless gifts during his lifetime, and Engelbert has always cherished the gift. Unfortunately for Engelbert, the charm did not bring him success at Eurovision.

Elvis was stationed in Germany for his army career from October 1958 to March 1960. It is not known if he watched the 1959 Eurovision on television, a possibility as he lived off base in a rented house in Bad Nauheim, but his stay in Europe certainly exposed him



DOMENICO MODUGNO

to Italian music, particularly when he heard *O Sole Mio* which he recorded with a new lyric as *It's Now Or Never*. It's not thought that Elvis ever sang an Eurovision song, but after returning from the army in 1960, Elvis filmed a television special with Frank Sinatra and *Volare* was under consideration as a song for Elvis for that show. Elvis was so impressed by both *Volare* and *Ciao, Ciao Bambina* that he demanded the opportunity to cover the follow-up by Domenico Modugno under the English language lyric *Ask Me*. Unfortunately, Elvis was so dissatisfied with the recordings that the song remained unreleased until 1964 when Elvis returned to re-record the song and release it as a single.

Elvis did record one song that was intended for Eurovision, *Wonderful World*, which had been one of the songs Cliff Richard sang in the 1968 UK pre-selection. Written by Guy Fletcher and Doug Flett, *Wonderful World* came third behind *Congratulations*, a very distant third, but was released on an EP of all six pre-selection songs. The publishers pushed the song to Elvis' team who were looking for songs for the next film, *Live A Little, Love A Little*, and they chose the song to feature in the opening credits sequence. The film was the last that Elvis made before he returned to concerts, starting with his *Elvis*



PATRICK OUCHENE

1968 NBC Special. *Wonderful World* was released on the album, *Elvis Sings Flaming Star*.

Most of the connections Elvis has with Eurovision are in his recordings

of songs written by prominent songwriters who

have participated at Eurovision or in UK pre-selections. As well as performing songs written by Domenico Modugno and Fletcher & Flett, Elvis recorded *What Now My Love*, written by Pierre Delanoe, who had written the 1958 Eurovision winner, *Dors Mon Amour*. Bill Martin and Phil Coulter, the writers of the UK's first Eurovision winner, *Puppet On A String* and of course

Congratulations, supplied *My Boy* for Elvis, a big hit single in 1973, while Andrew Lloyd Webber, who wrote *It's My Time* for the 2009 Eurovision, together with Tim Rice wrote a song for Elvis that was one of the last he recorded, *It's So Easy*. Other UK songwriters who wrote for Elvis were Geoff Stephens, Alan Blaikley & Ken Howard, Hal Shaper, Tony Macaulay, Les Reed and Barry Mason, all of whom had entries in the Song For Europe over the years.

One Eurovision winning songwriter may not have had a song recorded by Elvis but still holds a strange place in this litany of connections. Eddy Ouwens wrote *Ding-A-Dong*, the 1975 winner for the Netherlands. Two years later, news of Elvis' death affected him so much that he rushed into the recording studio, writing and recording *I Remember Elvis Presley* under the name Danny Mirror. The song immediately hit the charts, climbing all the way to number four. Elvis and Eurovision may not be the most obvious of bedfellows, but if you look hard enough you can find connections. ■

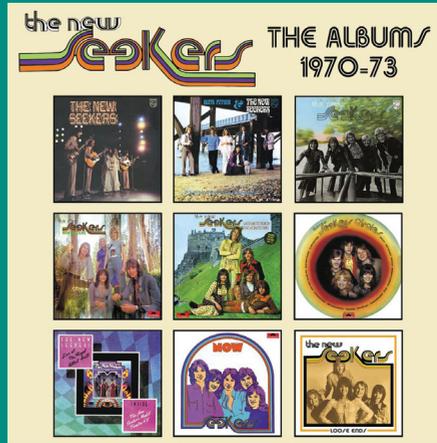


DANNY MIRROR

AT LAST! SEEK NO MORE



With the release of the box set *The New Seekers, The Albums 1970-1973*, finally the early history of our 1972 representatives, The New Seekers, is now available on CD. Nic Culverwell, the manager of The New Seekers, looks back on the effort that has gone into the release.



