



VICTORY FOR ELVIS FAN, 13
SEE PAGE 36

VISION

THE OGAE UK MAGAZINE SPRING 2023 1 ISSUE 131
www.ogae.uk



EXCLUSIVE!
WHO IS THIS MEGA-STAR FROM 1997?
READ ALL HIM ON PAGE 4

LIVERPOOL PREPARES!

● **Liverpool Council asks OGAE UK for assist.**

Plans for this year's Eurovision in Liverpool are progressing at great pace!
"It's absolutely fab!" says OGAE UK President Vaughan Staples, 24. "We've been tasked with organising the Euroclub and we have great plans for everyone," he added.
Read Vaughan's update on page 14.



New slogan for Eurovision 2023 announced

The BBC has unveiled the Eurovision Song Contest 2023 visual identity and slogan. 'United by Music', reflects the power of music to bring people together in a collage of hearts. This was a joint partnership between UK and Ukraine creative agencies.

Divas smash the bash!

The Eurobash in Cardiff was the biggest and one of the best it has been agreed!
Star guests, Katrina, from Katrina & The Waves (the UK's last winner) and Chiara who represented Malta twice, were a big hit with the fans - especially when they dished out all the secrets!
See all the pictures starting on page 46.



Katrina



Chiara

Rising opera student wins Eurostars!

Richard Decker was a popular winner when he came up top in the Eurostars contest at Eurobash in Cardiff.
His impersonation and interpretation of Elina Nechayeva's *La Forza* (Estonia 2018), was a big hit with the voting fans.
Read what makes Richard click on page 76.



Richard



Fan club keeps GROWING!

Is there no stopping OGAE UK? The AGM revealed that the club is by far the biggest in Europe! It now has over 6,250 members with more families joining and a big increase in gender balance.
See page 60 for details.

UKRAINE WINNERS HONOURED WITH SPECIAL STAMPS!

Philatelists rejoiced at the release of stamps featuring Kalush Orchestra and a souvenir version of the pink-hatted rapper Oleh Psiuk
See page 58 for the latest on Eurovision stamps



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Please check our website for all the news about the club, Eurobash, how to renew your subscription – and much more.

EDLINES



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UNITED BY MUSIC

I was holding off sending this issue to the printers until the BBC revealed their slogan for this year's Eurovision. The heart (representing love) has been a part of Eurovision's identity since 2004, so it makes sense for the BBC to approve a design that also encapsulates unity - with clearly the war in Ukraine in mind.

● Can this be true? The EBU has finally accepted that not all is well with some of the juries! Getting rid of them for the semi-finals is definitely going in the right direction. And besides it's probably only the true fans that watch the semis and vote. I would prefer to remove the juries from the Grand Final, but their participation does make for an exciting show. And last year they did put Sam Ryder on top - so I shall zip it! And at least a winner isn't clear half way through the voting as was the case before.

● Last time I began Edlines feeling happy that the club had grown to 5,000 members - but now I'm feeling smug with well over 6,000. We hope you all still stick around after the contest in May.

● This edition is usually our 'retro' issue, so there's a bit of a flavour of 1997 this time - from Katrina being a guest at Eurobash, to Matthew Keeley remembering his first Eurovision when he was a kid, to Alex and Alexa Storer who discovered Paul Oscar during lockdown on *Eurovision Today*.

● It was fab seeing so many of you at Eurobash, but it was so busy that I never got to say hello to everyone that I hoped to meet. But what a great show! Well done to all the organisers - and to Eurostars winner, Richard Decker.

● As of writing we still have no idea about tickets - nor our entry for this year's contest, but I'm sure the BBC and TaP will try to emulate the success of Sam Ryder - fingers crossed!

● Let me end by thanking everyone who contributed to this issue of **Vision**. Please drop me a line if you would like to contribute.



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www.ogae.uk

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NEXT ISSUE: OUT BY THE END OF APRIL 2023 WITH EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT EUROVISION 2023



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A wide range of Eurovision collectable vinyl and CDs available



The Eurovision Shop

Check out the Contact page which allows people to send messages



**The journey into the
fabjúlöss world of Páll Óskar
by Alex Storer and
Alexa Dubreuil-Storer**





Hello! We're Alex & Alexa (and this is Alex speaking). We were brought together by a love of the same kind of music back in 2002, and music has always remained central to us. When the first lockdown hit in March 2020, we took comfort in music; discovering new artists or watching our favourites giving special online performances. Of course, we all remember when the announcement came that there would be no Eurovision Song Contest that year, but despite that, we were already immersed in that year's songs and enjoying the alternative 'at home' performances. And then came *Eurovision Again*.

Eurovision Again was a genius idea. Saturday evenings became something to look forward to – not only to (over) indulge in nice things to eat and drink, but to escape from the gloom of the present and revel in the nostalgia of seeing contests of the recent and distant past, many of which we remembered and others we'd never seen before, which was a real treat. However, it was the repeat of the Dublin 1997 Eurovision on April 18th 2020 that proved pivotal to us, with Iceland's 'controversial' performance by one Paul Oscar...

Bang on

I actually remembered seeing *Minn Hinsti Dans* at the time, particularly because it really stood out from the crowd – especially as back then, the contest was still bogged down by the house orchestra, which didn't always lend itself well to the song at hand. *Minn Hinsti Dans* was bang on for the time; slick 1990s

Páll performing in Eurovision 1997

electronic production and a superbly choreographed performance to go with it – while such a routine is commonplace today, looking back, it had so many different things going for it. We all know it didn't perform as well as it deserved to, but watching it today, that song was leagues ahead of pretty much everything else, in every respect.

Uplifting

Páll Óskar (or 'Paul Oscar' in Eurovision circles and 'Palli' to his fans) had recorded a new video introduction to that edition of *Eurovision Again*, and co-ordinator Rob Holley provided a link to a new studio performance on free-to-view Icelandic television. So once Dublin 1997 was over, we tuned in to present day Iceland and discovered the most uplifting, colourful and entertaining performance by a more mature Páll Óskar. He lit up the room!

