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Edlines

Wasn't Athens fantastic? The Greeks were extremely welcoming, the food simply delicious and the Olympic complex provided the perfect setting for Eurovision in the 21st century.

The show was pretty good too and, although the UK failed to gain many votes once again, congratulations are offered to Finland who win the contest for the first time. Well done to Lordi also, who have become the first rock band to succeed in what is a traditionally seen as a pop song contest.

On behalf of those fans who travelled to Athens, a special word of thanks to our colleagues at OGAE Greece who, with superb organisation and thoughtfulness, ensured it was certainly a week to remember. Finland will have a hard act to follow!

Best wishes,

Gordon Lewis

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Eurovision CD's ... and much more!

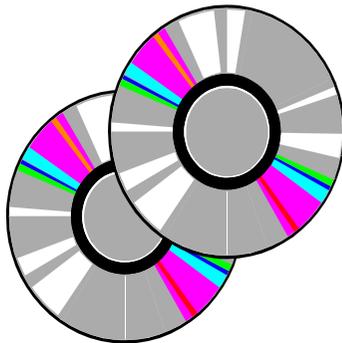
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Feel the Rhythm



Ten days before the Eurovision final was due to be held some people were beginning to think it might never happen. As delegates began to arrive in Athens on Wednesday, 10th May 2006 they found themselves confronted by a city that had come to a halt. The Greek Civil Service were striking over pension cuts and, apart from taxis and official courtesy buses, transport links between the airport, city centre and Olympic complex were non-existent. Fortunately the Greeks had no intention of disrupting the actual contest and by the time rehearsals started on Thursday, 11th May things were back to normal.

Debutants Armenia were the first to rehearse, marking the start of six intensive days of rehearsals, press conferences and photo shoots. Andre spoke of his double responsibility, realising that he was not just representing his country but was also the first person to do so on the Eurovision stage. He explained that "Without Your Love" was about a man in love with two women, but refused to say whether this was based on personal experience. However, Andre did reveal that he had wanted to sing in Armenian, but it was felt that English would reach a wider audience when it

came to televoting. He went on to say that FYR Macedonia and Greece were his two favourite songs, but that neither threatened Armenia's chances of reaching the top ten. Andre's confidence was proved right!

Mariana Popova had been given the task of performing Bulgaria's second entry and had also been drawn to perform second in the semi-final. She revealed a lifetime involvement with music and believed that "Let Me Cry" could achieve a good result for her country. Described as a ballad, Mariana recognised that this description was not an accurate one when compared to other songs. It was a personal song that represented the thoughts and feelings of the singer herself. Hoping that Eurovision could be a stepping stone to an international career, Mariana cited Bosnia Herzegovina as the country most likely to win in Athens.

Despite entering some amazing songs, Slovenia have so far made little impact on the international stage and so, prior to arriving in Greece, Anžej Dežan had embarked on a European tour to promote his song "Mr Nobody". He revealed that he was the first Slovenian singer to promote an entry in this way and hoped that the positive reaction he had received would help secure a place in the final. Anžej went on to speak about European music in more general terms with a personal wish that it would become more recognised across the globe and, especially, in the USA. Admitting that no one could accurately pick a Eurovision winner, he indicated that Russia and FYR Macedonia were his personal choices.

Jennifer, who preferred to be known as Jenny, surprised everyone by disclosing that she was not a professional singer. She went on to say that she was still having singing

lessons when selected to sing “Sense Tu” for Andorra! The television company had been looking for backing vocalists to support a then unselected artist, but were so impressed with Jenny’s voice that they signed her instantly to represent the small nation. Having already achieved a top ten hit in neighbouring Spain, Jenny was hoping to fulfil her ultimate dream in Athens. By her second rehearsal she had, unfortunately, caught a cold and, by the end of the semi final, Jenny found herself in the bottom place with just eight points gained from the country that had given her a taste of chart success.

Polina Smolova was on a musical journey, and one that had taken her from her home in Belarus to the ancient Greek capital of Athens. Whatever her Eurovision outcome, Polina viewed her future with confidence, promising to sing and dance her way around the globe. She admitted regret that Angelica Agurbash had failed to qualify in 2005 with such a strong song, but preferred to speak about her own entry “Mum”. This was described as a song that considers parents, mums and dads, as the most important friends anyone could have and Polina spoke of the way her own father had inspired her over the years. She also spoke with great respect of Anna Vissi and the Greek entry.

20 year old Luiz Ejlli had been given the task of representing Albania with the ethnic sounding “Zjarr E Ftohte” and was more than happy to be doing so. He admitted that it would be his largest live audience, but was confident of a strong performance. The song, translated as “Cold And Fire”, was about the extreme emotions of love that can cause people to become inflamed by passion or abandoned in the cold. When asked why the song was being

sung in Albanian Luiz explained that this had been the wish of his fans and that parts of the song would not sound right in English. Speaking of the wider competition he found it difficult to choose a winner because of the overall high standard of entries.



© Andrew Wright

As an established European star Kate Ryan, above, was clearly one of the pre-contest favourites and had chosen to participate in Eurovision because of the new challenges it would bring. Surprisingly the popular Belgian singer revealed an unexpected nervousness throughout her first rehearsals, but “Je T’adore” remained a popular choice with fans and delegates alike. Kate joked that Sandra Kim had begged her to win as, having regularly performed “J’aime La Vie” for 20 years, the youngest Eurovision winner was desperate for someone to take over her

crown. Sadly it was not to be and the biggest disappointment of semi final night was the failure of Belgium to qualify.



© Andrew Wright

Although Brian Kennedy had not been the obvious choice to represent Ireland, confident rehearsals and an amazingly strong voice soon made people sit up and listen! Representing the only country to have won the contest seven times Brian denied that this placed extra pressure on his shoulders. Instead he spoke about his confidence in Eurovision and his all time favourite Irish entry, Johnny Logan's "What's Another Year". Asked about his vocal training Brian, who has regularly recorded with former winners Secret Garden, disclosed a little known fact that he had never had any lessons and was self taught! Delighted to be singing his own composition, "Every Song Is A Cry For Love", the Irish nation were also delighted when Brian guaranteed them a place in next years final.

Born in New York City to a family of Greek immigrants, Annet Artani is no stranger to success and has worked alongside Britney Spears among others. Representing Cyprus with "Why Angels Cry" she described the song as one about love, peace and harmony. Annet went on to say that the angels mentioned were those helpless people of the world who needed to be

surrounded by the love of others. It was a serious subject and seemingly fitting for such a serious singer. Recognising the influences of both Greek and pop music, Annet also rehearsed a gospel version of her entry and indicated that she would like to record this in the future.

Although she didn't reveal her age, Monaco's Séverine Ferrer did say that her parents had named her after the French singer who has, to date, gained the only victory for the tiny principality. The two Séverine's had met a few weeks earlier as part of a radio show, and the 1971 winner was also in Athens to support the delegations of Monaco and France. Séverine junior was optimistic about her own chances, but was also determined to enjoy her time in Greece whatever the outcome. "La Coco Dance" was described as a song full of sunshine and beaches, both of which were enjoyed by the infectious singer who hoped that her song would bring the warmth of the Caribbean to the colder lands of Europe.

Representing FYR Macedonia Elena Risteska is already in the third year of her music career. Despite the politics that exist between her own country and the host nation, she was more than happy to represent the former Yugoslav republic on Greek soil. Unlike recent offerings, "Ninanajna", which is actually a word used in more traditional songs, was a modern R'n'B song with obvious similarities to Beyonce and Destiny's Child, but for Elena it was a song that she wanted everyone to sing and, of course, vote for! The singer also spoke about her love of Eurovision, mentioning "Touch My Fire", "My Number One" and "Diva" as being among her favourite entries of bygone years.

Three years after their first Eurovision appearance Ich Troje were

representing Poland once again. This time lead singer Michal Wiśniewski sported a mop of green hair which, according to his explanation, was the corporate colours of a Polish mobile phone company involved in supporting their entry. The last three years have been hard for Michal, including a messy divorce and the separation from his children, but looking to the future he has now married his new wife, Ich Troje singer Anna Świątczak. Unlike 2003, rapper The Real McCoy joined Ich Troje for "Follow My Heart", suggesting that everyone should follow their heart in making life changing decisions.

The second day of rehearsals began with Russian heart throb Dima Bilan who was modestly surprised to find that "Never Let You Go" was among the favourites to win. Supported by members of the world famous Bolshoi ballet, Dima admitted that his promotional tour had concentrated on the former Soviet states, but also added that he had visited Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria and Malta to gain support for his entry. Like other competitors Dima suggested that there were many strong songs taking part, but admitted to Greece as being the one he couldn't stop singing. He also tipped Cyprus and Ukraine as two of his other favourites in a contest of winners.

Sibel Tüzün revealed that she had submitted three songs to the Turkish selection process and that her personal favourite, "Super Star", had been chosen for Athens. However, far from being a celebrity super star, the song is about Sibel's husband who is her own personal hero! Combining family life with a musical career does not come easy, and the likeable singer spoke with honesty about the challenges this can bring. Not only is she a wife and mother, but Sibel also writes, produces and performs her own songs leaving

little time for rest and relaxation. Nonetheless, she was pleased to be representing her country and denied claims that Sertab's victory in 2003 had placed subsequent Turkish singers under greater pressure.



© Andrew Wright

She had come to show everyone her love and that's exactly what Tina Karol did with "Show Me Your Love". Back home the young singer regularly performs with the Ukrainian Military Orchestra which not only involves singing in full uniform but has also taken her to Iraq and Kosovo as part of Ukraine's own peace keeping activities. Tina was looking forward to performing in a less formal environment and her enthusiasm at doing so rubbed off on everyone she met. Last years host, DJ Pasha, was also in Greece supporting Tina and had helped re-write the song, originally entitled "I Am Your Queen".

Subject to pre-contest controversies including calls for them to be banned from Greece, no one knew quite what to expect of Finnish rockers Lordi. Frontman Mr Lordi informed everyone that it takes about three hours to complete his make up, but those present were far less impressed when he jokingly said that he ate babies for breakfast. During a second press conference he added that he ate kittens for dinner, but Mr Lordi's tongue-in-cheek humour was clearly beyond the reach of many. Although the band were confident that "Hard Rock Hallelujah" could do well for Finland, none of them presumed victory and suggested that they were genuinely modest people behind the masks. By the early hours of Sunday 21st May Lordi had literally changed the face of Eurovision!



© Andrew Wright

Having won the Dutch final Niña, Dejem and Caroline, the three girls who perform under the name of Treble, promised to tour 37 countries in 40 days. They then realised that there was no budget, but were able to gain sponsorship and fulfil their promise. Treble, pictured above, originally began performing as street musicians more than eight years ago and it was during this time that they devised an imaginary language on which "Amambanda" is based. However, unlike Urban Trad a

few years ago the girls' mysterious language does have meaning and a mini dictionary has been included as part of their album inlay.

They were proud to be among the older performers in Athens and admitted to watching Eurovision for nearly 30 years; even when entertainment viewing was restricted in the former days of the Soviet Union. LT United were not, it seemed, an obvious choice for the contest which was just as well because the six guys were far from worried about getting 'nil points'. Describing "We Are The Winners" as an anthemic victory song, the group hoped that, even if they didn't sing the winning reprise, the ultimate winner would perform their song. Although not broadcast, this wish was fulfilled when Lordi sang part of the Lithuanian entry during the winners press conference held shortly after the final.

Having been criticised for bringing the most dated song to Athens, Non Stop's composer, Elvis Veiguiha, claimed that this was a deliberate attempt to introduce an 80's retro feel to the contest. Few were convinced by the explanation and fewer still shared Portuguese optimism that "Coisa De Nada" would take the Grand Prix to Lisbon. Non Stop went on to explain that they were no strangers to competition, having come through a television reality show, but it was admitted that Eurovision was, perhaps, a far more difficult contest to crack.

23 years after her first appearance and 15 years after her victory, Swedish star Carola was back and felt like it was the first time all over again. The excitement was still there, but it was clear that the popular singer missed the orchestra that had been a major part of past contests. Speaking of the 50th anniversary show last October, Carola revealed that her participation had

shown how important Eurovision is to her and had helped her decision to participate once again. Unfazed by the prospect of singing in the semi final, Carola promised that she would remain “Invincible”.

Following in the footsteps of Sahlene, Sandra was the second Swedish singer to represent Estonia and hoped to do well for her adoptive country. Although she had not received any messages from previous Estonian singers, including Vanilla Ninja who represented Switzerland in 2005, Sandra indicated that she preferred to gain support from her family and friends rather than those she didn't know. Because of its strong Europop feel everyone thought that “Through My Window” would easily qualify, but being drawn after another Swedish singer failed to do any favours for the Baltic state.

Seven years after disqualification, Hari Mata Hari were finally given the opportunity to perform on the international stage. Lead singer Hari spoke about his ethnic influences, while recognising the similarities between “Lejla” and the Serbian entry, “Lane Moje”, from 2004. Composer and former Serbian participant, Željko Joksimović, explained that this was because both Bosnia Herzegovina and Serbia & Montenegro shared similar cultures in which people express their emotions through song. Whatever the similarities or differences, “Lejla” proved that it can only be a matter of time before Eurovision travels to Sarajevo.

Soon after Hari Mata Hari's departure from the press centre Silvia Night's boyfriend arrived to warn the assembled journalists that they would be removed if they looked directly at the eccentric Icelandic singer! And when Silvia, opposite, finally arrived it was apparent that she was only interested in herself, believing that she was a self

fulfilled saviour for Iceland if not the whole world! Claiming that Eurovision was a contest in which only those with true talent should compete, Silvia was expecting to receive “Congratulations” on May 20th. As it happened she failed to qualify, perhaps due to her insistent use of the f-word or her negative comments to ERT's stage crew recorded for posterity on film. Of course, it could also have been a backlash to the extremely public and obviously staged eviction of a reputed Lithuanian journalist who dared to look Silvia in the eye!



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As four days of semi final rehearsals and press conferences came to a close, finalists started to arrive in readiness for two further days of intensive activity. Switzerland were first with Six 4 One and their sentimental sounding “If We All Give A Little”. Adopted by the

international charity, We Are What We Do (www.wearewhatwedo.org), it was recognised that if every person in the world gave a little, then the world would be changed for the better. Lys Assia had sent her best wishes to the six international singers who had been brought together for the latest Swiss entry, and it was hoped that this European approach would help gain additional votes from across the continent. Sadly it was not to be, with only Malta giving top marks to their own Keith Camilleri. Sweden and Germany both ignored their representative singers, Andreas Lundstedt and Marco Matias, while Bosnia Herzegovina and Israel each gave a token four points for Tika Milinovic and Liel respectively. Switzerland, of course, could not vote for the sixth singer, Claudio D'Addio, who came from their own country.



© Andrew Wright

Leaving granny at home Moldova were back, this time with O-Zone singer, Arsenium, pictured above, and the very beautiful Natalia Gordienko. Arsenium explained that the various members of his former boy band had all wanted to do solo projects which led to the split. He went on to explain that he and Natalia were also solo singers who had joined forces purely for Eurovision. Arsenium, who has openly discussed his sexuality in the past, further joked that he had married his female

counterpart when she was 13 and that she didn't even know about it! A handful of people understood the joke, while the majority started asking questions about combining a musical career with married bliss! Trying to change the subject, Arsenium revealed that "Loca" had not been written exclusively for the contest, but was well suited to Eurovision.