The five disc set in a sturdy, extremely well presented box set along with extensive liner notes and many colourful images has been released on Universal Record's label Caroline and is available now from all good outlets



The New Seekers sing *Beg, Steal Or Borrow* at Eurovision 1972

The launch of CD in the early 1980s saw record labels re-issue their artists' albums on this new format, allowing fans to listen to these tracks without the snaps, crackles and pops so familiar to vinyl and the most obvious releases were those names from the 1960s and 1970s. Allowing for the fact that CDs are now well over 35 years old it is remarkable then that one of the UK's most successful artists of the 1970's are only now seeing their albums available on CD in a fabulous five disc box set much to the relief and excitement of their huge fan base.

Most recognisable perhaps for their multi-million seller *I'd Like To Teach The World To Sing*, The New Seekers have sold a remarkable 35 million records throughout their career which has included so many fabulous triumphs and highlights, not least being selected to represent the UK at the 1972 Eurovision Song Contest which was held at The Usher Hall in Edinburgh. Their song *Beg, Steal Or Borrow* remains a firm favourite among not only New Seeker fans but many Eurovision lovers, many of whom regard the song as one of the UK's finest entries. So why have these albums taken so long to see the light of day?

It's a question which fans, and I include myself, have asked themselves over and over and it's one which I was determined to find

an answer to and hopefully a solution. While many of the group's original recordings have appeared on various CD compilations which included the group's top 20 album *It's Been Too Long*, *The Greatest Hits* released in 2009 to celebrate the group's 40th anniversary, fans naturally want these songs in their original album format and entirety. There has for many years been a hesitation perhaps for a New Seekers complete recordings release and this could, understandably, be down to maybe not realising the huge popularity today for the group and the potential of their songs, coupled with the fact that these albums are now well over 40 years old and so a heck of a lot of work would be involved in order for them to be brushed off and re-issued.

Frustration

Not only to ensure the quality of these songs which of course requires its own process, but the administrative and legal procedures which tracks have to go through such as ownership and publishing rights, and when dealing with well over 125 tracks this is extremely time consuming and intricate. My own frustration led me to start looking for an alternative source who might have an interest in releasing the group's work and so thank goodness for me finding Cherry Red Records and in particular their 7T's label and one of their colleagues who

has been vital to the projects, Mark Brennan, who has been an absolute marvel in his commitment and dedication in helping with this release and two previous New Seekers releases.

Ten years ago our first project was released on 7Ts, a double collection of the group's CBS recordings from 1976-1978 after The New Seekers reformed following their split two years previously while at the height of their success. A second collection, again from 7Ts, was issued early in 2018, this time the group's final two albums on Polydor, *Together* and *Farewell* was the impetus for this new and exciting box set. The double CD was a huge success, selling far more than anticipated, confirming the fact that there certainly remained an enthusiastic and hungry fan base for the group's recordings. The group's official pages on Facebook are testament indeed!

Mind wracking

This complete collection had actually been discussed and reviewed for the entirety of my association with Mark Brennan, but we needed this confirmation in order to convince Universal Records to collaborate on the project and for the last six months of the year, endless, frustrating and mind wracking work was performed resulting in what is a true masterpiece of a box set of which we are all so proud. Mark's results

are a credit to his talent and patience. New Seeker members Paul Layton and Marty Kristian have been aware of my work throughout and on seeing the finished results, Marty's words to me were 'you are a Trojan', knowing just how much blood, sweat and tears have gone into this project and Paul was astounded at how brilliant this set has turned out.

So, what we have here are the entire works of the group, from their self-titled first album in 1970 and finishing with *NOW* from 1973, a total of eight complete albums and then an additional 14 non album tracks which we have named 'Loose Ends'. Therefore we have the recordings not only from the original New Seekers line-up but everything recorded from the hit making and instantly recognisable line-up of Eve Graham, Lyn Paul, Paul Layton, Marty Kristian and Peter Doyle. This includes the much anticipated album *Live At The Royal Albert Hall* and the group's most successful release *We'd Like to Teach The World To Sing* which of course includes the Eurovision track *Beg, Steal Or Borrow*. Paul Layton, who remains part of today's line-up always talks about this song in the group's live shows. He said: "We were so very proud to be asked to represent the UK at Eurovision and I have so many vivid and happy memories of the time and we never tire of singing this great song". ■

THE TEN ESSENTIAL GIRL BANDS

By Jason D'Arcy



Hi! I'm Jason D'Arcy, a DJ and the owner of Mr D'Arcy Entertains, a UK events company (www.mrdarcyentertains.co.uk). I also run the popular Eurovision night, *Manchester Calling*.