This resulted in us watching his other recent performances for Reykjavík radio station K-100, which in turn, led to us exploring a whole plethora of Icelandic music – something that year's entry of Daði Freyr had already turned us on to. However, now

central to our voyage through Icelandic music was Páll Óskar's discography, and over the coming months we caught up with his pre- and post-Eurovision career.

Despite us not speaking a word of Icelandic at the time, Palli's music and performances brought us so much joy during that worrying and uncertain time, as well as being a reminder – as if one were needed – that you can thoroughly enjoy music in another language even if you don't speak it. Different languages and cultures enrich the mind and soul, and this is one of the things we've always loved about Eurovision; that introduction to voices and cultures beyond your own.

Subsequent Saturdays comprised live-stream tours around Reykjavík by tour guide *Your Friend in Reykjavík* in the afternoon and indulging ourselves with *Eurovision Again* in the evening. This was usually followed by a trawl through Palli's YouTube channel and playlists of the latest Icelandic music. We were travelling without moving.

We knew then we had to see him live. But it was not the time for live music and certainly not the time to travel. Yet when we saw an announcement on Facebook that Páll Óskar's three 50th birthday concerts in Reykjavík had been re-scheduled to September, in a moment of madness we thought, 'why not?!'. Tickets were booked. Of course, this was slightly optimistic, as we all know how the pandemic dragged on with artists postponing or cancelling tour after tour. As September approached, with little information about whether the Reykjavík concerts were still going ahead, Alexa sent a message to Palli's Facebook page, and to our surprise, his manager phoned her to let us know what was happening!

Unsurprisingly, the concerts were moved to March the following year. Fine, we thought – the pandemic will be over by then. Wrong! The concerts were again rescheduled for September



Alexa points out Eurovision Again



Cool collection



Páll and Alex

2021, and finally moved to March 2022, which seemed like a lifetime away. In the meantime, we'd bought front row tickets for all three concerts and had fully immersed ourselves in Icelandic culture. We had also bought tickets to see him in Copenhagen, at an intimate show for the city's Icelandic community. As was by now the norm, this little gig was also rescheduled, ultimately set to take place in May 2022.

Irreplaceable

Meanwhile, Alexa had started tracking down Páll Óskar's back catalogue on CD – thanks to *Discogs* and *eBay*, albums were soon in transit to us from all across Europe. We still prefer to own music in physical format; it feels like an investment – to hold the tangible results of an artist's work remains an irreplaceable feeling, even more so today, in a world of invisible albums and disposable streaming. We had initially bought digital copies of his two pivotal albums – *Allt Fyrir Ástina* from 2007 and 2016's *Kristalsplatan*. We were soon catching up with the past 24 years of his career and realising there was nothing the man couldn't do – and the uplifting optimism we gleaned from his music pulled us through those long periods of lockdown and beyond.

On the evening of Sunday 20th March 2022, we finally set foot on snowy

Icelandic soil. It was a surreal sensation to realise we were finally in Iceland, after two years of planning what had started to feel like a fantasy holiday. Meanwhile for Páll Óskar, the shows to celebrate his half-century were now taking place just days after his 52nd birthday.

The first of the three consecutive concerts came on Thursday 24th March. We were literally the first people to enter the venue and found ourselves chatting to the two young lads manning the merchandise stand, who were interested to hear we'd travelled from the UK to come to the shows. Unexpectedly, Palli's long-standing harpist, Monika Abendroth, joined them at the stand and in no time at all, she'd also heard our story!

As the 900+ seat Háskólabíó concert hall began to fill up, it finally dawned on us that Páll Óskar would soon be on stage right in front of us. We hadn't felt a pre-gig excitement like that for some years, and as our first live concerts since 2019, we knew it was going to be a special evening. Adding to the excitement was the realisation a camera crew from main Icelandic



Copenhagen, May 2022



broadcaster RÚV were there to film the event.

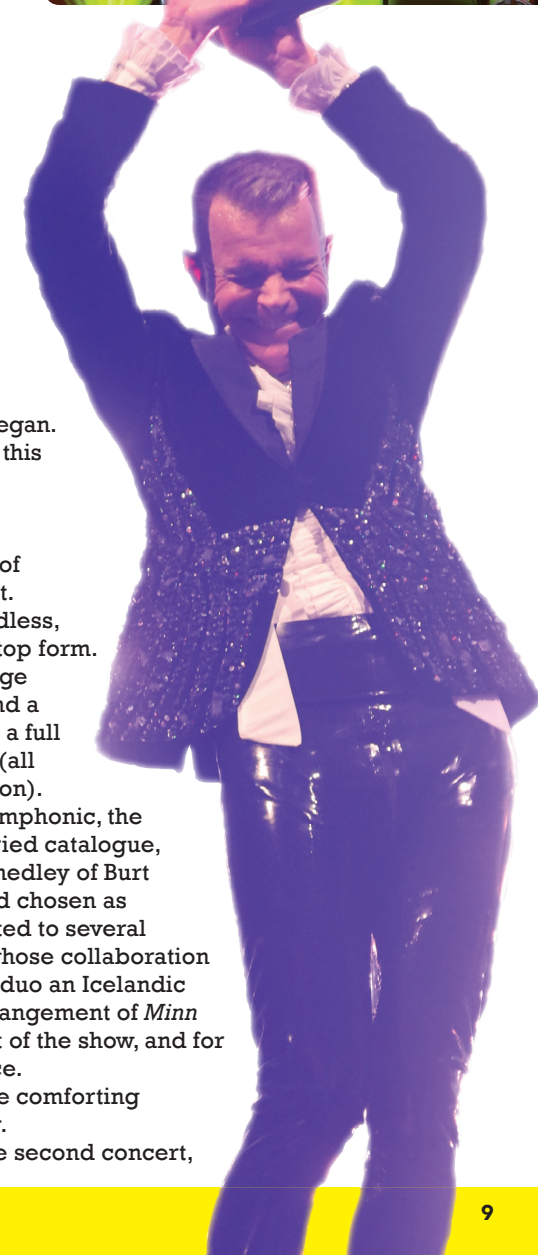
The lights dimmed and the band burst into action – starting with an instrumental medley of hits from behind a huge projection screen. This was beyond your average band, with a string section, harp, brass section, keyboards, drums, percussion and guitars. The music paused and in time to a throbbing heartbeat, Páll Óskar's huge backlit silhouette emerged behind the screen, which then dropped as the real show began. If any concert had been worth the wait, this was it.