Having represented Israel in 1999 as part of Eden, Eddie Butler had returned with a greater maturity than he had then. During the interim years Eddie has nurtured a solo career that combines American soul with European and Israeli music. He denied trying to sound like past Eurovision entrants, preferring to develop his own style. "Together We Are One" was typical of that style, as well as echoing Eddie's own origins in the USA. Although some felt that a gospel sounding song was out of place, Eddie and his singers were confident they could succeed.

Inspired by Bobby Ferrin, six young men known as Vocal Group Cosmos were hoping that the first acapella act to perform on the Eurovision stage would bring them greater recognition. All six are classically trained and have released four albums to date in their native Latvia. Undoubtedly talented, they considered the human voice as being the greatest instrument available to humanity, and had no qualms in demonstrating their unique style to the assembled journalists. Driven by their parents as children to practice their music in preference to playing football, Cosmos had grown to recognise that this had been a crucial part in forming their musical career.

Returning to their musical and cultural heritage, Norway were being represented by the beautiful Christine Gulbrandsen and her haunting song, "Alvedansen". Reflecting something of

traditional Nordic music, Christine also felt that the Norwegian people had voted for their own language to be performed to an international audience once again. She dedicated the song to her late father, who died four years ago, failing to hide her sadness that he would not be there to share her Eurovision experience. Although not released as a single, Christine confirmed that the song would be included on her forthcoming album.

Their favourite song in the contest was “Un Bloody Mary”, although the four Spanish sisters otherwise known as Las Ketchup did admit to liking “Sense Tu”; albeit because Jenny was also from Spain! Despite their massive international hit, “Asereje”, which the girls seemed to enjoy performing at various parties in Athens in preference to their contest entry, Las Ketchup were pleased and excited to be taking part in Eurovision. They refused to accept any criticism that they had little chance of victory because a Las Ketchup copy failed so dismally in 2005. Instead the girls believed that they had as much chance as anyone taking part.

Five years after his first attempt and six months after taking part in “Congratulations”, Fabrizio Faniello was back with his co-composed entry “I Do”. With three European albums to his credit and a host of singles Fabrizio believed that he was more than ready to gain a long awaited victory for Malta. Despite having vocal difficulties during the week, the popular singer rose above his problems and planned to enjoy the Athens experience. He admitted that his song was more Swedish in style than Maltese, but hoped that this would help gain additional votes from Scandinavia. In the event a shock result saw Fabrizio in bottom place with just one vote from Albania.



© Andrew Wright

Having beaten a former Eurovision winner, Vicky Leandros, in the German final, Texas Lightning were feeling very lucky to be representing their country. Fronted by Australian Jane Comerford, above, who explained how popular Eurovision has become in the land of her birth, the country style of “No No Never” was strongly defended as a serious attempt to bring the Grand Prix back to Germany. Despite taking part in a star studded selection process, none of the group had thought to ask past winners Dana International and The Olsen Brothers for any advice, but wanted to use the opportunity to reach a much larger audience than would normally be possible. As for Germany winning the World Cup ... ‘no no never’ came the reply!

Clearly influenced by American rock’n’roll, not least Chubby Chekker’s “The Twist”, Sidsel Ben Semmane was

pinning Danish hopes on “Twist Of Love”. Explaining her own love for sixties music, she was more than happy to be performing a retro style entry, but was still coming to terms with her new found fame that was combined with ongoing school studies. Even though this didn't leave the young singer with much free time, she recognised the importance of taking part in an event that has been broadcast annually for more than half a century. However, while appearing knowledgeable at Eurovision's past, Sidsel accidentally revealed that she has rarely watched the show.



© Andrew Wright

Having scored their best placing to date in 2005, Romania were more than aware that winning Eurovision is an increasing reality for the former dictatorship. This year the honour had been given to Mihai Trăistariu and, with “Tornero”, he was an early favourite for victory. With strong links between the Romanian and Italian languages, part of the song would be performed in Italian which brought a cheer from those who miss hearing this language at the song contest. However, Mihai had hoped to gain 12 points from Italy, not realising they no longer participated in the annual event until after his arrival in Athens!

25 years ago a young Daz Sampson watched Bucks Fizz win the Eurovision

Song Contest and made up his mind to do the same in the future. Having won Making Your Mind Up, he had now been given the opportunity to represent his country and possibly follow in the steps of his childhood idols. “Teenage Life” was described as an unconventional song for the international stage, but with a general feel good factor Daz was confident of a high placing. Sadly, some European journalists mistook this confidence for arrogance, while few outside the United Kingdom and Ireland fully appreciated the significance of the school uniform, openly wondering why so many British fans were dressed the same.

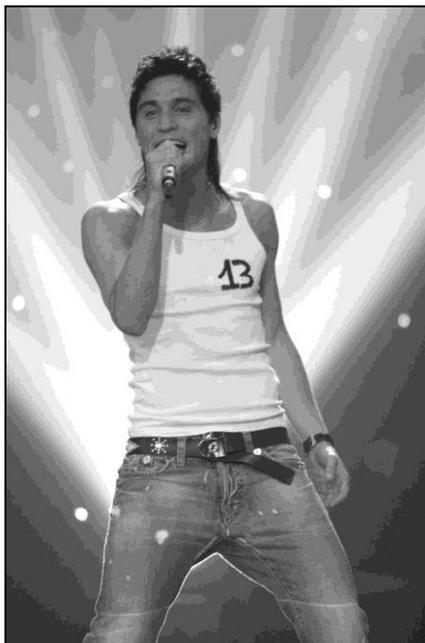
Anna Vissi is easily on the same level as Madonna or Kylie, yet despite her international fame and reputed wealth was one of the most down to earth performers taking part. She conducted her press conferences unaided and spoke of a re-discovered excitement that taking part in Eurovision had brought her. Anna went on to say that musical success makes you forget what it is like to experience the insecurity of competition, and that is why she had wanted to compete once again. The opportunity had also brought many requests for her to perform “Autostop” and “Mono I Agapi”, which were first heard more than 26 and 23 years ago respectively, as well as her latest offering for Greece, “Everything”. And Anna's favourite song from 2006? She was almost apologetic in naming “Hard Rock Hallelujah”.

French singer Virginie Pouchain had won an audition show on which Natasha Saint-Pier and Lara Fabian had been celebrity judges, although Virginie had not been able to seek any advice from these two former contestants. Unlike many other entries this year, “Il Était Temps” had not been promoted outside of France, and even

within its home country it was initially uncertain if the song would be commercially released. Supported by Matheson Bayley on cello, Alex Panayi also made a surprise appearance at one of the press conferences where he and Virginie sang a bilingual version of her entry in French and Greek.

And so to Croatia who were the last country to rehearse and, co-incidentally, had been the last country to automatically qualify to the final following the withdrawal of Serbia Montenegro. Young Severina spoke about her co-composed song, "Moja Štikla", which was written about her favourite thing ... shoes! With almost 300 pairs at home in Croatia, Severina went on to say that people across the world collect all types of things, so why not shoes. Currently working on an album for release early 2007, she was confident that her energetic ethnic style would gain the affection of televoters across the continent and not just the former Yugoslav states. It wasn't to be and at least three countries would have to withdraw if Croatia are going to unexpectedly qualify for a further year! Alongside the rehearsals and press conferences a plethora of parties were held throughout the week, many at Technopolis, an industrial museum complex that had become Euroclub for the contest season. Poland and Ukraine joined forces for a vodka night where Ich Troje and Tina Karol performed their respective songs while delegates decided which country produced the strongest liquor. Anna Vissi gave a mini concert while the Big 4 party saw performances from Virginie Pouchain, Texas Lightning, Las Ketchup and, of course, Daz Sampson. During the latter party the French delegation introduced 1971 winner Séverine who performed "Un Banc, Un Arbre, Une Rue" in French and German

... and, after some prompting, English as well. Speaking to Vision immediately afterwards Séverine recalled her own contest memories, reflecting on how small the event was 35 years ago compared to now and enquired after Clodagh Rodgers. She also seemed amazed at how many people wanted to meet her and was extremely gracious to everyone, posing for photographs and signing autographs for all who asked.



© Andrew Wright

Another highlight of the week was the party hosted by Russian singer Dima Bilan pictured above. Once again vodka, or other drinks mixed with vodka, freely flowed from the bar while performers representing the former Soviet states mingled with the international delegates. Vocal group Cosmos, Tina Karol and Polina Smolova performed their Euro entries

and were then joined by popular Russian singer, Varvara, who was in Athens for the show. Andre and LT United were both spotted in the assembled crowd, but the highlight was an amazing mini concert given by the one and only Dima who, in the eyes of many, became the true winner of 2006. The welcome party was held on Monday, 15th May at the national gardens, Zappeion Megaron, and resembled an outdoor pop festival with various acts taking to the stage throughout the evening, while the official sponsors, including Amstel and Cosmote, promoted their products on various exhibition stands. The after show party, of which there was one following each show, was held at Euroclub with singers coming and going throughout the early hours of Friday and Sunday morning respectively. Sadly access to Euroclub was often restricted to official delegates, but OGAE Greece had arranged Eurocafe in the Thissio area of Athens and within full view of the Acropolis. The staff, borrowed from an adjoining bar, were extremely welcoming to fans from across the European continent, while Eurovision videos of past entries were

played from early morning through to midnight every day. And that wasn't all! Throughout the week fans were treated to surprise appearances from past Greek and Cypriot entrants, including Marinella and Evridiki. The night of the semi final arrived and, as always, the mixed emotions of elation, surprise and disappointment. Few could understand why Kate Ryan had failed to qualify, while many felt that Sandra had been overshadowed too much by Carola. Bryan Kennedy was extremely happy to find his country qualifying, while LT United were considered the biggest surprise of the night. Two days later the grand final arrived and it was true to say that any song, including Lithuania's "We Are The Winners" could have won, but as the votes were announced Finland began to take an unprecedented lead. With 292 points Lordi not only gained the highest winning score ever, but also transformed the style of music from schlager to "Hard Rock Hallelujah"! Will it mean that next years' event will become the Eurovision Rock Contest? Time will tell, but for the first time in Eurovision history it is certain that the contest will be held on Finnish soil.



© Andrew Wright

2006 For The Record

*Vision's annual look at contest CD's
Other releases may be available*

ALBANIA : "Zjarr E Ftohte" Luiz Ejlli – RTSVH Promo : Albanian Television have circulated a one track CDR without inlay, the original of which is already impossible to find. Beware of illegal copies on some auction sites.

ANDORRA : "Sense Tu" Jenny – Musica Global 56406 : The contest version is accompanied by a Nacho Chapado remix. It may have come last in the semi final, but this has already been a hit in Spain.



ARMENIA : "Without Your Love" Andre – Armenian TV Promo : Like Albania this was made available on a one track CDR. The original inlay has a facial shot of Andre against a cream coloured background, but forgeries are known to be in abundance – some of which have different inlays.

BELARUS : "Mum" Polina Smolova – TVR Promo : A promotional CD containing audio and video versions

also incorporates a biography section. At present the CD has only been made available as part of the Belarus presspack for 2006.

BELGIUM : "Je T'adore" Kate Ryan – EMI 355399 2 9 : The amazing Kate Ryan's equally amazing entry that surprisingly failed to qualify is backed with "Driving Away". The five track German release (Ministry of Sound 0030205MIN) includes four versions of her Euro entry plus "Driving Away", but some copies fail to play the J-D alternative mix of "Je T'adore" (track four). A DVD (EMI 0 09463 65494 91) promo only press kit includes six videos plus the audio version, as well as photographs and biographies.

BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA : "Lejla" Hari Mata Hari – JS BiH E0064 : Issued as a CD/DVD combo, the CD contains the radio edit and instrumental version of "Lejla" while the DVD features a live performance together with biographical information.

BULGARIA : "Let Me Cry" Mariana Popova – BNT Promo : A one track CD was circulated in two different formats; one in a gatefold sleeve and the other as part of the official presspack. The latter also included a DVD containing the promotional video.

CROATIA : "Moja Stikla" Severina – Dallas Records Promo : The Croatian entry that unexpectedly found itself guaranteed a place in the final is featured in its vocal, instrumental and video versions. The CD also includes a photo gallery.

CYPRUS : "Why Angels Cry" Annet Artani – Virus Music 2108891013 : Released in limited quantities, the CD features the audio and video versions

of Annet's song. Available in a standard case, the CD was also included in the official presspack with a slightly different number (Virus Music 2108891014).

DENMARK : "Twist Of Love" Sidsel Ben Semmane – My Way Music M20099-2 : Vocal and instrumental versions of Sidsel's "Twist Of Love" are joined by the video and a selection of photographs.

ESTONIA : "Through My Window" Sandra – ETV Promo : Two versions of the song are found on the official promotional CD. A commercial release planned for Estonia will include five versions while the Swedish release (Mariann Records MLPCDS 458) has "Through My Window" with "If I Could" as a second track.

FINLAND : "Hard Rock Hallelujah" Lordi – Sony/BMG 82876 80676 2 : The radio edit and album versions of the first heavy metal Eurovision winner are joined by "Mr Killjoy" which has all the power expected from Lordi. Other releases are beginning to appear with different track listings.

FRANCE : "Il Etait Temps" Virginie Pouchain Wagram WAG 821 / 3114055 : The vocal and instrumental versions are both featured on this release. A one track white label promo is also in circulation.

FYR MACEDONIA : "Ninanajna" Elena Risteska - Macedonia TV Promo : Two different promotional releases are in circulation. The first, a CD/CD Rom combo, has the English version on a one track disc while the accompanying CD Rom contains photographs, biography and video. The second

release features English, Macedonian and Bilingual versions of "Ninanajna".

GERMANY : "No No Never" Texas Lightning – X-Cell Records 82876 80447 2 - : The first release features the latest German entry alongside Texas Lightning's unique interpretation of ABBA's "Waterloo". A revised release ahead of the contest includes a third song, "Can't Get You Horse Of My Mind", together with two videos and a photo section.



GREECE : "Everything" Anna Vissi – Columbia 6849602 : Although critics are still undecided this is likely to be remembered as the classiest entry from 2006 and two versions of "Everything" are found on the commercial release. A one track promotional CD is also in circulation.

ICELAND : "Congratulations" Silvia Night – Sena SCD350 : She may not have qualified, but Silvia gains a first for Eurovision with this Dual Disc release. One side contains the English and Icelandic versions, two instrumentals and a KGB Remix while the other side features Silvia's video in DVD format.

IRELAND : “Every Song Is A Cry For Love” Brian Kennedy – Curb CUBC118 : Brian sings two different versions of his Eurovision entry, together with “All Over The World” which came second in this years Irish final. Promotional copies have a different inlay to the commercial release.

ISRAEL : “Together We Are One” Eddie Butler – Eyal Robert Records Promo : Two one track CD’s exist, one with English titles printed on the inlay and the other with Hebrew lettering.