I love songs that are full of energy and life. Bangers, I hear you cry, but no, it's true! So, when I was asked to do an Essential Top Ten, I racked my brains for something different to do.

The Supremes, The Nolans, Sister Sledge, Bananarama, The Spice Girls, Girls Aloud, The Saturdays – girl bands have been a staple part of our pop history for many years now. There have also been a fair few of them gracing the Eurovision stage over the years too. So, I've scoured through my music collection and came up with my Essential Top Ten list of girl bands at Eurovision.

Believe 'N Peace

Times Three
(1999) Malta

Malta had returned to the contest in 1991 and, up until this point, had sent safe ballads and pop songs. In fact, the year before, they stormed into third place with Chiara's *The One That I Love*. In 1999, it sent something different, an up-tempo song by a girl band! A bouncy little number that started a trend for Malta for the next few years.

Philippa Farrugia Randon, Diane Stafrace and Francesca Tabone were your Times Three. The song was written by Chris Scicluna and Moria Stafrace, who came fifth for Malta in 1994. This ditty however came in 15th!



10

Bem-Bom

Doce
(1982) Portugal

According to Wiki, Doce are one of the original European girl bands, so that alone earns them a place in the Top Ten. *Bem-Bom* (Very Good) was their third stab at winning the national final, with entries sent in 1980 and 1981. They came 13th in the 1982 Eurovision. The members of Doce were Laura Diogo, Lena Coelho, Fátima Padinha and Teresa Miguel. Fátima and Teresa were part of the band Gemini who represented Portugal in 1978. As a band, they had five years in the pop spotlight, releasing their final single in 1985.



9



Call Me
Feminem
(2005) Bosnia & Herzegovina

Feminem has Eurovision links to both Bosnia & Herzegovina and Croatia. *Call Me* was their only successful attempt at Eurovision, in 2005. The group was made up of Neda Parmac, Nika Antolos and Pamela Ramljak, who together gave us their camp, yet slightly dated song that year. Very Sweden circa late 1980's. The song came a respectable 14th. Feminem tried to enter the contest again, this time for Croatia in 2007 and 2009, before getting through in 2010. Sadly, this time, they didn't make it past their semi-final.

8

Telegram
Silver Convention
(1977) Germany

I'm sending a *Telegram* to my baby! STOP! Penny McLean, Ramona Wulf and Rhonda Heath aka Silver Convention were a huge German disco girl band before they appeared in Eurovision. clocking up hits in Europe and in the States too. An early Sugababes type of band, Silver Convention had up to six different singers between 1974 and their demise five years later. In 1977 they were placed eighth in the contest. Their biggest UK hit was the disco classic, *Get Up & Boogie*, which climbed to number seven in 1976. The hits came to an abrupt halt just after their Eurovision success!



7



All to You
The Rounder Girls
(2000) Austria

Ah, the sound of the Motown beat! A heart-warming rhythmic number sung by Tini Kainrath, Kim Cooper and Lynne Kieran. This song is so full of vibrance and immediately makes you want to clap your hands and tap your feet. The song came in mid-table in 2000 at 14th place.

6

Wir Geben 'Ne Party
MeKaDo
(1994) Germany

Wir Geben 'Ne Party (We're Giving A Party) has a sentimental meaning to me, as it was the name of my first Eurovision DJ event! This was a very 1980s schlagertastic song, sung by a very 1980s girl band. It hit the impressive heights of third place on the night! MeKaDo were Melanie Bender, Kati Karney and Dorkas Kiefer.

5



4

**My Heart Goes Boom****Charmed**
(2000) Norway

Ah Charmed, the Norwegian B'witched! Camp and fluffy pop! The members of Charmed were Oddrun Valestrand, Lise Monica Nygård and Hanne Kristine Haugsand. The song hit the dizzy heights of 11th place in 2000. Sadly, like many of our girl groups on here, Charmed were nothing but a one hit wonder. In 2006, Hanne went solo and made two further attempts at entering Eurovision, but sadly her songs didn't make the final. BOOM!