Tight trousers

What followed was a joyous two hours of technicolour elation and entertainment. Performing over 30 songs with a boundless, youthful energy, Palli was on absolute top form. Vocally, he was perfect, owning the stage dressed in impossibly tight trousers and a fabulous shirt – later transforming into a full one-piece suit of shimmering sequins (all created by his designer Coco Viktorsson). From pop to electronica, Latino and symphonic, the setlist drew from the breadth of his varied catalogue, including one brand new song and a medley of Burt Bacharach classics, which the artist had chosen as personal favourites. We were also treated to several guest artists including rapper Birnir, whose collaboration with Palli on *Spurningar* had given the duo an Icelandic summer hit in 2021. A down-tempo arrangement of *Minn Hinsti Dans* came around the mid-point of the show, and for us, that was the moment of convergence.

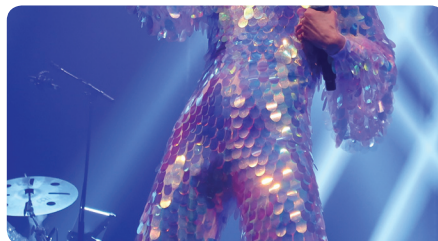
We left the show on a real high, in the comforting knowledge we'd get to do it twice over.

We turned up keen and eager for the second concert,





Páll with Friðrik Ómar and the band



in time to see Friðrik Ómar (of Euroband!) in the foyer, who was directing the concerts. As we were waiting, the guy from the merchandise table came over to us and said that word of our story had reached Páll, and he wanted to invite us backstage to meet him after the final show. Our jaws dropped!

Each concert was performed with precision and was a genuine joy to experience. While the audience on the first night had been surprisingly reserved, by the Saturday evening, everybody was feeling the party mood – or ‘Stuð’ if you’re Icelandic – and the third concert was an absolute blast. Shortly after the band had taken their bows and left the stage to rapturous applause, we met with Monika who directed us backstage. At the same moment, the President of Iceland, Guðni Th. Jóhannesson, stepped through the doors and descended the stairs ahead of us. Things were starting to feel quite surreal...

We found ourselves in the middle of post-gig celebrations when Páll came out of his dressing room for photographs with the President. He then came over to us, with hugs all round. He made plenty of time to speak with us and was an absolute delight, as we recounted that our being there was

all down to *Eurovision Again*. We told him we’d see him again in Copenhagen, in what he promised us would be a very different show.

Eurovision royalty

The whole experience not only felt like a reward for getting through the past couple of years but was perhaps the kind of experience many fans only dream about when it comes to artists they love. As two non-Icelanders, to suddenly find ourselves backstage alongside Icelandic pop and Eurovision royalty as well as the country’s President, all felt very bizarre, yet at the same time, it somehow felt right. We had gone from discovering Páll’s music in our living room to spending time with the man himself (with Birnir even inviting us to help ourselves to some food!). But having left Páll and bid good-night to Monika (and the President, as you do...), we slipped out into the night, in a haze of jubilation, which continued the following day when Instagram lit up with a lovely message from Páll, asking if he could use some of our photographs from the concerts on his social media.

Those three shows exceeded our expectations and were central to our amazing two weeks in Iceland. The warm generosity of the Icelandic people, the fantastic food and stunning landscapes

Páll with guest Heiða Eiríks (Unun)



all made our visit more than worth the long wait. There is something magical about Iceland (beyond the iconic scenery) that lures you back. We can only imagine what a great time you would have in Reykjavík during Eurovision season!

At Easter, RÚV broadcast the full concert film of that first Háskólabíó show, so we were able to re-live that momentous occasion (and spot ourselves in the audience).

Memorable

The rescheduled Copenhagen event came just over a month after we returned from Iceland. In contrast to the cold of Iceland in March, Copenhagen in early May was warm and sunny. Páll Óskar and pianist Jón Ólafsson were to perform at the North Atlantic House cultural centre, located on the city’s harbour front. Finding ourselves in the company of around 150 Icelanders in the middle of Copenhagen made for a memorable experience, and the show itself was tremendous fun. A small, simple stage and two-piece band couldn’t have offered a greater contrast to the shows we’d seen in Reykjavík.

We were reminded of the frustration of not speaking Icelandic as Páll and Jón shared entertaining anecdotes throughout the night. As well as fan favourites and best-known tracks, we were treated to hysterical renditions of his performance from the Icelandic version





of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and being only a week away from Eurovision, they also performed a short medley of Eurovision classics including *Save Your Kisses For Me* (complete with the dance moves) and *All Kinds Of Everything*. After the show Páll made time for us (despite having to be in Germany the following day), signed our CDs, and it was a simple pleasure to talk with him about music and the state of the industry; a conversation that could have easily lasted hours, but we reluctantly had to let him go.

Páll Óskar is perfectly content being a megastar in Iceland, yet he is a world-class talent and more; a true artist and real hidden gem. His experience of Eurovision in

Dublin 26 years ago clearly still means a lot to him, and

he recently said he wouldn't rule out returning to Eurovision if the right song came along. He had previously hoped to enter a second time back in 2007 with his comeback single *Allt Fyrir Ástina*, but the rules around song writers at the time sadly thwarted those plans – which was a shame, as it's an absolute banger! At the 2022 Eurobash in Cardiff, we were surprised when guest star Chiara performed an English version of *Allt Fyrir Ástina*, re-titled *Forget Forgetting Me*, which she had originally released in 2012.

As the end of 2022 approached, just as we were doubting when or if we would get to see him live again, Páll announced a special new year show – or *Pallaball* – in popular Icelandic holiday destination, Tenerife. The tickets sold out in a flash, but fortunately, popular demand led to the announcement of a second show on New Year's Day, for which

we got tickets – so quite unexpectedly, we would now be seeing in the new year in a much warmer climate than usual, and in great company.

We had another enjoyable conversation with Páll after his sound check, where we discussed his plans for future music as well as the current difficulties the live music scene in Iceland is experiencing. Despite Tenerife having long been a hotspot for Icelanders, this was to be the first time an Icelandic star had performed there.