LATVIA : “I Hear Your Heart” Vocal Group Cosmos – Micrec/EMI MRCX 060 : Undoubtedly talented, few people knew what to make of Cosmos or their style of music. Five tracks, including two versions of “I Hear Your Heart” are featured on this release. “Ticu Un Viss” and “Tango Letnego Sada” provide two of the additional tracks, while Cosmos’s version of Michael Jackson’s “Billie Jean” has to be heard to be believed!

LITHUANIA : “We Are The Winners” LT United – MP3 CD 006 : Lithuanian Television didn’t even bother with a promotional CD, but since gaining their highest placing the song has been adopted as the Lithuanian World Cup

anthem for 2006! Consequently the CD has finally appeared combining both Eurovision and football versions together with two remixes and a video. Also released in Finland (MP3 MGM-100) with just the Eurovision, football and video versions!

MALTA : “I Do” Fabrizio Faniello – Spectre/Cap Sounds 1075123 : Maltese heartthrob and fan favourite, Fabrizio, shocked everyone when “I Do” scored just one point. The CD includes seven versions of classic Europop together with the video.

MOLDOVA : “Loca” Arsenium feat. Natalia Gordienko & Connect-R – Cat Music 10125412 : A one track CD also includes a photo gallery. An earlier version only has Arsenium pictured on the inlay. Connect-R doesn’t appear on either! A seven track promotional CDR (no number) features songs by Natalia and includes “Loca”.

MONACO : “La Coco Dance” Séverine Ferrer – TMC Promo 004409 70559 : Five versions of Eurovision’s first song performed in Tahitian are included on the promotional CD distributed to publicise Séverine’s ‘Coco Dance’.

NETHERLANDS : “Amambanda” Treble – CNR Music 23 21750 2 : An infectious song performed by three great personalities failed to qualify, but the vocal and instrumental versions can be re-lived here.

NORWAY : “Alvedansen” Christine Guldbrandsen - MBN Alvepromo 01-06 : Unusually the Norwegian entry has only been released on a one track promotional CD, although it will be included on Christine’s forthcoming album. A promotional DVD (MBN DVD Prom1-06) is also in circulation.

POLAND : “Follow My Heart” Ich Troje feat. Real McCoy – EMI/Pomaton Promo CD 703 – The ‘promotional only’ CD features “Follow My Heart” and nothing else.

PORTUGAL : “Coisas De Nada” Non Stop – RTP Promo : The CD features vocal and instrumental versions of Portugal’s retro sounding song.

ROMANIA : “Tornero” Mihai Traistariu - TVR/Roton 3934-2 : Four energetic versions of “Tornero” are found on yet another promotional CD. The recent commercial release (Chips Records 0169688 CPR) has the original version and two remixes.

RUSSIA : “Never Let You Go” Dima Bilan – Sony/BMG Promo : Audio and video versions are accompanied by song lyrics and a slide show.

SLOVENIA : “Mr Nobody” Anžež Dežan – NKA Records/RTVSLO/Szasz Promo : “Mr Nobody” is featured alongside its original version, “Plan B”. There are also karaoke tracks for both versions together with an instrumental and multimedia section.

SPAIN : “Un Blody Mary” Las Ketchup – WEA CDSG 4633422-3 : Not “The Ketchup Song” but just as infectious to some. Six versions are included on the CD that has been a top ten hit in Spain. A one track promo (WEA SPN393W) was included in the press pack.

SWEDEN : “Invincible” Carola - Universal 987885 1 : The first English release combines the vocal and instrumental versions, while the second (Universal 985820 2) contains the vocal version plus three remixes. The original Swedish version, plus instrumental, is available on Universal

985383 1. Various white label promotional copies are also available.



SWITZERLAND : “If We All Give A Little” Six 4 One – Chips PGM CPR 169681 : The commercial release contains four versions of “If We All Give A Little” together with “Friends Are Friends”. A sought after promotional CD, only issued as part of a presspack, includes the Swiss entry plus solo tracks from each of the six artists, these being “Night Fever” (Andreas Lundstedt), “Time To Fall In Love Again” (Tinka), “Got You Under My Skin” (Marco Matias), “Jerusalem” (Liel), “Sunshine In Your Eyes” (Keith Camilleri) and “Identita (Claudia D’addio).

TURKEY : “Super Star” Sibel Tüzün – Arinna Muzik/TRT Promo : TRT excelled themselves this year with a three disc set comprising CD, DVD and CD Rom. The CD contains Turkish, English, English/Greek and Remix versions of “Super Star”, while the DVD has a selection of video clips. The CD Rom contains biographical information and photographs.

UKRAINE : “Show Me Your Love” Tina Karol – Lavina Music LMCD 462 :

The contest version plus two remixes and the video were included on a promotional CD distributed as part of Tina Karol's official presspack.



UNITED KINGDOM : "Teenage Life"
Daz Sampson – Sony/BMG 28768
34222 0 : Daz may have failed at
Eurovision, but he has provided the UK

with a top ten hit which is virtually unheard of in recent years for contest entries. Five versions of "Teenage Life" are accompanied by the official video. A one track promotional CD also exists, as do the controversial DJ white label releases from 2004.

VARIOUS : "Eurovision Song Contest Athens 2006" – CMC C00205-2 : As more and more countries ignore commercial releases and distribute limited numbers of promotional CD's the official compilation has become the essential purchase for those wanting to listen to all competing songs again and again. Admittedly some versions are slightly different to their commercial or promotional releases, but at less than £15 this double album is going to prove more affordable than some of the auction prices on rarer items.

Eurovision 2007 Tickets

The European Broadcasting Union announced in Athens that the 52nd Eurovision Song Contest would be held on Thursday, 10th and Saturday, 12th May 2007. This has since been confirmed by Finnish broadcaster YLE together with the additional information that the event will be held at Helsinki's Hartwall Arena – yes, that is how arena is spelt in Finnish!

Already more than 90 OGAE UK members have shown interest in travelling to Finland next year, increasing the likelihood that tickets will be balloted for the first time. ERT generously allocated 65 tickets for UK fans this year, but the average over the last six years has been 40 – excluding 2001 when none were issued to OGAE by the Danish organisers!

It is far too early to know whether OGAE will be offered tickets next year, but anyone who is already considering travelling to Helsinki should write **immediately** to OGAE UK, 51 Greenfields Avenue, Totton, Southampton SO40 3LU requesting entry to any future ticket ballot. Where possible an e-mail address should be provided and all requests should be received by 1st December 2006. Any requests received after that date will be placed on a waiting list and only considered if additional tickets become available.

Please note, any request made does not guarantee that tickets will be made available. As in previous years, any ballot will be restricted to one ticket – one member and only those living in the UK will be eligible.

Eurovision Song Contest Final 20th May 2006

Country	Total	Albania	Andorra	Armenia	Belarus	Belgium	Bosnia H.	Bulgaria	Croatia	Cyprus	Denmark	Estonia	FYRoM	Finland	France	Germany	Greece	Iceland	Ireland	Israel	Latvia	Lithuania	Malta	Moldova	Monaco	Netherlands	Norway	Poland	Portugal	Romania	Russia	Serbia M.	Slovenia	Spain	Sweden	Switzerland	Turkey	Ukraine	UK		
Finland	292	10	7	8	7	5	10	5	12	12	6	8	10	12	12	10	7	8	10	7	8	10	7	6	7	12	12	6	4	8	7	8	10	12	8	7	7	12			
Russia	248	4	6	12	12	3	6	10	7	8	2	10	8	12	2	6	8	5	5	12	12	5	10	2	3	10	7	8	5	4	7	7	5	4	7	7	5	12	1		
Bosnia H.	229	12	5	4	6	7	12	2	8	12	10	6	7	6	3	2	2	4	5	12	12	4	5	12	8	8	4	2	7	6	12	12	1	10	12	12	10	10	1		
Romania	172	2	3	4	3	2	2	2	5	10	6	4	2	6	7	5	7	2	6	10	2	1	10	12	1	10	12	8	4	3	10	2	2	3	1	10	12	12	10	6	
Sweden	170	10	8	6	5	5	3	3	10	7	1	7	3	5	2	7	7	5	7	5	6	2	5	12	8	8	4	2	7	8	5	2	1	7	6	2	10	12	12	10	6
Lithuania	162	7	6	4	1	6	4	7	8	3	8	5	5	2	10	3	10	5	6	1	6	5	7	2	8	2	1	6	12	3	10	2	2	3	1	8	10	8	5	10	
Ukraine	145	5	10	10	8	12	8	3	4	6	5	5	2	10	3	10	5	6	1	6	5	7	2	8	2	1	6	12	3	10	2	2	3	1	8	10	8	10	8	7	
Armenia	129	8	1	8	2	10	1	12	12	7	1	5	8	4	1	4	1	1	4	6	4	3	8	1	5	10	4	7	2	5	2	1	5	3	3	4	5	4	7	7	
Greece	128	8	1	8	2	10	1	12	12	7	1	5	8	4	1	4	1	1	4	6	4	3	8	1	5	10	4	7	2	5	2	1	5	3	3	4	5	4	7	7	
Ireland	93	4	3	7	10	4	2	5	6	4	1	4	12	12	3	1	1	4	6	4	10	4	7	2	5	2	10	4	7	2	5	2	1	5	3	3	4	5	4	7	
Turkey	91	7	7	7	10	4	8	6	8	4	12	12	3	1	12	3	1	1	4	6	4	3	8	1	5	10	4	7	2	5	2	1	5	3	3	4	5	4	7	7	
FYRoM	56	3	7	8	6	8	10	3	10	2	10	3	10	5	6	1	6	5	7	2	6	10	2	1	10	12	8	4	3	10	2	2	3	1	10	12	12	10	10	8	7
Croatia	56	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Norway	36	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Germany	36	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Latvia	30	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Switzerland	30	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Denmark	26	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
UK	25	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Moldova	22	6	12	1	1	4	2	3	1	1	4	2	3	1	1	4	2	3	1	1	4	2	3	1	1	4	2	3	1	1	4	2	3	1	1	4	2	3	1	1	4
Spain	18	6	12	2	2	3	1	1	4	2	3	1	1	4	2	3	1	1	4	2	3	1	1	4	2	3	1	1	4	2	3	1	1	4	2	3	1	1	4	2	3
France	5	4	2	4	2	3	1	1	4	2	3	1	1	4	2	3	1	1	4	2	3	1	1	4	2	3	1	1	4	2	3	1	1	4	2	3	1	1	4	2	3
Israel	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Malta	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Finland Rocks

They have possibly changed the face of Eurovision for ever and gained an impressive victory for Finland. Mr Lordi explains something of his monstrous rise to success.

“Greece was wonderful” Mr Lordi begins. “I love Greek food and the amazing sites that we were able to visit.” He adds “I’m not sure what some of the people thought of us though.” Perhaps their appearance caused alarm because some leaders within the Greek Orthodox Church had described the band as Satanists prior to their arrival in Athens. Mr Lordi is defensive. “We are not Satanists and we do not worship the devil. It’s a stage act” and reveals that he sometimes goes to Church. “If I have the choice between spending eternity in flames or sitting on a cloud listening to some harp music, then I know which one I would choose. I don’t want to burn in hell, I want to go to heaven” Mr Lordi declares with evangelical fervour.

So how did the group evolve and what is the history behind it? “It must be 14 years ago. I was at film school and had to make a rock video for one of my exams. I was the only one without a mask and when I saw the finished product I thought ... I thought I should wear a mask too! We are the coolest looking rock band in the world.” And the name? Mr Lordi continues by explaining that Lordi was the nickname given to him by his school friends, so combining the name, costumes and music gave birth to a new rock phenomenon, Lordi, all those years ago.

Since then the line up has changed when two of the original members decided to leave. “We were lucky with

their replacements” Mr Lordi confirms, pointing out that the chemistry between the various band members is just as important as the music itself. Known throughout Finland, Lordi have also developed a strong following beyond their homeland. “We toured Europe last year and appeared at the UK’s Download Festival” where the band made a further appearance in June 2006 following their Eurovision victory. Lordi have also spent time in Germany where their style of rock music is increasingly popular.

It is also significant that viewer ratings among UK teenagers were at their highest for many years and, when asked, most of them had tuned in because of Lordi rather than Daz Sampson! Mr Lordi laughs at his apparent success. “I am the monster of monsters” he jokes, “and I lead a group of five monsters from different ages and different dimensions. We have an alien and an Egyptian mummy among us. On the musical side we are a heavy rock band, playing melodic 80s hard rock. If the teenagers like us then it’s got to be good.”

And the costumes? Will Lordi ever be seen without their costumes? “Some of our fans have seen us without the masks, but they respect us too much to take photographs.” Mr Lordi remains emphatic. “Lordi will never be seen without our costumes. Only in private do we become ourselves.” It is a Jekyll and Hyde relationship between the band members on stage and their hidden true selves. Recent photographs claiming to be the ‘real’ Lordi are quickly dismissed, while an army of Finnish fans are actively seeking to ensure no one publishes pictures of Lordi unmasked.

But what about the man behind the monstrous face? “I’m actually a quiet person. Mr Lordi encourages me to do

things that I wouldn't normally do. Today I am a monster, but the first monster I owned was Animal from The Muppet Show" revealing the two extremes of how monsters are depicted in a modern age. Mr Lordi is still surprised at the bands Eurovision success though. "When Finnish Television contacted us I thought they were joking" he recalls, recognising that heavy rock music and Eurovision schlager are not the most obvious of companions. Prior to Eurovision some suggested that Lordi would scare younger viewers with their less than conventional appearance. "Who is really scared?" asks Mr Lordi. "Is it the children who are scared or their parents who make them scared?" It's a valid point and

one that does not necessarily have a simple answer. "We won the Eurovision Song Contest looking like this" Mr Lordi adds, "so it goes to show that Europe is not such a bad place after all."

"How weird is this? How cool is this?" Mr Lordi reflects on an impressive victory in Athens. "Think about it. A rock band just won a pop song contest. This is weird and strange and interesting. This is for all rock fans, hard rock fans, metal fans and Kiss fans. And we didn't just win – we won it for Finland."

He concludes by hoping that Eurovision will see a greater variety of music in the future, with a personal desire that more rock and metal bands join the competition. JPB/GL



© Lordi

Retrospective 2006

Once again Darren Jenkin takes an affectionate, albeit sometimes irreverent look at Eurovision 2006



© EBU

And so 32 years after their debut, finally it was Athens calling. Almost immediately it was evident that ERT had produced a spectacular stage in an impressive auditorium. The intro of past Euro hits was fun and set the stage for what was to follow. It was just a shame that not one of the seven Irish winners were represented. The hosts Sakis and Maria, pictured above, were obviously scripted, but appeared enthusiastic which was more than could be said for Paddy O'Connell who was very under-rehearsed and seemed to know little about the participants.

The Semi Final (Non Qualifiers)

Following their abysmal debut last year, Bulgaria upped their game in Athens. Mariana started slowly but by the first chorus proved what an exceptional singer she is. I liked the melancholy melody and it was an effortless presentation. However, the whole effect was ruined by what appeared to be Brigitte Nielson sporting a goatee

whaling like a castrated cat on the side lines.

Anzej from Slovenia proved to be one of the strongest singers in this years contest. He gave a sterling performance of an unremarkable but crowd pleasing Euro song. Weaker songs seemed to qualify ahead of this. Maybe the lack of gimmicks went against it though personally this is why I enjoyed it more than I thought I would. I don't know why Slovenia has become the forgotten and unvoted for former Yugoslav nation.

