

# VISION

THE OGAE UK MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2021 

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ISSUE

124

# UP

**JAMES CHANGES GEAR FOR ROTTERDAM**

THE BIG INTERVIEW WITH OUR 2021 HERO

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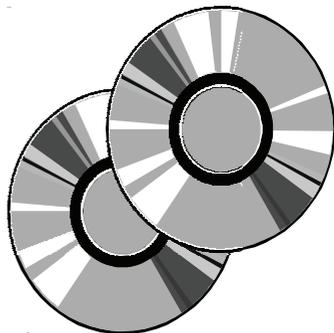
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## CONTENTS

On Friday, March 12, I got a phone call.  
 It was my mum. Nothing unusual in that.

She was full of bubbly enthusiasm for something. Again, that's not unusual, she's a very upbeat, positive person, especially if Liverpool Football Club's fortunes are on the up.

"I've just heard it," she said. "Oh, I think it's brilliant."

I must confess, I didn't have a clue what she was talking about. My confused silence must have spoken volumes too, as she was quick to explain herself further.

"Our Eurovision song!" she said. "It was on the radio. It's so good, that must be one of the best ones we've ever had."

Allow me to paint in a bit of context here. My mum is not what you'd call a very 'Eurovision' person and I did not grow up in a household where the contest was ever 'a thing'. In the 1960s, you were more likely to find my mother dancing to future soul classics at the Mardi Gras in Liverpool or Manchester's Twisted Wheel than staying in on a Saturday night to cheer on Kenneth McKellar in Luxembourg. For her to call me with the specific intention of praising the UK entry is - and I cannot stress this enough - a genuine first in my near 30 years as a Eurovision fan.

I'm not going to be daft and say this means James Newman's *Embers* is going to do a Katrina when Rotterdam rolls along, but just to have someone with rather funky musical taste (a lot funkier than mine, anyway) praise the British entry so effusively feels a bit like a win already. Maybe, just maybe, our fortunes are on the turn. We'll know more in May.

James himself speaks to Alasdair Rendall in this edition's big interview.

While Mr President-Man was doing that, I scratched an itch of curiosity by speaking to some of the people behind the biggest Eurovision podcasts. In the days of lockdown when I've been working in the spare room, miles from my usual office, those podcasts have been a brilliant way to feel connected with my favourite musical hobby, and I'm confident I'm not the only one who has appreciated them even more in the past 12 months or so.

This is the last issue of *Vision* before all the fun gets underway at the Ahoy Arena and wherever you will be watching the 65th contest, I hope you enjoy it even half as much as my mum loves *Embers*.

Eurovision 2021: Running Order Tables	4-5
Eurovision 2021: Now Open!	6-45
National Final Results	46-47
James Newman: The Heat Is On!	48-51
Apocalypse 2021	52-57
Five Moments in My Fandom	58-60
President's Page	61
It's The Euro pops!	62-63
Douze Pods	64-69
Mapping The Stars	70-71
The Ten Essential Bucks Fizz Songs	72-75
The Selector	76-79
Euro Quiz	80-81
ReVision	82-83
The <i>Vision</i> Panel: Your Top Three	84-96
Euovision Poster/Eurobash	97
Small Talk	98-99
Still No Gloom With Zoom!	100

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NEXT ISSUE: OUT IN LATE JULY 2021

SAVE THE DATE  
**eurobash**  
 BRISTOL 2021

Saturday  
 2nd October

OGAE UK and Vision will be reporting on this year's contest from Rotterdam and here in the UK.

Go to our website from Saturday May 8th for our daily blog, the latest news on rehearsals and press conferences - and more!

[www.ogae.uk](http://www.ogae.uk)

# EUROVISION 2021

## Rotterdam Netherlands

The contest at a glance



### Semi-Final 1

Tuesday 18th May 2021

Running order	Performer	Song
1	<b>Lithuania</b>	The Roop
2	<b>Slovenia</b>	Ana Soklic
3	<b>Russia</b>	Manizha
4	<b>Sweden</b>	Tusse
5	<b>Australia</b>	Montaigne
6	<b>North Macedonia</b>	Vasil
7	<b>Ireland</b>	Lesley Roy
8	<b>Cyprus</b>	Elena Tsagrinou
9	<b>Norway</b>	Tix
10	<b>Croatia</b>	Albina
11	<b>Belgium</b>	Hooverphonic
12	<b>Israel</b>	Eden Alene
13	<b>Romania</b>	Roxen
14	<b>Azerbaijan</b>	Efendi
15	<b>Ukraine</b>	Go_A
16	<b>Malta</b>	Destiny

Also voting: Germany • Italy • Netherlands

### Semi-Final 2

Thursday 20th May 2021

Running order	Performer	Song
1	<b>San Marino</b>	Senhit
2	<b>Estonia</b>	Uku Suviste
3	<b>Czech Republic</b>	Benny Cristo
4	<b>Greece</b>	Stefania
5	<b>Austria</b>	Vincent Bueno
6	<b>Poland</b>	Rafał
7	<b>Moldova</b>	Natalia Gordienko
8	<b>Iceland</b>	Daði og Gagnamagnið
9	<b>Serbia</b>	Hurricane
10	<b>Georgia</b>	Tornike Kipiani
11	<b>Albania</b>	Anxhela Peristeri
12	<b>Portugal</b>	The Black Mamba
13	<b>Bulgaria</b>	Victoria
14	<b>Finland</b>	Blind Channel
15	<b>Latvia</b>	Samanta T na
16	<b>Switzerland</b>	Gjon's Tears
17	<b>Denmark</b>	Fyr & Flamme

Also voting: France • Spain • United Kingdom

## Big Five and Host Country

Country	Performer	Song
<b>France</b>	Barbara Pravi	<i>Voilà</i>
<b>Germany</b>	Jendrik	<i>I Don't Feel Hate</i>
<b>Italy</b>	Måneskin	<i>Zitti R Buoni</i>
<b>Spain</b>	Blas Cantó	<i>Voy A Quedarme</i>
<b>United Kingdom</b>	James Newman	<i>Embers</i>
<b>Netherlands</b>	Jeangu Macrooy	<i>Birth Of A New Age</i>

## Eurovision Song Contest Saturday 22nd May 2021

Running order (TBA)	Performer	Song
1		
2		
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22		
23	<b>Netherlands</b>	Jeangu Macrooy <i>Birth Of A New Age</i>
24		
25		
26		

## Voting order

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

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# EURO♡VISION

SONG CONTEST  
ROTTERDAM  
MAY 2021

# NOW OPEN!



Better late than never! Rotterdam opens up for this year's Eurovision. **Vision** editor, **Hass Yusuf**, takes a socially distanced trip around Europe and beyond looking at all the weird and wonderful that we can expect from Eurovision 2021. Hold on tight!

Additional information by [eurovision.tv](http://eurovision.tv), [wivibloggs](http://wivibloggs) and [natfinals.50webs.com](http://natfinals.50webs.com)



# ALBANIA



## SEMI FINAL 2

**Song:** *Karma*

**Performer:** Anxhela Peristeri

**Songwriters:** Olti Curri, Kledi Bahiti



**Anxhela sings:**

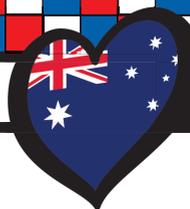
*God doesn't forgive me  
Life, as in a fairy-tale,  
Has spoiled me, Up in the sky I lived like a star,  
Laughing like crazy, When you groan  
Heartless, I only loved myself too much,  
God doesn't forgive me*

Talk about a dramatic start! Albanian female singers are required by law to have powerful lungs and Anxhela certainly delivers in this ethnic pop offering, which according to the English lyrics seems to be about abandonment with a love gone wrong and needs some sort of forgiveness. She certainly manages to convey all that angst in her presentation. Anxhela is also a songwriter and model (as you can see). She first tried to win the Albanian national final way back in 2001. She also starred in *X Factor Greece*. But she does her country proud here.

● **After a semi-final, 18 acts went through to the national final where the winner was chosen by a jury.**

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Norik Uka

# AUSTRALIA



SEMI FINAL 1

**Song:** *Technicolour*

**Performer:** Montaigne

**Songwriters:** Jess Cerro, Dave Hammer



Thankfully Eurovision is broadcast in full glorious colour and HD, so we can experience the glory of *Technicolour*. This is an interesting fast-pasted number that seems very personal to Montaigne (it was co-penned by her). Indeed, it was inspired after a conversation with her mother. The song and routine is meant to convey a sense of courage in asking for help - there's no harm in being vulnerable. And in a positive note relays that coming together is the best solution. Yeh, heavy stuff, but Montaigne is able to expertly tell that story in her performance. It's no wonder that she's become a sensation in the indie scene in Australia.

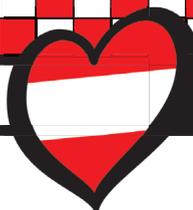
● **Montaigne was internally selected (as last year).**

Image copyright © Jess Gleeson

**Montaigne sings:**

*I wanna be close  
to my mother,  
I wanna belong to  
the world,  
A mirror that shows  
technicolour,  
I'd be a  
magnificent girl,  
But everything  
is frustrating,  
Everything moves  
along,  
Faster than I can  
relate to*

# AUSTRIA



SEMI  
FINAL 2

**Song:** Amen

**Performer:** Vincent Bueno

**Songwriters:** Tobias Carshey, Ashley Hicklin, Jonas Thander



**Vincent sings**

*I guess,  
Yeah you said that  
it's time for us to  
put,  
Our love,  
To rest.  
Dressed in black  
you left my  
neighbourhood,  
And I never  
thought you'd  
bury me and you,  
No I never  
thought we'd die,  
But amen,  
Amen,  
Tell me is this  
what you wanted?  
Amen,  
Amen,  
Tell me is this  
what you wanted?*

Inspired by his father who fronted a local band Vincent was a full-fledged musician by the time he was 11 having learned to play the piano, guitar, drums and bass. And he can also sing as we can see in his performance of *Amen*. This is sad song of a love gone wrong. Vincent carries off the key-changes quite well - going from a soft ballad into a louder electro-rock. It's a soulful performance where he's able to convey the story of the song. Vincent's ethnic background is from the Philippines, but trained at the Vienna Conservatory. He won the Austrian talent show, *Musical! The Show* and also found great success in the Philippines.

● **Vincent was internally selected (as last year).**

Image copyright © ORF/Roman Zach-Kiesling

# AZERBAIJAN



SEMI  
FINAL 1

**Song:** *Mata Hari*

**Performer:** Efendi

**Songwriters:** Amy van der Wel, Luuk van Beers,  
Josh Earl, Tony Cornelissen



There's a nice bit of continuity with last year's entry with the mention of Cleopatra. But this is no Carry On movie, but rather a very unique sound full of intrigue and mystery - as you might expect from a song about a famous spy. This song works on many levels, from Efendi's accent to the background beat of drums - and rare for an Azeri entry - ethnic music! These overtones actually mesh really nicely into the overall effect. This should do really well, especially if the stage show lives up to expectations. The theme of the song? Probably about sex and the art of seduction, by two infamous and powerful women of yesteryear. Efendi has appeared in many international talent shows - but it took her five attempts to get to Eurovision. And get this - she apparently has two parrots that swear a lot. But in what language?

● **Efendi was internally selected (as last year).**

Image copyright © ICTIMAI Television

**Efendi sings:**

*Imma godless,  
Spy imma spy I  
uncover,  
All of your secrets  
I want them,  
There's no  
stopping me now,  
I'm a liar,  
Playing the game  
of desire,  
Ain't gonna leave  
no survivors,  
Would you fall for  
me now?*

# BELGIUM

SEMI FINAL 1

**Song:** *The Wrong Place*  
**Performer:** Hooverphonic  
**Songwriters:** Alex Callier, Charlotte Foret



Hurrah! Geike Arnaert returned to the band after leaving in 2008. Her sultry vocals really resonate with the theme of this song about an unfortunate affair. The sounds Hooverphonic produce are quite mesmerising. Just close your eyes and listen - sheer brilliance. Eurovision should be proud that it can attract such a classy act. *The Wrong Place*? Hardly! But it's definitely the right time.

● Hooverphonic were internally selected (as last year).

Image copyright ©  
Zeb Daemen

### Hooverphonic sing:

*I wake up, and I think, I could use another drink, I'm reaching for a smoke, to forget about last night, I get up cause I need a shot of instant remedy, I put a record on, that makes me think about last night*

**BULGARIA**



**SEMI  
FINAL 2**

**Song:** *Growing Up Is Getting Old*

**Performer:** Victoria

**Songwriters:** Victoria Georgieva, Maya Nalani,  
Oliver Björkvall, Helena Larsson



Ah... life is full of memories. And this wonderful tune succeeds in getting that point across with its lovely haunting sound which starts softly and builds and builds. The song, which was co-penned by Victoria, explains that you can turn out to be a better person if you think back to happier times when growing up. Victoria's soulful voice is able to portray the angst of the tale. She was one of the official European Ambassadors of Earth Hour where everyone is encourage to turn off non-essential lights for an hour. Plus she was the first Eurovision artist from Bulgaria to perform at Sofia Pride. All this and Victoria is also an animal lover. The environment, equality - and pets. We like her.

● **Victoria was internally selected (as last year).**

Image copyright © Lora Musheva

**Victoria sings:**

*Playing tetris  
with my feelings,  
Trynna keep them  
all inside, Hollow  
shadows and my  
soul is spilling  
over, I'm out of  
time, Closing  
every door,  
Wanna be alone,  
Lonely is a way  
that I survive*



**Song:** *Tick-Tock*

**Performer:** Albina

**Songwriters:** Tihana Buklijaš Bakić, Max Cinnamon, Branimir Mihaljević



**Albina sings:**

*Try to fix the  
broken pieces  
now I'm leaving,  
But you made it  
loud and clear I'm  
not enough,  
Tried to fool  
me more than  
once to keep me  
dreaming,  
Cause you knew  
the truth would  
tear us apart If you  
pull me down,  
Then I'll come  
around,  
And rise to come  
show you who  
I am I feel fire  
inside,  
My hearts desire  
I'm breaking free  
from you Tick-  
Tock watch the  
days go*

There's a good message of female empowerment in this up-tempo pop song. Albina hopes that *Tick-Tock's* catchy tune will make it memorable. It'll inspire you all to get up and do a few moves - try to keep up with routine but be careful. The tune cleverly switches to various formats - from finger-clicking to electro-sounds. It should do well on Euro-dance floors. Like most Eurovision performers these days, Albina found fame on talent shows such as on *The Voice Croatia*. Let's wish Albina good luck and get those toes ready for tapping!

● **The national final featured 14 acts where the winner was equally selected by ten regional juries (50%) and televoting (50%).**

Image copyright © Borna Hrzina

# CYPRUS



SEMI  
FINAL 1

**Song:** *El Diablo (The Devil)*

**Performer:** Elena Tsagrinou

**Songwriters:** Thomas Stengaard, Jimmy (Joker) Thornfeldt, Laurell Barker, Oxa



The Greek Orthodox Church got a bit hot under the collar about this sexy dance number. Dancing with the devil? Outrageous! (Haven't they been to Ayia Napa?) Elena is a hot, hot, hot star in Greece and Cyprus - she's had success on various talent shows as contestant and coach. *El Diablo* is all about naughty sex - let's not beat around the bush - even though it has a great beat! This number really grows on you. Though best to take a cold shower. \*Phew\*

● **Elena was internally selected.**

Image copyright ©

Panos Giannakopoulos

**Elena sings:**

*Tonight we gonna burn in a party, We wild as fire that's on the loose,  
Hotter than sriracha on our bodies, T- taco - tamale - ya that's my mood,  
All this spicy melts my icy edges baby it's true, Tonight we gonna burn in a party,  
It's heaven in hell with you, Mama mama cita, Tell me what to do, Lola lola loca,  
I'm breaking the rules, I fell in love I fell in love I gave my heart to El Diablo El Diablo*

# CZECH REPUBLIC



SEMI  
FINAL 2

**Song:** *Omaga* [slang for Oh My God]

**Performer:** Benny Cristo

**Songwriters:** Benny Cristo, Filip Vlček



What a flirt! After some subtle references to lockdown it's now time to rekindle the lurve. Yes, it's a cheeky number that's very up-tempo and perfect for the dance floor. Don't expect any great meaning here - just appreciate the interesting sounds and repetitive lyrics and beat. Benny comes from a mixed heritage of a Czech mother and Angolan father and seems to be an expert at everything - snowboarding, tennis, Brazilian jiu-jitsu - and he even co-penned his entry. He's also into animal rights and a vegan. We approve.

● **Benny was internally selected.**

Image copyright ©  
David Turecky

## Benny sings

*My babe you said you gained a few pounds you blame the apocalypse, there ain't no apocalypse long as you're here on my lips, Honestly, I don't care, I'm happy you're here, I'm trying to make you smile for a while now, I'm like oh my god you're so beautiful, why don't you come over and have it, why don't you let me have it all*

# DENMARK



SEMI  
FINAL 2

**Song:** *Øve Os På Hinanden (Practice On Each Other)*

**Performers:** Fyr Og Flamme

**Songwriter:** Laurits Emanuel



**Fyr & Flamme sing:**

*Time has stopped,  
What is it we're  
waiting for?  
Your eyes are  
saying the same  
thing as mine,  
So I start dancing,  
I've practiced it at  
home,  
And I pray to my  
creator that it takes  
hold of me (A  
dancefloor),  
Rivals stretch their  
legs and wage war  
(On a dancefloor)  
But if you don't let  
go of me, then we  
rise,  
No one knows how  
it's done,  
So let's practice on  
each other,  
Soon we're two  
adults,  
You're the woman,  
I'm the man,  
The whole floor has  
lost its mind,  
Let's practice on  
each other*

Let's go back in time for a bit of 1980s synth! This popular dynamic duo just resonate a lot of fun. We could all do with a bit of disco love. The song actually has a nice message - don't worry about things - get out there and have a bit of fun. Let your insecurities go and remember that no one is perfect, hence *Practice On Each Other*. There's also a suggestion of blossoming young love in the lyrics as well. Is there room for an old-fashioned romp in Eurovision? Let's hope so as it adds a nice bit of diversity to the contest.

● **Eight acts were preselected for the national final where the winner was chosen equally by SMS and mobile app voting in two rounds of voting - the first to select the top three and the second to select the winner.**

Image copyright © Nicklas Bruun

**Song:** *The Lucky One*  
**Performer:** *Uku Suviste*  
**Songwriters:** *Uku Suviste, Sharon Vaughn*



**Uku sings:**  
*Wonder if it ever  
crossed your mind,  
That what we  
had was really  
unbelievable,  
Unbeatable. A  
miracle.  
Why'd you have to  
go and mess it up,  
Why'd you have  
to make what  
was unbreakable,  
Shakeable,  
unsaveable.  
Now it is too late to  
cross your fingers, I  
am wide awake and  
not a dreamer, Hate  
it but it seems the  
dreams were never  
true,  
For a little while the  
fates were with us,  
Wonder why they  
had to turn against  
us*

Uku might be smiling but this is a passionately sung song full of angst of a broken relationship. It's a sombre story expertly told by Uku's powerful voice and performance. The lyrics suggest noticing the danger signs of things going wrong - who knows what love is going to bring? But there's still hope after a breakup. Uku, who co-penned his entry, won the Estonian national back-to-back, so he finally gets to try his luck in Rotterdam.

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

Image copyright © Karl Saare

# FINLAND



## SEMI FINAL 2

**Song:** *Dark Side*

**Performer:** Blind Channel

**Songwriters:** Aleksi Kaunisvesi, Joonas Porko, Joel Hokka, Niko Moilanen, Olli Matela



You can always rely on the Finns to offer up a bit of hard rock - though the band like to refer to their sound as 'violent pop'. But as rock goes, this is superb - it's got a great beat and chorus to make any head-banger proud. Blind Channel, who penned their entry, know their stuff. As the title suggests this isn't a happy song, but one that highlights the grim reality of life. And giving us the middle finger is a bit rude! The ruffians! But we can forgive them as they're still young - as their lyrics point out. And ultimately you can still have fun if life is sometimes harsh. Just close your eyes and think of Eurovision - that'll do the trick.

● **The national final featured seven acts where the winner was chosen by televoting/app voting (75%) and seven international juries (25%).**

Image copyright © Mona Salminen

**Blind Channel sing:**

*Put your middle  
fingers up,  
Take a shot,  
Throw it up and  
don't stop,  
I'm, I'm, I'm,  
Living that life on  
the dark side,  
Every psycho in the  
scene,  
Hands up and  
follow me saying  
Empire of the freaks*

**FRANCE**

**GRAND  
FINAL**

**Song:** Voilà (Here)

**Performer:** Barbara Pravi

**Songwriters:** Barbara Pravi, Igit, Lili Poe



That's some footwear Barbara - but you've certainly put your stamp on this year's contest! Do France have a winner - and why? Well this chanson-inspired composition (co-penned by Barbara) just reminds you of the greatness of Edith Piaf and Jacques Brel. But this is all about Barbara, who comes from a multi-cultural background and has written entries for Junior Eurovision. The song, which is pure class, is very personal to her - fighting against domestic violence and emerging from the shadows as an independent woman. And like it or not, here she is. A simply superb entry full of emotion.