Horoscopes**Sheeba**
(1981) Ireland

Ah! Sheeba... Like the Nolans but much, much better! If you watch the video of this, it seems SO old and dated now!

It's still a joyful song to hear. The group consisted of Irene McCoubrey aka Maxi, Marion Fossett and Frances Campbell. Sheeba enjoyed chart success in Ireland, scoring a number three hit with *Horoscopes*. They came fifth that year. Fresh from their success, the girls entered the national finals in 1982, singing in Irish and again in 1984, sadly though 1981 was the only year they qualified!

3



2

Never Let It Go**Afro-dite**
(2002) Sweden

Oh, I do love a Swedish banger! Blossom Tainton-Lindquist, Gladys del Pilar, and Kayo Shekoni were the voices in the wonderful Swedish girl group Afro-Dite. They entered the contest in 2002, singing a song that Alcazar turned down! Shame, as it placed this sassy group in eighth place that year. Six other singles followed *Never Let It Go*. All three artists also went on to have successful solo careers and the group still perform.

1

Love Games**Belle & The Devotions**
(1984) United Kingdom

This kitsch 1960's infused pop number, sung by Kit Rolfe (Belle) and her Devotions (Laura James and Linda Sofield) bounced into our lives in 1984, during a somewhat more successful period for UK songs. There was controversy that year after English football hooligans ran amok during the European Championships. The poor girls started their song to somewhat muted booping in the hall. Thankfully the juries voted them on the merits of the song, and it was placed in seventh position. The band released four singles during 1983 and 1984.



EVENTS



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WHATEVER HAPPENED TO... BEN ROBBINS AND SIMON MAY



In the latest edition of this column, **Marcus Keppel-Palmer** looks back at the careers of two songwriters who only entered Song For Europe together once, back in 2000, but whose careers have had a number of links to Eurovision

the return of Sergey Lazarev to Eurovision reminds us that the Russian star's career was launched thanks to the help of several UK songwriters and producers, including A1's Ben Adams and his less well-known colleague Ben Robbins. Accustomed at an early age to the theatrical and performing life, Ben Robbins grew up in South London singing in the choir at Westminster Cathedral. This experience led to a music scholarship at King's Wimbledon, where he became an expert on the piano winning several competitions. Robbins then went to work at RG Jones Sound, a company that had studios but also did live touring sound installations. Ben gained experience working as an engineer and then producer so started to work with a number of famous artists.

One of those artists was A-Ha who recorded the *Stay On These Roads* album at RG Jones Studio in Wimbledon. Ben worked on the album under the production of Alan Tarney, who worked with Cliff Richard for many years, including appearing at Eurovision in 1973. Ben's first compositions that were recorded were for Leo Sayer on his 1990 album *Cool Touch*, while in the following year Ben got into remixing – starting with Cliff Richard himself. In the 1990s, Ben

'Jammin' Robbins, as he styled himself, was working in the dance milieu. In 1993 he released his only recording as lead performer, *Good Sexual Movement*, released under his name and then again under the name Star. Although that wasn't a great success, this led to Ben working with a number of dance acts including D-Influence on their *Midnite* recording and remixing the dance version of *You Might Need Somebody* by Shola Ama. In among this was the engineering he did on the Number One hit for Mr. Blobby.

India

In 1996, Robbins opened up his own studio and worked with artists such as Errol Brown from Hot Chocolate, Rick Astley and Laura Pausini (her first English language recordings). He also worked with the Simon May Orchestra and this led to Ben and Simon writing together. In 2000 Ben and Simon entered Song For Europe with *Wherever You Go*, originally sung by Pas de Deux, who were then renamed India for the contest. In 2000, eight songs participated in a Radio 2 vote with only the top four progressing to the televised final. India narrowly finished fifth and so Ben and Simon didn't make it through this time.