Then everything went dark ...

For the first time since October, Ludgvan suffered a power cut. Needless to say I morphed into a Euro Tourettes sufferer. Mercifully, the power came back on during the performance of Jenny. How I wished the power had stayed off. Quite why Andorra sent an ample bosomed Kinga look-a-like and then made her writhe uncomfortably among four Moulin Rouge wannabes. They should have invested in a costume designer and some backing singers for the chorus instead.

The theme for Belarus this year seemed to be frenzied. Looking remarkably like Paula Abdul, Polina was certainly the most energetic performer of the night. It wasn't all bad either, although attention should have been paid to lyrical pronunciation as I couldn't understand a word she was singing. It was a shame the lyric of "Mum" was sung in a lower key but the Queen style ending was excellent.

Luiz took the prize for most uncomfortable looking performer in his preview video. Therefore, it was a pleasant surprise to see one of the most natural looking vocalists of the night fit so easily with those around him on stage. This was an honest portrayal of traditional Albanian folk and modern pop. I was quite sorry this didn't qualify.

Eurovision favourites don't always take the prize but the failure to qualify this year for Kate Ryan must surely be one of the contests biggest ever shocks. I cannot deny that the performance wasn't a little over fussy and Kate was by no means the best singer on show, but if there were eleven better songs than this, then I was watching a different show. If this was known as the former Yugoslav Republic of Belgium, we would have heard this again in the Saturday show. Regrettably, this is what is wrong with the current voting system.

Like last year song number nine was the semi final heart string wrenching ballad. Also like last year it was immaculately performed. Draped in Cypriot bling I thought Annet gave the best vocal performance of the night. Her yellow dress stood out among the dimly lit stage and the subtlety of her backing singers. Alas, like last year, song number nine was also three minutes of imposed saccharine bile.

I must admit a sneaking regard for this years Monegasque entry. Looking like Girls Aloud's Cheryl Tweedy, Severine was never going to emulate her name sake of 1971. Vocally this never really got going but visually it was fun, cute and just about their best effort since their return in 2004.

So much was right with this years' Polish entry. The Real McCoy was a very pleasant blast from the past and was the best thing on stage when he got there! As for the others, their vocals couldn't be faulted but they would've been over dressed for a wedding on 'Footballers Wives'. Personally I think this cost them a place in the final.

It was always going to be a tough draw after the Finns for Treble. Their performance was competent and slightly engaging, but also very repetitive and unmemorable.

"Amambanda" is by no means the worst song in this year's contest, but it was all a bit too safe and the presentation gave off a virginal hen night type vibe.



© Andrew Wright

The Portuguese girls gave a much better vocal performance than I anticipated. Undeniably "Coisas De Nada" was a very old fashioned song and coupled with Non Stop's hideous dress sense this never had a chance of qualifying. However, my dearest Portugal, take heart from the Finnish victory and see you again next year.

Another I thought would qualify was Estonia's Sandra. Like Portugal it was a terribly old fashioned song, but its ABBA vibe coupled with the retro outfits and strong vocals made it memorable and it was undeniably catchy. Quite how, therefore, this finished so far behind the similarly styled Swedish entry which preceded it in the running order is a mystery.

Eagerly anticipated was Iceland's performance. Alas, however, Silvia's outbursts and overacting took this joke too far in a country with absolutely no sense of humour. The vocals were too screechy and not good enough, and the golden shower reference was grim. I adored the guy running around waving the flag. Genius. On the whole though, a great idea that just fell a little flat.

After the semi final, my placings were Belgium first followed by Ukraine,

Turkey, Portugal, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Slovenia, Monaco, Iceland, Albania, Estonia, Russia, Ireland, Poland, Bosnia Herzegovina, Finland, Belarus, Netherlands, Sweden, Andorra, Armenia, FYR Macedonia and, in last place, Cyprus.

The Final

While the semi final intro was quite entertaining things were rather more long winded in the final. I seem to remember some dolphins and always like the reprise of the host country's winning song to set the scene and get the crowd going, but other than that just say hello and get on with it. So let's go and you'll find my personal placings in brackets.

The desperation of the Siegel/Meinunger partnership to win this contest again is wearing a little thin. It was a tacky idea using artists from six different nations especially given that the song wasn't anything special either. Some strong singing though and how very kind of Malta to award twelve points to its very own Tony Wegas clone. (15th)



© Andrew Wright

The silly season started early thanks to the Moldovans. Looking like a cross breed of Martin Stenmarck and Big Brother's Seezer, Arsenium and Co. just didn't have it in them to inject any

real interest into the song. With silly lyrics and pointless costume changes this "loca" was a bit of a "shocka" and rightly they must return to the semi final next year. (22nd)

Potentially the Israeli entry could've been very good. It's a little dull on CD but Eddie performed this so well at Kdam. In Athens, though, it was all a bit of a mess. He looked stupid lying on the piano and although six great singers individually, collectively it was absolutely painful towards the end of the song. A shame really as the song was better than second to last. (23rd)

Apart from the robot I was very impressed with Latvia's efforts this year. Without the anorexic tin man and the first minute of wailing the boys vocally excelled and the chorus was one of the strongest of the night. None of those drawn early did anything special on the scoreboard but I reckon if this was among the final few sung it would have been in the top 10. Great effort. (8th)

I thought Donna Air was singing for Norway. What a beautiful ensemble they all made. Christine had a strong and, dare I say, elfish voice, and it fitted the enchanting melody so perfectly. This was another that seemed to be forgotten during the voting which is a shame because soon Eurovision will be full of over visualised nonsense. We must protect those who keep it simple because after all this is a song contest. (4th)

Then countries such as Spain won't have to resort to hiring Sinead O'Conner and her chums to look so hideously out of place in an attempt to remain memorable among so many other countries distractions. In all reality the girls in their swivel chairs would've been more than enough without going overboard visually. It was still un bloody awful cancion. (21st)

Despite its remarkable similarity to the Swedish entry in 2003 I was a fan of the Maltese song going into the show. Sadly this was just about the biggest disaster of the night. The male backing singer was woefully loud and out of tune, and given that Fabrizio was having a vocal nightmare himself it was an excruciating three minutes. Not sure why he was dressed like Siegfried and Roy but whatever, bring on the lions! (14th)

I think the Germans would have been very disappointed with their placing. I thought this would finish well into the top 10 especially as they had one of the most engaging lead singers in Jane Comerford. Musically this wasn't really for me, but I loved her quirky countrified movements and the whole group looked professional and showed they had lots of experience. A German Woolpackers perhaps? Yee Ha. (12th)

Denmark got it oh so wrong this year. The idea was poor for a start, but who on earth dressed this poor lass? It would be wrong of me to suggest that she couldn't sing but the way she kept throwing her head back to reach some of the higher notes leaving her mermaid locks to go all over the place was most off putting. Also Sidsel had absolutely no stage presence and looked quite out of her depths at times. Johnny? Come on home mate. (18th)

Dima Bilan is Mark Owen with a mullet. He sang this very well I thought and for once wasn't overshadowed by his backing ensemble. "Never Let You Go" was just about the most contemporary song of the night and, for that reason alone, it was good to see it do so well. The piano lady idea was well thought out and Russia can be proud of their efforts this year. (9th)

If ever there was an argument for doing away with the current voting system may I present to you the last three

years of FYR Macedonia's participation. For three years they've been able to qualify on the strength of their neighbours voting only to score similar points in the finals. No way should Elena have got through from the semi especially with such a weak vocal performance. You could say that Poland have missed out for the past two years because of this. And the song was rubbish. (24th)

Mercifully Mihai was bang on form for his performance of "Tornero". Again he was charismatic enough and didn't need the dancers on stage with him. Definitely one of the most natural performers on stage and with a voice that I hope to hear again at Eurovision again one day. If only it were to be Bucharest 2007. (1st)



© Andrew Wright

Loved the new version of "Lejla" complete with Wogan's dulcet tones during almost all of the intro. Doubtless that this was always going to be the main Balkan challenge for the title but to finish only one place behind the vastly superior "Lane Moja" seemed wrong to me. The staging was spot on, though, and was so atmospheric. Hari himself sang very well and reminded me a little of ASFE veteran Simon Spiro at times. (17th)

Good old Lithuania. To put in such a polished and very funny performance in the wake of such a hostile crowd was

quite remarkable. I kept thinking of Van Halens "Jump" at times during this and that wasn't a bad thing at all. In the wake of the cruel audience, especially when their poor jury spokesperson got jeered which was despicable, such a high placing must have been sweet indeed. (5th)



© Andrew Wright

What a great name Daz is! So we went for gimmicks in plenty this year and still nobody liked us. Mr Sampson cannot be faulted for his enthusiasm and total lack of modesty, and although way under marked it was good to see a UK entry back in the British top 10. The chorus was strong and very well sung by the girls. Daz himself seemed to be suffering from upper body rickets at times. On behalf of surely all UK Euro fans, thanks for the enthusiasm mate and good luck in whatever you do. (7th) Now I feel I know a Euro frontrunner when I hear one and I never heard it with Greece this year. However, almost all the bookies and many fellow fans disagreed with me so I went with the flow. So slightly smugly I was more than happy with Greece's final position especially after the totally over the top performance from Anna. What was that all about? Was a certain Mr Kirkirov her mentor? Anna can be proud of the wonderful show she put on. (16th) I bet Lordi were sweating like pigs in all that gear. So we all knew what was

coming and visually stunning is all I can say. From a purists point of view I was a little disappointed in the total disregard for vocals with the exception of the keyboardist who carried the song through its strong chorus. The best thing about their victory was a first win for one of Eurovision's old guard. Lordi came with extra protection too. He had wings. (13th)

Tina Karol reminded me a bit of Cat Deeley facially. Loved Ukraine this year and was chuffed to see it do so well. Again the gimmicks used were well thought and not too intrusive, and what a set of lungs Tina has on her. Such a shame that, yet again, Mr Wogan saw fit to interrupt during the song to say something that wasn't even remotely amusing. (2nd)

The dress rehearsal reports didn't offer much hope to the vocal capabilities of Virginie and, while she never looked entirely at ease on stage, this wasn't the disaster that really it could've been. I do actually quite like the song, but I'm not entirely sure that this kind of thing has a place in Eurovision anymore due to its subtlety and total disregard to conform to visual stereotype. (10th)

However, in a knowingly written contradiction the visuals made a strong Croat entry even better. Severina excelled as the diva in this musically well structured song and I was expecting a place in the top six for this. Again marred by our commentating buffoon, he really must learn to keep quiet during the songs especially as he his stopping UK voters from giving some songs a fair hearing. Anyway, nice one Croatia. (3rd)

At least something subtle did reasonably well this year, so congratulations to Ireland. Brian facially looked like actor Neil Pearson. Again the green background was a fine homage to the Irish and the effect

looked great on the television screen. Just a shame they couldn't find a shirt to fit the male backing singer. Other than that, a job well done. (11th)

There is just something about Carola I don't get. Undoubtedly she is a wonderful vocalist and can reach some great notes with a strong amount of power. Maybe it's just me, but I just sensed a desperation about her in trying to win again and the visual side was a bit clinical. It's all been seen and heard from better Swedish entries in the past. (20th)

Sibel upped her vocals a couple of notches after the semi final where she was a little weak. I've become bit of a Turkish fan over the past couple of years and I loved the vibe of "Super Star" too. It had a bit of disco, some spoken vocals and a good old Euro chord change at the end. One to bop until you drop to! (6th)

Another I didn't expect to qualify was Armenia and, given that they were first on in the semi and the song wasn't good, expect a victory for them sometime soon! Actually as a piece of ethnic music it wasn't that bad. It was just a shame Andre had to sing. Maybe if the chords had been pulled a little tighter around his throat he may have been able to hit some of the higher notes. He wore his combats in tribute

to the famous Status Quo song "In the Armenia now" ... (19th)

"Mambo" was another excellent song from Helena and would've made more of a title defence than "Everything". Other than that the interval section was weak and the voting gets more boring by the year. Only announcing the top scores may have speeded things up a bit but it was hard to keep track of what was going on. All the neighbourly voting is getting worse and it's hard to put up any constructive argument to non fans. I'm not saying the Finnish victory wouldn't have happened regardless of any voting system and they won fair and square, but I predicted correctly the top marks of 32 of the 38 countries voting. How boring! Yet again your retro votes have been steadily arriving since the contest ended and your results and comments will be printed next time. Please keep sending me your votes for the three categories (semi final, final and combined) and any comments you wish to make about any or all of the songs by posting me the form found in the centre of Vision issue 64. Alternatively you can e-mail me your top 10's for the three categories and any comments to ahotspur@hotmail.co.uk Friends and family members are also welcome to vote. Until next time then.



Mihai on a High

Back in issue 54, the Romanian duo Valahia was interviewed. The duo is now no more, but former member Mihai Traistariu won the TVR pre-selection with "Tornero". Thanks to the support given by Vision in the past, Mihai granted Marcus Keppel-Palmer exclusive access before, during and after Eurovision.



© Mihai Traistariu

It's been a week since Mihai Traistariu, native of the Black Sea city of Constanta and possessing one of the most unique voices in pop music, won the Romanian pre-selection with his Italian/English song "Tornero". He won the jury vote and came second in the televote and so at his sixth attempt this self-confessed lover of Eurovision finally got the chance to represent his

country at Eurovision. Mihai, described as a ginger-haired Hobbit by some, is very excited as we first speak. I ask him how he was feeling. "It's great! I've been trying for several years, because competing at Eurovision is one of my greatest dreams. And now, finally, it's come true!"

His enthusiasm is infectious. I ask him how he came to enter with "Tornero". "I had eight songs to choose from" he explains, "but I liked the song and thought it would suit me, even if my audience is not used to hearing me sing uptempo songs. But I think it's very catchy and easy to remember; easy for the public to sing along to." And how he will be proved right on a hot Athens night! Mihai continues "it's my first collaboration with Eduard Circota, the composer, and this is his first go at pop music. Until now he used to work in TV and advertising, composing music. He approached me and asked if I wanted to sing his song for Eurovision. I listened to the song and said YES!!!" So what is the meaning behind "Tornero" I ask? "'Tornero" is a love song," says Mihai animatedly, "but, even if the lyrics talk about separation, I think it's very optimistic. It's a kind of promise. I'll come back and ... I'll give my life to you."

We talk about dance routines, and whether Mihai thinks he'll need a dance routine to win. Reflecting back on the pre-selection, Mihai says "in the final, the show will be completely different. There won't be dancers; we'll have a completely different show. I think people vote firstly for the song, secondly for my voice and then for the show." He adds whistfully "I hope they'll like me".

I ask him about the pre-selection and which of the rival songs Mihai feared most. "Well ... I had to compete with what is a strong hit here in Romania.