● **Twelve acts were selected to the national final where the winner was chosen in two rounds of voting. In the first round seven acts chosen by televoting and one by a jury went through to the second round where the winner was chosen equally by televoting and a jury.**

Image copyright © FTV/Joel Saget

**Barbara sings:**

*Listen to me,  
Me, the wannabe  
singer,  
Talk about me  
To your loves, to  
your friends,  
Tell them about  
this girl with black  
eyes and her crazy  
dream,  
Me, what I want is  
to write stories that  
reach you, That's all*

**GEORGIA**



**SEMI  
FINAL 2**

**Song:** *You*

**Performer:** Tornike Kipiani

**Songwriter:** Tornike Kipiani



This is a rather charming understated entry from Tornike that he composed himself. It starts off gently and slowly builds up making good use of Tornike's vocals. The song mentions many elements of nature, but this is no environmental song - though it probably could be - but rather, according to the composer, the song is about humans, and even though it might be difficult for us to live on Earth we still love it as it allows us physical contact. Besides being a musician, he's also an architect, formed his first band when he was 19 and won the first series of *X Factor Georgia*. And now he's in Eurovision. Success!

● **Tornike was internally selected (as last year).**

Image copyright © Giorgi Tsaava

**Tornike sings:**

*Sunshine, I wanna  
touch you  
Wind blow,  
I wanna see you,  
I wanna touch,  
I wanna see,  
I wanna be,  
with you,  
Ocean, I wanna  
hear you,  
Mountain, I wanna  
feel you*

**Song:** *I Don't Feel Hate*

**Performer:** Jendrik

**Songwriters:** Jendrik Sigwart, Christoph Oswald



Just what we need - a feel good song! This is a whimsical, quirky, upbeat number with loads of key changes, co-penned by the performer. There's a lot to be said for owning a ukulele. Though of course Jendrik's not cleaning windows here (ask your grandparents), but rather washing his clothes. The message of the song is a good one and done in a fun way. Too many people hide behind social media to attack others. You should just feel sorry and pity for these poor Trolls. Be decent and live a colourful life instead. Hurrah for Jendrik!

● **Jendrik was internally selected by a panel of industry experts and the general public.**

Image copyright © NRD

**Jendrick sings:**

*I really don't care that you want to bash me, do it with flair and I'll let you be, (I'll let you be common Eileen), but don't you dare, mmm, to get angry when you realise those words just don't hit me (whaaat?), Cause I don't feel hate, I just feel sorry, you feel so very clever whenever you find another way to wear me down, I just feel sorry, so you can wiggle with that middle finger it'll never wiggle back to you, 'cause i don't feel, hate, sorry*

**GREECE**



**SEMI  
FINAL 2**

**Song:** *Last Dance*

**Performer:** Stefania

**Songwriters:** Dimitris Kontopoulos, Arcade, Sharon Vaughn



Stefania is a Dutch/Greek singer, actress and YouTuber who rose to prominence on *The Voice Kids* and also represented the Netherlands at Junior Eurovision. Her impressive song is an up-tempo dance number about a romance that has ended - and even though the memories are still there and strong, it's time to move on. Stefania gives a top class performance.

● **Stefania was internally selected (as last year).**

Image copyright © Haris Farsarakis

**Stefania sings:**

*If the dreams we  
made are made  
of fire,  
I would give a life  
just to live the  
dream again,  
if our hearts are  
hanging on a wire,  
let's forget the  
world below and  
dance,  
until the end*

**ICELAND**



**SEMI  
FINAL 2**

**Song:** 10 Years

**Performer:** Daði og Gagnamagnið

**Songwriters:** Daði Freyr Pétursson



Many expected to be in Reykjavík this year, but the band are back again with another self-penned quirky disco number that could do well for them. It's got a nice infectious beat that's very memorable. *10 Years* is basically a love song by Daði to his wife of ten years, who's also a member of the band (as is his sister). There's a very positive message that no matter how long a relationship is, it shouldn't stop you from discovering new things to love about your partner or life. The band are amassing a big following with each member having their own pixelated image on their outfits. How very cool.

● **Daði og Gagnamagnið were internally selected.**

Image copyright © Birta Ran

**Daði og Gagnamagnið  
sing:**

*We've been together  
for a decade now,  
Still everyday I'm  
loving you more,  
If I could do it all  
again, I'd probably  
do it all the same as  
before, I don't wanna  
know what would  
have happened, If I  
never had had your  
love*

# IRELAND



SEMI  
FINAL 1

**Song:** *Maps*

**Performer:** Lesley Roy

**Songwriters:** Lesley Roy, Philip Strand, Emelie Eriksson, Lukas Hällgren



If you fancy a pop anthem then look no further than this excellent Irish offering. It comes at you at 100 mph with a superb toe-tapping beat. After a year of lockdown the artist, who co-penned her entry, explains in the lyrics how she has had to fight off those inner demons. *Maps* can be interpreted in many ways - maybe the map of your life? Examine your roots and find peace within yourself for the future. Too heavy? Maybe, but it sounds great!

● **Lesley was internally selected (as last year).**

Image copyright ©  
Ruth Medjber

**Lesley sings:**

*I'm gonna let, down all the armour, Let out the power, that I've been hiding, Not afraid, of the monsters, Of the nightmares, that I've been fighting. Easy to run, harder to stay, Finding colours in the grey, Thought I was done, but I got it wrong, I fell twice, I'm twice as strong*

# ISRAEL



SEMI  
FINAL 1

**Song:** *Set Me Free*

**Performer:** Eden Alene

**Songwriters:** Amit Mordechay, Ido Netzer, Noam Zlatin,  
Ron Carmi



For such an upbeat sound the song has a rather dark side to it. The composition seems to explain a rather abusive relationship that Edén can't get out of - until she finds the courage to do so. But regardless of the sombre lyrics, the background beats are impressive with some subtle ethnic undertones. Edén has an Ethiopian background but was born in Jerusalem. She became the only person to win both *X Factor Israel* and *The Rising Star*. Will Eurovision be next?

● **After a semi-final three songs, all sung by Edén, went through to the national final, where the winning song was chosen by online and app voting.**

Image copyright ©

Shai Franco

**Edén sings:**

*Take a look what we've become, it's been so long, Getting you out of my life I feel so strong, Set me free, Don't let me down, Feeling like in prison, Looking for the reason, I don't wanna say goodbye, Feels like no tomorrow, Everywhere that I go, Babe I'm gonna lose my mind*

**ITALY**

**GRAND  
FINAL**



**Song:** *Zitti E Buon (Shut Up And Be Quiet)*

**Performer:** Måneskin

**Songwriters:** Måneskin



Glam Rock rocked the *San Remo Festival* with a win for Måneskin (the word in Danish for 'moonlight'). The band met up in school and combined their love of rock, rap, raggae, funk and pop (a shame they missed out yodelling - it might have been fun). This is a bit of a rebel song where everyone should cherish their individuality. Well the band certainly have a unique look in this year's contest. They've had to tone down some of their ruder lyrics to fit within EBU rules, but y'know, they're unique. But it's another great effort from the Italians.

● **After winning the *San Remo Festival* Måneskin had the right to represent their country at Eurovision.**

Image copyright © Gabriele Giussani

**Måneskin sing:**

*They don't know  
what I'm talking  
about,  
You're dirty, bros,  
full of mud,  
Cig stains, between  
your fingers,  
Me with a cig  
walking,  
I'm sorry but I really  
believe  
That I can make this  
jump*

**LATVIA**



**SEMI  
FINAL 2**

**Song:** *The Moon Is Rising*

**Performer:** Samanta Tina

**Songwriters:** Samanta Tina, Aminata Savadogo,  
Oskars Uhaņs



*The Moon Is Rising* is all about empowering women - 'the queen of the night is coming' she proclaims! Samanta seems like a no-nonsense performer - and has stated that her god-given voice must be heard. And no doubt those of us watching the show live in the UK and elsewhere will be able to hear her from Rotterdam. You can tell Aminata Savadogo had a hand in the song, as did Samanta herself. Certainly something different.

● **Samanta Tina was internally selected.**

Image copyright ©

Arturs Martinovs

**Samanta sings:**

*The queen of the  
night is coming,  
The blood moon is  
rising,  
When I walk in like  
this with an attitude,  
You should know  
that I'm coming after  
you,  
You can run, you  
can hide, but you're  
mesmerized,*

# LITHUANIA



SEMI  
FINAL 1

**Song:** *Discoteque*

**Performers:** The Roop

**Songwriters:** Vaidotas Valiukevičius, Mantas Banišauskas,  
Kalle Lindroth, Robertas Baranauskas, Laisvūnas Černovas, Ilkka Wirtanen



Why did those evil Lithuanians put the poor Roop through another national selection? After last year's superb effort they should've been pre-selected. Anyway, they're back with an even greater quirky song and act. *Discoteque* sounds like as described on the can - a lively dance number that easily ticks all the boxes for a Eurovision win. The song also sends a powerful message - it's OK to dance alone - you don't need to conform to other people's attitude - you're free to decide your own future. It's all rather fab.

● **After a semi-final, six acts went through to the national final where the winner was chosen equally by televoting and a jury.**

Image copyright © Paulius Zaborskis

**The Roop sing:**

*Ok, I feel the  
rhythm,  
Something's going  
on here,  
The music flows  
through my veins,  
It's taking over me,  
It's slowly kickin' in,  
My eyes are blinking  
And I don't know  
what is happening*



**Song:** *Je Me Casse (I Break)*

**Performer:** Destiny

**Songwriters:** Malin Christin, Amanuel Dermont,  
Nicklas Eklund, Pete Barringer



**Destiny sings:**

*Babe are you  
hurting,  
Are you alright,  
You look like an  
angel that fell from  
the sky,  
And boy you keep  
talking massaging  
my ego,  
With your  
unoriginal pick-up  
lines (Hell no what  
you gonna do).  
Hell no, I am not  
your honey,  
Hell no, I don't  
want your money,  
Got it wrong I ain't  
into dummies,  
Nuh-uh-uh-uh  
So baby, it's not a  
maybe,  
Yeah I'm too good  
to be true,  
But there's nothing  
in it for you,  
So if I show some  
skin,  
Doesn't mean I'm  
giving in*

So Destiny, m'dear - what does the future hold for you? Silly question of course - the answer is clearly success! Success! Success! Well for this song anyway. *Je Me Casse* certainly took Eurovision by surprise. Destiny of course is already a winner - for the Junior variety of Eurovision, but she stands a good chance winning the grown-up version with this raunchy fast-paced number about female empowerment (a regular theme this year). She doesn't need a man to show her a good time. What an incredibly infectious song! All the best for little Malta!

● **Destiny was internally selected (as last year).**

Image copyright © Carlton Agius

**MOLDOVA**



**SEMI  
FINAL 2**

**Song:** *Sugar*

**Performer:** Natalia Gordienko

**Songwriters:** Mikhail Gutseriev, Sharon Vaughn,  
Dimitris Kontopoulos, Phillipp Kirkorov



Natalia has the title of Honoured Artist of the Republic of Moldova - so serious representation here. She had a fab career and won various awards. She also participated in Eurovision 2006. *Sugar* has pedigree composers, and it shows. Natalia is using the sugar metaphor for a bit of lust! This is all quite fitting for this rather fab and sexy dance number! Thankfully artificial sweeteners are freely available these days.

● **Natalia was internally selected (as last year).**

Image copyright ©  
N Gordienko

**Natalia sings:**

*Il can't explain it but there's something going on,  
A crazy energy inside of me, First just a tingle,  
then it turned into a burn, Like fire in my blood, And now I hear my  
body talk, talk, talk, A taste is all, all I need,  
And I'm about to climb the walls, No way I'll be alone tonight  
Come over, come over, I'm over doing without you,  
Come over, come over, Hey lover, give me some sugar*

# NETHERLANDS

GRAND  
FINAL



**Song:** *Birth Of A New Age*

**Performer:** Jeangu Macrooy

**Songwriters:** JAU Macrooy, PL Perquin



We hear a new language for the contest this year as part of this song sung in Sranan Tongo, a language of Suriname, homeland to Jeangu, who co-penned his superb entry. 'Mi Na Afu Sensi, No Wan Man E Broko Mi' translates as 'I'm half a cent, you can't break me'. The song is about respect and resonates with the Black Lives Matter symbolism. If *Birth Of A New Age* ever makes it to musical theatre it'll be awards galore. It really is a powerful anthem. The African roots of the composition really do shine through. And talk about emotion and true meaning.

● **Jeangu was internally selected.**

Image copyright © Rinse Fokkema

**Jeangu sings:**

*Skin as rich as a starlit night, Your rhythm is rebellion,  
Deep currents running in the rivers of your eyes, Your rhythm  
is rebellion, They spat on your crown, And they poisoned your  
ground, Your rhythm is rebellion, They burned your heroes at the  
stake, But your voice will echo all their names, This ain't the end,  
no! It's the birth of a new age, YU NO MAN BROKO MI (You can't  
break me)*

# NORTH MACEDONIA



SEMI  
FINAL 1

**Song:** *Here I Stand*

**Performer:** Vasil

**Songwriters:** Vasil Garvanliev, Davor Jordanovski,  
Borche Kuzmanovski



**Vasil sings:**

*There are times  
when I remember  
back,  
Wish to hug the  
child about to  
crack,  
I'll tell him, "Wait,  
it won't be long,  
Trust your heart  
and just stay  
strong",  
'Cause baby, they  
all tried to break  
us,  
Not knowing it's  
what makes us,  
This is how we  
found our way,  
Now here I stand,  
There's no  
pretend,  
My walls are down,  
my heart's in your  
hand,  
Unchain my wings,  
And the oceans of  
tears will fade to  
black*

Fancy a show-stopper? Well here you are. There was actually a bit of a backlash to *Here I Stand*, and Vasil, (who co-penned the entry) by various groups, but it's good to see him here. Vasil put his disappointment about Eurovision being cancelled last year aside and pours out his emotions this year. And he knows how to do it when you look at his impressive training and career. He wrote his entry during lockdown and it reflects the journey and frustrations he had at the time - but he stayed strong. His powerful voice easily tells the story of the tale in this excellent ballad.

● **Vasil was internally selected (as last year).**

Image copyright © Martin Trajanovski

**NORWAY**



**SEMI  
FINAL 1**

**Song:** *Fallen Angel*

**Performer:** TIX

**Songwriters:** Andreas Haukeland, Emelie Hollow,  
Mathias Haukeland



TIX is actually singer/songwriter Andreas Haukeland who co-penned *Fallen Angel*. He chose his TIX nickname to take ownership of growing up with Tourette's syndrome. You can either take *Fallen Angel* - a great example of synthpop - in a number of ways. Maybe it's a metaphor for those who struggle with conditions such as Tourettes, or it can be a tale of unrequited love. TIX uses biblical imagery to relay his story of not being good enough for the angel he loves. One thing's for sure though - this song is definitely worthy of Eurovision!

● After a semi-final and a last chance show, six songs joined a further six that were pre-selected to the national final. The winner was chosen by three rounds of online and app voting. The first round selected a top four, the second selected a top two, with the third round selecting the winner.

Image copyright © NRK/Julia Marie Naglestad

**TIX sings:**

*Here in the dark,  
Inside a hole in my  
heart,  
I'm fighting all of my  
demons tryna tear  
me apart,  
And I'm still not sure  
what you ever saw  
in me,  
No, I'm a, I'm a fallen  
angel*

**POLAND**



**SEMI  
FINAL 2**

**Song:** *The Ride*

**Performer:** Rafal

**Songwriters:** Joakim Övrenius, Thomas Karlsson,  
Clara Rubensson, Johan Mauritzson



Rafal rose to prominence after appearing on *The Voice Of Poland*. His Eurovision credentials include hosting Junior Eurovision. This is a lively synth-pop offering composed by a bunch of Swedes, so already it's got a good footing. It also has a 1980's disco-vibe to it, which seems to be the rage these days. The song is quite positive and offers anyone a ride of their life if they hook up with Rafal. But be careful not to try and take him for a ride though, as he's a medal-winning wrestler. And he's also liable to throw you out of a plane while he's practising for his aerobatic pilot licence. But in the meantime, just enjoy!

● **Rafal was internally selected.**

Image copyright © TVP

**Rafal sings:**

*Lights, beating down  
a rainy street,  
All the faces that I  
meet, tell me I'm  
wrong, Bright, starin'  
at the the neon signs,  
Makin' up a storyline,  
Got to hold on,  
(I'm) not lost, even in  
the dead of night,  
I can make it out  
alright*

# PORTUGAL



SEMI FINAL 2

**Song:** *Love Is On My Side*  
**Performers:** The Black Mamba  
**Songwriter:** TATANKA



**The Black Mamba sing:**

*Left home when  
I was only sweet  
sixteen,  
Chasing blind love  
and a bunch of  
broken dreams,  
Don't know how  
I thought I'd be a  
queen,  
I could do anything  
But somehow I  
end up here I don't  
know why,  
I still believe that  
Love is on my side,  
Love is on my side,  
Love is on my side,  
Maybe not tonight  
I can feel it when it  
rains,  
I can feel it still  
runnin' through  
my veins*

Lead singer Pedro Tatanka, who wrote the entry, has a very distinctive voice. And this is the first Portuguese song to fully be sung in English. The group are well-known for their blues, soul and funk sounds and have toured around the world. This certainly is a soulful performance - and reading the lyrics we're told a sombre story through the eyes of what seems to be a prostitute. She strongly believes that she can eventually find love, but maybe not yet. A sad song, but great performance.

● **After two semi-finals, ten acts went through to the national final where the winner was chosen by televoting (50%) and seven regional juries (50%). As there was a tie the televoting vote took precedent.**

Image copyright © Arlindo Camacho

# ROMANIA



SEMI  
FINAL 1

**Song:** *Amnesia*

**Performer:** Roxen

**Songwriters:** Adelina Stîngă, Viky Red



There's a dedication at the end of Roxen's video which perhaps explains the mood and message of this performance - 'for every shout that went unheard'. Roxen's voice sets the right tone for this angst-filled story. Working on the song during the lockdown was quite positive for her - it offers hope for those who find it difficult to be heard. It's easy to forget about the positive which can lead to self-neglect - instead fight back and start loving yourself. This is an impressive entry from a singer who is definitely going places.

● **Roxen was internally selected (as last year).**

Image copyright © Bogdan Petrice

**Roxen sings:**

*Once upon a time I  
used to know a girl,  
Ripped jeans,  
messy hair, shinin'  
like a pearl,  
Like a summer day  
she could push the  
night so far away,  
If you feel what I  
feel, see what I see  
Don't bring yourself  
down*

**RUSSIA**



**SEMI  
FINAL 1**

**Song:** *Russian Woman*

**Performer:** Manizha

**Songwriters:** Manizha Sanghin, Ori Avni, Ori Kaplan



Manizha (who was born in Tajikistan) got into a bit of hassle with her pro-LGBT stance, but she is clearly very independently-minded. Besides being a singer/songwriter she's also a musician, author, director, a well-known public figure - and for good measure, a UN Goodwill Ambassador for Refugees. As you would expect, she co-penned her entry, *Russian Woman*. It's a musical treat of different genres which explains the role of women throughout Russian history. Boy, have they suffered! It's definitely quirky and unique enough to get noticed - and it should be!

● **Three acts were selected for the national final where the winner was chosen by SMS voting.**

Image copyright © Egor Shabanova

**Manizha sings:**  
*Field, field, field,  
I'm too small  
How to cross a field  
though the fire?  
How to cross the  
field if you're alone?  
Heeeey?  
Should I wait for  
somebody's little  
hand?  
Whaaat?*

# SAN MARINO



SEMI  
FINAL 2

**Song:** Adrenalina

**Performer:** Senhit

**Songwriters:** Thomas Stengaard, Joy Deb, Linnea Deb, Jimmy Thörnfeldt, Kenny Silverdique, Suzi Pancenkov, Malou Linn Eloise Ruotsalainen, Chanel Tukia, Senhit Zadik Zadik, Dillard Tramar



So how many writers does it take to write a country's best entry to date? Well, ten will do. Add in African/Middle East sounds, electro-pop - and an appearance of rap super-star Flo Rida - you have a superb dance number. The act is all about hot love. This entry just shows that size doesn't matter. Tiny San Marino this year has a chance at the big prize! Hope they can fit us all in.