Ben then signed up with Rive Droit Music, a French company which had under contract Enrique Iglesias and Cher



BEN ROBBINS



SIMON MAY



SMASH!!

at the time. He first worked with classical singer Katherine Jenkins, whose debut album reached Number One in the UK Classical charts. Ben also teamed up with Welsh band The Storys led by Steve Balsamo, and together they wrote with and for French singer Jonatan Cerrada. The singer was internally selected by France for the 2004 Eurovision and the song chosen was Ben, Steve, and Jonatan's *A Chaque Pas*. At the end of the voting Jonatan finished 15th. Ben and Steve Balsamo were then asked to work with the Russian boy duo, Smash!! comprised of Sergey Lazarev and Vlad Topalov. Ben co-produced the duo's first album *Freeway* and also the second album *2Nite*. When Lazarev left the duo, Ben and Steve wrote for Lazarev's first solo album, *Don't Be Fake*, which Ben also produced many of the tracks for.

Russia

Although it was recorded in London and featured a number of songs written by A1's Ben Adams, the album was only released in Russia and neighbouring countries. Ben Robbins and Steve Balsamo then contributed one song to Lazarev's second solo album, *TV Show*, which Ben also co-produced. Ben then left Rive Droit to set up his own production company and in 2007 opened his own studio in Soho in Andrew Lloyd-Webber's Palace Theatre. Since then, Ben



has mainly worked in the musical and classical music field, writing and mainly producing for artists such as Alfie Boe, Ramin Karimloo, Rhydian and Ruthie Henshall, as well Michael Ball. He hasn't totally abandoned pop music, working with Bonnie Tyler and Mike & The Mechanics.

Simon May, who co-wrote *Wherever You Go* with Ben Robbins, had previously entered Song For Europe in 1998. Simon was born in 1944 in Devizes and after leaving Dauntsey's School went to Cambridge University on a choral scholarship. After graduating, Simon went to teach languages at Kingston School. While there, Simon teamed up with Roger Holman to write music and songs for a musical he and another teacher put on as a show at school. The show *Smike* (based on Dickens' Nicholas Nickleby) was a big hit and the BBC televised a version of this in 1973. The show has gone on to be a regular for amateur dramatic groups to perform. Based on this, Simon left teaching to work at ATV, primarily to write music for TV shows. Early on he was asked to write a song for *Crossroads* for Stephanie De Sykes to sing. She was playing a songwriter who was staying at the motel, and the song Simon wrote, *Born With A Smile On My Face*, was a success reaching number two in the charts. The following year Stephanie, who co-wrote two UK Eurovision entries, repeated the *Crossroads* chart hit route with *We'll Find Our Day*, originally written by Simon and Roger for Smike.

Top Ten hit

Other hits from *Crossroads* included Kate Robbins (ESC 1980) with *More Than In Love* (a number two chart hit) and also Simon's own vocal hit, *The Summer Of My Life*. In fact, Simon had already released a couple of singles under his



own name from 1975 onwards. The first was *Put The Flags Out Johnnie Boy* which was followed up by *Sophie* and then by *Never Ever Could I Leave You*. None were hits but when *Summer Of My Life* was featured in *Crossroads* it became a Top Ten hit in 1976. Simon released three further solo singles in 1977, including *We'll Gather Lilacs*, which nibbled at the charts and also *Closest Thing To Heaven*, which Amii Stewart also recorded, hardly surprising as Simon produced her early records including Number One hit, *Knock On Wood*.

Doof doof

Simon was asked to work with Amii Stewart by Barry Leng, and Simon and Barry wrote and produced three albums for Amii garnering five further hit singles including a cover of *Light My Fire* before Stewart relocated to Germany to work with Leslie Mandoki of Dschinghis Khan. Simon then returned to television writing the music for the BBC series *Cold Warrior*, before being commissioned to write the iconic "doof doof" theme to *EastEnders*. That theme became a hit single for Anita Dobson with lyrics by Don Black under the name *Anyone Can Fall In Love*. Simon then worked with Bradley and Stewart James, recently interviewed in *Vision*, on the Nick Berry Number One hit *Every Loser Wins*. That song

would win the Ivor Novello award for its songwriters. After *EastEnders* came themes for *Howard's Way* (Marti Webb had a hit single with a vocal version) and then *Eldorado*.