Legendary

In keeping with what we'd read about these legendary events, the *Pallaball* comprised a full 90-minute performance of his own songs, plus a DJ set of over two hours with Páll behind the decks (and occasionally back out in front of them). While the DJ set was geared towards the Icelandic audience, one highlight was a medley of Icelandic Eurovision classics which also included his own version of Daði Freyr's 2017 selection entry, *Is This Love?*.

Lasting almost four hours and

finishing at 2:00am, there was a joyful, bouncy, crazy, sweaty party vibe to the whole evening and Páll was firing on all cylinders and vocally flawless throughout. One thing is clear – Páll Óskar will give any gig his all, regardless of the size of venue or audience; something we were now able to compare, having seen him in a 900+ seat concert hall, a tiny intimate gig and now a club venue for around 300 people. Few performers can boast such charm, charisma and versatility – and he evidently adores every second of being on stage. What a fabulous way to start 2023!

It now feels like Páll Óskar's music has always been there with us – yet it's only been a couple of years since that moment of discovery. How had we managed for so long without it?! Alexa is now learning Icelandic and we're hoping to return to Iceland as soon as we can – and with new music from Páll on the horizon, we're truly strapped in for the ride.

All this because of *Eurovision Again*. Thank you, Rob! ■

Alex works as a graphic designer, freelance science fiction artist and electronic musician. You can see his work at www.thelightdream.net. Alexa works as a freelance French/English/Spanish translator, specialising in environmental and humanitarian issues.

Watch Páll Óskar's live studio performance on RUV: <https://www.visir.is/k/ae1c2d9f-25a0-458a-9e01-f5ace1881913-1587154451379>



PREZ UPDATE

A few words from
OGAE UK President
Vaughan Staples
(ogaeukpres@gmail.com)



HAPPY NEW EUROVISION YEAR

Welcome to 2023 and what a year to be a UK Eurovision fan. Whether on the TV, the radio, in magazines, online or in the shops, Eurovision is EVERYWHERE and has never been more celebrated or seemed so cool. What a difference a year makes!

After 25 years we welcome the world once again to the United Kingdom where the Eurovision Song Contest will be taking place in the City of Liverpool. We have lots of exciting plans and ways of celebrating this year and I look forward to seeing many of you over the coming months at events and celebrations across the country.

LIVERPOOL 2023

While we still await news on tickets, hosting plans are already underway for this year's contest. I have been working with Liverpool City Council and various other agencies inputting into preparations and plans alongside Simon Bennett from OGAE International. Thanks to Alasdair Rendall for agreeing to chair our Organising Committee and to many of you who have offered your time and

expertise this year. As we get nearer the contest there will be many ways to get involved. Just before Christmas we were pleased to announce that we will be hosting the official OGAE EuroClub at Camp and Furnace, a world class venue just minutes from the Liverpool Arena and the Organising Committee will now work hard to put together an amazing programme for Eurovision week. As well as the EuroClub, there will be lots of events taking place across the city and I can't encourage you enough, regardless of tickets that you take the opportunity this year to visit Liverpool at some point during May to soak up the atmosphere, socialise with fellow fans and celebrate this fabulous contest we all love.

NATIONAL FINAL SEASON

It's that time of year again when participating countries choose their entries with many holding national finals. Join us on our **OGAE UK Facebook Members Group** where you can watch along with the show and comment and share your thoughts on the results. Many members will be travelling to various countries to these shows and organised parties and screenings across the

relevant country. Our regional Eurovision societies are also there for fans and members in local geographical areas of the country to organise get togethers and watch the various shows as well. Wherever you will be watching the various national finals, enjoy the shows and let's hope for some amazing artists coming forward for the contest. At the time of writing, we still await to see who will be coming next to represent the UK and follow on the incredible success trailblazed by Sam Ryder. Fingers crossed we can go one better in Liverpool and win but regardless of our result, the future of Eurovision in the UK has never looked so bright.

THANK YOU

As the membership of the club has exploded to over 6,000 members, so has the workload and responsibilities and I want to thank the OGAE UK Committee for their continued work and dedication. While many involved in the contest in Liverpool will be doing so as part of their paid job, we will continue to support the hosting of the contest as volunteers, and I would ask for your continued support and patience while we continue to

navigate the running of the club in our spare time. Thank you to everyone for your continued messages of support and gratitude for all we do as well, they mean a lot.

This year is OUR year to show our passion and love for Eurovision and show the world just how special the contest is. With so much attention on us there will be lots of opportunities to do this and your support and participation in showcasing the fandom will be at the heart of all we will be doing. With just months to go, let us prepare to welcome the world for THE biggest party and celebration of our lifetimes, after so many challenging years, we ALL deserve this moment so Enjoy it! ■



Liverpool Pier, location of the Eurovision Village

BIG MESSY BLUE WRITING



For this retro special edition, **Matthew Keeley** remembers watching the last time the UK won the Eurovision Song Contest. Here's his personal account.

Sunday 4th May. Something amazing happened.'

So begins my blue colouring-pencilled diary entry, unearthed from a box of yellowed notebooks, faded cinema tickets, and dusty photo albums (remember those?). The writing is uneven, stretchy, but perfectly spelled. And what was so 'amazing' I felt compelled to commemorate it with such intensity? Great test results at school? A medal at sports day? A new baby in the family? Don't be ridiculous. It was May 1997. What else would a normal 12 year-old boy be celebrating at such a historic time?

'We won the Eurovision Song Contest!'