● **Senhit was internally selected (as last year).**

Image copyright ©  
Fabrizio Cestari

**Senhit sings:**  
*I'm burning up with  
affliction,  
Come give me your  
full attention,  
I want you to tame  
my fire now,  
Woah-oh-oh-oh-oh,  
Keep moving now  
your eyes on me  
It's like my body's  
yours only*

**SERBIA**



**SEMI  
FINAL 2**

**Song:** *Loco Loco (Crazy Crazy)*

**Performers:** Hurricane

**Songwriters:** Sanja Vučić, Nemanja Antonić, Darko Dimitrov



This year's contest seems to have a few recurring themes such as female empowerment. And here is another example with this energetic dance number. The trio might be called Hurricane, but it could easily be the title of this entry. *Loco Loco* suggests that it's OK for a female to make the first move. While the song is mostly sung in Serbian the tune is pure Latin - the band grew up watching Mexican soaps and figured Spanish sounds sexy. Band member Sanja Vučić supplied the lyrics. It's all rather crazy, but great fun!

● **Hurricane was internally selected (as last year).**

Image copyright © Dejan Milicevic

**Hurricane sing:**

*Don't be angry,  
gather courage  
A girl like me doesn't  
ask for promises,  
You don't take your  
eyes off of me,  
I got into your veins  
so easily, I see it in  
your smile,  
You want me, don't  
you lie*

# SLOVENIA



SEMI  
FINAL 1

**Song:** Amen

**Performer:** Ana Soklič

**Songwriters:** Charlie Mason, Ana Soklič, Žiga Pirnat, Bojan Simončič



**Ana sings:**  
*Hey child,  
Why ya hiding from  
the light?  
Why ya cowering  
in fright?  
Don't tell yourself,  
The heavens cast  
you out,  
And you've fallen  
from grace,  
You'll get beaten  
and bruised,  
You'll be scarred  
unto your core,  
But it's gonna  
make you who you  
are,  
When ya learn to  
heal,  
When ya learn to  
rise again,  
You can tell the sun  
amen*

When Ana was confirmed as this year's representative to Eurovision the call went out for submissions or ideas. The end result is this gospel-inspired anthem superbly sung by Ana, who also co-penned her entry, *Amen* (the second song in the contest to have that title this year). The singer really owns the stage and has a powerful voice that does the composition justice. The theme is to be strong against adversity. Amen to that.

● **Ana was internally selected.**

Image copyright © Adrijan Pregelj

# SPAIN

GRAND  
FINAL



**Song:** *Voy A Quedarme (I Will Stay)*

**Performer:** Blas Cantó

**Songwriters:** Blas Cantó, Leroy Sánchez, Daniel Ortega, Dan Hammond



Apparently Blas always dreamed of participating in Eurovision even when he was part of Spain's most successful boy band, Aurn. He co-wrote his entry under sad circumstances with the passing of both his father and grandmother - the emotion really shows. The message of this powerful song that shows off Blas' powerful voice is never to leave a loved one no matter what.

● **Blas was internally selected. At the national final, Blas sang two songs and the winner was chosen by televoting, app and online voting.**

Image copyright ©  
Steven Bernhard

**Blas sings:**  
*Stay tonight until  
the break of day,  
so that I feel your  
voice, caressing me,  
stay just for one  
more second,  
there's nothing to  
lose, while I draw a  
sea of memories in  
your skin*

**SWEDEN**



**SEMI  
FINAL 1**

**Song:** *Voices*

**Performer:** Tusse

**Songwriters:** Joy Deb, Linnea Deb, Jimmy (Joker) Thörnfeldt, Anderz Wrethov



Tusse, has Congolese roots and came to prominence in Sweden's *Got Talent* and went on to win *Swedish Idol* - and obviously *Melodifestival*. Now he has a chance for the big one and, as with other Swedish entries, this should do well in Rotterdam. The writing team certainly have pedigree. It's a passionate electro-pop number with a theme that suggests that all of us need to be heard, be free and let's help each other. Let's hope Tusse's voice resonates with everyone at the contest.

● **After five semi-finals, 12 acts went through to the national final where the winner was chosen equally by eight international juries and a public vote which included mobile phone app and televoting.**

Image copyright © SVT/Stina Stjernvist

**Tusse sings:**

*There's fire in the  
rain,  
But we'll get up  
again,  
We're thousand  
miles apart,  
But we'll  
overcome,  
I'll never let you  
down,  
World is turning us  
around*

# SWITZERLAND



SEMI  
FINAL 2

**Song:** *Tout l'Univers (All The Universe)*

**Performer:** Gjon's Tears

**Songwriters:** Wouter Hardy, Nina Sampermans, Gjon Muharremaj,  
Xavier Michel



This is another superb entry from Gjon's Tears that might reach the very top. Gjon's Albanian grandfather was so convinced of his grandson's ability that he signed him up for various talent shows starting with *Albania's Got Talent*. And what talent! Gjon co-wrote his haunting entry, *Tout l'Univers*, which tells the story that you need to remain strong and let love rule your life. The song starts softly and slowly builds and gets more powerful allowing Gjon's voice to really impress. Some have compared this to *Arcade*. Slightly unfair as this is a unique sound, but they share one quality - class! The universe awaits for Gjon.

● **Gjon's Tears was internally selected (as last year).**

Image copyright © Oscar Alessio

**Gjon's Tears sings:**

*Let the wind brush,  
His/her hand over  
my shoulder,  
The void in my  
head,  
Not a single place  
to hide,  
The dawn is fading,  
Behind a field of  
ruins,  
It's time to grow up,  
Don't hold yourself  
back*

# UKRAINE



SEMI  
FINAL 1

**Song:** *Shum (Noise)*

**Performer:** Go\_A

**Songwriters:** Kateryna Pavlenko, Taras Shevchenko



There are many unique sounds in this year's contest and you don't get more special than this. *Shum* was composed by two of the band members and they offer a song sung in the special 'white voice' - an authentic folklore technique. The song explores the special noises made by the emerging spring - a spring that offers a better life and love. This sort of ethnic offering really should be encouraged. Sheer brilliance.

● **Go\_A were internally selected.**

Image copyright ©  
Anastasiia Mantach

**Go\_A sings:**

*Oh Spring song,  
Spring song,  
Where have you  
spent your Winter?  
In the garden,  
sitting on a maple  
tree,  
You've been  
spinning a shirt.  
There on the edge  
of a forest  
An owl is blowing  
into the water*

# UNITED KINGDOM



GRAND  
FINAL

**Song:** *Embers*

**Performer:** James Newman

**Songwriters:** James Newman, Conor Blake, Danny Shah,  
Tom Hollings, Samuel Brennan



The old jokes are the best jokes so let's just say that we've saved the best till the last - again! But it's definitely worth the wait, as James returns with a different sound to do us proud in Rotterdam. James is a multi-platinum selling, Brit Award-winning and Grammy-nominated songwriter, who co-penned *Embers*. The song is about a positive relationship that lights up the room. When things get a bit low you can still spark up your life. This entry has certainly put a spark of hope into many British fans. You can never predict what Eurovision will offer, but this is a composition and performance that we can be proud of.

● **James was internally selected (as last year).**

Image copyright © Victor Frankowski

**James sings:**

*Sometimes I know  
my fire burns low,  
But as long as  
you're with me I'll  
never get cold,  
'Til day and night,  
'til darkness and  
light,  
I never worry when  
you're by my side,  
Oh, feelings  
change and  
seasons fade*

# NATIONAL FINAL RESULTS

Not many national finals were held this year, but we know many of you want to see the final results. Source by [natfinals.50webs.com](http://natfinals.50webs.com)

## ALBANIA

<i>Karma</i>	Anxhela Peristeri	1st
<i>Kam Me T'ba Me Kajt</i>	Sardi Strugaj	2nd
<i>Kush Je Ti Dashuri</i>	Festina Mejzini	3rd
<i>Peng</i>	Devis Xherahu	
<i>Zjarr Im</i>	Era Rusi	
<i>Tjerr</i>	Evi Reçi	
<i>Vajzë</i>	Florent Abrashi	
<i>E Lirë</i>	Gigliola Haveriku	
<i>Më Jep Jetë</i>	Gjergj Kaçinari	
<i>Pendesë</i>	Inis Neziri	
<i>Kujtimet S'kanë Formë</i>	Kamela Islamaj	
<i>Vallja E Jetës</i>	Kastro Zizo	
<i>Nëse Vdes</i>	Mirud	
<i>Valixhja E Kujtimeve</i>	Orgesa Zaimi	
<i>Vashëzo</i>	Rosela Gjylbegu	
<i>Nënë</i>	Viktor Tahiraj	
<i>Vesi I Shpirtit Tim</i>	Wendi Mancaku	-
<i>Më Mbron</i>	Xhesika Polo	



## CROATIA

<i>Tick-Tock</i>	Albina	198
<i>Rijeka</i>	Alkonost of Balkan	145
<i>She's Like A Dream</i>	Mia Negovetic	119
<i>Zaljubljen</i>	Cambi	118
<i>Blind</i>	Filip Rudan	118
<i>Ocean Of Love</i>	ToMa	103
<i>Colors</i>	Bernarda	99
<i>Zapjevaj, Sloboda Je!</i>	Tony Cetinski & Kiki Rahimovski	77
<i>Come This Way</i>	Ella Oreškovic	52
<i>Reci Mi</i>	Eric	45
<i>Share The Love</i>	Ashley Colburn & Bojan Jambrošić	43
<i>Ma Zamisli</i>	Beta Sudar	16
<i>Noci Pijane</i>	Brigita Vuco	15
<i>Kriv</i>	Sandi Cenov	12

## DENMARK

<i>Øve Os På Hinanden</i>	Fyr & Flamme	37%
<i>Beautiful</i>	Jean Michel	34%
<i>Højt Over Skyerne</i>	Chief 1 & Thomas Buttenschøn	29%
<i>Abracadabra</i>	Claudia Campagnol	
<i>Står Lige Her</i>	Emma Nicoline	
<i>Everything Is Alright</i>	Mike Tramp	
<i>Hvileløse Hjerter</i>	Nanna Olivía	
<i>Silver Bullet</i>	The Cosmic Twins	

## ESTONIA

<i>The Lucky One</i>	Uku Suviste	15 24,081
<i>Time</i>	Sissi	15 14,968
<i>Magus Melanhoolia</i>	Jüri Pootsmann	15 12,776
<i>We Could Have Been Beautiful</i>	Koit Toome	14
<i>Wingman</i>	Andrei Zevakin & Pluuto	14
<i>Energy</i>	Kadri Voorand	10
<i>Kiss Me</i>	Karl Killing	8
<i>Heaven's Not That Far Tonight</i>	Suured Tüdrukud	8
<i>Tartu</i>	Redel	7
<i>One By One</i>	Hans Nayna	6
<i>Free Again</i>	Egert Milder	2
<i>Ma Olen Siin</i>	Ivo Linna, Robert Linna & Supernova	2





**FINLAND**

Dark Side	Blind Channel	551
I Love You	Teflon Brothers x Pandora	180
Kelle Mä Soitan	Ilta	149
Lie	Oskr	115
Hurt	Aksel	108
Sinä Päivänä KunKaikki	Danny	60
Rakastaa Mua		
Play	Laura	13

**FRANCE**

Voilà	Barbara Pravi	T	204
Pourvu Qu'on M'aime	Juliette Moraine	T	136
Amour Fou	Pony X	T	124
Tutti	Casanova	T	102
On A Mangé Le Soleil	Céphaz	T	82
Mæva	Amui	T	78
Magique	LMK	J	76
Peux-Tu Me Dire?	21 Juin Le Duo	T	38
Paris Me Dit (Yalla Ya Helo!)	Ali	-	-
Alléluia	Andriamad	-	-
Bah Non	Philippine	-	-
Je T'emmènerai Danser	Terence James	-	-

**PORTUGAL**

Love Is On My Side	The Black Mamba	20
Por Um Triz	Carolina Deslandes	20
Dancing In The Stars	Neev	17
Contramão	Sara Afonso	13
Saudade	Karetus & Romeu Bairos	10
Na Mmais Profunda	Valéria	10
Saudade		
Volte-Face	Eu.Clides	9
Joana Do Mar	Joana Alegre	9
Não Vou Ficar	Pedro Gonçalves	5
Dia Lindo	Fábia Maia	3

**ISRAEL**

Set Me Free	71.3%	1st
La La Love	17.2%	2nd
Ue La La	11.5%	3rd

**RUSSIA**

Russkaya Zhenshchina	Manizha	39.7%	1st
Bitter Words	#2Mashi	35.7%	2nd
Future Is Bright	Therr Maitz	24.6%	3rd

**LITHUANIA**

Discoteque	The Roop	24
Where'd You Wanna Go?	Gebrasy	20
Never Fall For You Again	Voldemars Petersons	15
Thank You Very Much	Martyna	13
Be Paspalpciu	Evita Cololo	12
No	Titas & Benas	12

**SPAIN**

Voy A Quedarme	58%	1st
Memoria	42%	2nd

**SWEDEN**

Voices	Tusse	175
Every Minute	Eric Saade	118
In The Middle	The Mamas	106
Little Lot	Dotter	105
Böherer Inte Dig Idag	Clara Klingenström	91
Beat Of Broken Hearts	Klara Hammarström	79
Dandi Dansa	Danny Saucedo	74
Still Young	Charlotte Perrelli	60
Tänker Inte Alls Gå Hem	Arvingarna	44
Baila Baila	Alvaro Estrella	26
New Eeligion	Anton Ewald	25
The Missing Piece	Paul Rey	25

**NORWAY**

Fallen Angel	TIX	0	0	380,033
Monument	KEiINO	0	0	281,043
Let Loose	Blåsemafian feat. Hazel	0	0	-
Faith Bloody Faith	Jorn	0	0	-
World On Fire	Atle Pettersen	-	-	-
Witch Woods	Emmy	-	-	-
I Can't Escape	Imerika	-	-	-
Feel Again	Kaia Rode	-	-	-
My Lonely Voice	Killm	-	-	-
Hero	Raylee	-	-	-
Eyes Wide Open	Rein Alexander	-	-	-
Who I Am	StavangerKameratene	-	-	-



# THE HEAT IS ON!

OGAE UK President, **Alasdair Rendall**, interviews our hopeful, **James Newman**, as he rolls up his sleeves to do battle in Rotterdam

Images by Victor Frankowski



## “IT’S ABOUT THE GLOW IN THE FIRE THAT HASN’T BURNED OUT THAT CAN STILL BE REIGNITED”

**Alasdair Rendall:** How are preparations going?

**James Newman:** It’s going well - I’ve been doing a lot of rehearsals, a lot of singing lessons, a lot of cardio as my song is quite upbeat! It’s going so well, the response has been amazing - I’m really having such a good time, I’m really enjoying it.

**AR:** We’ve got to know and love *Embers*, but describe it in your own words.

**JN:** It’s about the glow in the fire that hasn’t burned out that can still be reignited. It’s about when people come back together and that feeling of the spark igniting again. It’s about people who love each other, friends or whoever it might be, who’ve not been able to see each other coming back together and having a party, having a dance together. It’s that reignition of fire and passion.

**AR:** It feels like you’ve tapped into the mood of how people are feeling at the moment.

**JN:** 100% - that’s what we wanted to do when we came to write the song at the end of last year, just before lockdown when we could get into a room safely to write together. I want to do something that’s upbeat and fun and that feels like you can have a dance to. I feel like we’ve got that - I wanted to have a big brass drop in it, which we got, to make it feel like a big banger.

**AR:** So what have you been up to for the last 12 months, what’s it been like for you?

**JN:** Preparing again for Eurovision! I’ve been writing songs in general, I’ve been lucky in that my part of the industry, song-writing, wasn’t too damaged so we can still write over Zoom. That’s been pretty good as you can still be productive without leaving the house. I’ve been doing a lot of cooking, and

DIY which I’m not very good at! Just trying to create music and keep being positive.

**AR:** Without giving too much away what can we expect from your performance in Rotterdam?

**JN:** I can’t give too much away - I will say that we’ve been doing some choreography, and it’s going to go off!

**AR:** We probably won’t have the packed thousands of fans in the arena, do you think that makes a difference on how you’re going to perform?

**JN:** Although you won’t have the atmosphere that having thousands of fans there can provide, when you’re up on that stage and all the lights are going and you know there’s millions of people watching from home, I’m still going to get that huge buzz. I did my back-up performance the other day and even though there was hardly anyone in the studio, still performing to the camera gave me that huge buzz. I’m just looking forward to getting on stage and singing for everyone.

**AR:** Is there anything you’ve learned about Eurovision since getting involved that’s surprised you?

**JN:** It’s such an amazing community of people, it’s so welcoming and so inclusive, which I love. I watch Eurovision every year but I didn’t realise how big the community is and how lovely it is to be involved in. Especially through the rubbish time we’ve been through I’ve had so many nice messages from the fans, people liking and sharing my music, I’ve been so lucky in such a community like that in these times.

## “I HOPE THE ATTITUDE IS CHANGING AND I HOPE I’VE PLAYED SOME PART IN THAT”

**AR:** Where there any lesson you took from last year into this year?

**JN:** Well it was such a different time when I wrote *My Last Breath*. I wrote it before Covid even became Covid! This time I thought more about the staging, I didn’t realise at first how big the stage was, this time I’ve kept the staging in my mind from the beginning of the creative process, including how the video would look like. We’ve had a practice run and now I get to go again!

**AR:** Over the last few months countries have been selecting their songs, have you been following the process, and any favourites?

**JN:** Yes definitely, it’s a competition! I’ve been listening to songs as they are added to the Eurovision playlist on Spotify. It’s been interesting to see what other people have come back with, obviously my song is totally different to last year’s. All the songs are so strong - I watched *Melodifestival* for the first time and it was amazing. I thought all the people were so good; I love Tusse’s *Voices*. Obviously Lesley Roy from Ireland is a friend now, we’ve kept in touch, I love her song *Maps*. I love Gjon’s *Tears*, it’s such a beautiful song, totally different to mine but that’s the beauty of Eurovision. I love loads, Destiny’s song, it’s wicked, so much fun!

**AR:** How much attention do you pay to comments on social media and reaction videos? Does that influence any tweaks you might make?

**JN:** Yes, 100%. Making music is for the fans, so it’s important for me to interact and listen to what people are saying. The

reaction videos are amazing, that people have taken the time to put in the effort to listen to my song, so it’s only right that I take the time out of my day to listen to what they are saying and to honour everyone’s effort they’ve put in. The most important thing for me is the fans.

**AR:** You’ve got loads of connections in the industry, are you sensing a bit of a change in that the industry is more willing to get involved with Eurovision in the UK again?

**JN:** Yeah I think the UK has kind of lost touch with Eurovision a little bit. I think when people start thinking about it properly they realise that it’s a huge stage to perform on - people like Justin Timberlake and Madonna have performed in the intervals. I think as people start to realise that more I think that can only be a good thing for the UK. I got asked by my label would I be up for doing Eurovision, I had never really thought of it, but with millions of people watching me perform, of course, why wouldn’t I? I hope the attitude is changing and I hope I’ve played some part in that.

**AR:** Would you ever come back as a songwriter?

**JN:** Definitely, I wrote a song for Ireland a few years ago, and I’ve written two now for the UK, so yes definitely! I wrote one for Roxen called *Wonderland* which was her single just before Eurovision and I’d hoped that would be her Eurovision hit! I would 100% like to be involved in writing for other people in the future.

**AR:** All the very best, and any message for the fans?

**JN:** Thank you so much for supporting me - it really means so much and hopefully I’ll make you proud in Rotterdam! ■



# APPOCALYPSE

## The Eurovision Apocalypse Top Ten Most Wonky National Final Songs of 2021



In the midst of Covid it was always going to be a sparse season for collectors of the weird and wonderful songs that never quite make it past their own national selection shows. With a large proportion of this year's competing countries either sticking with their singer from last time or taking the internal selection route we were understandably a bit light on those unique musical outliers that brighten up the early months of any year. But if you delved deep enough there were still just enough oddities to keep you both delighted and dismayed! So here's **Roy D Hacksaw's** annual tribute to the acts who didn't let an international pandemic stop them from looking a bit silly on TV...



# WILDFIRE 2021

## LITHUANIA

Black Spikes

### *Don't Tell Me*

When you think of Lithuania the first thing that always comes to mind is a bunch of ladies standing on oil drums with massive fabric cowls playing growly symphonic metal, while two other ladies in elaborate head dresses out front have an enormous waily singing fight. Yes, it's a story as old as time itself. We're still that amazed this didn't give The Roop a run for their money, but instead it floundered in its semi-final. A sad loss to international bewilderment.