Simon's first effort at Eurovision was entered for the 1998 Song For Europe. Simon was asked by Tim Laws, who has written *Dreams* for Gabrielle and would go on to work with 5ive, S Club 7, Atomic Kitten and Blue among others, to assist with a new act he was working with, Farrell Lennon. Between Simon, Tim and Farrell they came up with *Suddenly*, a soulful ballad which missed out on a place in the televised final by just four telephone votes. A further single, *World's Greatest Lover* followed before Farrell Lennon went on to work with French dance producer, Bob Sinclar. Of course, Simon's second attempt was with Ben Robbins, and the pair would also work with Belgian singer Natalia on her Number One hit (in Belgium) *Fragile Not Broken*.

Simon's third attempt actually reached the televised final in 2003, finishing third as Mimi performed *Ever Since That Night*, co-written with John Brant. Along with Simon Lockyer, Brant would work closely with Simon May doing production and writing work, including setting up Music on Screen to deliver TV incidental music. The team wrote *All Of Me* performed by Blake for the royal wedding in 2011. Simon has written his autobiography entitled "Doof Doof" after the *EastEnders* theme, is currently a Visiting Professor of music at Southampton Solent University and also has gone back to teaching, this time at a special needs school in Surrey.

Ben Robbins and Simon May only had one co-write in Song For Europe, but between them they have Eurovision connections stretching all the way from Stephanie de Sykes to Sergey Lazarev. ■

HOW DO YOU WATCH EUROVISION?

Obviously with a smile and much happiness – but how and where? **Vision** went on a mission...

about 20 years ago, it all changed. Eurovision fans suddenly got options. While it was never an impossibility for us to attend the contest in person, the audience in the venue each year was pretty much a closed shop unless you knew a kindly soul at the host broadcaster who could pull a few strings to get you a seat.

But as the public sale for tickets gradually became part and parcel of the annual Eurovision offering, a pan-continental convoy of travelling fans with the means to attend the show and squeeze in a lengthy stay in the host city to boot has seemingly sprung from nowhere. Arguably, mention 'Eurovision fan' these days and casual observers will think of the exuberant souls in the crowd, occasionally armed with boas, that the director cuts to as each entry is being applauded.

That's not true for everyone. Sometimes, perhaps, we need a reminder that there are many different ways of being a Eurovision fan in the 21st century. You may not write a blog that gets tens of thousands of hits, post up a reaction video to every entry as soon as it lands, take part in the many podcasts which pop up at this time of year, or make the trip to the big show itself. But however you take your Eurovision, you're still a fan, even if you're the only soul who knows about your passion. For this special feature, **Vision** asked four fans to tell us how they've watched the contest in recent years. Your experience may be vastly different to theirs - and if so, that makes it all the better.

1 THE FIRST-TIMER

Doctor and occasional stand-up comedian Peter Turton finally broke his duck last year and made the trip from his Liverpool home to Lisbon to see the contest live for the first time.

"The Eurovision experience last year for me had been my first real interaction with other fans. I'd previously spent the last 20 years squirreling MP3s of old songs off Napster or sitting on YouTube tutting at all the people who think Scott Fitzgerald was right not to win.

"My only other experience prior to the contest was going to Eurovision: You Decide in 2016, where most of the sympathetic audience around me would tap me on the shoulder and say 'You must hate this, has your wife brought you here?!' and then be shocked that I was the fan!



2 THE HOMEBIRD

Theresa Krajewski is a teacher who always watched the show at home with her family and she wouldn't have it any other way. For now.

"I have been a huge Eurovision fan for as long as I can remember.

"Although I would love to go to a contest one day, I am just as happy watching from home.

"I always stockpile food from around Europe to ensure I can devour something from each country during the show and I love being able to give my full attention to the contest rather than being stuck in a stuffy arena with an obscured view, fun though that sounds!



"I have seen live performances by many of my favourite Eurovision artists on subsequent occasions, so I don't feel I've missed out.

"I've bumped into Chiara in a Maltese car park, seen Brainstorm and Mumiy Troll perform live at least five times each and even travelled to Saaremaa on the west coast of Estonia to meet my favourite Eurovision performer, Vaiko Eplik of Ruffus (pictured above)."



"I couldn't have asked for a better first contest. Lisbon is beautiful and the EuroVillage was the perfect place to go and watch the second semi-final. The roar in the crowd when Sweden qualified was deafening!

"The queue for merchandise in the Village was huge but people were just welcoming and chatty. The lad behind me in the queue went to the same school as me, albeit ten years later.

"The contest itself was so strange from watching on TV.