It's a song called "Jokero" with the boyband Akcent singing it. That song was a radio hit, as well as being a club and disco hit. Everybody knew their song before the final. My song was unheard before the contest, so I was fighting with a song that was broadcast. But the jury and public seemed to prefer my song." Mihai has had experience before of being unlucky in the pre-selection. "I have tried six times so far, everytime before placing 2nd, 3rd or 4th. This time I had the big chance and the song counted!" But Mihai knows the Eurovision final is a different ball game. "When I am in Athens, I'll just be concentrating on the contest. I have already performed in five international festivals, and every time I have been looking to win the big prize. Eurovision will be the same. Already we have changed the song from the original version, and our show will be different from the national final." I ask Mihai about his plans for his career after Eurovision. He looks pensive. "I think this contest could be a great opportunity to have international success. I will do my best to make an international career. It's my dream." There is no denying Mihai's steely ambition and determination. Don't be fooled by his slightly waifish looks. We chat about other things, such as Eurovision history. Mihai likes ballads from the past such as winners by Johnny Logan, Celine Dion and Toto Cotugno, although in the past few years he has liked the upbeat dancy songs. "That's why this year I am singing a dance song in the contest. Previously I got awards for my ballads. This year is my premiere with a dance song". I ask him about Valahia. "Dorin is married now with a child already, so he's not singing anymore. I have wanted to be a solo artist since I was a child. But I think it was better to start in a boyband. I've

now got a lot of experience." He continues ruefully "showbusiness is difficult. It's no joke. It's hard".

Does he have plans to release an album after Eurovision? Mihai is enthusiastic. "Yes, of course. We will promote the song all over Europe first. We have already made two remixes for clubs. We have sent it to lots of radio stations and big companies to stimulate interest. I'll be going to promote "Tornero" in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Turkey, Bulgaria, France and next week in Greece. It's so wonderful!!"

In the intervening weeks, Mihai e-mails me with enthusiastically about his European tour, updates about the progress of "Tornero" in the charts and enthusiastic updates as fan polls consistently rate him a potential winner. He films a video and has photo shoots. So next time we speak it's the day of the semi final and Mihai has been in Athens for a week rehearsing. He's invited me to come to the Romanian Embassy for a reception which is being filmed by TVR. The Embassy is located in a leafy northern suburb and I'm slightly non-plussed to be able to walk in unchallenged. How different from Cold War days!

The whole Romanian delegation is there and I'm the only foreigner. There are drinks and Romanian delicacies which look suspiciously like sausage rolls. The delegation has an air of confidence and the dancers mill around like naughty children and they look very young! Mihai is very much the ringmaster, signing autographs for embassy staff, introducing the team and talking to everyone. He doesn't have a drink nor any food. He and I get away for a few minutes to chat in the garden. I notice that Mihai is slightly tired and perhaps is feeling the pressure.

I start by asking him about what he's been up to since we last spoke. His eyes sparkle. "I have always wanted to make a European tour and this has given me the chance. We have toured everywhere and the song has been played everywhere. It's been especially good to have been doing promotion in Greece, as I have been doing work with Anna Vissi. We have been doing a lot of promotion together. We were at a party together and she made me promise that if I win Eurovision, I'll do a duet with her!" I ask cheekily whether there is romance between Mihai and Anna. Mihai grins.

I ask him about what he's done since arriving in Athens. "Well, we've rehearsed a fair amount. We now have a dance routine mixing street dance and ballet. But I still think the song and the voice are more important. I have been involved in choosing the clothes I'm going to wear. And we've done lots of press conferences." He sounds tired of that. I suggest that the press conferences aren't that thrilling. His press officer, Oana, has already said as much. Mihai agrees, saying that he wasn't asked any interesting questions. And has he met the other performers? "Yes, of course. But there are some that aren't very friendly!" He won't be drawn publicly on who they are.

What about his post Eurovision career? "We've signed a deal with Jupiter Records in Germany to release my new album. I've already recorded that and it should be ready to release about a month after Eurovision. There'll be 16 songs on it and ten are in English. "Tornado" is on the album of course." Finally, I ask him what he'll do as preparation for the final. He answers "I will need to rest my voice. I will just be in my bedroom alone resting, without anyone around. I will be focussing on giving the best performance I can." With

that the TVR cameras find us and our little chat is over.

We wander back in and Mihai introduces me to Eduard Circota, the composer. He seems much more relaxed and confesses that he'll probably be returning to writing jingles. I ask if he'll work again with Mihai, and, although he is awestruck by Mihai's five octave range, I get the impression that "Tornado" is it. Eduard is sanguine that pop music and Eurovision pop is disposable. He has no illusions that "Tornado" has a limited shelf life. He is confident they'll do well, but now with the white heat of competition glowing, no one is predicting victory.

Of course, Mihai gives it all he can and the points pile in from around Europe. But it's never enough to overhaul Lordi, but a fourth place finish is still creditable. Three weeks have passed now and we speak again. This time Mihai is back home in Constanta. With hindsight, I ask him how he felt now. He is upbeat once again. "I feel great. Eurovision gave me the opportunity to sign several record contracts. The result wasn't just all there was to Eurovision. It's great to sign with Jupiter to release records in Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, Cyprus, Greece and other places. I'll be out promoting the new album and we're filming new video clips for TV. In fact, we have a clip playing on MTV already. And many other companies are interested in me for the USA. We are talking to Universal at the moment."

What is his view about his Eurovision performance? "At the time I was not happy with the result. I really wanted to win, but now I accept that it was a good result. Eurovision is a different contest now. Some people commented that my show could have been better. Perhaps we should have changed the dance routine. But I still say that the song and

the voice are more important.” Mihai is refreshingly honest. Which other songs did he like? Again he is enthusiastic, a real fan of Eurovision. “I really liked the Russian song; that was fantastic. I didn’t expect Finland to win.” His astonishment rings through in his voice. “They did really well, Lordi. It was an interesting new image. But the song wasn’t great. The image won. The show won.”

What was the reaction in Romania? How did his fans take it? “The reaction in Romania was great. I am in the newspapers every day and on TV. We did a show last week showing behind the scenes in Athens. On the 24th June my home city, Constanta, is recognising me as a Citizen of Honour. My fans have been supporting me more and more. Everywhere I go, I get many new fans, especially mums and dads who all followed me in Eurovision.” It certainly sounds as if Eurovision hasn’t harmed Mihai’s career. “That’s right. I’ve had no chance to rest yet” he says. “I have been invited to sing with the Philharmonic Orchestra and a 200 voice choir. I’ll be the first pop musician invited. I feel really honoured. And although I need a holiday, I’ll be doing another tour of Europe. Tomorrow I fly to Greece for the MTV Awards, where I’ll be singing “Tornero” in a duet. I’ve been nominated in two categories. Then I fly off to Malta, Cyprus, Estonia and Sweden to do promotion and sing on shows. I guess that’ll be my holiday! Then it’s back to Romania to perform in the Mamaia festival in August. I won’t be in the competition this year, but I’ll be a guest artist.”

I ask Mihai if he’ll come to England. Again, he is enthusiastic at the prospect. “England is the number one place to promote an artist worldwide. I must come. I need to be in the heart of European music. I consider England to

be perfect to launch an international career. I certainly hope to be in England in September or October this year.” Finally, and rather inevitably, I ask Mihai whether, in light of his experiences this year he’ll consider doing Eurovision again. I hear him grin sheepishly. “Not next year, maybe in a few years. But if my international career takes off then I don’t think I’ll be back in Eurovision”.

With his focus and drive, with his unique voice and friendly disposition, it’s certainly likely that Mihai Traistariu will have considerable success. It seems a shame that it means he’s unlikely to tread the Eurovision stage again. Perhaps we can get him to change his mind. It’s been a long journey with Mihai following him from his pre-selection win to post-Eurovision, but there’s no one who would have been better company. Bravo Mihai.



© Andrew Wright

ESC Online

So that was the contest that was – and congratulations to Lordi for finally bringing Finland the victory they've deserved for a long, long time. I mentioned their website in the last issue (www.lordi.org), but it's worth mentioning again because this is presumably where information on future tours and TV appearances will be posted, or at least it will be as soon as they've recovered from the shock of winning!

Let's not forget those who came so near and yet so far, though. Runner-up Dima Bilan has a website that fits his status as something of a teen idol in Russia, and there's even a charmingly stilted English version (www.bilandima.ru/enghtml) where, among other things, "you may choose excellent wallpaper with Dima Bilan". Elsewhere, third-placed Hari Mata Hari's official site can be found at www.hari-mata-hari.com, albeit with a lot of content in Bosnian – so it may be better to rely on that old favourite, www.eurobosnia.com, instead.

But it's Finland who'll be hosting the next Eurovision Song Contest, whether in Helsinki, Turku or a little village inside the Arctic Circle, and UK-based Finn Juha Repo will attempt to give readers the inside scoop on every last detail of the preparations with his new site, ESCFinland (www.escfinland.eu). This well-designed page already has an impressive news section and promises the addition of a retrospective take on Finland's ESC and national final history in the near future.

A lot of the goings-on in ESC week were comprehensively covered by the various weblogs out there, but as the saying goes, a blog is not just for Eurovision! All year round there are

commentators giving their spin on various aspects of the contest, its singers and all manner of related (and unrelated) topics – like the mysterious Schlagerboys and their Sweden-obsessed www.schlagerblog.blogspot.com, which essentially consists of an awful lot of worshipping Shirley Clamp and hating anything with a guitar – but it's well-written and frequently amusing, so we'll let them get away with it. Meanwhile, if the Balkans (or something a little more high-brow) are more your cup of cocoa, Catherine Baker of La ESCena fame has an excellent blog on the local pop scene, culture, politics and anything else that comes her way – the Illyrian Gazette can be found at <http://illyriangazette.blogspot.com>.

I mentioned Ben Tumminaro's Eurovision Record Book site last summer, but it's worth mentioning again – not only because it has a new home (update your bookmarks to <http://eurovision.tummiweb.com>), but because its content has been expanded to include a high-speed, multiple-choice Eurovision quiz, an interactive voting simulator and a chance to "relive" the scoreboards from the last 20 years. You can even make the juries vote in random order to see if the tension could have been greater than in real life!

An impressive recent addition to the online ESC scene is www.eurovisionsongs.net. Run by the same chap as the "nationalfinalmp3" Yahoo Group, this site builds on the success of the mailing list by giving a permanent home to some of the knowledge gleaned from the contributors, coupled with a huge audio download archive including disqualified, replaced and withdrawn songs, alternative language versions and even some complete contests. The "Download of the Day" section also

invariably comes up with something curious and collectible.

And finally this time round, the nature of the Internet is such that a new trend always seems to come along every six months or so, and Eurovision fans are invariably able to benefit. With broadband connections becoming faster and more readily available, it was only a matter of time before one site established itself as the main source for sharing videos quickly and easily, and **www.youtube.com** appears to be it. Simply type the name of a Eurovision artist into the search box – the more recent the better, it has to be said – and you'll generally come up with a range of clips to keep you entertained and amused for a while. I've stumbled across all kinds of things so far, from ESC press conference clips and Silvia Night's post-failure tantrum to Edyta Gorniak's infamous English dress

rehearsal performance in 1994 and a bizarre mash-up involving "Twist Of Love" and "La Det Swinge", so why not take a look and see what you can find?

That's all for now. If you have any tips for sites I may have missed, do drop me a line at **m.d.faulkner@hamburg.de**. Happy surfing!



Junior Eurovision 2006

Yes, it's already time to look forward to the fourth Junior Eurovision Song Contest which will be held at the Sala Polivalenta arena, Bucharest, Romania on 2nd December 2006. However, while the European Broadcasting Union continues to stress that the junior event is becoming more and more popular, the participating countries seem to suggest otherwise.

The United Kingdom (ITV) has officially withdrawn, although Svante Stockselius has recently informed Vision that he hopes the BBC will consider taking the show from 2007. Time will tell! Denmark (DR), Norway (NRK) and Sweden (SVT) have all pulled out, but Stockselius has persuaded one of the Swedish commercial stations, TV4, to takeover from SVT.

Latvia also fails to return this year, while Poland withdrew ahead of the 2005 event. Neither France nor Switzerland seems interested in competing after just one entry each, but it's not all doom and gloom with both Portugal and Ukraine making their debut. Cyprus also re-appears following their unfortunate disqualification last year.

Consequently, 15 countries listed below will compete in Romania, one of which will be hoping to follow in the footsteps of last years winner from Belarus.

Belarus, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, FYR Macedonia, Greece, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia & Montenegro, Spain, Sweden and Ukraine

Quiz Time

In the words of Daz Sampson, it's been a long, long time – but finally we can celebrate Finland's first Eurovision victory. And what better way to pay tribute to Mr. Lordi and his merry mob than with a Finnish-themed quiz? Compiled by Martin Faulkner and Marcus Keppel-Palmer, the answers are on page 51

1. Who performed Finland's first ever entry in Eurovision and in what year?
2. Before Lordi's victory, which song gave Finland their highest placing?
3. Which legendary Finnish conductor was in charge of the orchestra for the Finnish entry almost every year between 1966 and 1989?
4. And which Finnish entry did he himself write?
5. How many times have Finland ended up with the dreaded 'nul points'?
6. What is the only Finnish entry to have been performed at ESC in the country's second national language, Swedish?
7. Much beloved of clip shows with the classic "Pump Pump", Fredi also entered the 1967 ESC with which song?
8. What relation is Monica Aspelund (1977) to Ami Aspelund (1983)?
9. Following the introduction of the douze points voting system in 1975, which was the first Finnish entry to receive an award of 12 points?
10. Geir Rönning, who sang "Why?" in 2005, is not Finnish. From which country does he come?
11. Which Finnish ESC song title contains the most umlauts?
12. And finally... which Finnish entry was re-recorded in Dutch by its original singer for use in an advert for insulating roofing tiles?



Liquid Gold – source unknown

Whatever Happened To

LIQUID GOLD

The 70s and early 80s played host to the music trend and fashion farrago that was disco. Song for Europe wasn't immune to this innovation. Marcus Keppel-Palmer looks at the disco band, Liquid Gold.

The 1981 Song for Europe was of course won, convincingly, by Bucks Fizz with "Making Your Mind Up". We all know what subsequent success both the song and the group had, the band being a poster child for 80s pop. But strange as it may seem now, Bucks Fizz weren't favoured to win the Song for Europe. Instead, favourites were disco band Liquid Gold, pictured opposite, who entered "Don't Panic" and who had already enjoyed several chart hits. As it transpired they came second, had a minor hit with "Don't Panic", but discovered that the disco wave had run its course.

So who were Liquid Gold? Were they the faceless disco aggregation that one might have expected? The band was built around the lead vocals of Ellie Hope and featured Ray Knott on bass guitar, Syd Twynham on lead guitar and Wally Rothe on drums. Ray, Syd and Wally had all grown up near each other in Buckinghamshire and their paths crossed several times before ending up in Liquid Gold. Wally was the first to make a mark, recording an album called "The Amazing Sound of S P Leary" before forming a progressive rock band called Rocket, unfortunately and shortly to become the name of Elton John's label. Syd had been in bands called Unknown People and Swampdog before being asked in 1972 to join Rocket.