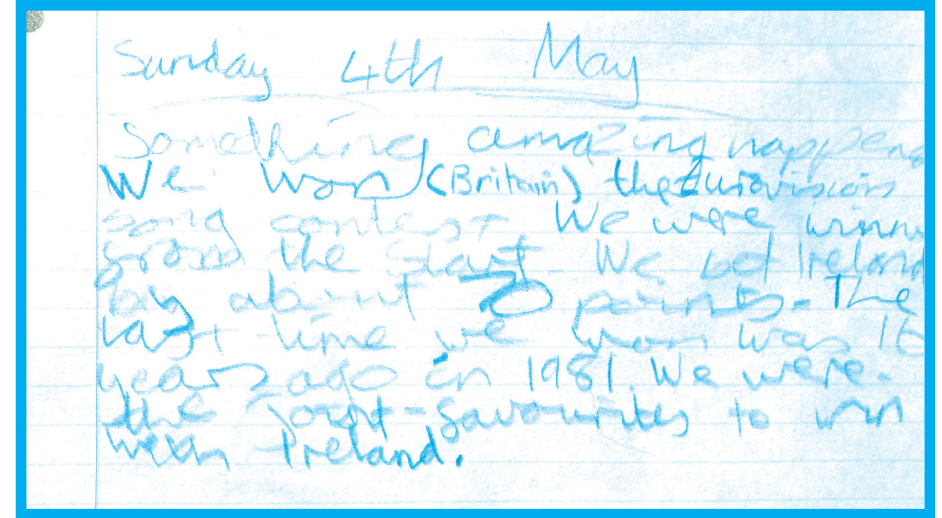
Katrina & The Waves had let *Love Shine A Light* across Europe

(about 70 points ahead of Ireland, or so 12 year-old me notes) and belted the UK to victory! This had to be recorded in my special A4 Cambridge Refill lined paper diary. I was elated in big messy



blue writing! Eurovision was magic; my annual version of the Olympics shining onto the TV with colourful flags, spotlights, a points table, a trophy, and, this year, a 1980s pop-rock British-American comeback band who probably couldn't believe their luck. As a kid, Eurovision was an epic tournament of nerves; a sequined tent-pole holding the year up between Christmases.

I hadn't watched our triumph at a loud Eurovision house party or with giddy friends who shared my passion. Instead, I'd



listened to Terry Wogan punctuate the point-strewn path to the top of the leader-board while I was curled up under a duvet beside my parents in a foldout caravan bed. Every Friday after school, we'd bundle the car up with walking boots, outdoor coats, fresh bedsheets, groceries, my 'diary' and, seemingly, colouring pencils, and drive north for an hour to the village of Comrie in Perthshire. Don McLean sang to us on the journey there; Pam Ayres rhymed us back home on a Sunday. Sometimes ABBA would whirl into the CD player – my Europop fixation obviously stemmed from some familial influence.



I was the youngest of five, but my siblings had all outgrown such trips, leaving me posing as an only child in the white-cottaged rural village. Our caravan park was small, set at the foot of thick, wooded hills with a little shop that opened on request – ringing the doorbell of the park owner's house was a novelty I never grew tired of. Our tourer van was nestled in a grassy corner, hooded by pine branches; a den that smelt of holidays and dew.

It was cooied in my curtained-off 'bedroom' that I chronicled my week. And what a week in May 1997 I was having. My wobbly blue handwriting reveals that two days before our Eurovision victory, Labour had won the general election - 'Everyone is happy and things are going great', I was 'brilliant friends with Sean now' (whoever Sean was), I'd just entered a public speaking competition at school, and the





IMAGE BY DUNMOID

much-anticipated Jurassic Park sequel was 'said to be AMAZING' (where was I getting this pre-internet insider movie gossip?).

All this scribbled down at my countryside hideaway. Nowadays, people pay a fortune for such writers' retreats.

A recent drive through Comrie was nostalgic and bittersweet.



Gliding along the country road towards the village main street, I recognised the caravan park entrance; the

tops of static vans peeking over the hedges; the moss green bridge crossing the river; the gravelled path leading down to the Catholic church; and the grocers with the slim video rental shelf – our main entertainment on non-Eurovision weekends. But the town doesn't match up perfectly with my memories. The book shop is empty, with polythene sheets covering the windows, the

sweet shop replaced by a business consultancy, and stepping into the grocers, I noticed, of course, that they don't rent videos anymore.

Eurovision has had a costume change too. The basic elements are the same: the happy pop songs, the power

ballads, the wild outfits, the endless assignment of points. But (*Ooh Aah*) just a little bit of the naïve magic has faded. It's still camp and ridiculous, but back then, when there was a real chance of actually winning, I didn't know it was camp and ridiculous.

Maybe the seclusion of our caravan was an apt symbol of my closeted Eurovision celebration. Yes, num and dad watched too. But were they as jubilant as me? Would they be cheering with their colleagues come Monday morning, reliving their highlights of Saturday night's event? Or was it contained in the caravan? A celebration kept just for us? I'm still making my mind up.

Now, though, I can celebrate aloud. It's fun to say you like Eurovision, accepted as 'a bit of a laugh'. People throw themed parties, bringing dishes to represent competing countries, placing bets on their winners, even if it is all a bit tongue-in-cheek. Back then, my shabby diary was the only outlet for my excitement. I had to scrawl it down in writing – something I'm sure no other boy at school was doing. I couldn't tell my peers that confetti-covered Katrina & The Waves was the highlight of my weekend. I was in First Year. It wouldn't have been big messy blue 'amazing' to anyone else. ■



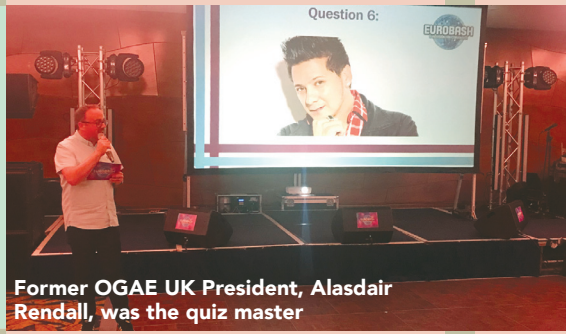
In **Vision** we like to highlight the achievements of our members, so let's end Matthew's feature with a plug for his published novel, *The Stone In My Pocket*. Talking to ghosts beats homework any day. It sounds amazing to us...

For details go to <https://linktr.ee/matthewjkeele>

EUROBASHED!

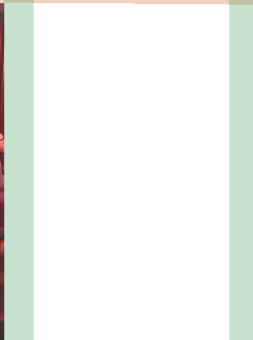
The Eurobash held in October was our biggest convention yet! Here's a pictorial account of the day at the Cardiff Hilton. We've tried to include as many attendees as possible - apologies if you're not included.