"We had a prime spot at the foot of the Green Room (pictured right) which meant we could see the BBC sofa go nuts when the stage invasion happened and heard the applause when SuRie took her place in the Green Room.



"Weirder bits included the warm up guy who literally spent an hour saying 'YOU ARE THE BEST FANS IN EUROPE', over and over, and the stage manager saying, 'When song two gets to the chorus, put your phone torches in the air, when song five is on, do the same, but for the verses only, when song 11 comes on...' which if I'm honest was a lot to remember!"

"What you don't see during the postcards is the mad rush to get everything ready. I genuinely thought the German background wasn't going to load in time for the performance!"

"All in all, my Eurovision experience last year meant I met some great people, made new friends, and my wife has forgiven me for tweeting that it was better than my wedding day!"

3 THE CONVERT

Pete Lambert is a data manager from Birmingham. A few years ago he went to the contest on a whim and now he's had that taste, enjoys a (mostly) annual fix.



"It was only a quick hop to Malmö. "Picture it. 3.00 am, Wednesday morning, the bar of a budget 'Travelodgen' of some description. "'Are you an OGAE-er?' "Pardon? "'It's an OGAE thing, yeah?' "It wasn't. And I had no idea what he was talking about. I wasn't even sure what language he was talking in. But little did I realise that I had, in spirit, just become one of us. "Always a fan, I had finally blundered into fandom. "Before that spontaneous trip to the 2013 semis, hearing a song ahead of

the TV shows felt like a terrible spoiler. A Eurovision party at mine meant a lavish Euro buffet then sitting down, shutting the heck up, and filling out your score sheet PROPERLY. "When Eurovision was just up the road from me in 1998, I'd sniffed that it just wouldn't be the same to go. Why sit in some arena, with no commentary? Now you can actually vote - by telephone - from the comfort of your very own hallway! "Coming home to watch the 2013 Grand Final with uninterested friends was quite a crunch. "I won't always be able to make it to the finals, and it's a huge privilege to have been able to so many times since, but the exhilaration of having been swept up in the periphery of the contest itself will hopefully never leave."



4 THE PRESS CENTRE KID

There's a good chance you've heard of Roy Delaney (he's actually also elsewhere in this edition). It's a long time since this Bristolian journalist hasn't spent Eurovision fortnight in the press centre. We have a sneaking suspicion he wouldn't have it any other way.

"There's something very special about following the Eurovision proceedings from the press centre. As the fortnight goes on you watch your band of fellow press hounds build from a small trickle of familiar faces to a heaving throng of international camera crews and lost looking junior reporters. "Each day is different as you watch the performances unwrap themselves during rehearsals. There'll be that song you never thought much of that suddenly silences the whole hall in a moment of unexpected fragility, or the party banger that gets everyone dancing on the tables. "Gossip goes around the building like a wildfire, with eager conspirators dashing from table to find out if anyone



has got any more crumbs of scandal, and solid news of delegation parties is treated like a currency that's incredibly useful for storing up favours for the future. It's like a buzzing economy of information that feeds off itself and creates the most electric of atmosphere. "It's also the best place to get contact with the performers, with everything from unhinged press stunts and tat giveaways to impromptu performances and unexpected dignitary visits from state leaders. "But best of all there's the friendships forged over the years. "People you've known for decades, but have rarely seen outside of a succession of dark caves in the bowels of some converted sports hall. Little gaggles of journos and fandoms each ruling their own corner and getting unfeasibly excited when something incredible happens.



"I only wanted to go to one Eurovision in my lifetime, but Tel Aviv will be my 22nd, and it's the heady atmosphere of the press centre that keeps me coming back for more as much as the songs and the food and the amazing cities that we visit."

SMALL TALK WITH... CHRIS HILLS (CHILLS)

David Ransted posed the questions



Occupation: Software Engineer, computers and that.

Favourite Eurovision year: 1991 was the first contest I was able to rewatch multiple times. When I was a boy, before the internet was invented, we didn't have YouTube and we could only watch Eurovision at 8pm on one Saturday each year. That was it! For Christmas 1990, Santa bought me a new fangled VHS video recorder, and so I put a tape in that year and pressed record. I wore that tape out rewinding it and rewatching it, and that's when I really fell in love with Eurovision. Allora. It was all so adorably amateurish then, but with some wonderfully quirky songs and performances, and one of the most exciting scoring sequences in history.