<https://tinyurl.com/blacklith>



## NORWAY

Ketil Stokkan

### *My Life Is OK*

You'll remember Ketil from the old days, obviously. But nothing quite prepared us for the awkward cheese-fest that this performance became. Shuffling about leadenly in garish pink gloves, this hero from the past grumbled out his hymn to mediocrity over the top of a timeless (read 'dated') karaoke backing track that came over as more of a cry for help than any kind of serious contender. A difficult but still rather entertaining watch.

<https://tinyurl.com/ketilok>



## ALBANIA

Era Rusi

*Zjarri Im*

Albania rarely let us down on the entertainment front, and Era Rusi provided all sorts of thrills and spills. Imagine a Kat Slater lookalike in a long blonde wig, swathed in gold from head to toe and surrounded by lads who were stripped to the waist and pretending to bash away on some drums. Ahh, I've got your attention now I see. But when you realise that they did all of this outdoors in a car park in an Albanian winter you've got to give them extra points for heroism. Above and beyond, lads. Above and beyond.

<https://tinyurl.com/erarusi>

## BELARUS

Katya Ocean & Daz Sampson

*Give You Love*

Belarus may have not had a national final this year, and at the time of writing they may not even have an actual Eurovision entry at all (*They haven't - Ed.*), but that didn't stop them from publishing most of the 38 songs (yes, only 38!) that threw their hat into the ring for consideration. And who was nestling among them all like an awkward cousin at a wedding but our old pal Daz Sampson. And whatever you think of the chap, the moment

he delivers his first signature 'Yeaaaaaah!' at the 50 second mark is one of the most joyful moments of this whole Eurovision season. Bless him!

<https://tinyurl.com/dazarus>





## SWEDEN

Eva Rydberg & Ewa Roos

### *Rena Rama Ding Dong*

This year's *Medlodifestival* was an especially bland affair, where pretty much every song sounded a little bit like at least three other songs you've already heard and was performed by a terrified looking young person in beige. So it was up to the oldies to provide the joy, and none more so than this beautiful pair. Looking every bit like a couple of half-cut Aunts who'd opened the wrong door on the way back from the loo and wandered onto the stage by accident, they twisted, mugged and cavorted for an utterly delightful three minutes. The song might have been rubbish, but it was pure entertainment on toast.

<https://tinyurl.com/evaewa>

## UNITED KINGDOM

Tokyo Rose

### *Have Some Fun*

Although we all kind of knew that the UK were going to let James Newman have a second run at it, that didn't stop all kinds of freakazoids sending in their home composed efforts to the BBC in the hope of Eurovision glory. The worst of them - and a strong contender for the most witless piece of music I've

ever heard - was this one. Effectively, an elderly man bellows the story of how he wrote the song in front of a karaoke clip of girls dancing in their pants, to a piece of music that is in a time signature so weird that it's scientifically impossible to measure. Approach this one with caution, because man is it ever bad.

<https://tinyurl.com/tokyofun>



## CROATIA

Ashley Colburn and Bojan Jambrošić

### *Share the Love*

Pure national final gold, this. Somehow an American film maker convinced her Croatian BF to join her on this folly of pure distilled cringe. Marvel in delight as she descends from the roof on a swing. Recoil in horror as she begins to attempt to sing. Feel your teeth hurt at the pure sugary sweetness of it all. Feel your brain explode as they somehow manage to change to a key that doesn't physically exist at the 2:16 mark. It really is just a little bit, ahem, special.

<https://tinyurl.com/ashboj>

## FINLAND

Teflon Brothers x Pandora

### *I Love You*

Remember how last year Finland binned off a bonkers over-the-top pop song that you really really liked in favour of something that you weren't all that fussed about? Well they've only gone and done it again. This time they've forgone the opportunity to have space aliens with giant brains descend from a spaceship, while a

Swedish rave pop legend belts out one of the catchiest choruses of the decade. Whatever were they thinking swapping this out for a bit of turn-of-the-century nu metal, I ask you?!

<https://tinyurl.com/tefpan>





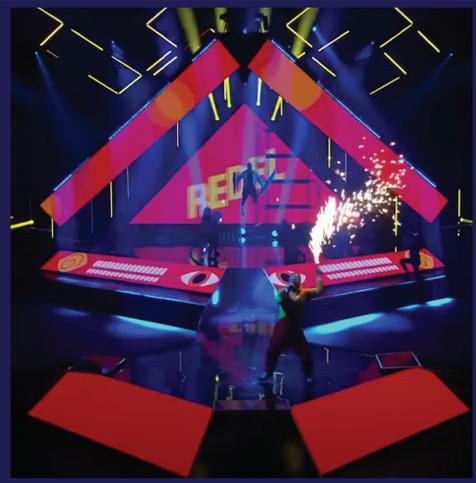
## PORTUGAL

Ian

*Mundo*

Now you can always expect something a little leftfield to come out of Portugal, but I'm not sure that even we were ready for this. A lady called Ian (Ian! I ask you!) wearing a wig that she'd clearly fished out of Lady Gaga's bins and a giant porcupine outfit writhes and wails in rough time to the music as she gradually gets more and more pregnant. No seriously, I'm not on the mushrooms - this really actually happened on live prime time national telly. I bloody love Eurovision!

<https://tinyurl.com/ianmundo>



## ESTONIA

Redel

*Tartu*

We've definitely saved the best until last - although 'best' is a very subjective term. Remember that werewolf-faced bunch of wrestlers called Winny Puhh from *Eesti Laul* a few years back? Well this is their singer and one of their drummers back to mess with the very concept of what a song actually is. Expect to see a middle-aged man in a babygown telling us all about which towns in Estonia have wooden buildings while his mate larks about with a giant mask on top of a wonky step ladder, all while the most ear-splitting slice of aggressive techno beats hammer away underneath. Man alive it's almost perfect!

<https://tinyurl.com/redeltartu>

If all this wasn't enough and you want to go and experience even more national final shockers, go and visit Roy's blog called *Eurovision Apocalypse* on the internet. And if you still need more of this nonsense, his second novel, *Worst. Eurovision. Ever.* is due out in the Summer from Earth Island Books

# FIVE MOMENTS IN MY FANDOM

It starts with a song that catches your ear, a performance on the Saturday night stage, or a singer that makes you do a double-take. Once you have your first memorable moment as a Eurovision fan, others soon follow. In this issue, flying the flag is **Steve Thornton**, who owes it all to Thomas the Tank Engine.



## THE MOMENT...

### IT ALL STARTED

It was a rainy afternoon some time in 1989 and as a restless six year old I was getting bored! Mum settled me down to watch an episode of *Thomas the Tank Engine* she'd recorded for me. Little did she know this day would trigger a lifelong passion. As the end credits of Thomas rolled, the VHS cut to something altogether different. A lively Turkish conductor took his position and the camera cut to Pan's unforgettable performance of *Bana Bana*. I'd never seen anything like it, the unique sounds, the new language, everything about it, I was fixated. As the remainder of the contest rolled on I was

mesmerised by all the new songs and languages I was hearing for the first time, not that I really had much idea what it was all about at this stage! All I knew is I wanted to watch it all again! ...and again... and again...



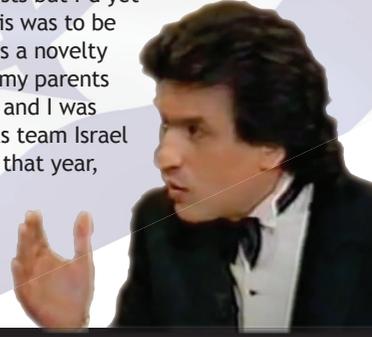
## THE MOMENT...



### I KNEW I WAS OBSESSED

Fast forward to 1991. After hearing *Bana Bana* on repeat countless times my parents had bought out back copies of contests on VHS to provide some variety. I now had a healthy collection of contests but I'd yet to see one live. This was to be my first year. It was a novelty to sit up late with my parents to watch the show and I was very excited. It was team Israel all the way for me that year,

I think I must've burned through an entire pack of blue pens drawing Israeli flags during the voting segment. The chaotic meanderings of good ol' Toto entirely passed me by back then but kept my parents just as entertained as I was, jumping around in my sea of flags.



## THE MOMENT...

### IT BECAME A FAMILY TRADITION

Accepting the fact that Eurovision was now a dominant feature of my life, my parents decided to nurture this unexpected obsession of mine.

Eurovision day had become a family affair. We'd start the day with a trip out somewhere, heading off early and spending the day together discussing our predictions for the contest and getting in some party food for the night. The day of the 1998 contest came with extra excitement, we were off to Birmingham! I'd missed out on tickets to the event but we headed to Birmingham nonetheless. How could we miss visiting the host city the year the contest was on home ground? Of course back then there was nothing like the fan villages and festivities of recent years, but we still packed as much in as we could for one day. I came home happy to have at least experienced a bit of the Eurovision atmosphere, bags full of posters, t-shirts, promotional packs and postcards.



## THE MOMENT...

### I FLEW THE FLAG FOR MOLDOVA

As we work through the 2000s I'll admit my interest was slipping quite alarmingly! Losing the languages and orchestra that'd so vividly captured my attention all those years back had hit hard. Living now away from the family festivities also put a dampener on things. 2005 created a rather different experience.

I was in Moldova, staying and working with a local team. This was the year Moldova debuted in the contest and there was a real buzz, one that I'd never experienced in the UK before. It was hard not to get sucked into the excitement. Seeing Zdob și Zdub do so well softened the blow of the UK's poor performance, or perhaps it was the vodka. Yeah, probably the vodka!



## THE MOMENT...

### WE CAME TOGETHER

2020 was not the year any of us had expected or hoped for. The news the contest had been cancelled hit hard, but it didn't mean an end, the spirit of Eurovision lived on. A contest designed to bring a continent together was suddenly bringing people across the world together despite having been cancelled. Week after week of dark news and gloom was punctuated by the simple joy of joining friends from across the world. We virtually re-watched past contests, joined with the Eurovision stars for their home concerts, coming together as a community for quizzes, parties, games or just to check in on each other. This past year was a moment when the spirit of Eurovision took on a far deeper meaning. As we approach the first contest in two years, I'm sure this year will have given us all new moments on our Eurovision journey we remember for a very long time to come. ■





# PREZ PAGE

A word from OGAE UK President **Alasdair Rendall**

## Eurovision is back!

It's wonderful to know that in just a few short weeks, Eurovision 2021 will be taking place. Yes it looks extremely unlikely that many of us - if any - will actually be in Rotterdam for the show, but it is so wonderful to know that we have a contest taking place. And what a contest it's shaping up to be! The past few months of lockdown have definitely been made better by a thrilling national final season with some great shows, and broadcasters coming up with innovative ways to select and reveal songs despite the constraints made necessary by the pandemic. We've ended up with a strong selection of songs and it does look like we are heading for a genuinely open contest (although I reserve the right to be proven wrong when one country ends up with a runaway victory!).

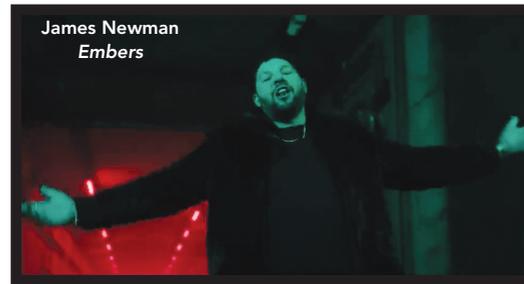
As for the UK we're of course delighted to be represented by James Newman, and with *Embers* we have a song that I think we can be happy to have representing us. It's a credible, professional and upbeat song, and we have fingers crossed that it gets a good result in Rotterdam.

Thank you to all those who joined our various lockdown events - it was great to see so many of you albeit virtually. Whether it was our national final after party (and thanks to Danny for co-hosting that), or our weekly lockdown quizzes it helped to make lockdown that bit more bearable. Many congratulations to Chris Hills and Paul David Leigh for their tremendous success in the quiz, winning the most times over the three months.

As we hope lockdown is behind us - but of course noting the very unpredictable times in which we are living - we are looking forward to seeing many of you in person. We're delighted to confirm that Eurobash 2021 will be going ahead in Bristol on Saturday 2nd October. However we would advise you not to book anything yet - we'll be announcing more details in early summer. We're also looking at doing

a more informal meet-up over the summer - anyone fancy an OGAE picnic in the park? And we of course look forward to the return of various Eurovision parties, including *Eurofest* and *Manchester Calling*.

A reminder as well that later in the summer and early autumn, the committee elections will be taking place. Following the constitutional changes approved by the membership last year,



James Newman  
*Embers*

there will be a small increase in committee positions - although we'll set out full details of the election process after the contest and in the next edition of *Vision*, with the new Committee expected to take office after this year's AGM in November.

As for Eurovision week, plans are currently underway for any events that may take place, both by ourselves and across the OGAE network. As ever, we'll provide updates in our newsletters and via the *Cardskipper* app. A reminder that while we have a plethora of communication channels, 'official' club updates will always be via email and in *Vision* magazine, so it's really vital that you keep your contact details up to date - a reminder you can do that simply and quickly on the *membermojo* website.

So, let's try and put the last 12 months behind us, and look forward to the return of the contest. Good luck to all 39 participants in Rotterdam - and especially James Newman - and may the best song win!

Happy Eurovisioning!

POP! POP! POP!

# IT'S THE EUROPOPS!



Ace designer **Ben Morris** returns again with his fab EuroPops! Fancy seeing your favourite 2021 performer on a t-shirt? Go to [www.redbubble.com](http://www.redbubble.com) - and search for 'EuroPops'. And check out Ben's site at [www.benmorrisillustration.com](http://www.benmorrisillustration.com).



MT 2021 



AU 2021 



BG 2021 



HR 2021 



FI 2021 



DE 2021 



GR 2021 



FR 2021 



GR 2021 



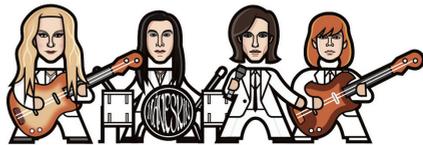
IS 2021 



IE 2021 



CZ 2021 



IT 2021 



LV 2021 



LT 2021 



AL 2021 



MK 2021 



AT 2021 



AZ 2021 



BE 2021 



UK 2021 



CY 2021 



ES 2021 



OK 2021 



EE 2021 



MD 2021 



SM 2021 



NO 2021 



RS 2021 



PT 2021 



UA 2021 



IL 2021 



SI 2021 



PL 2021 



NL 2021 



RU 2021 



SE 2021 



CH 2021 



RO 2021 

# DOUZE PODS

The past year has seen us spending a lot of time at home. Aside from the online chats and quizzes with our chums, another way to feel connected with the Eurovision world is popping a podcast on. With more and more on the subject appearing on streaming platforms and building up their own following, Vision has to admit to being a bit nosey about the people behind them. So rather than stay nosey, we decided to track them down for a chat. It meant a few late finishes and early starts in order to grab people from different sides of the world, but we hope the end result is worth it. These are just some of the faces behind the soothing tones which have distracted us from the sheer strangeness of a world on pause for an hour or two.

And if we're talking Eurovision podcasts, there can only be one logical place to start.

## ESC Insight

### ESC INSIGHT

Arguably the granddaddy of all other Eurovision podcasters, Ewan Spence and the *ESC Insight* team cover so many bases contest-wise they radiate strands of different podcasts, each with their own identity and fans.

The annual *Juke Box Jury* is one of them, as is the alternative show commentary, with Ellie Chalkley's *Eurovision Castaways* becoming a more recent evergreen. There's also been partner recordings to accompany the successful *Eurovision Again* events.

It all began in 2009, when Ewan - already an experienced podcaster - was asked by *The Stage* to do some recordings connected to the contest. Called *The Eurovision Podcast*, it wasn't quite the *ESC Insight* we know today,

but the signs of what was to come were definitely there.

Ewan said: "Podcasting is personal. It's a one to one relationship. Radio is one person to many, even though the whole thing is to pretend you're talking to one person. When I do the weekly European music radio show, I know I'm talking to a lot of people. But with podcasting, you create a much stronger relationship and the reason for that is that it is much easier to switch off. The stop button is right next to you. In radio, it's across the other side of the room."

Another element that *ESC Insight* prides itself in displaying is linking out to, and including, personnel from other sites. That comes via the ever changing roster of *Juke Box Jury* panellists and the format of *Castaways*, where "friends of the parish", as they're described, join Ellie to select the eight Eurovision tracks they would take with them to

### EUROVISION CASTAWAYS

One of the most enjoyable ways to spend an hour during lockdown has been adrift and distracted on the Ile de Bezencon, home of *ESC Insight's Eurovision Castaways*. Its creator and presenter, Ellie Chalkley, told **Vision** about the fun of asking fans to choose eight favourite Eurovision songs and a related contest luxury.

"We started making *Castaways* as a way to help our listeners and readers to get to know the team," Ellie began. "But once we worked



## VISION RECOMMENDS

Besides the podcasts mentioned in this feature, here's a few more Eurovision podcasts for you to try:

### *On Europe's Eurovision Reviewcast*

Phil Colclough of the *OnEurope* website gives real backstage depth to the stories behind the staging of contests past (the episodes dedicated to Birmingham 1998 are a particular Vision favourite).

### *Eurobliss*

The annual preview show that feature very differing sets of opinions.

### *BetEurovision*

A new podcast focusing specifically on the betting markets surrounding the contest (now remember, kids, if you are going to gamble, please do it responsibly...)

### *Eurovision Legends*

Emil Lofstrom meets artists, composers and other significant figures from the contest's past (check out the interview with Katrina Leskanich if you can).

### *The Eurovision Showcase*

The ideal way to catch up with Ciaran Urry-Tuttielt's regular show featuring music and chat from *Forest FM*.

the Ile de Bezencon. As Ewan admitted, quietly proud: "We've brought people into podcasting through Insight."

Rather than have a master plan of how many different podcasts to include under the Insight brolly, the different series that have sprung up have happened organically.

"We've never sat down and said what we were going to do," Ewan continued. "The thing is like, 'we haven't done any documentary, why don't we try?'" - that led to the regular in-depth reports Fin Ross Russell has filed for Insight on subjects such as the effects of Covid-19 on Eurovision's digital engagement in 2020.

But the first strand that took off for *Insight* in a big way was the alternative commentary, which began in 2009 and can be listened to in sync with the live broadcast for an altogether more involved and analytical experience. Ewan took up the story: "I've always gone down the line that, if you've followed us and other

websites for 51 weeks of the year that you want to hear the final part... so, yeah, it would be almost impossible to read that much detail into broadcast television, although you could possibly put a fan commentary on the Red Button for the BBC."

Perhaps more than any other season in Eurovision history, the months circling the cancellation of the 2020 contest saw fans reaching out to each other more than ever for a welcome pinch of moral support. It was a philosophy Ewan was keen to foster on Insight: "For the past few months, we've been inviting other podcasters on. We're not possessive of the content. We'll say, 'give us a 60 second trailer and we'll stick it on our podcast.' Why? Because that's what we do. That's Eurovision though, isn't it? It's community, it's sharing, it's learning other things. And, yeah, we've got a family. And that family grows."

Find out more at [escinsight.com](https://escinsight.com).

out how fun the show could be, we started bringing in people from the fan community who might have an interesting story to share."

A criteria for appearing is 'at least two really good Eurovision anecdotes' and a promise of getting the list of songs for the Ile's customs desk down to the mandatory eight. Although songs can be knocked back by the host. (such as Rita Pavone's cover of the rejected UK Song For Europe 1969 hopeful *Try It And See*), admission policy can be fairly lax. When Coinneach Macleod guested, he was able to bring in the piece that was Scotland's debut at Eurovision Choir, as he was part of the ensemble.

Before lockdown, *Castaway* shows tended to be done live, which led to some of Ellie's favourite moments so far: "[We had] Elaine O'Neill turning the 2010 interval act into a stirring call for international solidarity, Roy Delaney treating a sleepy lunchtime audience in Lisbon to Winny Puuh and singing *Igranka* with Slavko (Montenegro's 2017 entrant) are all absolute moments. Everyone who participates has something great to contribute, whether it's a story of partying and high-jinks, an emotional moment bound up in a song or just the story of how Eurovision changed their life."

## SECOND CHERRY

First there was the event, then later (much, much later) came the accompanying podcast.

Beginning in 2006 - with some fallow years before a revival - *Second Cherry* is one of the regular fan contests where songs which didn't get the chance to represent their nation at the contest enter the competitive arena once more. It's a chance for the favourites within the Eurovision community to claim another kind of glory, with Erika Vikman's 2020 UMK runner-up *Cicciolina* the reigning champion.

The revived *Cherry* experience now has its own podcast, with pals Matt Baker and Monty Moncrieff (known to Eurobashers as a regular guest interviewer) getting together to talk songs they love, results they didn't, and the occasional gossip about national final entrants who would make ideal husbands. In each episode, a particular national final is reviewed and analysed before one of the unsuccessful entries becomes the cherry that will represent the nation at the end of series final.