By 1974 prog rock was on the wane and glam was in. Syd joined Scandinavian group, Hector, who dressed up as bover boys. Hector released several singles but failed to make the charts. So in 1975 Syd hooked up again with Wally forming a band called Brewster. By this time, Ellie Hope had been in a group called Ellie, releasing two singles, before joining a rock group with a track record of albums called Babe Ruth. There she joined Ray Knott, who had also been recruited into Babe Ruth. The band had released four albums with some success in Canada and the USA. For the fifth album, "Kids Stuff", Ray and Ellie contributed some songs as did another new member, Bernie Marsden, who later joined Whitesnake. The album was not successful and the band was dropped by their record company. While touring the album, Babe Ruth was augmented by Syd and Wally. So when Babe Ruth broke up Ellie and Ray teamed up with Syd and Wally forming Dream Coupe and getting interest from Hansa Records.

With punk changing the face of music, Dream Coupe changed from playing prog rock to playing disco music and regularly played the Luton area. Producer Adrian Baker showed interest in the group, signing them to the Creole label, and giving them a song he and Eddie Seago had written, "Anyway You Do It". By now the group's name was changed from Dream Coupe to Liquid Gold. Released in November 1978 "Anyway You Do It" reached number 41 in the charts, stalling just short of a position which would have got the band onto Top Of The Pops. Encouragingly, the single was well received in the USA as well. A single called "My Baby's Baby" was released only in the USA and reached number 48 in the Billboard charts.

This gave Baker and Seago, who had co-written a song for the New Seekers in SFE 1972 with Mike Leander, encouragement, so they signed Liquid Gold to a longer deal, releasing a follow-up single, "Mr Groovy", in May 1979. Unfortunately this too proved unsuccessful, so the band took a break while Syd and Ray joined the glamrock band Mud. Les Gray, lead singer with Mud, had split the band up and decided to put together his own version to tour as Les Gray's Mud at this time. Curiously, Ellie Hope had sung backing vocals on Mud's number one hit, "Oh Boy", in 1975. Back in the Liquid Gold fold, Baker and Seago produced the next single which was the breakthrough. Released in January 1980, "Dance Yourself Dizzy", soared up the charts reaching number two and charting for 14 weeks. With this success came a punishing workload of TV and concerts, so the band recruited a keyboardist, Tom Marshall, who had been a member of Tony Rivers & the Castaways and then Harmony Grass, who had seen a 1969 Top 30 hit with "Move In A Little Closer". The band released a follow-up single, "Substitute", in May 1980 which also made the Top 10 and then the band's only album entitled "Liquid Gold" was released which also charted. The final hit in 1980 was called "The Night, The Wine, The Roses" but this only reached number 32, perhaps understandably as it came from the album. Baker and Seago decided to enter Liquid Gold into the 1981 Song For Europe with the belter "Don't Panic" but despite being a pre-contest favourite, the group came second with their only set of top points coming from the Bristol jury. Released as a single, the song reached number 42 in the charts, which if lower than their previous records still deserves a

mention as one of the very few non-winning Song For Europe entries to chart. Following this Liquid Gold and Adrian Baker parted company. The next single released in 1982, "Where Did We Go Wrong", only reached number 52, while their next single, "Turn The Tables" written by Rob Davies (formerly of Mud), missed the charts altogether.

Ellie Hope released a solo single, "Lucky", also written by Rob Davies and by 1983 the writing was on the wall. Liquid Gold released a final single that year called "What She's Got" to indifference and split up. Initially Wally and Syd left to form a band called the Roadknights and although Liquid Gold struggled on for a little, recruiting Franco Moruzzi to play keyboards, that was really that and in 1984 the band called it a day. Tom Marshall joined Bucks Fizz as a touring musician and was involved in the coach crash which affected the band badly. Ellie Hope joined a band called Two Minds Cracked who released an album, but she and Ray Knott left the music business to run a pine furniture store. Syd joined up with Bernie Marsden to form the short-lived band 147, before he and Wally were drafted in to play for Mud with Les Gray.

Liquid Gold did reform for two gigs in 1992, but that was that. Syd Twynham spent the 90s playing with Mud and also Sweet. Wally left Mud and in 1998 joined The Searchers for whom he has been drumming since. Since the demise of Les Gray, Syd has been playing in local bands in Aylesbury, most recently The Montanas. "Don't Panic" was a song of its era, both in the disco sound and in its title taken from "Hitchhikers Guide To The Galaxy". Liquid Gold was a band of its era too, an era when it was okay to dance yourself dizzy!

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Euro Curios

Thomas Latham takes another look at some of those little known Euro facts.

Did anyone spot that the 'schoolgirl' manning the decks behind Daz Sampson's sterling performance of "Teenage Life" in Athens was Emily Reed? Emily, of course, failed to get to the Eurovision Song Contest in 2003 when her performance of "Help Me" was beaten by only four points by Jemini and "Cry Baby". At least Emily finally made it to Eurovision and also outscored Jemini (not exactly a difficult task) by 25 points! Well it beats singing in TV adverts for Kentucky Fried Chicken I suppose. Incidentally, in case you were wondering, Emily is the schoolgirl second from the right on the cover of Daz's CD single.

Speaking of vocalists who have backed British ESC entries, a book that may be of interest is "The Girl With The Glasses" - the autobiography of Maggie Stredder, who was a founder member of The Ladybirds who appeared a number of times in a Eurovision context as backing singers. They were regulars on the recordings of Sandie Shaw, such as the number one hit "There Is Always Something There To Remind Me", and so I suppose they were natural choices to appear with her when she performed "Puppet On A String" to victory in Vienna in 1967. I think I also saw her sing backing vocals behind Olivia Newton-John at the Dome in Brighton in 1974 on one of the clips featured in the BBC's recent "Boom Bang A Bang" celebration of fifty years of Eurovision. Sadly, Maggie's book has few remembrances of her Eurovision connections but as a whole it is nevertheless an entertaining read providing real insight into the lives of

the unsung heroines of the music scene.

Speaking of "Boom Bang A Bang", the song not the show, I recently came across a really obscure and tiny Eurovision connection in a book called "The Hidden Face", which features some of the caricatures produced by Nicola Jennings for "The Guardian" newspaper. On page 13 you can find the small but unmistakable, though distorted, image of 1969's co-winner Lulu. It's not as funny as some of the cartoons featuring George W. Bush and Tony Blair, but no less interesting for all that. And while we are on the subject of Eurovision artists and satire, did everyone spot 2006 winners Lordi on the front cover of number 1159 of "Private Eye" (26 May-8 June issue)? They were there to make a comment about the British government's new support for nuclear power, with the word balloon "I can assure you it's perfectly safe". I'm not sure if buyers were intended to be frightened by the possibility that nuclear radiation will turn them into monsters or Finnish rock stars. As in "Big Brother" - you decide. Another publication that has some curiosity value for Eurovision fans, but slight older this time, is 1983's "Inside BBC Television: A Year Behind the Camera". Edited by Ruth Rosenthal and featuring photographs by John Timbers, this book takes a behind the scenes look at a number of BBC productions from the previous year including, of course, the 1982 Eurovision Song Contest held in Harrogate. Across four pages you'll find some views of the stage from design, through construction to finished version complete with that years hostess Jan Leeming. Most interesting perhaps is a shot of what looks like a very cramped green room where the contestants appear to be trying their

best to look uncomfortable on brown leatherette. Why the Austrians seem to be the only ones enjoying the experience is anybody's guess.

Not very far away from Austria, alphabetically speaking that is, is Australia which is not a country I have been assiduously investigating for cover versions of Eurovision entries. However, since they have a history of broadcasting the contest, and would have also been sold many of the BBC's light entertainment shows that included Song For Europe segments in the 1960s and 1970s, it is not surprising that it seems to have been fertile ground for such things. I recently came across a publication entitled "The First Wave: Australian rock & pop recordings, 1955-1963". Compiled by Ross Laird of the National Film & Sound Archive in Canberra, it is essentially a discography of recordings aimed at the teen market in Australia between those years. Available at www.screenound.gov.au/pdf/collection_guide_thefirstwave1955-1963.pdf, it seems to reveal five cover versions of SFE and ESC songs.

The earliest is 1960's cover of "Pickin' Petals", which was originally intended to be performed in the 1960 SFE by trio The Avons until somebody realised trios were not allowed under the rules of the ESC and was eventually sung by Pearl Carr and Teddy Johnson. In Australia it was released as a single by Johnny Robson with The Two Gs (Teen TC-018). In 1961 Sydney-based pop singer Bryan Davies, who left Australia after hosting his own music show to try his luck in Britain in 1964, released a cover of "Dream Girl" (HMV EA4425 & OCLP7585) which had been sung to 4th place by Mark Wynter in that year's SFE. It also seems likely, though not certain as no copy exists in the Australian archives, that Dario

Campeotti's "Angelique" (DK61) was released in 1961 by singer Grade Wicker as a B-side to "The Wild Colonial Boy" (HMV EA4424). Unsurprisingly, "Volare" (IT58) was covered, but not until 1963 when it featured as an instrumental recorded by The Joy Boys (Festival FL31079 and FX 10771). Also released in 1963 was a cover of that year's Danish winner "Dansevise" in English as "I Loved You" and performed by Melbourne-based instrumental group The Saxons (W&G S1718).

In addition to the above, one single I recently came across is the Australian group The Family's 1975 release of "This House Runs On Sunshine" on the Sydney-based label M7 Records (MS-113), which was originally performed by The Shadows as part of their SFE appearance that year and coming third. The Shadows, of course, are best known for their instrumentals, which is a very bad link into looking at some instrumental cover versions of ESC entries. In 1968 a series of stereo LPs was released in the Netherlands under the banner "Color In Dance". The nineteenth release was subtitled "Eurovision" (Stereo Palette MPB S-3206) and featured twelve cover versions of entries from the 1960s by artists like Peter Kreuder and Teddy Mertens. Many of the tracks, if not all, would have been released previously in other formats, but this album represents a quick and easy way to own them all (UK68, DK63, FR67, IT61, IT64, LU61, ES68, BE68, UK61, BE64, MN61 and UK67).

Very few non-winning, non-British Eurovision entries have been hits in the UK singles charts, but one such entry was the top twenty hit "Go (Before You Break My Heart)" (CBS 2294). Gigliola Cinquetti's runner-up to ABBA in 1974 was the least successful of the four hits

from that year's contest, helped no doubt by the fact that it all took place in Brighton. However, it still came as a surprise to find that the song had been covered by the prolific Mantovani. Originally released in 1975, you can find his version on the CD "The Love Collection" (Spectrum 844 971-2), which also includes his 1969 cover of "Love Is Blue".

In the past I've mentioned some really rather peculiar-sounding instrumental covers of Eurovision songs, but the supply is by no means exhausted. Mike Hall's 1990 CD "His Master's Choice" (ACD101) features his version of both "Puppet on a String" and "Boom Bang a Bang" as performed on the Elka C1000 Organ. Meanwhile, over on the Hammond Organ, Ole Erling's "100 Go'e" is a four CD collection of his best, and I use that term loosely, material on MBO (596223 2). It features truly forgettable versions of DK80, IE80, ES73, DK00, DK81, NL75, DK84, DK57, DK78, UK76, IL79, DK90, SE74 plus "Ring Ring" from the 1973 Melodifestivalen as well as "Hasta Manana", which ABBA also considered submitting for Eurovision in 1974, and many many more.

As well as bizarre organ music, there have also been some very odd reggae cover versions over the years. One that I recently came across was "All Kinds Of Everything" featuring the dulcet tones of an artist called Peggy and, thankfully, it's quite short. You'll find it on a number of CD collections including "The Reggae Love Collection: Original Trojan & Creole Recordings" (Sanctuary PDSCD 593).

Speaking of Dana's 1970 winner brings me to a German cover version, and if you like German Schlager then you will love the three CD set "Schlager der 70 Jahre" (Delta Music 55 376). Eurovision winners Severine and Vicky Leandros, as well as German entrant Lena Valaitis, are among the singers featured, but you also get Edina Pop's version of "Knock Knock Who's There" ("Kom Kom Zu Mir") and Manuel's cover of "All Kinds of Everything" ("Alles Und Noch Viel Mehr").

If you have any information about releases that may be of interest to others, or even just questions, then please drop me a line: Thomas Latham, 286 Russell Court, Woburn Place, London WC1H 0NF.

Class of 2006

© Joan Street



If At First You Don't Succeed ...

He may have only come 19th, but Daz Sampson is already planning his entry for 2007. John Hodgkiss finds out more.

John Hodgkiss : First of all, congratulations for a great performance on the night. You did the UK proud and we all know you deserved a much higher placing! Before the contest it really felt as though you had the strongest support for a UK entry in a number of years. Was this the most important thing to you and are you pleased with your chart position?

Daz Sampson : Obviously it meant a lot to me to know people back home in the UK were behind me, and they've demonstrated this by going out and buying the single. I would like to think that we put in a fantastic performance on the night. The crowd in the arena certainly seemed to think so judging by the reaction we got, and this makes me feel proud that we gave it our best shot this year. I hope people in the UK agree.

JH : You seemed to be having a great time all week in Athens and had a very refreshing approach to promoting "Teenage Life". How was the whole Eurovision experience for you and what were your personal highlights?

DS : It was a fantastic week and a great experience. Meeting so many people from all over Europe was a highlight, as was performing at such a huge event.

JH : Were you surprised by the Finnish win? Which songs were your own personal favourites?

DS : Only a little. They went in with something completely different and took a risk by trying something new. They put on a great show and deserved to

win. My personal favourites were Kate Ryan, who unfortunately got knocked out in the semi final, and Greece.

JH : As a self confessed Eurovision fan, can we look forward to seeing you make another appearance at Making Your Mind Up in the future?

DS : Well, I'll be applying to enter for a few other countries first, so we'll have to see how that goes!

JH : Following Eurovision, do you have any plans to do further international promotion?

DS : I'll be at the MTV awards in Romania next Saturday (2nd June 2006) with Uniting Nations.

JH : Finally, Daz, what can UK fans look forward to next? Any plans for a new single or an album release in the near future?

DS : The next single is nearly ready, and right after that will be my album.



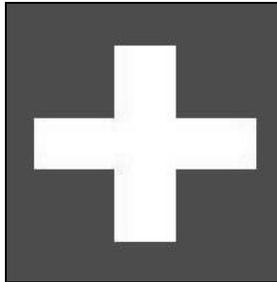
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Vision wishes Daz the very best of luck as he continues his musical career.

OGAE International Convention

14th October 2006

Switzerland



“the home of Eurovision”

OGAE UK are pleased to support the first ever international convention which will be held at Saalbau Rhyпарк, Basel

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OGAE Song Contest 2006 – UK Selection

With a record 29-member jury, Martyn Clarke once again organised the UK selection for the 2006 OGAE Song Contest to be held in Italy later this year. All 20 songs had been nominated by OGAE UK members, many of whom joined family and friends in making their votes during the long hot days of June. There truly was something for everyone in the line up, with almost every song receiving at least one 10 or 12 points during the voting process. However, there could only be one winner and this honour was awarded to former soldier James Blunt, pictured below, and his number one hit, "You're Beautiful".