Below: OGAE UK President, Vaughan Staples, opened up the day with a run down on how the club is doing

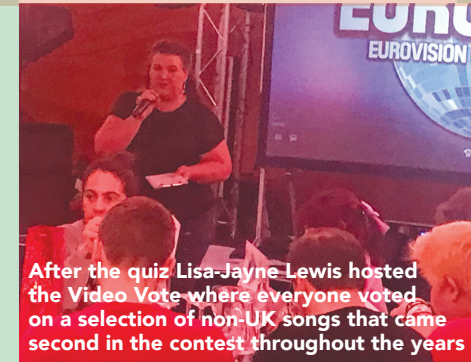
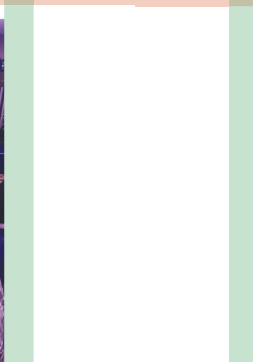


Former OGAE UK President, Alasdair Rendall, was the quiz master





Above and below: The quiz winners



After the quiz Lisa-Jayne Lewis hosted the Video Vote where everyone voted on a selection of non-UK songs that came second in the contest throughout the years

Image by Robin Scott



Dean Asker was the host of the Guest List. Our star guests were two great divas - Katrina and Chiara. The ladies knew each other well when they met at the 1998 contest in Birmingham. Katrina was giving out the award, while Chiara was representing Malta for the first time. Katrina was really impressed by Chiara's talent. It was a revealing interview with both ladies saying how it really was!



Vaughan Staples and John Bennett introduced the Eurostars contest in their own immedible style. We didn't ask why.



Eurostars begins:
Jamie as
Doris Dragovic



Richard as Elina Nechayeva



Gurj as Ochman



Helen as Sakis Rouvas



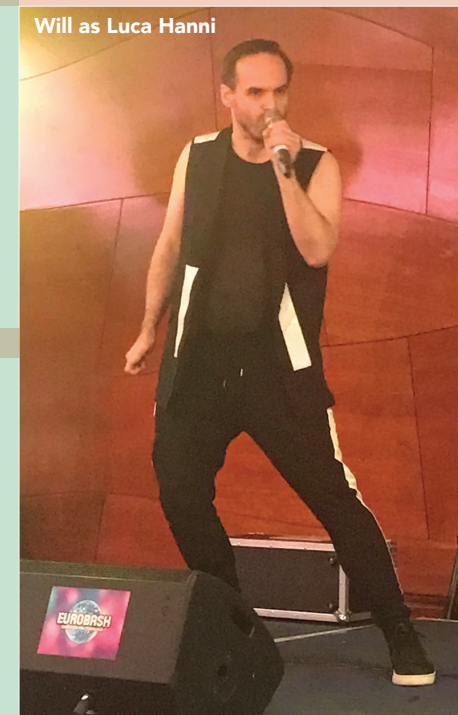
Natalie as Dami Im



Michelle as
Bojana Stamenov



Stella as Nicole



Will as Luca Hanni

Timothy as
Cornelia Jacobs



Alasdair as
Joy Fleming



Before the winner
of Eurostars was
announced we were
treated to a mini
concert featuring
Katrina...