Monty explained: "We were originally going to provide the format to the *Pop Justice* podcast, because we thought it just lends itself really well to looking at a different national final each episode, picking



a song and putting them into competition at the end of the podcast season for listeners. But the thrill of *Second Cherry* was always that kind of live show, the live party event, and so we decided it was worth trying to bring that back as well."

*Eurofest* at London's Royal Vauxhall Tavern - surely one of the contest's spiritual homes in the UK - became the new place for cherries to be re-bitten, now with its own podcast. In 2020, the results show went online, with Jody West joining the pair for the big reveal.

## AUSSIEVISION

### AUSSIEVISION

Sunday mornings in national final season can either be spent overthinking the results from the evening before or tuning in to a podcast that involves hours of early morning dedication for its hosts and creators.

Mike and Dale are the real-life couple behind *Aussievision*, which takes a methodical look at the runners and riders from each competing Eurovision country from the viewpoint of one of the event's most successful new nations.

Dale said: "We're both sports fans, and I think we equated [Australia joining Eurovision] to, particularly, the football World Cup. When you're in it, with the qualification, every part of it, it suddenly gets to feel much more intimate."

If you've enjoyed their coverage of the 2021 national final season, spare a thought for the early rises which make *Aussievision* happen. In their home city of Brisbane,

Mike Jones, left, shows Dale Roberts how many times Australia has entered a song for Eurovision so far



Matt, left, and Monty have this ESC podcast lark licked



Matt added: “The funny thing about me and Monty is that we’re quite polar opposites in some way. If it was up to me, every bit of the podcast would be militantly organised, and not swept to the side, whereas Monty is a bit more fluid. I think we balance each other out.”

Regular listeners will certainly testify to the obvious and relaxed chemistry between the two of them which has led to some of the cheekier moments in contest podding. Pre-Covid, *Second Cherry* had started to stretch its legs. One episode was recorded entirely

on location at London’s Swedish Church in Marylebone which hosts *Melodifestival* screenings each year. Two series in, and audience interaction is on the increase, to the extent Matt and Monty have found themselves autographing t-shirts which bear their faces.

Monty said: “At the end of the day, we know it’s intensely silly. But hopefully, it’s a nice way of reflecting, once the dust is settled on Eurovision, on the many, many songs that were worthy and didn’t get the chance to go.”

Find out more at [secondcherry.vision](http://secondcherry.vision).

getting up in time to see a Norwegian qualifier means a 4.30am start, then recording their thoughts afterwards. It was something they first experimented with, talking into an

iPhone over two bottles of wine because they felt Australian voices needed to be heard in contest coverage now that their home was part of the Eurovision family.

Mike told *Vision*: “I probably have a little more of an irreverent view of it at times whereas Dale is very analytical and he’s looking at numbers and figures and probabilities. We never shy away from disagreeing because I think that is when it really, really works.”

Dale added: “The UK is easily our second biggest audience but it’s quite incredible where people are coming from, all over Europe and Asia.

“It was such a loss for people not to have the contest [last year] and not to be able to connect, so I think these remote types of connection have really become important.”

*Aussievision* is still recorded over drinks and on an iPhone, but as a sign of the boys’ success, these days it’s connected up to some funky mics as well.

Find out more at [aussievision.net](http://aussievision.net).





Rob, left, with his fellow Euro Tripper James



## THE EURO TRIP

While some of us spent lockdown attempting a greater fluency in French or increased competency in arc welding, Rob Lilley and James Rowe decided to start up a Eurovision podcast. Within four months, their impressive list of interviewees saw *The Euro Trip* generating headlines on fansites in the first hour of going live.

“I think we’re quite lucky in that both of us have that radio background,” Rob explained. “I did it in university and then I had a job on radio for five years. I am a podcast producer now, that’s what I do for a living. But it all

started off as a student radio show when I was at university. I was too embarrassed to just do a Eurovision show when I was trying to be cool and trendy, initially it was just new European music.”

The green shoots for the new style *Euro Trip* sprouted when Rob and James met while working on *The Euro Jury* show in 2020. Filmed in a small Yorkshire village, they ended up sleeping on bunk beds in a youth hostel and an early hours incident with a feline intruder saw a strong bond develop between the new pals, in the ways those shared experiences do. After throwing around a few feature ideas to

## 12 POINTS FROM AMERICA

“So, you know in the early seasons of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, when they were still in high school, and Cordelia the rich girl would often come into the library and just yell at them for being dumb, but also ask about whatever monster they had to kill this week? I feel like that’s me. I’m here to yell at you guys for liking such a stupid thing, but then also to be a part of it.”

Meet Danny.

He’s an actor, and one quarter of the team who make up *12 Points From America*. Based in Minnesota, the long-time friends who already had a shared passion for the quiz bowl community and pub trivia were brought together in broadcastable chunks through Samantha Ross’s passion for all things Eurovision.

A name instantly recognisable to followers of *ESC Insight* (of which there’s more elsewhere in this article), Sam (if you’ll forgive the diminutive) sowed the *12 Points* seed with her annual contest preview parties for her pals at home.

It was a thunderbolt moment for team member Erik, who was hooked from the off and, like Sam, has been involved at the contest in a more official level, even helping Bulgaria select *Bones* for the group Equinox in 2018. Their producer, Derek, was part of the Austrian delegation in Lisbon in 2018 and, along



with Sam, can be seen in Kristian Kostov’s postcard for Bulgaria in 2017. Danny hasn’t - the first Eurovision song he ever heard was *Toy*, at Sam’s 2018 preview bash. But it’s a four-way blend that works incredibly well.

Sam said: “I’m the walking encyclopaedia. I’m the factual geek. I’m the one who knows a lot of the history but just because - if you’re talking about post 2011, I’ve been there for it. I’ll have a lot of stories from behind the scenes.”

Erik added: “I see myself as the fanboy, the one that’s just head over heels for the contest and enthusiastic about it. I think I’m bringing an energy and enthusiasm for many, many new things.

“I also love that Eurovision is a rabbit hole that can go basically as deep as you want it to. Even when we’re ten months away from Eurovision, when we’re in July, we’ve got stuff to talk about.”

produce a podcast different to others on the market, the first edition of *Euro Trip* arrived in August 2020. Working on *Euro Jury* meant the team had a contacts book brimming with Eurovision alumni who had been involved in awarding points. Their first big interview was Lovers of Valdaro vocalist Erik Gabriel, who also participated in the immense choreographic fever dream that Do Re Dos provided for Moldova at Lisbon 2018. The following episodes saw talks with former winners Dave Benton, Cheryl Baker, Paul Harrington & Charlie McGettigan and 2011 champ Eldar Gasimov who has, Rob and James admit, “the most excellent chandelier” in his living room.

But it was their talk with UK head of delegation Lee Smithurst, released as a special episode over Christmas, which really got people tuned into *The Euro Trip*.

Rob said: “I emailed him in the August or September and he he said he’d love to, it sounded interesting, but he was busy launching a TV show and he’d get back to us in a few months. We got lucky because he was very amenable with his time and very generous.”

With Lee talking about the BBC’s partnership with record label BMG and the

step-by-step plan to improve the UK’s showing at the contest, it was the kind of first-hand information the British fanbase perhaps isn’t used to hearing, especially two-and-a-half months before the song reveal itself. “The listener figures were huge”. James said: “Before I’d even gone to bed, it was 1am, and we put the podcast out at midnight and there were already tweets about the interview.”

As the boys’ reputation grows, it’s led to interviews with *Melodifestival* legend Christer Bjorkman and the contest’s executive supervisor Martin Osterdahl. There’s plenty of life left in this double act and its cheeky chemistry, with James, a media production student at the University of Sunderland, the impish wee monkey of the two.

James added: “There is a bit of an age gap between us, so perhaps that comes from him being more wise. Rob will do the *One Second Song* [their weekly game to guess a Eurovision entry from just its opening second] and get it horrendously wrong and I will take the Mickey out of him because, you know, he deserves it.”

Find out more at [eurovoix.com](http://eurovoix.com).

Erik, Sam, Danny and Derek; Minnesota’s finest exports since Rose Nylund



“I guess the role I have is the more practical one,” said Derek. “I have a background in literature, so I think the thing for me, when we’re getting into discussions, when we’re looking at songs, and the artists and the countries that they’re from, I’m always interested in the story. I want to drill down into the narrative and take everything apart and figure out how it works.”

But would this particular podcast have a different feel if the USA followed Australia into the contest as a new entrant?

“Yes!” said Danny. “Half the fun I have about Eurovision is being one ocean away from it. America has a really homogenous culture, we all speak the same languages and we all watch the same TV shows and Europe has so many different pockets of culture that are older. The vibe of Eurovision is unique in a way that America would be unable to replicate.”

Find out more at [12pointsfromamerica.com](http://12pointsfromamerica.com). ■

# MAPPING THE STARS



Many of us love looking at maps. Adrian Murphy goes a step further - he creates them! We begin a new series where our cartographer reveals where all those Eurovisions stars came from. It seems natural to start off with the Netherlands.

**K**nowing the cities and towns where every Eurovision has taken place is us Eurovision fans' obsessions. From miniscule Millstreet to massive Moscow, we all know the history. But beyond those venues, there are many more places that have Eurovision associations.

In 2020, the sudden cancellation of Eurovision 2020 came as a shock. I was very much looking forward to Rotterdam 2020, especially as I live in Amsterdam. It was just a short train ride away. Eurovision in the country you live in is a dream for many, and I was full of anticipation for the parties and welcoming friends from OGAE UK and everywhere else to a city I love spending time in.

## PINNING

In summer 2020, not being able to travel far with the pandemic, I visited a lot of Dutch towns and cities. Pinning events on a map - you know their location, where they happened and when. As I looked up where I was visiting, I would find Eurovision connections. For example, Arnhem's main library and museum displays a photo celebrating local Linda Wagenmakers. And there's a small square in Alkmaar named after Rudi Carrell who was born there.

So I started to map these out, making a Eurovision map of the Netherlands - but first, some words of caution: placing people on a map is more difficult.

I myself am an example of that - I was born in Wexford, grew up from age five in Cork, and, as an adult, have lived in Edinburgh, London and now Amsterdam.

Where would I pin myself on a map? Probably Cork, but all would apply.

In the first of these 'Eurovision maps', I've mostly chosen performers' birthplace or the place where they grew up or the place where they became famous.

So please think of these as maps of places with Eurovision connections, rather than a definitive map positioning every performer.

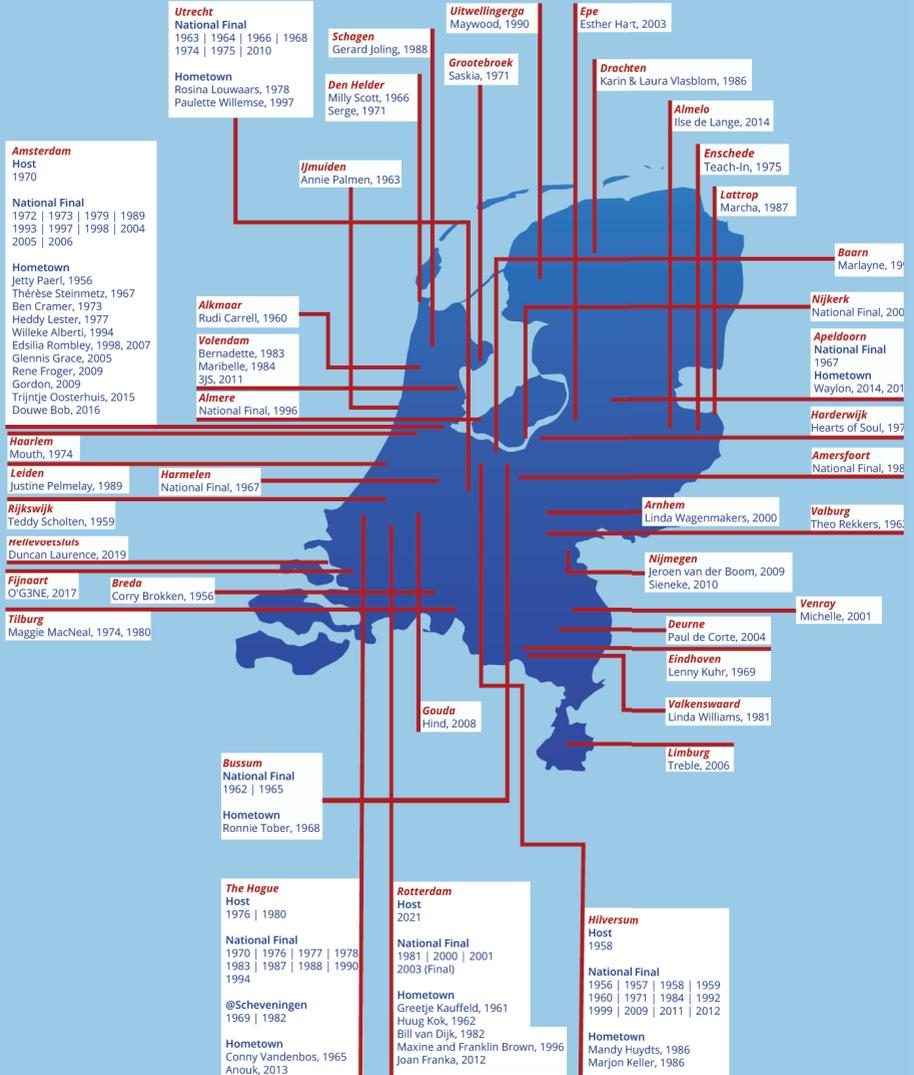
The history of the many thousands of performers in Eurovision is delightfully complex. We tend to think of them as representatives of the country they perform for, but there's more to it than that.

Histories of migration intertwine with Eurovision in lots of ways, with countless examples. Vicky Leandros was born in Greece, grew up in Germany and represented Luxembourg. More recently, Eleni Foureira was born in Albania, grew up in Greece and represented Cyprus. These facts may make positioning people on a map difficult, but their experiences make the contest all the richer.

For the map of the Netherlands, there were also several artists born outside the Netherlands. Anneke Gronloh was born in Indonesia, the first Asian performer at Eurovision way back in 1964. Similarly, Teach-In found their fame living in the city of Enschede, but singer Getty Kaspers was born in Austria.

I find all these geographic connections and movements fascinating, so I hope these maps go some way to detailing them. If you know any further information, please do let me know and I will update them! ■

# THE NETHERLANDS



# THE 10 ESSENTIAL BUCKS FIZZ SONGS

To celebrate the success of Cheryl, Jay, Bobby and Mike 40 years ago in 1981, this edition of Ten Essentials lists the pick of the pops from our Eurovision superstars, together and elsewhere

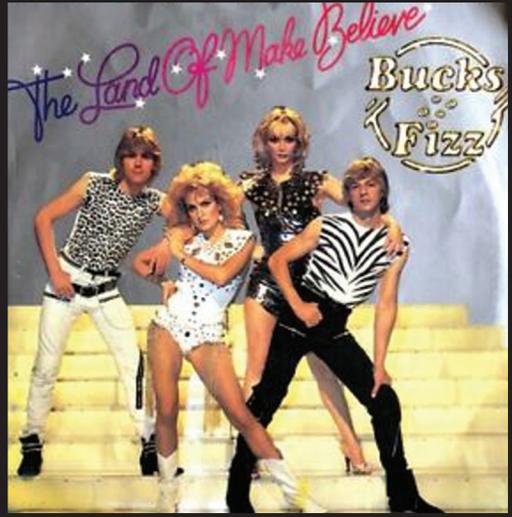


## **Making Your Mind Up** Bucks Fizz

We have to start with the all-conquering winner - a riot of colour, lively dancing, skirt ripping, and a frankly catchy tune from the pen of Andy Hill. The foursome was put together specifically for Dublin 1981, but when they romped to victory and stormed the UK charts all the way to the top, there was no way the group weren't going to stay together for all time and turn make-believe into reality.

### *The Land Of Make Believe* Bucks Fizz

We all knew that Bucks Fizz were no one hit wonder and that they would run for the sun for evermore when we heard this beautiful paean to childhood (or was it a coruscating commentary on the state of Britain in the 1980s with something nasty in the garden waiting to steal your heart?). Lyrics were written by Pete Sinfield of King Crimson; the song went to Number One in 1982; and the poem at the end was voiced by Abby Kimber of the Minipops, who covered the song - as did AllStars and (believe it or not) Celine Dion.



### bobby·gee



#### BIG DEAL

English (new re-recorded version)  
German (from 1986 to present)

### *The Big Deal* Bobby G

Bobby was apparently keen to forge a solo career even while Bucks Fizz were at the height of their fame. In the end, the only solo hit he had was the theme tune to the comedy-drama TV series *Big Deal* which starred Ray Brooks and ran for three series on the BBC. It stayed in the charts for 12 weeks and was heard by the many millions who watched the show. Not bad. eh, Mr Gubby - who also wrote the song.



### *Cry (Till My Eyes Run Dry)* Brooks

This single by boyband Brooks, released in 1978, featured Mike Nolan on lead vocals. Brooks was a boyband put together by Pete Pereira, fresh from Song For Europe experience in Co-Co (with of course Cheryl Baker). As well as Pete and Mike, the group was rounded off with Ricky Gallahad and Chris Hamill, who would go on to find fame as Limahl in Kajagoogoo. Despite several singles and record company investment, success eluded the group both in the charts and at the *Ljubljana Song Festival 1980*, so Mike drifted off to join Bucks Fizz.

**Naked Phoenix****Jay Aston**

After Jay left Bucks Fizz (to be replaced by Shelley Preston), she embarked on a solo career, encouraged by her sister-in-law, Marcella Detroit from Shakespeare's Sister. This lively piece of dance synthpop was released as a single but failed to trouble the chart compilers. Jay then went on to record with her husband Dave Colquhoun before performing in a covers band. In 2009, Jay rejoined the Bucks Fizz fold when she replaced Shelley Preston in The Fizz.

**Bad Old Days****Co-Co**

Cheryl's first foray on the Eurovision stage and the UK's least successful entry ever at the time. The band, formerly known as Mother's Pride, consisted of Cheryl plus Terry Bradford, Josie Andrews, Keith Hasler, Charlie Brennan and Paul Rogers when they took to the stage in Paris. The song was released as a single and reached number 13 in the charts and was the title track for the subsequent album. Sadly, that was it for Co-Co (despite releasing more singles), but for Cheryl it was onwards and upwards.

**The World We Left Behind****The Fizz**

The most up to date version of Bucks Fizz finds Mike, Cheryl and Jay treading the boards and the recording studios under the shortened - but no doubt legally compliant - name of The Fizz. This 1980s throwback belter was the most recent single released from their 2020 album *Smoke and Mirrors* and sounds at times reminiscent of Lonnie Gordon's *Happening All Over Again*, hardly surprising with Mike Stock in the producer's chair. The album reached the UK charts Top 30 and the new songs means that when the group returns to the stage, they will have a wealth of great material to draw upon.



THE WORLD WE LEFT BEHIND  
(EXTENDED VERSION)



### *You And Your Heart So Blue* Bucks Fizz

Released in June 1985 as the first single from the *Writing On The Wall* album, this magnificent song faltered and failed to reach the Top 40, no doubt affected by the group recovering from the coach crash and then Jay leaving the group the month this was released. A TV special filmed to tie-in with this was never shown as the company that made it went bankrupt. All in all this means that this track is often underappreciated. Not by Vision.



### *Run For Your Life* Bucks Fizz

From the *Hand Cut* album, this Top 20 single showcases all the complex production that Andy Hill contributed to our heroes, a massive wall of sound that allows the group to showcase their vocal interplay behind synthesisers and gated drums. With a spooky promo video set in a deserted mansion, the song really played on themes of insecurity and paranoia. This would be the template that Andy Hill would use for *Rules Of The Game* and *London Town*.

### *My Camera Never Lies* Bucks Fizz

The third number one for the group and most probably their finest hour. The nihilism of the chorus, the glorious harmonies and counterpoints, the irresistible beat, the wonderful 'click, click', this is a Beethoven symphony wrapped up in a three-minute song. *My Camera Never Lies* is not only the best song by Bucks Fizz, but possibly the best song of the 1980s.



# THE SELECTOR



## THIS ISSUE JOE SANSON

Just five Eurovision songs. How do you choose? Do you go for five favourites or do you go for five songs that have a special meaning to you? Well, Latvian-loving OGAE UK member, **Joe Sansom**, has made his selection.

### SWITZERLAND 1993 ANNIE COTTON *Moi, Tout Simplement*



Annie Cotton was the second Canadian singer to represent Switzerland (after a certain Celine Dion of course), and she nearly replicated Celine's result but ultimately had to make do with a third place finish in 1993.