Song	Performer	Pts	Pos
"Dakota"	Stereophonics	99	=7th
"Sunrise"	Angel City	109	5th
"All Time Love"	Will Young	124	3rd
"The Girl Who Falls Downstairs"	Tom McRae	42	17th
"That's My Goal"	Shayne Ward	95	9th
"So Good"	Rachel Stevens	86	11th
"JCB Song"	Nizlopi	57	15th
"Apply Some Pressure"	Maximo Park	36	19th
"Electric"	Lisa Scott-Lee	29	20th
"Army Of Lovers"	Lee Ryan	68	14th
"Nine Million Bicycles"	Katie Melua	125	2nd
"I Predict A Riot"	Kaiser Chiefs	111	4th
"You're Beautiful"	James Blunt	144	1st
"Nature's Law"	Embrace	81	12th
"Put Your Records On"	Corinne Bailey Rae	80	13th
"Ugly"	Sugababes	39	18th
"The One I Love"	David Gray	99	=7th
"Everybody's Gone To War"	Nerina Pallot	88	10th
"Fix You"	Coldplay	108	6th
"King Of The Mountain"	Kate Bush	45	16th

Richard's Round Up

Congratulations to Daz and the girls who did us proud. Despite being placed 19th (better than last!) "Teenage Life" was the first UK entry to reach the Top 10 since Precious and "Say It Again" in 1999. It was also the first, non winning, UK entry to climb the UK charts after its ESC result since Belle & the Devotions in 1984. As many of you will know Daz is a respected re-mixer and producer, usually under the Uniting Nations name, and while in Athens he revealed that he would love to remix the Anna Vissi and Kate Ryan entries for UK release. In the meantime watch out for the forthcoming Uniting Nations single. It's a danced up version of the Survivor hit from 1986, "Burning Heart".

Well done to Lordi who have taken the contest to a new level and will force many countries, and the public, to re-think their perceptions of a Eurovision song. Since winning the contest Lordi have been extremely busy promoting the song. In the UK they were a late addition to the Download festival, where I hear they went down a storm, and visited the offices of rock magazine Kerrang! where they brought the staff some champagne to help celebrate their 25th birthday. They then walked away with the "Spirit Of Hammer" award at the Metal Hammer Golden Gods Award in London and, in an interview with NME, Mr Lordi revealed that he would willingly produce a song for Morrissey if he wanted to enter Eurovision. They also mentioned that this years entries from Turkey, Iceland and Greece could all be Lordi songs!

All this promotion has paid off and given Lordi the highest charting ESC winner since Charlotte Nilsson seven years ago, although it would have beaten her if it had been on sales alone

as "Hard Rock Hallelujah" was number 16 and with an album in the Top 100. Lordi have also announced five UK dates in October for Nottingham, Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow and London - check press for details. Interestingly the group have gone to great lengths to keep their true identities hidden, but when a Finnish magazine printed pictures of the group without make-up hundreds of people cancelled their subscriptions and two major advertisers withdrew!

Brian Kennedy's single release of "Every Song Is A Cry For Love" was withdrawn in the UK to make way for the new album "Homeland" (Curb CURCD217). While in Athens I passed on best wishes from Niamh Kavanagh to Brian and he revealed that they had recorded an unreleased duet together.

Tony Christie is back in the Top 10 with "(Is This The Way To) The World Cup?" (Tug CDSNOG16) and he also has new albums on Delta ("The Legend That Is" Xtra 26532) and Prism (CHEBX 3007), which is a triple set and includes "Live at the V Festival" but both feature re-recordings of his hits. A-ha returned to the Top 40 with "Cosy Prison". It was the second single to be taken from "Analogue", but failed to return the album to the charts which has so far peaked at number 24. Vocalion have issued another Kathy Kirby compilation, "More Rarities and Lipgloss - Decca Singles 1962 -1966" (Vocalion CDLK 4292). It features two previously unreleased tracks.

Tricia Penrose joins Murray Head on the proposed single "Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow" but the track only seems to be available on the album, "Emotions" (EMI 3674752), which is an overview of Murray Head's recordings. As Sally-Ann Triplet featured on many of his recordings don't be surprised if she makes an appearance on the

album as well. Samantha Janus's new BBC sitcom "Home Again" has had a critical mauling but her next project is on the big screen starring in "Dead Man's Cards". Peter Grant covers "Walk Away" on "New Vintage" (Globe 9877257) while Russell Watson performs "Volare" on "The Voice - The Ultimate Collection" (Decca 4757672) alongside "You Raise Me Up" and his duet with Lulu "The Prayer".

1988 ESC interval act, The Hothouse Flowers, have a budget compilation issued on Warner. "The Platinum Collection" (5101130352) includes "Don't Go" alongside seven other hits. Leann Rimes duet with Brian McFadden, "Everybody's Someone", can be found on "Whatever We Wanna" (London / Curb 2564634142). It's nearly 12 years since "Total Eclipse Of The Heart" gave Nicki French her first chart hit. Now she has re-recorded the song and with the help of the Diva DJ's the single is in the shops again. Polydor have re-issued the original "Greatest Hits" by ABBA (9877156) to mark it's 30th anniversary, the only difference being that it now has the original Swedish artwork which features a cartoon drawing that includes Frida in stockings and suspenders!

The inspiration for Eminem's "My Name Is..." was, surprisingly, a little known Labi Siffre track called "I Got The...". To co-incide with a new compilation of Labi's recordings EMI have issued a limited edition 7" of "I Got The..." (EMI / Stateside SS 2232). Cheryl Baker is appearing in "Footloose - The Musical" and watch out for a new CD of Bucks Fizz rarities titled "The Lost Masters" (Sony/BMG 82876872882). Fans of Carl Wayne and Roy Wood might be interested in "Movements - 30th Anniversary Anthology" (Westside WESX 302) which draws together material recorded by The Move.

Despite several UK dates in April the release of "Don't Blame Your Daughter (Diamonds)" by The Cardigans was cancelled. The track was to have been the second single from their sixth studio album, "Super Extra Gravity", which has failed to chart so far.

It's going to be an expensive time for Matt Monro fans. Firstly the Nelson Riddle Appreciation Society have released a CD of material recorded in 1967 for a BBC concert with tracks including "Walk Away", "Born Free" and "When You Become A Man". The disc is only available by mail order from the society at 4 Jardine Cottages, Templewood Lane, Stoke Poges SL2 4BQ. "Heart Of The Man" is a compilation of previously unheard recordings recently discovered by Michele Monro, and the album is released on the Night Owl label that is distributed through Rollercoaster Records (NOMCD 101). Coincidentally this release contains a version of "Walk Away". Meanwhile EMI issue "At The Movies" on DVD (Odeon ODNM 010). Also in the pipeline are a double CD of rarities, a talking book, "The Ultimate Collection Volume 2" and a re-issue of two original albums onto one CD. In November there will be an event for fans to meet each other and it will be followed by a performance by Matt Monro Jr. Details of this and all the other items mentioned can be found at the website www.mattmonro.com

Finally, I have a MEDIUM white polo shirt with DAZ SAMPSON across the back in pink for one lucky reader to win. All you have to do is send me the name of one of the groups that Daz has had a hit with - except Daz Sampson! My address is on the inside front cover and the competition closes on 31st August. Good Luck and remember it's a MEDIUM polo shirt!

Record Reviews



DANIJELA Oaza Croatia Records 5637776

Released in 2005, this is Ms Martinovic's most recent offering based around her entry in the 2005 Song Contest at Herceg Novi in Montenegro, "Jedno Te Molim", was certainly catchy enough to have entered into Eurovision. There are 12 other strong songs here including the singles "Jednom Se Zivi" and "Gdje Mi Je Pamet Bila". Among the songs is Danijela's entry into the Dora 2005, "Za Tebe Rodena", which many felt was stronger than Boris Novkovic's winning song. Danijela sounds coquettish all the way through, which slightly belies her experience now. MKP

MICHALIS HADJIYIANNIS Live Universal 06024 9877752 7

Since representing Cyprus in 1998, Michalis has become the biggest male star in the Greek music firmament and this double CD, plus DVD, of a live performance will cement his position. There are a couple of new studio recordings, but the live

concert draws on songs from across his career, although not unnaturally relying heavily on his most recent studio album, "Akatilli Skini". There are plenty of hits here including "Monos Mou", "Mono Sta Oneira" and "To S'Agapo". As the final track makes clear, seeing Michalis in concert is a real party. This offering will satisfy many fans until the next studio recordings come along. MKP

GRETHE & JØRGEN INGMANN 100 Go'e MBO 596208 2

Grethe & Jørgen Ingmann won Eurovision in 1963 with "Dansevise" but, although they failed to turn this into international success, they had a long and productive career in their native Denmark. This four CD box set released last year features exactly 100 recordings made in a two decade period between 1956 and 1976; the couple divorcing in 1975. I've always thought that Grethe had one of the best voices to ever grace the Eurovision stage, and this is a great chance to appreciate it on a wide variety of songs. As well as both the Danish and English language versions of "Dansevise" ("I Loved You" in English) you also get a number of ESC covers including "Romantica" (IT60), "I Love The Little Things" (UK64), "Merci Cherie" (AT66), and "Boom Bang a Bang" (UK69). Towards the end of the fourth CD you also get a song called "Rosen Dør", which turns out to be their version of "A Rose Has To Die", a hit in the UK

in 1978 for The Dooleys, but which had been submitted previously for a mid-seventies Song For Europe. This is an excellent mid-price release and well worth checking out if, like me, you are a fan of Grethe Ingmann's singing and "Dansevise". TL

BRIAN KENNEDY Homebird Curb CURCD 127

After the success of "You Raise Me Up" I was surprised to see that "Every Song Is A Cry For Love" failed to get released in the UK, but listening to "Homebird" I understand the reason. Keeping his Eurovision entry out of the shops gives the buyer an incentive for buying this album and it's well worth it. It's probably Brian's easiest album to listen to. It's full of heartfelt songs wrapped in lush string arrangements. It's an artist at a new high in his career. Whether it's because he's writing and working with Callum McColl, Brendan Graham, Ronan Keating and Marc Roberts or because he's at a good place in his life, "Homebird" is original yet familiar, relaxing yet stirring and expected yet unexpected. The opening track, "If You Don't Believe In Me", sets the tone for the whole album and takes a musical journey through "Every Song Is A Cry For Love", "Coming Home", "For Once In Your Life", "All Over The World" and arrives safely back home with "You Raise Me Up". For a limited period the album comes with a bonus acoustic CD which features an alternative version of his ESC entry and

"Silver Hearts On Chains" which he co-wrote with Eddi Reader. I hope this is a flight that you will want to take again and again and I hope that it's a huge success for Brian. He deserves it. RC

BIRTHE KJÆR Six *Originale Albums Fro 1969-1977* Favorit 9874147 – LC01846

Birthe Kjær had a long and successful career in Denmark before she was finally successful in the Dansk Melodi Grand Prix with "Vi Maler Byen Rød". This box set reissues six of her LPs that originally appeared between 1969 and 1977. Birthe's musical style can be something of an acquired taste and, since the only Eurovision connections are cover versions of "L'Oiseau Et L'Enfant" (FR77), "Une Petite Francaise" (MC77) and "Ah-Haa-Vah Hee Sheer Lish-Naa-Yim" (IL 77), all of them on the last of the six discs, this is probably for diehard fans only. TL

LECIA & LUCIENNE *Rør Ved Mig* Hamlet T 30128-0 This recently released three CD box set brings together a number of recordings by the Danish female duo who appeared in the Dansk Melodi Grand Prix in 1979 (coming 7th with "Dit Liv, Mit Liv") and 1980 (also 7th with "Bye-Bye"). Curiously neither makes an appearance here, but there are plenty of other tracks with a Eurovision connection. Besides a variety of covers of songs written by Björn and Benny from ABBA, including "Waterloo" (SE74) and "Ring

"Ring" (MF73), their Danish covers of "Eres Tu" (ES73 as "Rør Ved Mig"), "Ey Sham" (IL73 as "Kom Tag Min Hånd"), "Mein Ruf Nach Dir" (CH74 as "Min Sang Til Dig") and "Pump Pump" (FI76 as "Bum Bum" – pronounced 'boom') are all finally collected on one CD. Lecia and Lucienne were great pop vocalists, but this box set does seem too expansive. Many of the melodies of songs featured on CD 3 could have easily been omitted, and their pre-selection entries included instead. All in all this release is a missed opportunity, saved mainly by being a mid-price release and having such a wealth of Eurovision covers. TL

LIEL *Unison* Yodan Productions/Vertrieb Music 7 612027 947829

At 16 years old she was the youngest member of Six 4 One, yet many thought she had the most powerful voice of the entire ensemble. On this album Liel joins forces with German rock band The Scorpions, sharing vocals on three tracks while the remaining nine are solo performances from the young Israeli singer. "Lost In You" opens the selection and is a powerful, rocky pop number that shows a different side to the Liel who co-represented Switzerland. "Send Me An Angel" is an emotive ballad and the first number to feature The Scorpions, yet played loud this still retains the power of the opening song. Other ballads follow, and each one has a message for the listener, whether that

message is about private emotions or the future of the world. But, unlike "If We All Give A Little", there is no sentimentality here. Liel's voice is dynamic and strong with an amazing consistency, and there is a good mixture of western and ethnic influences. Perhaps the most poignant track is "Jerusalem" which features as a solo number on the Swiss promotional CD. Here Liel is joined by The Scorpions' lead singer, creating a unique spiritual union between two once divided nations, Germany and Israel, and it is that type of love and unity that Liel wants the world to share. This is an amazing album from an equally amazing young lady. GL



LORDI *The Arockalypse* Sony BMG 82876789852

Thanks to Lordi's historic win in Athens, a heavy metal CD finally gets reviewed on these pages! This is actually Lordi's third studio album which is quite obvious from the slick and high quality production. Upon reading the special guests featured the names mean nothing. However, two former members of Twisted Sister and one from KISS are

revealed as guest artists, thus giving further credibility to the group. Starting with a news report all about Lordi and 'the monster invasion', advising listeners that 'these monsters will attack without warning', the tracks start in the same vein as "Hard Rock Hallelujah" and the pace rarely lets up. All in all we are treated to 12 different songs – their winning Eurovision entry featuring in a slightly longer version. Other highlights include "Kids Play With the Dead" which to the delight of many readers features a key change and "It Snows In Hell" which is a typically classy rock ballad with a great guitar riff. You'll also get to hear such gemlike lyrics as 'breathing fire, spitting blood, biting off the heads of bats and doves'...nice bunch, eh? From this CD it is clear that Lordi are planning some sort of pan European domination and, although not everyone's cup of tea, it all seems to be quite cleverly tongue in cheek and surprisingly fun to listen to. PMJ

MARIE N *Another Dream* Baltic Records BRD 219
 Marie N is back! It's just been a year since her last release, "Nesauciet Sev Lidzi", and on "Another Dream" you'll find several of the tracks from that CD. Of the 11 tracks, four are directly from her previous album. Then we have three English versions of original Latvian tracks. They seem to have been given a new lease of life in English – especially "Cry Baby" (no, thankfully Marie N is not

resorting to Jemini covers just yet). This is a moody jazz number, which Marie N seems to do so well. In addition you'll find for the first time on one of her albums the interval song from 2003 "I Feel Good" in its standard and previously unreleased remixed version. We're also treated to a new version of "On a Journey" from the album of the same name in an improved arrangement. Overall, this seems like a stop gap album just to keep Marie N in the spotlight. Nevertheless it's a lovely collection of mellow sounds and with tracks in English, French and Portuguese, there is something for everyone from the marvellous Marie N! PMJ