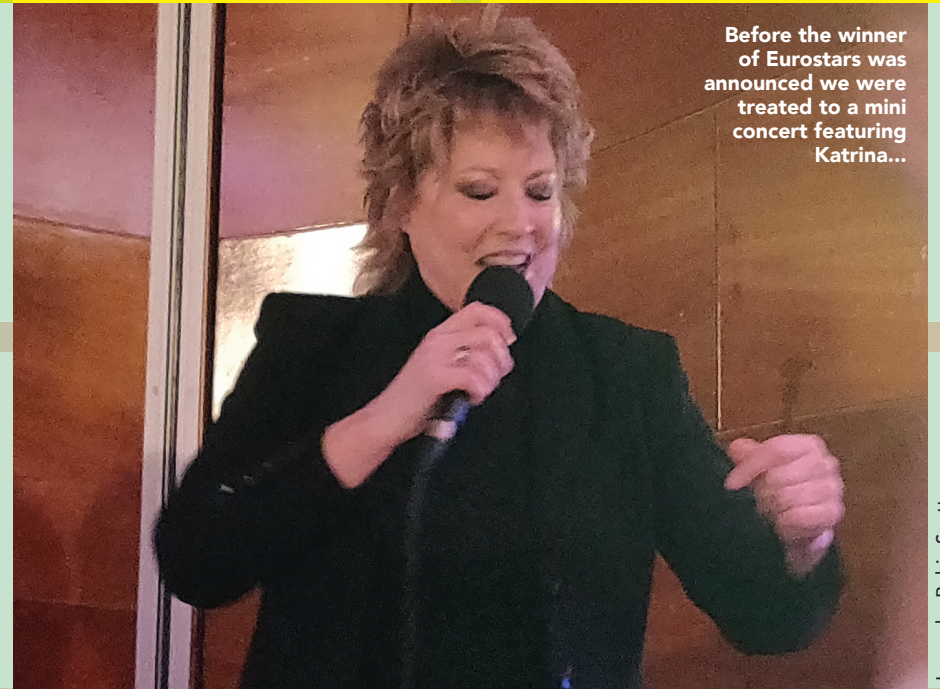


Image by Robin Scott

Harry as
Mahmood



Sasha and Tristan
as Naviband



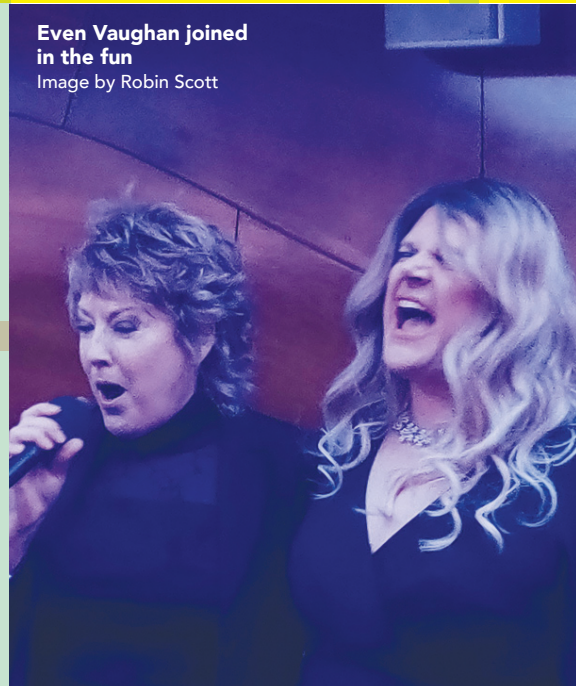
...and Chiara



Image by Robin Scott



Everyone was enjoying the concert



Even Vaughan joined in the fun
Image by Robin Scott

Richard Decker wins Eurostars and is the proud owner of that lovely trophy

(Read all about Richard's journey in Big Talk)



The rest of the event was spent dancing the night away - it always ends with *Love Shine A Night*
Image by Robin Scott

THIS ISSUE

BRYAN THOMAS



Bryan Thomas had a successful career in international banking which he gave up in 1996 to try rather less successfully to launch a satellite TV channel. After that failed to happen, he set off on a completely different path, heading up the administration of a global women's medical charity - the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) until he retired in 2014. He is also responsible for editing and designing the **Songs4Europe.com** website based on Gordon Roxburgh's series of books (*Songs For Europe - The United Kingdom at the Eurovision Song Contest*).

com website based on Gordon Roxburgh's series of books (*Songs For Europe - The United Kingdom at the Eurovision Song Contest*).

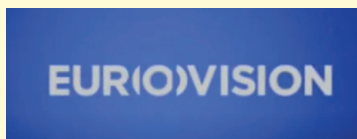
Before Bryan gives us his top five songs, let's have a special prelude...

EUROPE 1956-DATE

Marc-Antoine Charpentier

Prelude to Te Deum (Marche En Rondeau)

This is a tune that has always been – and always will be – in my life. I'm not really into classical music, but this piece just gives me immense joy. It is, of course, the anthem played before every broadcast on the Eurovision network, including the song contest. I even record the annual New Year's Day concert by the Vienna Philharmonic just to hear the full length version. If I could only listen to one piece of music on that fabled desert island, it would be this. I have even given instructions – although I hope they are not carried out for many years! – that it should be played at my funeral. The sense of pure pleasure and expectation that this relatively simple piece of music gives me is immeasurable. You hear the opening chords and you know that you are in for the time of your life.

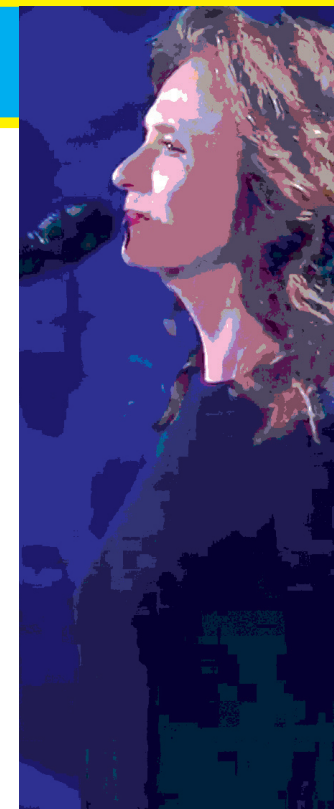


ITALY 1964

Gigliola Cinquetti
Non Ho L'età

Sing Little Birdie by Pearl Carr & Teddy Johnson was my favourite song when I

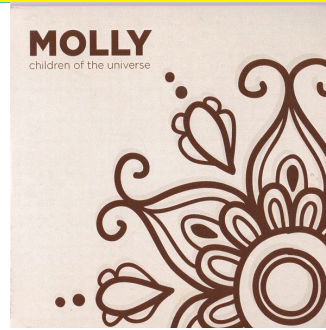
was about four years-old, so Eurovision has been in my life since my very early childhood. The 1964 contest (when I was nine years-old) was the first, though, that I actively remember sitting with my family watching. Ironically, of course, it is one of only two contests where very little video footage survives. The impact of *Non Ho L'età* on my father in particular was immense, and I remember seeing him cry for the first time ever that night. I would not describe him as having been a particularly emotional man, so the power of music to move him came as something of a revelation. And seeing my dad cry made me tearful as well. Every time I hear the song (including the surprise performance by Gigliola Cinquetti during the 2022 contest interval), it takes me right back to that evening, sitting in our little living room on the council estate in west Wales, where I was born and brought up, watching Eurovision on a tiny black and white set.



UNITED KINGDOM 1972

The New Seekers
Beg, Steal Or Borrow

Eurovision had established itself as a family tradition in our house and, even after I had headed off to the Big City, the annual pilgrimage home for the 'big night' was a must. I collected all of the UK singles back then (and still do!) and this was my favourite... or one of them. Ask me tomorrow and it might be *Knock, Knock, Who's There?* (Mary Hopkin - 1970) or *Puppet On A String* (Sandie Shaw - 1967) or *Love Shine A Light* (Katrina & The Waves - 1997) or *Storm* (SuRie - 2018) or...well, you get the idea!



UNITED KINGDOM 2014

Molly
Children Of The Universe

One of those United Kingdom entries brings back memories of actually appearing in the Grand Final in 2014. Okay - it was just the back of my head, you could only see my bald spot and I only recognised myself because I ran in behind my now good friend Lesley who was wearing one of her trade-mark exotic hand-made hats! We actually met for the first time that

day in a windy, rain-soaked car park in Maida Vale where Molly was filming the postcard for the 2014 contest. The idea was that the performers would form their national flag using symbols of their country and Molly assembled the Union Flag using a combination of white limo, red London buses and Post Office vans. We were among a load of extras wearing blue rain macs forming the rest of the flag. It took around five hours to film the 45 seconds that actually appeared before Molly's performance on the night! I still have the mac!