Taking place in the tiny Irish town of Millstreet, the 1993 contest was, for me, the best show ever. It saw the debut from a number of nations (including a pre-qualifying round for the first time) and an extremely high bar in terms of quality, and diversity in style. There are so many songs I still listen to regularly - Bosnia's *Sva Bol Svijeta*; Spain's glorious *Hombres* and Belgium's stunning *Lemand Als Jij* which is well remembered for

### LATVIA 2002 MARIE N | *Wanna*



While my first pick was all about the quality, my second choice is more for sentimental reasons and the significance that the song (and performance) had on me.

I visited the city of Riga for a random holiday with a friend in 2000 and fell in love with the city, its stunning art nouveau architecture, its people and welcoming atmosphere.

Wind forward two years to Eurovision 2002 in Tallinn and Marie N's performance, which was full of colour, fun and charm. Out of nowhere she became a potential winner.

## ESTONIA 2013

BIRGIT ÕIGEMEEL *Et Uus Saaks Alguse*

sadly all the wrong reasons (I'm sure I don't need to explain the Barbara Dex Award). But for me the class of the field was Annie - a stunning French language ballad with a strong message with the title translating to 'quite simply myself'. I've always been mesmerised by this song and felt it had a lot more quality than both of the songs in the top two, but that's often the way it works out of course.

Annie is more known in her native Canada for her TV acting, as her singing career didn't follow quite the same trajectory as Celine's, but she had a great voice and left us with a song that I will cherish forever.

I was watching with the same friend and we both said that if she actually went on to win, why not go back to Riga and go to Eurovision. As soon as the scoreboard ticked over with the final votes our decision was made, and Eurovision 2003 became the first show I would attend in person (and of course after that I was hooked and have now been to 14 contests!)

So this song will always have a special place in my heart. And it's just impossible to listen to it without smiling as it's just so unashamedly joyous. It may not have the

I first fell in love with Birgit Õigemeel in 2008 when she entered *Eesti Laul* with the song 365 days. A beautiful ballad, perfect in just about every way (aside from the fact that no one told her that 2008 was a leap year). That show serves as a reminder that national final rage is not a new phenomena (check the archives also for Slovenia's *EMA* of 2004), as Birgit (and the equally amazing *liris*) lost out to Kreisiradio's monstrous *Leto Svet*.

So I was of course thrilled when she returned in 2012 and again in 2013, this time with *Et Uus Saaks Alguse*. But there was a concern that history could repeat itself as she was up against Winnie Puuh with their eclectic punk anthem. But thankfully Estonia went for quality this time and Birgit went on to do them proud in Malmö by producing a stunning performance and qualifying for the Grand Final.

The song is a beautiful ballad about hope for the future, and was translated to *New Way To Go* for the title of its English language version. Estonian is such a beautiful language. I love to hear songs in native languages and I think this song is one of the finest examples.

In the Malmö arena, I was sat to the side of the stage and had a perfect spot adjacent to where the next artist would wait for their cue to take the stage. I remember little of Roberto Bellarosa's performance for Belgium as I was spending the time furiously waving my Estonian flag until Birgit saw me and blew me a kiss. My heart melted, and it still does every time I hear this beautiful song.

quality of a *Moi Tout Simplement* but for me it was absolutely the right winner, and it started my own love affair with Latvia at Eurovision that has grown stronger with every year.

Marie N entered the preselection for Latvia (*Eirodziesma*) a number of times in the early 2000s with her trademark style of jovial pop (check out *Hey Boy Follow Me* which is another of my favourites) and she went on (of course) to host the show in Riga (alongside Brainstorm's Renārs Kaupers). She also appeared as a judge at *Supernova* 2017 and I was lucky enough to meet her there.

4

Miriam Christine with her biggest fan at Malta's Eurovision Weekend

**MALTA 1996**  
MIRIAM CHRISTINE *In A Woman's Heart*



Back in 1996 all UK eyes were on Gina G with a sense of excitement that we could get a great result (sadly wasn't to be), but for me it was the Maltese entry that caught my ear. Miriam Christine was just 17 at the time (just a couple of months younger than me), but she performed with such confidence and an amazing vocal. She finished a decent tenth that year not far behind Gina.

Around 15 years later I met Miriam Christine in the randomest of ways. I was at a football match in the away end at Oldham Athletic's Boundary Park (supporting my beloved Southend United). It was a Tuesday night in December and it was FREEZING and it was a long journey, so

**NORWAY 1984**  
DOLLIE DELUXE *Lenge Leve Livet*

1984 was the first Eurovision I remember watching and it was such a great year for quality. I was six and ahead of the show had already fallen in love with the UK entry and I remember dancing and jumping off the sofa to *Love Games*. I was allowed to stay up to watch the show, and it was the true start of my Eurovision fandom I guess.

The Norwegian entry that year was the duo Dollie (although at MGP they rebranded to Dollie Deluxe because Eurovision was in Luxembourg that year). They sang *Lenge Leve Livet* (*Long Live Life*) dressed in rags, and I don't know why specifically but I've always been so

very fond of it every time I've watched that show back (which is a LOT of times with classics from Italy, Denmark, Yugoslavia and of course The Herreys of Sweden with their golden shoes).

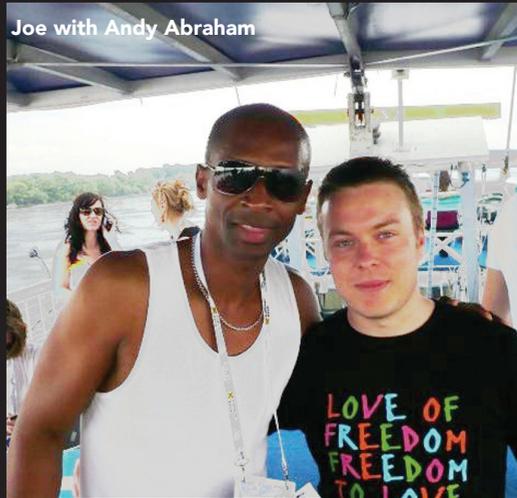
Many years later on a holiday in Norway (I think for MGP 2007) I recall finding the song on the jukebox of Oslo's London Pub and dancing on the tables. Goodness knows what the locals thought, but I may have had a few expensive beers by this point! Dollie went on to write their own stage musical *Which Witch*, which hit the West End in the 1990s, and they had a string of hits in Norway. *Lenge Leve Livet* has gone on to really symbolise Eurovision from 1984 for me and the start of my own Eurovision journey. ■

understandably the away end was sparsely populated. So I noticed someone who looked familiar, but I thought to myself “no it can’t be..” but I decided to say hello in any case (well it was more along the lines of “this may sound random but did you represent Malta at the Eurovision Song Contest in 1996?”) It turns out that she had married a guy from Southend and was in the UK visiting family and had been taken to this awful football match (it finished 0-0).

I arranged then to meet them at the next game on the Saturday at our own Roots Hall for a pre-match pint, and she was kind enough to sign my CD single (after the shock of learning I owned a copy). Back in the 1990s one had to go to the local record shop and get something like that specially imported. Thank goodness for modern day streaming apps, eh?! I met her again in 2019 at Malta’s *Eurovision Weekend* event where she performed. This time she recognised me and came over to say hello and it was lovely to be remembered. I’d recommend anyone to listen to her album *Little Zee* which contains one of my favourite ever songs *Mystery Mama*.



The real Joe &amp; Jake



Joe with Andy Abraham



# EURO QUIZ

At the end of the national final season for 2021, here is our national final-themed quiz, set by **David Ransted**



7

**How many times has Linda Martin taken part, either solo or in a group, in Ireland's national final?**

- 1 Which country's national final is known as *UMK*?
- 2 In Sweden's *Melodifestival*, how many times has the Final been won by a song that had qualified through the 'Andra Chansen' second chance round?
- 3 Which artist withdrew his song from the contest immediately on being announced the winner of the German national final in 2015?
- 4 How many languages were included in the songs of this year's French national final?
- 5 What is the name of Estonia's national final?

- 8 At this year's *Samremo Festival* the 26 'Big Artists' songs in the Final were whittled down to a Super Final of three by four groupings of voters. One grouping was a public televote, one a press jury, one a demoscopic jury. Who made up the fourth grouping?

- 9 Which country's 2021 national final ended in a 'Golden Duel' between two songs?



6

Tony Moore has written several Song For Europe contenders, including *A Little Bit of Heaven* (third, 1991), *Waiting In The Wings* (third, 1994) and *That's My Love* (which he performed himself, second, 2001), as well as co-writing the entries *The Answer* (eighth) and *Crazy* (third) for the 2000 final. He was a former member of which famous heavy metal band?



10

**Runners-up in this year's Russian national final were the duo #2Mashi. What was the name of their song?**



How many times has Cheryl Baker performed in the UK national final?

11

12 Which former member of the hard rock bands White Lion and Freak of Nature made the Danish national final in 2021 with the song *Everything Is Alright*?

12

Polish singer Margaret has twice featured in Sweden's *Melodifestival*, but which of her songs was runner-up in Poland's 2016 national final?

16



17 Changes to the contest after 1957 were inspired by the BBC's national selection process in the UK. What was the original name for the UK version?

17

18 Which Swedish artist has performed songs in three *Melodifestival* finals and also hosted the show in 2017 and 2018?

18

19 The UK's Song For Europe contest has only once been decided by a tie-break. In which year, and which song came off second best?

19

The Eurovision Song Contest was modelled partly on Italy's *Sanremo Music Festival*. In what year did the first *Sanremo Music Festival* take place?

20



13 Cliff Richard's 1973 UK entry *Power To All Our Friends* was released with the Song For Europe runner-up as the B-side. What was the song?

13

14 Last place in this year's Finnish national final went to an artist who has twice represented Estonia in the contest. Who is the artist?

14

15 The UK national final of 2007 was held in a studio complex that has also been home to *Jools Holland's Hootenanny*, *Catchphrase* and CBBC's *Hetty Feather*. Where is the studio?

15

## The answers

1. Finland (Uuden Musiikin Kilpailu, which means 'New Music Competition').
2. Just once, in 2013: *You by Robin Sjöberg*.
3. Andreas Kunnert, with the song *Heart Of Stone*.
4. Four: French, English, Corsican and Tahitian.
5. *Esti Lau!* ('Estonian Song').
6. Iron Maiden.
7. Nine times as a solo artist, four times as a member of *Chips* and once as Linda Martin and Friends.
8. The orchestra.
9. Norway.
10. *Bitter Words*.
11. Four times: twice with Co-Co (1976 and 1978), once with *The Main Event* (1980) and of course with *Bucks Fizz* in 1981.
12. Mike Tramp.
13. *Come Back Billie Joe*.
14. Laura [Poldvere]: *Estonia 2005* (with Suntribe) and 2017 (duetting with Koit Toome).
15. The Maidstone Studios, Kent.
16. *Cool Me Down*.
17. The Festival Of British Popular Songs.
18. David Lindgren.
19. 1980. *Happy Everything*, performed by Maggie Moore, lost the tie-break by eight juries to six.
20. 1951.

# REVIEWS

Marcus Keppel-Palmer looks back at a past *Vision* magazine  
This time: April 1997 (issue 28)

## THE GREAT BRITISH SONG CONTEST 1997

Despite the initial low profile on BBC Radio 2, eight songs were broadcast from which one has become the 1997 UK Eurovision entry! But what did you think? Did the best song win, or was there another which you personally preferred?

To find out Ace Freshen is compiling a *Vision* poll and would like you to choose your top five favourite songs from this year's GBSC, awarding each 5; 4; 3; 2; and 1; Send your scores to Ace at 2 Lambeth Mews, Hockley, Essex SSS 4UQ as soon as possible. The full results will appear in a later issue of *Vision*.

\*\* If you haven't yet heard all eight songs and would like to receive a cassette of the Radio 2 broadcast please send a £2 cheque to Gordon Lewis, *Vision* - GBSC Cassette, 15 Hammonds Lane, Totton, Southampton SO40 3LH. All cheques should be made payable to 'Gordon Lewis' and any surplus, once expenses have been met, will be donated to DGBE-UK.



Sam Blue



Joanne May



Do Re Mi  
Feat Kerry



Katrina And The Waves

### The Tip Sheet

During the first week of March DGBE-UK were approached by Jonathan King's *Tip Sheet* about distributing sampler GBSC CD's to all current UK members as of 1st January!

Obviously this was an offer that could not be refused, and so confidentiality was broken in order for appropriate mailing details to be made available. *The Tip Sheet* were somewhat astounded by our membership level, but hopefully everyone eligible received a CD - and from calls received you were all very pleased!

Finally, if you have any reason to suspect that your name has gone on someone else's mailing list, or do not wish your address to be given to any third party should a similar offer arise, please write to the Editor at your earliest convenience.

8



Barbara Berta



Mrs Einstein

### NETHERLANDS

Song: "Niemand heeft nog tijd"  
Translation: "No one has time"  
Performer: Mrs Einstein

Aid great excitement and voting session the 1997 Nationaal Songfestival was held in Amsterdam on 23rd February. As indicated in the last issue of *Vision* all six songs were performed by five piece female group, Mrs Einstein. Former winner, Corry Brokken, watched over a complicated voting procedure which combined regional juries with a national phone-in! When both sets of votes had been received they were equally weighted and converted into overall percentages with just six points separating the top three songs. However "Niemand heeft nog tijd", written by Ed Hoogjans, was a popular choice with the studio audience and should do well in Dublin. Fast and energetic, with a dramatic introduction, the song has been released on Columbia CDL 664345-1 and is not what some would call a typical run-of-the-mill Eurovision entry.

18

**T**HE FRONT COVER: Pride of place on the front cover goes to Katrina & The Waves who would have the hopes of the UK on their shoulders as they travelled only so far as The Point in Dublin for Eurovision 1997. *Love Shine A Light* had triumphed in the Great British Song Contest 1997 on Sunday 9th March (an afternoon show hosted by Dale Winton) scoring over 10,000 more votes than the song in second place. Would Katrina go on to win with this anthemic ballad? Only time would tell.

**THE MAIN STORY:** As always, *Vision* provided a comprehensive rundown of all the competing songs in the 1997 Eurovision, for many the first information in these pre-internet days when fans did not have access

to leaks from Czech Radio, YouTube videos, fan reaction videos, and a whole host of news and gossip on social media. Jeepers! There were no preview shows anymore on the BBC - but OGAE UK supplied preview videos if you wrote in to Steve. The 25 songs - from Cyprus to Iceland - were reported on by *Vision*, while correspondents with satellite dishes reported on national finals from Malta, Germany, Turkey, Ireland and Denmark. Among the usual shenanigans, *Vision* reported that Greece was originally due to be represented by Dimosthenis Stringlis until that was changed, none of the ten songs submitted to the Austrian national final were deemed good enough, and Poland appointed boyband Stachursky until a poll of Poles showed 98% of respondents had never heard of them.

# VISION

Issue 28

April 1997

## VISION

The OGAE (UK) Magazine

EUROVISION '97  
The Point, Dublin



Affiliated to Organisation Générale des Amateurs Eurovision

### RECORD REVIEWS

- by Richard Crane

**CELINE DION "C'est pour vivre"** (Nectar NTR0076 via Pinnacle)  
It's difficult to know where to begin with this CD and my first reaction was, oh no - not another rehash of her early eighties material! On further inspection I've discovered this is the most satisfying Celine album to date. The first advantage as far as I'm concerned is that the awful "Ne partez pas sans moi" isn't included! Secondly, this CD contains six tracks which are making their first appearance on CD, one of which, "Paul et virgine", appears to be previously unreleased anywhere. If the only CD of Celine's material from the eighties you own is "Les premières amours" then buying this CD will give you ten tracks you don't already own on CD. At under a tenner this is excellent value and a must!



**LINDA MARTIN "The singles collection"**  
This is an absolute must for Linda's fans; a compilation that includes both ESC entries as well as her excellent version of Carola's "Love isn't love" ("Framling"). The remaining tracks showcase Miss Martin's versatility as a singer, although I could have done without four Connie Francis songs in a row! Listening to this tape makes me saddened that there is so little of her material available. Where, for instance, is "Feels like walking in my sleep", the B side of "Tervainal 3", or any of her Irish Eurosong entries? Hopefully this unnumbered catalogue release will eventually

50

**VISION VIEWS:** Televoting continued to be a hot topic - it had rumbled on and off for several years and of course was introduced for the 1997 contest. Andrew Mullen was not happy wanting tradition to stand. Nobody was quite sure how televotes would be counted - there was a suggestion that there would be a jury too and the televote and jury votes would be combined. As if! Richard Crane was reporting on Lulu's role in the film *To Sir With Love 2* and her friendship with then popular singer, Kavana. Gina G won the best song of 1996 vote among *Gay Times* readers, while *Attitude* were singing the praises of Code Red as being "the only good looking boy band that can actually sing".

**AND FINALLY:** There were calls for Eurovision fans to help two students' theses - one on Irish dance and one on UK fan attitudes to Eurovision. Did you help either? Marcel Palonder (Slovakia 1996) had an album reviewed, a rare demo cassette reviewed, and also was reported to have been hospitalised in Prague - he was certainly flavour of the issue. Celine Dion had her usual slew of albums released - she was amazingly prolific in the 1990s - while Barry Bowman (OGAE UK President) reported that he had discovered through the delights of RTP's teletext service (ask your parents) 'RTP-texto' that Simone de Oliveira (Portugal 1965, 1969) was starring in a telenovela entitled *Vidas de Sal*. That is something worth checking out. ■

# THE VISION PANEL SPECIAL YOUR TOP THREE

Your mag, your views. In this special edition of the **Vision Panel** we asked a number of recent and established members to list their top three songs from this year's contest. And in true Eurovision style members weren't allowed to vote for the UK. Regular **Vision Panel** chairman **Alasdair Rendall** leads the way.



## Alasdair Rendall

**8 Norway** Wow, what an incredible national final Norway gave us this year. Any number of songs could have won, and although I definitely shared the love for KEiiNO's *Monument* I still think Norway have ended up with a standout pop song.

**10 Switzerland** It's a crying shame Eurovision never got to officially experience Gjon's absolutely beautiful song last year, which was my runaway favourite, but I'm delighted he's been given another chance. His vocals are in a different league, and if a ballad is to win, this should be it.

**12 Denmark** In 2003 Estonia told us the *Eighties* (were) *Coming Back*. Well we had to wait a but, now they finally are. This is a brilliantly catchy, uplifting, and memorable song. And it's great to hear the Danish language back in the contest again!



## Andrew Brook

**8 Ukraine/Norway/Austria.** I am useless at choosing my favourites. Ukraine is like Nox on Acid, Norway and Austria appeal to my taste in melody and harmony. I'm going for Ukraine as my number three simply because it is a more adventurous choice. 2020 was a brilliant year and 2021 might just turn out to be as good.

**10 Malta** This just keeps growing on me. It is a very well constructed song, which is very catchy and shows off Destiny's vocal abilities. My first thought was that this song is going to tap into the audience who voted for *Toy*, but, actually, it's a much more substantial song which I think could be a big international hit.

**12 France** If 2021 is a year for a runaway winner then this is the one. It is quintessentially French, and it will appeal not just to those who actually like the song, but to those who appreciate it for its authenticity. And it doesn't hurt its chances that Barbara wrote the current Junior Eurovision winning song.



## Carol Ritson

**8 Switzerland** I love how the stillness of the verse makes me feel so calm and relaxed, before the music suddenly erupts into a huge explosion of sound in the chorus.

**10 Georgia** I really love Tornike Kipiani's voice. Over the last 12 months I've listened to many of his songs and this is a big diversion of style for him. I also really love the sound the stringed instruments make when they pluck in the middle of the song.

**12 France** This was a very easy choice for me. As a huge lifelong Edith Piaf fan, how can I not love this! It sounds just like a recently discovered lost song from her collection! Fabulous!



## Charlie Ong

**8 Austria** Beautiful lyrics.

**10 Lithuania** Catchy number.

**12 France** Transcendent indeed.



## Gary Speirs

Having watched, loved and attended (not all!) Eurovisions since 1974, I'm always looking for something to get me up on my feet, or tug on the old heartstrings.. so these are the best three in it for me this year.

**8 North Macedonia** This grabbed me by the heartstrings on first listen. If he can pull this off live, OMG. Vasil was my 2020 winner and has grabbed me again big-time with a totally different sound - Euro-class.

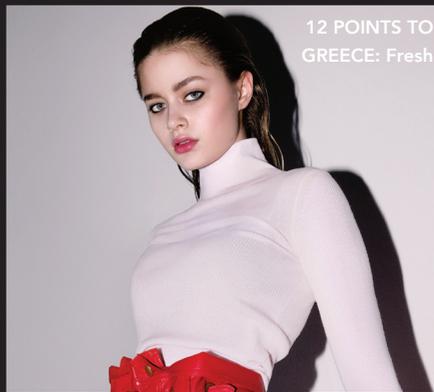
**10 Norway** This was unexpected but I can't stop playing it. Such a great production and such a genuine artist. Powerful and evocative - sure resonates with me.