SAKIS ROUVAS *Live Ballads* EMI 0946 365762 2 0
 The Greek god's latest album, released to coincide with hosting ESC 2006, is a live offering of his more downbeat songs, comprising both a CD and DVD of the performance. There is some variation in songs, particularly as the DVD contains his versions of "Hey Jude", "Ain't No Sunshine" and "Help Me Make It Through The Night". There is

a beautiful version of his last studio albums "S'echo Erotethei" and also "Mia Zoe Mazi", which he sang during the semi-final. Interestingly the CD also has a studio version of a Greek version of Damien Rice's "The Blowers Daughter". This is laid back, with Sakis singing perched on a stool for much of the DVD, but if you like the man, you'll enjoy this. MKP

SIDSEL BEN SEMMANE *Where Are My Shoes* My Way Music M 200962
 While "Twist Of Love" was a great sixties pastiche and deserved to do better in Athens, the rest of this album falls into two categories. You have either crap cover versions or interesting original songs that show promise. It's a shame because the Eurovision entry works well on it's own, but sounds much worse alongside "Sweet Nothings", "Do You Love Me" and possibly the worst cover version of a Queen song, "Let Me Live", I have ever heard. However, "All As If One" is a superb ballad and really shows the potential that Sidsel Ben Semmane has. I'm not sure how this will be received outside Denmark, but given a better choice of material Sidsel could go far. RC

RALPH SIEGEL *Mr Grand Prix – The Exclusive Collection* Jupiter/BMG 82876734739
 This DVD and CD set covers thirty-four years of Ralph Siegel's career and features many ESC related recordings including

Germany 1979 / 80 / 81 / 82 / 87 / 88 / 94 (the fabulous Mekado!) / 97 / 99 / 02 and 03. The majority of the remaining tracks are pre-selection songs while the DVD features 45 videos, including all the above and "If We All Give A Little" by Six 4 One. There's something for everyone here but my favourite will always be "Dschinghis Khan". The CD also adds three bonus tracks from Luxembourg; "Bye Bye I Love" by Ireen Sheer, "Le Papa Pingouin" by Sophie & Magaly and "Children Kinder Infant" by Margo, Frank Oliver, Diane Solomon, Malcolm Roberts, Ireen Sheer and Chris Roberts. As far as I know it's the first time "Children Kinder Infant" has appeared on CD so, as a Malcolm Roberts fan, this is a welcome addition to my collection although I have to admit that, apart from "Dschinghis Khan" and "Children Kinder Infant", the other tracks I can take or leave! RC

LABI SIFFRE *Labi Siffre* (1970) EMI 3568912

LABI SIFFRE *Singer & The Song* (1971) EMI 3569802

LABI SIFFRE *Crying Laughing Loving Lying* (1972) EMI 3569272

LABI SIFFRE *For The Children* (1973) EMI 3568872

LABI SIFFRE *Remember My Song* EMI 3568842

LABI SIFFRE *The Best Of* EMI 3543542

As part of EMI's current re-issue programme all of Labi Siffre's albums have been re-issued on CD with many appearing for the first time in this format. For fans of

intelligent song-writing these re-issues will be a welcome addition. Each album features bonus tracks, approximately thirty extra songs spread across the five CD's, but there's still at least another 15 tracks that could've been added. For the casual buyer "The Best Of" will suffice as it includes "It Must Be Love", "Crying, Laughing, Loving", "Something Inside (So Strong)", "Watch Me" and "Star Ride to Nowhere". However, it's "Remember My Song" that will cause excitement among Eurovision fans. Originally released in 1975 the album kicks off with "I Got The...", which was sampled by Eminem on "My Name Is...", but one of the two bonus tracks is Labi Siffre's Song For Europe entry "Solid Love". The only slight quibble is that this track was recorded three years after the original album so it's a bit out of place here, especially as there were several other singles issued between 1975 and 1978 that haven't been included. But all CD's by Labi Siffre are to be greeted with open arms as he is one of our most underrated singer-songwriters. RC

TEXAS LIGHTNING *Meanwhile Back At The Ranch* Sony/BMG 82876841352

Within the context of the Eurovision Song Contest I wasn't a fan of "No No Never". I couldn't bear the thought of it winning and next year's contest being full of similar sounding songs, but listening to it as part of an album I found myself

happily singing along. Together with their ESC entry you'll find countrified versions of "Kiss From A Rose", "Man In The Mirror", "Dancing Queen" and "Like A Virgin", all of which are fun and inoffensive. Their version of "Highway To Hell" pales into insignificance against the version by Hayseed Dixie but that's only a minor quibble. The album is rounded off with video footage of the band performing. It's not everybody's cup of tea but you can see why Texas Lightning are going down a storm! RC



VARIOUS *50 Years Of Grand Prix* Zyx Records 0 90204 83160 9

Released in Germany this compilation brings together 19 past Eurovision entries, but fails to do justice to '50 Years Of Grand Prix! Among the tracks you will find an odd assortment of songs, including the 1958 French winner "Dors Mon Amour" and Malta's 2002 offering "7th Wonder". An extended version of "Telegram" by Silver Convention is included, but the rarest track is probably that of Ivo Lina & Maarja-Liis Ilus singing "Kaelakee Hääl"

from 1996. Unless you don't already have that song on CD, there probably isn't much else to tempt you ... unless you're still looking for "Apres Toi" in German! GL

VARIOUS *EMA 06* Sazas 109188

Once again there is a release for all the songs in the Slovenian pre-selection and, as always, it's a mighty fine gathering of pop music. Unaccountably, Anzež Dezan failed to qualify for the final but "Plan B", in its original version, is a juggernaut of a song. There are 13 other songs here, including Sasa Lendero's "Mandoline", probably my favourite national final song of 2006, and "SOS" by Natalija Verboten, who is still waiting for the chance to represent her country on the big stage. Other favourites here are "Polkaholic", which bears a strong resemblance to a Steps song, and "Tu Da Du" by Sergeja. This is a collection well worth investing in. MKP

VARIOUS *Eurosongs* Sony/BMG / Universal / Minos EMI 82876 83580

To celebrate Athens 2006 a consortium of record companies joined forces to release this double album that contains every Greek entry from 1974 through to 2005. Listening to the 26 tracks makes one ask why it took so long for Greece to win the Eurovision Song Contest. The first entry, Marinella's "Krassi, Thalassa Ke T'Agori Mou", is strongly influenced by traditional Greek music and, it must be said, Greece have never

been afraid of reflecting their musical heritage on the Eurovision stage. However, it should also be noted that Greece's answer to Wham, Bang, performed a strong pop offering that matched the trends of 1987. If you have enjoyed Greek entries over the years you have no option but to purchase this collection. And if you collect Eurovision entries in more general terms, this is probably the only way to obtain forgotten gems such as Marianna Zorba's "Horepse" and "Mia Krifi Evaisthissia" from Thalassa, both of which were previously available in limited quantities. Even some Greek Eurofans don't have the originals of those two songs! GL



ANNA VISSI *Nylon* (Euro Edition) Columbia 82876732972

Anna Vissi's most recent album, released in 2005, has been re-packaged with a second CD containing "Everything" and the three other songs in the running for the Greek selection. That in itself makes this valuable, but "Nylon" is a cornucopia of styles ranging from the dancebeat title track to the ballad "Venetia". There is

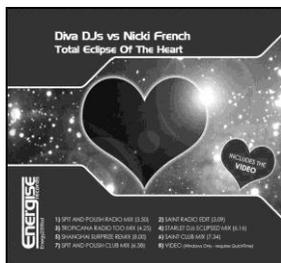
only one song among the 16 in English, "Lie", but my favourite is "Erota Mou Apiste". Anna Vissi is such a star that she defies critical analysis. She is mistress of almost any style of music she tries. At the end of listening to this it feels like you have been blown away! MKP

WALTERS & KAZHA *The War Is Not Over* Microphone MRPMCD 003

The Latvian sign language boys release a CD that capitalises on their success in Kyiv and, as you might suspect, acoustic guitars are strummed along to pleasant anthemic ballads. Perhaps Journey South model themselves on Walters & Kazha! This album, however, feels like a Putnu Balle CD, as all six of them feature on every song, many of which were written by Martins Freimanis from F.L.Y. Each of the songs is sung in English, which sometimes grates, like the strange "Miss Supermodel", but this adds to the international appeal of this release. The boys cover "Fly On The Wings Of Love" but best songs here, apart from the title track, are "Feeling This Touch" and "7 Days and 7 Weeks" which has an adult theme. At times the boys seem to want to be an acoustic version of the Red Hot Chili Peppers, and this is an interesting start. Now how do we tell them apart? MKP



Singled Out



DIVA DJs vs NICKI FRENCH *Total Eclipse Of The Heart* Energise ENERGY2006CD

It's more than ten years since Nicki first entered the charts with her cover of "Total Eclipse Of The Heart", but she's back with the Diva DJs and not one, not two, but seven fantastic mixes of her 1995 hit. The single also includes the video, with Nicki looking better than ever accompanied by two male dancers. A firm favourite with Eurovision fans and club goers alike, hopefully this release will see Nicki return to the UK charts. GL

VICKY LEANDROS *Don't Break My Heart* Koch/Universal 06024 987731 2

1972 winner, Vicky Leandros, surprised everyone when she took part in the German final earlier this year. Unfortunately she failed to win her trip to Athens, coming third out of three songs. Nonetheless, "Don't Break My Heart" is a powerful ballad that will no doubt become a strong favourite in future years. The CD also features the instrumental version together with a German song entitled

"Fremd In Einer Grossen Stadt". GL

ANNA VISSI *Autostop / Love Is A Lonely Weekend* Minos EMI 0946 358815 2

Soon after ERT announced that Anna Vissi would represent the home nation in 2006, OGAE Greece persuaded Minos EMI to release this limited edition CD that combines both of Anna's previous attempts. "Autostop" (Greece 1980) was never officially released although has appeared on some compilations, while "Love Is A Lonely Weekend" (Cyprus 1982) was widely available as a 7" single. The bonus here, however, is that Anna's Cypriot entry is in its original Greek version of "Mono I Agapi" making this release highly desirable. GL

DVD Reviews



VARIOUS *Eurovision Song Contest Athens 2006* EMI/CMC C 00208-9

Incredibly this is already the third official contest DVD that once again contains both live shows in their entirety. A

summary of each participant is included, although the full preview videos would make a better bonus addition. The 'Behind The Scenes' section is very biased towards Greek organisation of the contest, but still gives an interesting glimpse of the days that were Eurovision 2006. Look carefully and you might even spot OGAE UK president, Richard Crane! Highlights of Lordi's winning press conference are also included as well. Once again this is an essential purchase for all those who want to feel the rhythm again and again. GL

Concert Reviews

ANNA VISSI

Royal Albert Hall, London
27th May 2006

Just a week after her appearance at the Eurovision Song Contest in Athens Anna Vissi was playing to thousands of Greeks and Cypriots, and a few hundred gay men, at London's most prestigious concert venue, the Royal Albert Hall; itself the venue of the 1968 contest. The show began with a video of her Eurovision performance of "Everything", at the end of which Anna entered the stage singing the final chorus. She asked a member of the audience if he had seen the competition, and he admitted that he hadn't. "Just as well" was her self depreciating reply, and that was the last we heard of Eurovision. No "Welcome To The Party", no "Mono I Agapi" and certainly

no "Autostop". That might have been disappointing for the Eurovision fans in the audience, except that what we got instead was a whirlwind tour de force performance of hits from her thirty year career. Much has been speculated about her age, but one thing is indisputable - Anna Vissi is a performer at the very top of her game. With more vitality than most 20 year olds, she hardly stood still all night. It was exhausting just watching her. When she wasn't belting out her dance

numbers, from "Call Me" to "Nylon", she was performing traditional songs, delighting the thousands of ex-pats with memories of home, although for most of the audience 'home' is actually Palmers Green. Between the songs she chatted to the audience as if they were members of her family, and she was more than happy to embrace anyone who came up to the stage. Every so often she wandered into the audience, to the consternation of the bouncers, who were

obviously not used to an artist taking the audience to their heart quite as literally as Anna Vissi did. The rapport between singer and audience had to be seen to be believed. Three minutes on a Eurovision stage just cannot represent the unique talent, charisma and sheer vocal abilities of Anna Vissi, and it is entirely to her credit that she took the risk of taking part. Tonight was proof that there is indeed life after Eurovision. An awful lot of it, too, in the case of Anna Vissi. AB



© Anna Vissi

Vision Smalls

FOR SALE

About 1600 Eurovision records for sale. Mainly vinyl singles and LP's from before 1993. Many cover versions and related festivals. Send £2 sterling in stamps (essential for response and deductible from first order) for a catalogue to ERA Records, Frans Erensstraat 22, NL-6367 SK Voerendaal, The Netherlands or download the list from www.erarecords.com

Brand new copy of the official fan book and programme (hard back). £10 including postage. Please contact Mark Jones at jonflawuk@yahoo.co.uk or write to Mark at Cartref, 76 Chapel Street, Pontcïau, Wrexham LL14 1SE

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WANTED

Wanted! Any UK pre-selections prior to 1993 on DVD or VHS video. Also seeking a copy of the book 'United Kingdom – A Song For Europe'. Any reasonable price paid. Please contact Frank Bardsley, 97 Norfolk Park Avenue, Norfolk Park, Sheffield S2 2RB

Wanted! Advertisements for Vision. If there is something you want, or something you want to sell, why not advertise in your favourite Eurovision magazine? Advertisements should be sent to the usual address.

MISCELLANEOUS

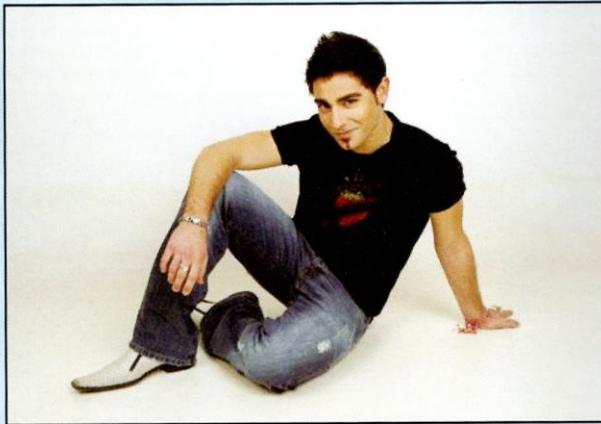
For details of Eurosong News, the international OGAE magazine, please send a stamped addressed envelope to OGAE UK, 51 Greenfields Avenue, Totton, Southampton SO40 3LU or visit www.uk.ogae.net

Quiz Answers

1. Laila Kinnunen (1961)
2. "Tom, Tom, Tom" (6th in 1973)
3. Ossi Runne
4. "Playboy" (1966)
5. Three (1963, 1965 and 1982)
6. "Fri?" (1990)
7. "Varjoon-suojaan"
8. They are sisters
9. "Old Man Fiddle" by Pihasoittajat, in 1975 itself. The 12 points came from the German jury which voted 4th that year
10. Norway.
11. "Eläköön Elämä" (1985)
12. "Lapponia" (1977)

The 'Last' Page

Malta 2006 - Final



I Do

Fabrizio Faniello

Received one point from Albania