Favourite Eurovision entry: *Vrede* ('The Barman Hasn't Normal Carling To Give Stan') by Ruth Jacott.

Favourite UK entry: *Come Back* by Jessica Garlick.

Favourite winner: *Euphoria* by Loreen.

Favourite city or place: My home town of Manchester of course! I was very proud when MediaCity hosted the UK national final this year for the first time. It's finally in the Eurovision history books now, alongside Maidstone.

What are your interests/hobbies outside Eurovision: I love board games, both playing and inventing. I mix my hobbies

Which living person do you most admire, and why? My partner, Paul David Leigh of course. He doesn't mind my farts.

What trait do you most deplore in others? Deploing others. We're all human, we're all flawed, and what gives anybody else the right to be negative about others? We should try not to deplore, just love.

And what trait do you most deplore in yourself? Deploing others. Oops, I'm also a hypocrite. And I fart.

How do you relax? My father banned that song in our house when I was a child. So I don't do it.

scrutineer, just like Mr Naef, counting all the points, making sure everything was fair, and telling Toto off.

Who would play you in the film of your life? Rupert Grint, Rasmussen, or some other ginge.

What is top of your bucket list? Attend a Eurovision Grand Final hosted in the UK. I might well have kicked the bucket by then.

Favourite non-Eurovision song: *Chiquitita* by Abba. You'll be dancing once again, and the pain will end...

Apart from Eurovision, who was the last music act you saw perform live? Kylie Minogue, but please don't judge me, hand



Chris with Paul David Leigh



With the lovely Selma



Chris lets off a fart..?



Come Back Jessica



'Stan'



Someone's happy



Who's that on the left on tellybox?



Guilty pleasure

Which Eurovisions have you attended, if any? I've been a shy, invisible member of OGAE for years, not attending any events, just watching, listening and reading from home. That changed in 2016 when a friend encouraged me to enter the ballot for tickets, and I was dumbfounded when I actually got some! Stockholm was everything I hoped it would be, but the best part was meeting other Eurovision fans for the first time. You can see me on the tellybox just after Poli Genova, wearing my DJ and Union Jack bow-tie, just like I had planned since 1991. I also had Union Jack underwear on, but luckily you can't see that.

too, and some of you have played my filthy Eurovision version of *Cards Against Humanity*, and my ESCape room which tests your puzzle solving skills with a Eurovision theme. If you're coming to Manchester for Eurovision or to Eurobash, maybe you can have a go, it's lots of fun.

When were/are you happiest? Following Stockholm, I came to Eurobash for the first time in 2017. There I met even more amazing new Eurovision friends, and one very special man in particular. We fell in love and we're still together, all thanks to OGAE!

What advice would you give your 18 year-old self? Relax.

What was your most embarrassing moment? Putting on weight and accidentally splitting my trousers when I wasn't wearing my Union Jack underwear.

Do you have any superstitions? I never walk under ladders which have men dressed as horses on, or go near pianos as I've learned they are prone to spontaneous combustion.

What did you want to be when you were growing up? I wanted to be the EBU

on my heart it was my little brother who wanted to go, not me!

What is your most treasured possession? My pin badge collection; I've got more than 250, including many Eurovision ones. I try to wear a different one every day.

Guilty pleasure: *Sámiid Adnan* by Sverre Kjelsberg & Mattis Hætta. I love a joik. Can somebody please do a mash up of this and this year's Norwegian entry?

Tell us a secret: I wear size 14 shoes. And you know what they say about big feet? Yeah, well, it's not true, but that's enough small talk. ■

PARTING SHOT

We'll wave Bon Voyage to last year's contest with this shot, taken by David Ransted at rehearsals in Lisbon, of Madame Monsieur performing *Mercy for France*. One of the fan favourites and hotly tipped in the betting, the song finished in 13th place in the Grand Final with 173 points, and peaked at number two on the French singles chart.



SILVER LININGS



Came second in 1996

Norway

I Evighet

Elisabeth Andreassen

Came second in 1997

Ireland

Mysterious Woman

Marc Roberts



Came second in 1998

United Kingdom

Where Are You?

Imaani