**12 Lithuania** With sheer uplifting joy, The Roop have done it again. Inventive, instant, slick and authentic. Sunshine in a song - and it should go close.

IMAGE BY GETTER JAANI



12 POINTS TO ESTONIA: Talented



12 POINTS TO GREECE: Fresh

IMAGE BY HARRIS FARSAKAKIS

**Darron Copeland**

**8 Israel** Eden has all the boxes checked. The look. Check. Perfect pandemic song title *Set Me Free*.

Check. Stunning, strong vocal. Check. But I think the ultra slick song production could stop Israel from winning again.

**10 Malta** Destiny has the voice of Christina Aguilera and the attitude of Lizzo coupled with a female empowerment message. Love this song but could comparison's to Lizzo hold her back from taking the trophy?

**12 Italy** Who knew that glam rock and Italian rap could be the combination that could finally push Italy over the top. They have to nail the performance and capture the imagination of the viewing audience to win.

**Caroline Griffin**

**8 Poland** I love this entry. Rafel is a wonderful, confident performer and this song has a very uplifting

electro vibe to it. Love the accompanying video.

**10 Norway** As a youngster, Andreas Haukeland (alias TIX) was mercilessly bullied due to Tourette Syndrome, and labelled 'tics', which is later turned into a stage name. He is inspirational in turning his negative experience into a positive one, and he relates his struggles in music that everyone can relate to. *Fallen Angel* is very touching song about struggling with depression.

**12 Estonia** What would Eurovision be without a few power ballads, especially one sung by a terribly handsome chap like Uku Suviste? Uku is a multi talented singer-songwriter and pianist. His mother is a classically trained singer and an uncle and aunt of his are professional opera singers. Uku's musical training shows in his well crafted compositions. I equally love both his entries from this year and 2020.

**Danny Lynch**

**8 San Marino** By far the biggest surprise package of the year comes from The Most Serene Republic.

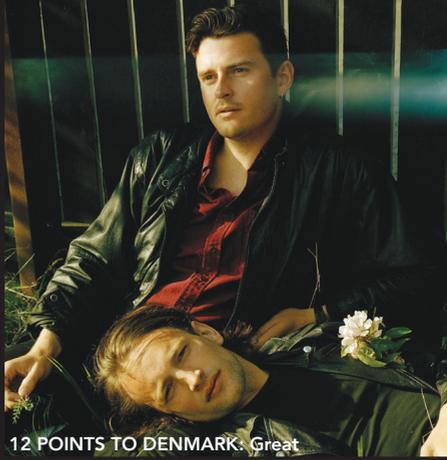
Who would have thought they would have something like this up their sleeve? A catchy pop track with a storming chorus, it reminds me of those classic Eurovision songs of the 2000s brought right up to date. And then there's the addition of FloRida, which I can't quite believe happened - whether he makes it to the Eurovision stage in Rotterdam we will have to wait and see, but with or without him, this is sure to give the micro-state their best result ever at Eurovision.

**10 Malta** Destiny is no stranger to winning Eurovision, Junior Eurovision, that is, and she's pulling no punches this year with her female empowerment anthem which feels very much needed right now. The song has a catchy saxophone drop which is sure to go viral on Tik Tok and does the whole swing thing much better than Electro Velvet did for the UK. All of this combined with Destiny's vocals and stage presence, it is easy to see how this is one of the favourites to win this year. Malta have never won Eurovision before and two weeks on the island in May next year sounds a very inviting prospect. Can Destiny make history for Malta? Time will tell...

**12 Greece** Harking back to the 1980s is bang on trend right now and this song ticks all the boxes for me. It's young, fresh and sounds like something that could be a hit in the charts for someone like Dua Lipa or Mabel. I love the production and how the song builds and builds until the glorious middle eight and last chorus. From live performances I have seen, she is a great little performer and rumours say that the Greeks have planned a huge stage show for this, so I do have high expectations for this song. Fingers crossed!!



12 POINTS TO IRELAND: Masterpiece



12 POINTS TO DENMARK: Great



### Nicky Teare

**8 Cyprus** Others such as Belgium, Estonia, Australia, Romania and Czechs are queuing up behind this ready to podium, but this is my current song and dance number of choice. The verses are a bit modern and affectedly cool for my usual tastes, but somehow that all doesn't matter when the incredible pop chorus comes crashing in. This has been my early bet to win, so we could be seeing Cyprus' first ever victory? Or more likely given some of my tips, Cyprus' first non-qualification since Malmo.

**10 Norway** As an optically diverse pop star once observed, dreams can come true. I heard this on Spotify when it was first revealed and thought it was magnificent. I knew though that a song in foreign could never really challenge to be my favourite at Eurovision, although I do have *El Diablo* third this year, because lyrics matter too much to me. It was story of the season for me then when TIX not only came up with an incredible performance for this, but also decided to do it in English and romped home in *Melodi Grand Prix*, just seeing off fan favourites Blasemafian feat Hazel. From start to finish this provides me with huge levels of emoting and I'm still at the point where the key change and soaring next chorus brings moisture to my eyes during every listen.

**12 Ireland** Life is a wonderful thing, and few experiences clarify that feeling more strongly in me currently than listening to Lesley Roy. The unlikely icon of the 2020s was also in my top five last year with *Story Of My Life* – a glorious, if possibly slightly simplistic, anthem for the single movement. This though is a masterpiece – a deeper and more existential examination of the joy that can be found in the world through the process of self-reflection and the resulting authenticity. I'd love her to do well at the contest, but also don't really care that much as I have been gifted this song to listen to forever. Best Irish entry since The Mullans.



### Lesley Sim

**8 Iceland** OK this won't have as much impact as last year, as they are no longer new, but I just love his relaxing but quirky voice, and that the song has a real meaning behind it. I even like the video, though it's a little bit spooky that there was a real volcanic eruption in Iceland at the time the video was being created.

**10 Switzerland** I do prefer Gjon's previous song, but this is still gorgeous - what an amazing voice, and another effective, affecting video.

**12 Ukraine** This is so different to anything else this year, it is both ethnic and dancey, and it just builds and gets faster. I have found that is absolutely the best thing to play when using my elliptical exercise machine, as I'm also copying the arm movements from the video.



### John Hodgkiss

**8 Iceland** Not as good as last year in my opinion, but it's funky and will get noticed.

**10 Lithuania** Loving this! Prefer it to Iceland this year. It's memorable and looks great on stage.

**12 Malta** My banger for 2021. This girl can sing, and who can't resist a lyric about farting!



### Linda Wilson

**8 Germany** It's nice fun pop.

**10 Iceland** I LOVE how quirky it is and It's great that we have a good follow up to last year with another fun dance.

**12 Denmark** I'm a big fan of 1980s pop and this to me is great. I'll be dancing to it for years.

IMAGE BY MONA SALLMINEN



12 POINTS TO FINLAND: Top Ten



12 POINTS TO CROATIA: Cool

IMAGE BY BORNA HRZINA

**Daniel Fay**

**8 Slovenia** Stand out song in a field of chart friendly uptempo songs.

**10 Greece** Love 1980s vibe to the song...she'll have great staging.

**12 Malta** Fun, catchy, performed by a perfect pop star.

**Andrew Main**

**8 France** Barbara has perhaps the best chance to give France a top placing as well as to win back to back contests with Junior and the main contest. Almost classic Chanson with a modern twist, her live performance is mesmerising.

**10 Croatia** Among the plethora of uptempo girl songs this one stands out for me. Albina performs the socks off this at the Dora and am sure she won't disappoint.

**12 Lithuania** The Roop certainly have surpassed themselves with this fun quirky song that presses all the right buttons for me. Would be great to see it take the win.

**Paul Marks-Jones**

**8 France** Nice to hear some proper French chanson in the contest after so many years. This one is emotive and well delivered - let's hope it delivers on the scoreboard!

**10 Ukraine** I didn't think they could top their 2020 entry, but they have done with a mix of tempos, good shouty vocals and some off the wall lyrics!

**12 Croatia** *Tik Tok* - I loved this in the national final and was impressed by her vocals for a pop track. It's contemporary, sleek and cool.

**Michael Duncan**

**8 Malta** Great though not fantastic song, which she'll sell like hot cross buns at Easter.

**10 Slovenia** Just a quality gospel inspired song well performed.

**12 Finland** Well performed great rock song. Will finish Top Ten. You heard it here first.

**Fiona Guest**

**8 Cyprus** I usually have no problem choosing my top three, but this year there could have been any one of 12 songs in my Top Ten, but I adore this fuego/nursery rhyme/up-tempo mash-up after a shaky start. The infantile interludes would normally irritate me, but somehow they add to the uniqueness and appeal of this fun, pacey foot-tapper. There are certainly shades of *Fuego* at times, and if it is staged well, it should have a broad appeal and get people up and dancing with a really happy smile. Just what we need at the moment!

**10 North Macedonia** I know, I know: I'm a sucker for a Balkan ballad and when combined with powerful orchestration (bring back the orchestra please!), some operatic elements and a passionate delivery, I'm hooked. Vasil can hold a long note perfectly and demonstrates it several times which only adds to his melodic and powerful delivery. I would love North Macedonia to build on 2019's success and this has totally won me over.

**12 Ireland** From a country that has given us musical extremes (Dustin the Turkey anyone?), this grabbed me from my first listen. I have no idea of any of the lyrics (something about places?), but it's a happy fast-paced memorable earworm full of energy and lifts the spirits after such a weird and depressing year. I have played it on repeat from the first time I heard it, and it just gets better and better each time my foot beats out the tempo. It's just the kind of post-Covid song we all need, and I can't get enough of it. Could it be Dublin (or Millstreet) 2022? I would love it if it were!



12 POINTS TO ICELAND: Joyful

**Eddie De Souza**

**8 San Marino** The big big pop song from the tiny state. They have really pulled it out the bag this year and I hope they get a top placing. Add in Flo Rida and surely this is a summer hit around Europe!

**10 France** Pure class. Reminds me of Eurovisions of old, in a good way. She sells it amazingly and if there was a full audience, I could see her surrounded by a thousand phone lights - just magical!

**12 Iceland** It's totally different to everything else. Fun, joyful and top tapping. Folk will remember him from the press of last year and I'm sure the production will be memorable. Here's hoping for Iceland... 12 points!

**David Plews**

**8 Ukraine** A song so unique, visually and sonically, from anything else in the contest. I love the traditional white voice style of singing and ethnic instruments that are then combined with the electronic, almost industrial beat. The message in the video is so 2021, the summoning of spring set against a dystopian backdrop.

**10 San Marino** Wow, the shock of the year, Flo Rida at Eurovision. He adds a great energy to an already highly energised bop. The strong Arabian or African (or both) rhythms at play, make this the dance track that has the best chance of winning. The greatest improvement from last year by far, well done Senhit, the best San Marino entry without question.

**12 Azerbaijan** A great ethnic bop that employs Turkic instruments and rhythms along with other national motifs throughout, which makes the song stand out. I hope she sticks with the Ariana Grande-esque styling and also maintains a lot of the elements from the official video. Azerbaijan usually has big bucks to throw at the performance, so I'm looking for something sensational in the dance break at the end.

**David Elder**

**8 Denmark** Yes, it's cheesy as a Gregg's Cheese & Onion Bake, but this 1980's throwback is absolutely glorious in its blatant neon-tinged fantasy! While I would imagine anyone under the age of 45 will be looking on in abject horror during the Danish performance, those of us of a certain age will be pulling up our leg-warmers, flinging on our deely-boppers and bopping around like things possessed!

**10 North Macedonia** If Denmark is cheesy then Vasil is providing us with a full-on fondue! I'm a sucker for a big, blousy, Disneyesque ballad sung from the heart, and lovely Vasil is giving it loads as he sings his wee heart out for his homeland. That big note at the end! Marvellous.

**12 France** I have always adored Edith Piaf's melancholic, stripped back style of singing and I instantly fell in love with this classic chanson when I first heard it at the end of last year. Barbara's voice has a poignancy and clarity that is bound to get more than a few tears flowing on 22 May. In a year full of belters and bangers France has a great opportunity to stand out. Un gagnant, peut-être? Voila!

**Dean Asker**

**8 Greece** There are a lot of uptempo female-led songs this year, but this mix of Dua Lipa and Ava Max is my favourite.

**10 Denmark** Hooray! Some fabulous 1980s Danish schlager. It's like Hot Eyes and Birthe Kjaer never went away. This is probably the most joyous song of the year, and, for me, at least, the most authentic. Brilliant.

**12 Lithuania** I loved The Roop's song last year and was concerned they couldn't better it. But they have! This works on every level for me. Just enough of a gimmick, a great track and strong performers. This would be a worthy winner.

IMAGE BY/CTIMA TELEVISION



12 POINTS TO AZERBAIJAN: Stand out



12 POINTS TO MALTA: Respect

IMAGE BY CARLTON AGIUS

**Alistair Cheetham**

**8 Lithuania** I'm not one who got the hype for *On Fire* last year, but this song is fun, catchy and will fill

Eurovision dancefloors for years. The hook and the crazy dancing just add to its appeal.

**10 Malta** While lyrically and thematically this could be accused of being 'TOY 2,' Destiny's voice and sass take this to another level.

Coupled with the incredible timing of the release of this song to what was going on in the UK, I think she's going to hit the right note!

**12 Ukraine** From the opening bar *Shum* hooked me! And when the bass kicks in it starts a whirling dervish of an entry that keeps on giving. The fusion of traditional with hardcore dance is mind blowing and Kateryna Pavlenko's voice is just amazing. I loved the original version they released, but the Eurovision version is just as mad, but brilliant.

**Ingrid Neighbour**

**8 Denmark** This is just glorious.

I'm generally not a fan of ballads or songs that take themselves too seriously and this is full of fun. It takes me back to my 1980s youth AND it's in Danish - seriously, what's not to love?!

**10 Serbia** Banger alert! For the first time since 2014 (okay, they didn't participate!), Serbia isn't my douze points. I adore the Serbian language and while I preferred *Hasta La Vista*, *Loco Loco* is the sort of music I listen to outside of Eurovision. I know it will have its haters but it doesn't do for us all to like the same thing, right?

**12 Germany** What can I say? I fell in love with this from the first listen. It's so much fun and I think that's just what we need after the year we've all had. Jendrik will no doubt have a memorable performance and while I get it's a totally marmite song, I adore it. Zwölf Punkte für Deutschland bitte!

**Gordon Lewis**

**8 San Marino** Has Europe's smallest country taken steps to guarantee its qualification to the Grand

Final or will the gamble result in 'nil points'? Senhit is no stranger to the contest, having competed in 2011 and expected to take part in 2020, but this year she is joined by chart topping American rapper and producer, Flo Rida. Admittedly, Flo Rida's success on the global charts seems to have diminished in recent years, but his unique style perfectly complements Senhit's vocals. This song could go either way, but let's hope that Flo Rida at least manages to get to Rotterdam to perform alongside Senhit.

**10 Iceland** Iceland was certainly the country to watch 12 months ago and, even when the contest was cancelled, Daði & Gagnamagnið (Dadi Freyr) still managed to leave their mark on the European music scene. *Think About Things* not only reached the Top 40 in the United Kingdom, but has also been heard on *Strictly Coming Dancing*, *Dancing On Ice* and a host of other TV and radio shows. Although *10 Years* does not really compare to the band's previous song, it is still likely to receive top marks from across Europe (and Australia) and rightly so.

**12 Malta** With some of the strongest vocals in this year's contest, Destiny deserves to win and become the first person to gain victory at both the Junior and Eurovision song contests. Last year, Destiny went gospel for the cancelled contest, but now returns with a very grown-up sound containing some jazz influences for good measure. The lyrics speak of having respect for women and follows in the theme of Netta's *TOY* (Israel 2018) just three years ago. No one is messing with Destiny and there is no messing around when it comes to her performance either. Could Malta prove to be everyone's 'Destiny' next year?

## 12 POINTS TO FRANCE: Pure class

**Mandy Norman**

Here goes with the Eurovision Bingo because this year is vintage! It's a corker of a year for songs and I've found this whole 8, 10, 12 points business a bit tricky to say the least. So, I have to admit that I flipped a coin when it got tricky and these are the ones that won the flip!

**8 Moldova** Pure candy to the ears and pop-tastic in every way. Moldova really know how to do a great stage show, so think we will be in for a sweet treat. Plus, I've got my outfit sorted for the evening. Look out for the mad Yorkshire lass dressed as an ice-cream cone!

**10 Lithuania** Quirky and a bit bonkers, I just love the innovative vibe to Roop and to this whole song. The glitter ball is at the ready and I've been practising the dance moves, so should have them perfect come May.

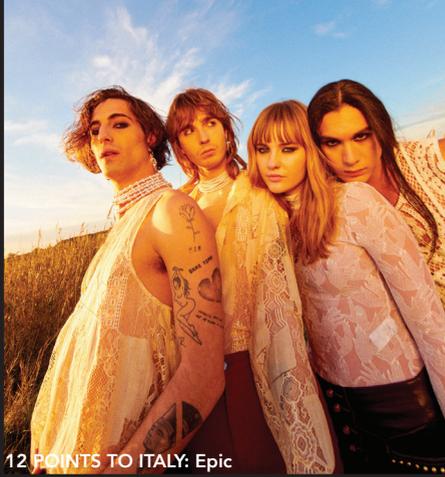
**12 France** I have to be honest and say that I was a tad disappointed that Tom Leeb wasn't going to be joining us this year for obvious reasons...However, this song is pure class and you couldn't get more French if you tried. It makes my hairs stand on end and I shall be enjoying watching it win with croissant in hand.

(Other songs which cut the Eurovision mustard this year are the magnificent Switzerland, the belter from Malta, ethnic choral sounds from the Netherlands, and although we weren't allowed to vote for the UK in our line-up, I'm sneaking it in here. My inflatable saxophone will be at the ready on the 22nd of May.)

**Martin Palmer**

**8 Finland** For me, *UMK* was the strongest national final this season with a diverse variety of musical genres among all the entries. Having said that, the Finnish public arguably went to type with their overwhelming selection of a metal band and 'stuck their middle fingers up' to everything else! Blind Channel were the ones who brought their A game to *UMK* - it was three minutes of high intensity and aggressive visual action, a pure gig performance that grabbed your senses and made you feel like you were in one of their mosh pits. I love the dual lead vocalists and the nod to Linkin Park in the musical sound - this will be a stand out in Rotterdam, every performance will be 100% and this will do a lot better than most Eurovision fans think it will. Welcome back to the upper reaches of the leader board, Finland!

**10 Switzerland** Always hard to recreate excellence at Eurovision but we have it with Switzerland. Who thought that Gjon's Tears could provide us with something as pure and beautiful in 2021 as he gave us in 2020? *Tout L'Univers* is strong when you listen to the studio/video version but we ascend to the heavens as Gjon sings live - even with a piano accompaniment and nothing else, you know you are in the presence of the best male voice of 2020 and 2021. You also know that every word is heartfelt and that the delivery of the song comes from deep inside Gjon, the emotion transferring into this listener at least! An entry to lay back and chill to, to contemplate the bigger things in life - this will be a highlight in May, everyone experiencing this will recognise that their ears have just had a wow moment.



12 POINTS TO ITALY: Epic

**Hass Yusuf**

So very tight this year - Switzerland and Lithuania (who I expect to win) just missed out.

**8 North Macedonia** Well who can resist a show-stopper? Fab voice and delivery - it gets all those short hairs erect!

**10 Belgium** What fab symphonic sounds. Very sultry vocals - this could easily open any Bond movie. How utterly professional. The sudden ending (what an evil thing to do) makes me crave for more! Yes - more!

**12 France** Well, it's pure French this year. The best language for any song. It's so very emotive and sung with real passion - it became my instant favourite. Now the French may poo-poo our Covid vaccine, but I'm more than happy to forgive them for fresh croissants in Paris. Yeh, it doesn't take much - but they've been robbed of victory many times (since 1991).

**12 France** January 30th was when I found my favourite entry for 2021 - it is rare that a national final performance is so perfect for me that I have my fingers crossed that nothing is changed for Eurovision! Barbara's flawless vocals, the impassioned lyrics, the minimalist staging, the passionate artistic delivery - everything about *Voilà* is perfection and there was no doubt that this was going to be France's entry for Rotterdam. Every performance since has been of the highest quality and leaves all who view Barbara delivering this song spellbound, including me. I am convinced that this will be the jury winner in May and hope beyond hope that the public see that this entry has beauty and class enough to give France their first win in 44 years - that was the magic figure for the Netherlands in 2019 too...

**Laura Cress**

**8 San Marino** This is my guilty pleasure in this year's competition! I don't know if it's the unexpected inclusion of Flo Rida or slight resemblance to Cyprus's *Fuego* but I love it!

**10 Cyprus** Always a fan of a club banger so this Lady Gaga-esque hit immediately grabbed me! Will be very interested to see how this gets staged.

**12 Malta** Catchy, a great message and of course the fabulous voice of Destiny who we've already seen can handle the pressure from her winning performance in Junior Eurovision. This has got Eurovision winner all over it!

**Jonny Belcher**

**8 Cyprus** I'm a sucker for a Gaga-esque track. It's certainly no *Fuego* however the heavy beat of the chorus hooked me in from the first time I heard it.

**10 Denmark** This song is great fun and wouldn't feel out of place as the soundtrack to a romcom. Love the energy from the lead singer.

**12 Poland** I absolutely love this 1980s style synth pop updated for the 21st Century. Could it be *Warsaw 2022*, with an interval act from the milk maids we've all been waiting to see again?

**Pete Lambert**

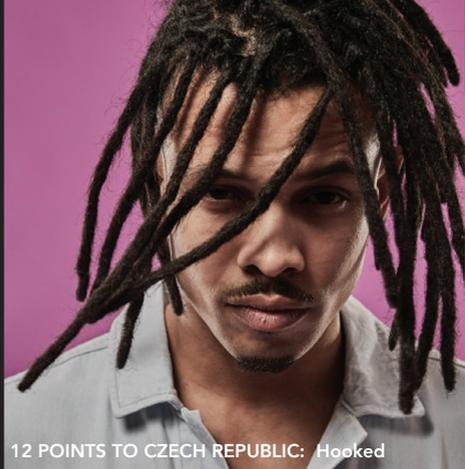
**8 Moldova** Little did I know, back when *Sugar* first cake-face-munchingly stomped its way into my world, that Eurovision 2021 would end up with more bangers than a Walls sausage factory - but I've stayed true to my first love among them! This is a playful sexy powerhouse of a track and Gordienko in her own way brings the Big Loboda Energy that I always want to see at Eurovision.

**10 Russia** *Russian Woman* weaves its ultra-modern and classically Russian elements together brilliantly, really building them up through the course of the track, and Manizha's rapping is so melodious and packed with personality that she almost makes me forget I don't speak a word of Russian. A truly radical choice of entry that couldn't be less generic, I really hope its originality is rewarded in the scoring.

**12 Italy** I'm no rock expert but this three minute epic has strutted out from somewhere between glam and grunge and got right under my skin. Victoria is coolness personified on bass and Damiano's rapid-fire vocals (especially those Italian rolled 'r's) bring it to the very top tier, in any genre. This is the song that keeps popping into my head and demanding to be played just once more, so has a secure place as my pre-Rotterdam #1.



12 POINTS TO ROMANIA: Memorable



12 POINTS TO CZECH REPUBLIC: Hooked

**Ray Duffy**

**8 Albania** Can't think of many Albanian songs I haven't liked over the past decade or so. *Karma* would have been one of about four songs I would have chosen pre-Festivali I Kenges. It's powerful, dramatic, atmospheric, and the recent re-vamp has heightened all of those positives. A song where I'm hopeful the staging will be as amazing as the song.

**10 Poland** Alicija was my favourite last year, and Poland narrowly misses out being my fave again. But I honestly find it hard to split my top two - the songs are too different to compare! Poland has a wealth of musical talent at present, with two Junior Eurovision winners waiting in the wings, I'm sure, for a crack at the big one. This song has a similar vibe to *Gram-Of-Fun* in *Eesti Laul*, which was my favourite of all 2021 songs, a rollercoaster of a bop.

**12 Romania** I've forgiven her for not taking *Cherry Red* last year - as this year's amazing offering showcases her voice and writing ability. It's a personal song (although 2020/Covid related which I'm kind of against in 2021) which she is passionate about. It has amazing delivery just to listen to, and to watch, and I am sure the Rotterdam staging will make it equally memorable.

**Theresa Krajewski**

**8 Australia** I find this song fascinating, it seems like several genres all stitched together and I think it works really well. I was a huge fan of her song last year and this is just as good. She has a strong voice and seems like an interesting performer - I can't wait to see how this comes across on the Eurovision stage. (8 points also to *James Newman, UK*. I am so proud to say that this is our entry this year! A very credible and likeable song, great beat and vocals. I have been listening to this A LOT!)

**10 San Marino** Wow, I just love this! Senhit's offering this year is sassy, fun and a real ear worm. I would love to see this bring home the victory in May, with or without Flo Rida.

**12 Czech Republic** This song has had me hooked from first listen. The opening lyric, "Honestly, don't care..." seems to sum up my feelings towards the past year. No use worrying about cancelled holidays and changed plans, I honestly don't care as long as we're all healthy and happy! I love the rhythm and Benny's laid-back vocals. So catchy and a massive improvement for me on his song from last year (which I couldn't stand!).

**Martin Phillips**

**8 Moldova** I love the video for this and thought it was merely a case of eye candy, but the song has the strength of *Siren* by Maruv, the banned Ukrainian song from a couple of years ago, which could have won Eurovision. The song is immediate and improves on repeated hearing.

**10 San Marino** This song also caught me immediately, and another great video. Just enough eastern promise in this to get votes from almost all countries. It's a little derivative but Senhit looks spectacular and FloRida is the real rap deal, giving it added hotness and credibility. I'll be playing this loud in my convertible on I-95 this summer.

**12 Lithuania** One of my two favourites from last year. Both produce songs that are similar in style, but while Dadi's effort for Iceland is less than, The Roop's *Discoteque* is definitely more than! A song for all us Euro-misfits. Cheeky (especially with the accidentally unbuttoned fly in the Lithuanian final), knowing, addictive and a big up yours to Covid. I am already looking at hotels in Vilnius.

IMAGE BY PAULIUS ZABORSKIS



12 POINTS TO LITHUANIA: Super catchy

**Scott Em**

**8 Latvia** Combining the incredible skills of Samanta and Aminata was always destined for something brilliantly leftfield. *The Moon Is Rising* isn't just a great track - it's anthemic and makes an impactful statement.

**10 Croatia** A gentle nod to Dua Lipa's *Future Nostalgia* for sure. The glossy production, driving bassline and catchy hooks are making me yearn for the return of Eurovision parties.

**12 Moldova** It's playful, a little cheeky and the drop into that instrumental 'chorus' is a glorious wall of sound. I'm already salivating on what visual feast awaits us come May.

**Selina Hargreaves**

**8 Norway** This is such a catchy song, that I have found myself singing it all day! I know that angel wings are over-used, however they are very fitting for this song, especially with the 'demons' pulling at him throughout. This song is sung in a very heartfelt way and TIX has a beautiful voice that I love listening to over and over again. Another brilliant song!

**10 Ireland** I love this song as it's so positive and memorable. Lesley looks like she is enjoying singing the song, which is full of energy and is passionately sung. It's fun to sing along to and is one of those songs that you definitely want in your favourites playlist. A real crowd pleaser which should do well.

**12 Cyprus** This song is definitely my favourite this year! Elena grabbed my attention right from the start, even before she started to sing! There is a good amount of interest throughout this song, which changes tack every so often. It builds well, is memorable and I found my toes tapping throughout. It's one of those songs you really can't help but sing along to! It could be a winner!

**Shau Chan**

**8 Italy** During the past few years Italy have sent some great entries and this one is no exception.

Glam rock music is back in Eurovision. I absolutely love this song from the first time I heard this at *San Remo* and was pleased it won. This song really stands out with the repetitiveness of a great chorus and along with fierce looks. It would be interesting how this will be performed live on the Eurovision stage proper and how this will go down with the juries.

**10 Iceland** Daði Freyr has done it again and this time written the song about his wife. *10 Years* is a quirky tune, has a very funky rhythm, as well as a very catchy chorus. The start of the song reminds me of *Amar Pelos Dois* with its slow violin intro and then it goes all upbeat/funky for the remainder of the track. The choreography is awesome, as expected, which makes this more memorable to dance to. I love this song as much as *Think About Things* but it will be intriguing to see how the staging will look on the Eurovision stage proper, compared to when this was first sung in a small TV studio during its premiere.

**12 Lithuania** The Roop would have been the most talked about entry from last year's contest and this year is no exception, with another catchy dance track. I was very pleased when they won their national final selection. I admit when I first listened to the song I still couldn't get *On Fire* out of my head, but after a few more listens of this song, I love this even more on its own. A great follow up to *On Fire*. Again that crazy dance move and that catchy tune certainly would provide enough distraction. It's super catchy and memorable at the same time!

12 POINTS  
TO UKRAINE:  
Quirky



IMAGE BY ANASTASIA MANTACH



### Marcus Keppel-Palmer

**8 Belgium** A close-run thing with Bulgaria, Germany and Switzerland, but another classy song from Belgium's finest Hooverphonic gets my 8 points. Like The Roop, Hooverphonic have plenty of experience to be able to deliver live or on recording, and this song also plays to the brain and the feet. An organic cup of tea will be raised if *The Wrong Place* is in the right place to vacuum up all the douze points on Eurovision night.

**10 Poland** Like Lithuania, Poland rarely is in my pre-contest list of favourites (nor indeed post-contest to be fair), but this slice of undiluted 1980s joy is doing it for me. This is Modern Talking for the modern age. The video looks great too. It may not be the ride of my life - but I think this will be three minutes of heaven. I know many of the fans have written this off, but I am not so sure.

**12 Lithuania** The Roop were in my top five last year, and this year's *Discoteque* is even better. From its first reveal this constantly shifting beauty of a song has been top of my chart, combining irresistible beats for the feet and plenty of musical interest to keep the brain engaged. I think this is the first time Lithuania has a real chance of victory - and on May 22, I think the Roop will say "we are the winners"!



### Wendy Evan

**8 Finland** I was described at the OGAE UK Quiz last week as wholesome and 'Wholesome Wendy' is a nickname that I truly hope will stick so it might be a bit of a surprise that this song made my top three. I do, indeed, always try to bat for the 'good side' so I was somewhat hesitant but, once I had read the band's own description of the song: "We want to show that even if life is darker and harsher, you can still have fun", that made it okay with Goody Two Shoes here. That quote echoed my own thoughts over the past year and the recent OGAE online bashes have really helped me to live that out....so thanks to everyone. So into my top three it came [and kicked *Voilà* into fourth place, which has, likely, put a smile on our President's face!].

**10 Lithuania** The Roop were my favourites in 2020 and I am still learning to live with the fact that I shall never, ever know whether or not they would have won so when this year's video opened with the little hand behind the head wave thingy it was an open and shut case of "You had me at 'Hello'". [If that doesn't quite ring a bell with you, it's a cracking line from the movie *Jerry Maguire*.] The hypnotic throb, staccato vocals and positive message really captured my mood. Whatever has been thrown at us, they can't stop us dancing, even if it's dancing alone. I am practising my Roop moves and *Star Trek Vulcan Salute* ready for the 22nd May, even if I'm all on my own.

**12 Ukraine** I love quirky. After 52 years of watching this beloved contest, I have learned [and will boldly claim] that it needs an angel-winged medallion man and a space invader dance routine but I've also learned that quirky, even when backed by silver-clad, buttock-bearing dancers, rarely compensates for an iffy song. For quirky to win, it usually needs a helping of good musicianship and vocal prowess. All three that made this mini-list scored highly in the *Je Ne Sais Quoi* quirk factor and here's my absolute favourite. The ever-increasing tempo drew me in and then the pipes and pogo-ing kicked in and it just had to be top three. Even the tick-box outfit-ripping-off moment fits the theme of the song. The final vibrato note was the icing on the cake that sprung this into first place.

## 12 POINTS TO SWITZERLAND: Goosebumps

**Nico Pittórtou**

What a year, so many great songs to love and enjoy. There are six clear top songs for me and any would be worthy winners. My top five happen to match with the bookies and then the sixth is the *Dark Side* of Finland, my strong outsider.

**8 France** Barbara presents us with artistic genius in the live performance. This will connect with almost everyone across Europe's romantic notions of France. It's a magical chanson that transports you in a time when we've all been stuck at home. A wonderful three minute Parisian weekend break.

**10 Malta** Yaaas! Destiny kicks butt again. It's fresh, it's meaningful, it's a wrist flopping, saxxy, bum shaker. And you just know this girl is going to kill it live. Of the 'old' countries, chronologically Malta is next in line to the throne; could this finally be Valletta calling? I would be overjoyed for the Mediterranean cousins. And no, other than being uptempo, this is NOTHING like the chicken song.

**12 Switzerland** Chills, goosebumps, spine tingling, another song that bypasses understanding of language and somehow speaks straight to the heart. It leaves me somehow in pieces by the end of it. Not exactly the uplifting winner you might expect or want this year, but it has an impact I don't think televoters or juries can ignore. Are there vague similarities with *Arcade*? Yes, but only ish and probably only for fans, for the casual viewer not enough to detract from its uniquely poignant beauty.

**Robin Scott**

**8 Germany** This song makes me smile, from start to finish. It may not get an Ivor Novello Award. But if I want something that is so easy on the mind, as well as the ear, then this is the one. I'm past the days of regular bopping, but this tickles my inner rhythm stick. Happiness is Jendrick.

**10 Austria** I really liked last year's entry and wasn't expecting something as emotive and inspiring as this. It's so well produced that even a simple stage performance would be enough. In the days of visual distractions, it's refreshing to hear an uplifting song and hear Vincent's fabulous voice.

**12 France** For three minutes of sheer class then this is the one. Voilà, c'est parfait. Sometimes songs in other languages need translation, but this one is performed in such a way that you feel it, and it's not important to do more than let it hug you. It may be the best French entry ever. I feel like I've stepped into another world with Barbara as my guide.

**Paula Duffy**

**8 Israel** Loved Eden Alene's song last year, great voice, great song choice, oh yes I would like to go back to Israel!

**10 Poland** So 1980's what's not to like, in my book a real tuuunnne!

**12 Croatia** My winner hands down, just love it, great song to dance to and so catchy.

**Rodney Maskell**

**8 Denmark** I know this is not for everyone but I love the 1980s vibe, the artists bring great energy to the stage and I'm in love with his pink jacket, another classic.

**10 Finland** Put your middle fingers up! These brilliant dark lyrics are so well performed by the band and the song really is a classic.

**12 Lithuania** This is my winner, lyrics that represent the current situation combined with a great beat and add some groovy dance moves, a classic.

12 POINTS TO BELGIUM: Cracking

IMAGE BY ZEB DAEMEN



**Helen Scott**

**8 Germany** An upbeat song with a good message. I'm looking forward to seeing the staging.

**10 Norway** A beautiful voice and melody. This song is on repeat on the internal playlist in my head!

**12 Iceland** I'm very excited to have participated in this song, having taken up Daði's invitation to join his virtual choir. It's a fun song and dance, and very sweet and positive. And I can vote for myself with Iceland!



**Jamie McLoughlin**

**8 Lithuania** If I channel every last fibre of my intelligence into my fingers and thumb, I can just about do the Vulcan dance to this, but it's worth all that cerebral effort when the song is so good. You don't really get a lot of arty pop at Eurovision, and it's even more brilliant when it feels like a song that could truly connect with a wide audience. I'd love to see this become Lithuania's most successful entry yet.

**10 Malta** Maltese telly wasn't daft in hanging on until the very end of the song submission period to unleash *Je Me Casse* on our grateful lugholes. It's so cleverly crafted for Eurovision, with moments that peak at just the right time in the song's journey (Ladies! Listen to me...) but it doesn't feel contrived and is also a very special pop song in its own right. And, yeh, I know this has far more chance of winning than Belgium does.

**12 Belgium** This was the kind of song I really wanted Hooverphonic to send in 2020 after immersing myself in their back catalogue in the run-up to the song reveal. They're such an experienced group, I'm expecting a live performance that will have spines crackling everywhere. It's put me off wearing a Johnny Cash t-shirt ever again, mind.

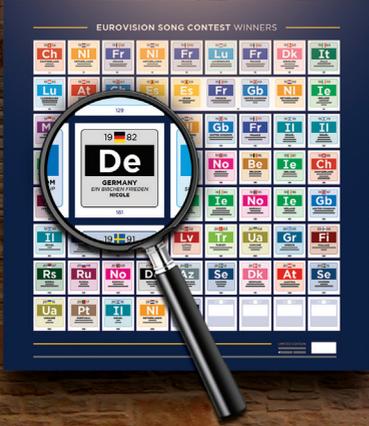
**OVERALL SCORES**

Lithuania	142
France	130
Malta	114
Iceland	70
San Marino	62
Ukraine	62
Denmark	60
Norway	56
Switzerland	50
Cyprus	46
Poland	40
Finland	38
Germany	36
Moldova	36
North Macedonia	36
Ireland	34
Croatia	32
Italy	32
Belgium	30
Greece	30
Austria	18
Slovenia	18
Israel	16
Azerbaijan	12
Czech Republic	12
Estonia	12
Romania	12
Georgia	10
Russia	10
Serbia	10
Albania	8
Australia	8
Latvia	8

**'Good evening Rotterdam - thank you for a wonderful show. It was lovely. Here are the results from the Vision Panel.'**

12	Lithuania
10	France
8	Malta
7	Iceland
6	Ukraine
5	San Marino
4	Denmark
3	Norway
2	Switzerland
1	Cyprus

Looking at the above tables it looks like it might be a clear battle between Lithuania or France, with Malta not far behind. But well done The Roop on being our Number One.



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eurobash  
BRISTOL 2021

Saturday  
2nd October

# SMALL TALK

## WITH TIM GRAY



David Ransted posed the questions

### Occupation:

Retired now but most recently have been renovating property and before that helping people find employment and training.

### First Eurovision you watched:

This was the 1964 contest, although I was quite young so don't remember a great deal. My main recollections were seeing the Tivoli Gardens; it seemed quite magical as I'd never seen anything like it and seeing Gigliola Cinquetti singing *Non Ho L'eta*. Sadly video recorders weren't around or I could be sitting on the only recording of the contest!

### Favourite Eurovision year:

1987, though I like most of the contests in the 1980s.

### Which Eurovisions have you attended?

I was lucky enough to get a ticket for Birmingham in 1998. I'd always wanted to attend a contest and this was a dream come true, even if I was sitting in the back row. I was fascinated by the way the stage was set up for each performance while television viewers were watching the post cards; getting the

candelabra on and off stage for Chiara was a masterpiece as they were balanced on planks of wood which I think the crew carried on their shoulders. I'm always amazed now to find out how many Eurovision friends were also at the contest but in those days without social media Eurovision was a very solitary interest and so I never met any of them. Roll on 20 years and I now have an extensive Eurovision family.

### Favourite Eurovision entry:

There are just too many to mention and I don't think you have enough pages!

### Favourite UK entry:

Again, I like a lot, but my first favourite is *I Belong*, the 1965 entry by Kathy Kirby which is the first Eurovision record I bought.

### Favourite winner:

*Molitva*. It's the only winner I've ever predicted. There have been a number of winners I was sure would be last like *Satellite* and *Insieme 1992*.

### Interests outside Eurovision:

Choral singing, visiting heritage properties, steam railways and renovating property.



Tim with Euroband



*Non Ho L'eta*



Tim with Anna Bergendahl

Chiara and her candelabras.

Molivita

Riverdance

Eurovision 1987

Guilty!

**Favourite movie:**

*Pretty Woman*. I think Julia Roberts gives a flawless performance.

**To give or to receive?**

Definitely give.

**Most embarrassing moment:**

It's embarrassing so I never talk about it.

**What is the worst job you've done?**

Filing clerk in a Spanish bank. All the documents were in Spanish and my command of the language was limited to say the least.

**A night on the town or a quiet night in?**

It's always been a night on the town especially Eurofest nights at the Royal Vauxhall Tavern in London, but as I get older, I suspect nights in will become the norm; I'm not sure about quiet though!

**Best and worst Eurovision moments?**

**Best moment:** *Riverdance*. I still well up watching it.

**Worst moment:** Eurovision 2020 having to be cancelled because of the pandemic.

**If you could go back in time, where would you go?**

The 1920s. I love Art Deco.

**Which yet-to-win Eurovision country would you most like to see win?**

Malta. They have entered some incredible songs and been unlucky not to take top spot on several occasions. It would be nice to have a contest somewhere sunny.

**What did you want to be when you were growing up?**

A cabaret singer.

**What advice would you give your 16 year-old self?**

Don't be afraid of people.

**Guilty pleasure:**

Ice cream.

**Tell us a secret:**

I spent two years at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies in London studying for a degree in Serbo-Croat Language and Literature and dropped out to do a Business Studies course. ■



# STILL NO GLOOM WITH ZOOM!

It's the end of the national finals season - so how to celebrate?  
We party of course! Here are some scenes from the  
OGAE UK after-party.



SPECIAL GUEST  
Benny Cristo