AUSTRIA 2016

Zoë
Loin D'ici

Up until the time that I retired in 2014 and decided that I now had the luxury of time to set my sights on actually attending the contest in person, I had held an annual Eurovision party that sort-of carried on where the family gatherings of old had left off years before. For well over 20 years, the party became something of an eagerly awaited institution with quite often 30 or more people somehow cramming into my relatively modest living room. But then I joined OGAE UK and

managed to get an allocation of tickets for the live shows in 2016. Stockholm was not only an amazing event, but also an incredible city and I can truly say that going there for Eurovision was one of the highlights of my life. Before travelling to Stockholm, I had gone to the London Eurovision Party at the Café de Paris, where Zoe had really impressed me with the Austrian song, *Loin D'ici*. I vividly remember Paddy McConnell, who was hosting, going on about the audience reaction having made a young girl cry. Sadly, that audience reaction did not carry through to the contest itself, and Zoe finished in 13th place despite my utter confidence that it would be that year's winner. Nevertheless, it reinforced my view that, despite the rather dismissive attitude that the UK public has sometimes shown towards the contest, the songs are often of the highest quality. Long may that continue - the quality of the songs, NOT the dismissive attitude! ■

SPAIN 1973

Mocedades
Eres Tú

Eres Tú came second to Anne-Marie David's magnificent *Tu Te Reconnaîtras* in 1973 and it was the first time I remember going out and buying a song that had not actually won or was that year's UK entry. Back then, it was quite usual for Eurovision singles to contain the original song on one side and an English version on the other. The English version - *Touch The Wind* - became a huge hit in the States, but never bothered the UK charts. I thought that was a massive miscarriage of justice. If anyone asks me "what is your all time favourite Eurovision song", this would be it.



SPINNING THE MAGIC

Gordon Lewis reflects on the recent Junior Eurovision Song Contest broadcast live from the Armenian capital of Yerevan



held on Sunday, 11 December 2022 after a busy week of rehearsals and parties, the 20th Junior Eurovision Song Contest saw 16 nations compete and, for BBC viewers, the much anticipated return of the United Kingdom after an absence of 16 years. Of course, Welsh viewers were represented as an independent nation in 2018 and 2019, but with limited success if, indeed, last and second from last places can be called being successful. The online voting had commenced the day before the live show, which was then suspended on the Sunday afternoon until the final song had been performed.

As the show commenced and the strains of *Te Deum* faded away, 2021 winner Maléna welcomed everyone to Yerevan before the first eight performers appeared on



JUNIOR EUROVISION 2022

Running order	Performer	Song	Total score	Position	
1	Netherlands	Luna	<i>La Festa</i>	128	7
2	Poland	Laura	<i>To The Moon</i>	95	10
3	Kazakhstan	David Charlin	<i>Jer-Ana</i>	47	15
4	Malta	Gaia Gambuzza	<i>Diamonds In The Skies</i>	43	16
5	Italy	Chanel Dilecta	<i>BLA BLA BLA</i>	95	11
6	France	Lissandro	<i>Oh Maman!</i>	203	1
7	Albania	Kejtlin Gjata	<i>Pakëz Diell</i>	94	12
8	Georgia	Mariam Bigvava	<i>I Believe</i>	161	3
9	Ireland	Sophie Lennon	<i>Solas</i>	150	4
10	North Macedonia	Lara feat. Jovan and Irina	<i>Životot E Pred Mene</i>	54	14
11	Spain	Carlos Higes	<i>Señorita</i>	137	6
12	United Kingdom	Freya Skye	<i>Lose My Head</i>	146	5
13	Portugal	Nicolas Alves	<i>Anos 70</i>	121	8
14	Serbia	Katarina Savić	<i>Svet Bez Granica</i>	92	13
15	Armenia	Nare	<i>Dance!</i>	180	2
16	Ukraine	Zlata Dziunka	<i>Nezlamna</i>	111	9



ROSA LINN



NETHERLANDS



POLAND



KAZAKHSTAN

stage singing the theme song, *Spin The Magic*. After a brief interlude of beat-boxing and drumming, the same eight re-entered the arena with their respective flags. The remaining seven performers, the Serbian singer being unwell, then continued singing the song and, after another short interlude, also came back waving their national flag. It was a seamless performance, concluding with all 15 performers bringing the theme song, co-written by Rosa Linn (Armenia 2022), to its close.

Hosted by singer-songwriter Iveta Mukuchyan (Armenia 2016), Garik Papoyan, an actor, musician, presenter, writer and comedian who also co-wrote Aram MP3's *Not Alone* (Armenia 2014), and Armenia's Junior entrant from 2019, Karina Ignatyan, the celebrity threesome had little difficulty in encouraging an already enthusiastic audience. And in what is believed to be another Eurovision

first, the first non-human host was introduced as being none other than Robin the Robot! It was then time for the competing countries to perform, with the first and last positions drawn by ballot and the remaining 14 countries arranged in performance order by the show's producers.

PARTY SONG

Twelve-year-old Luna, dressed in a crimson-pink trouser suit, represented the only country to have now competed in all 20 Junior contests. Singing *La Festa* (*The Party*) for the Netherlands, the young singer was accompanied by four backing dancers and a party-themed table for what was a party song. Although catchy and uptempo, the performance was better than the vocals that were delivered by a rather nervous Luna. The five girls all seemed to be having fun though. At just 11 years of age, Laura

was representing Poland with a confident performance of *To The Moon*. With lots of dry ice adding to the silver and white theme, the singer was accompanied by one boy and four girl dancers. Sadly, Laura's song failed to take off from earth when it came to the international voting.

The first environmental song of the event was *Jer-Ana* which translates as *Mother Earth*. It was also the first song that saw the singer, David Charlin (12) from Kazakhstan, perform alone on stage without any dancers or gimmicks. He started well, but seemed to strain his vocals during the chorus which spoilt the impact of what was otherwise another valiant attempt to save the world. Continuing the white and silver theme, 13-year-old Gaia Gambuzza represented Malta with *Diamonds In The Sky*. This was an uptempo and almost futuristic number that saw Gaia perform alongside two young dancers. Next came Italy with

the colourfully dressed Chanel Dilecta (13) and *BLA BLA BLA* which translates as... *BLA BLA BLA!* With three girl dancers and a young male break dancer, this was a strong entry that exposed the broken promises of world leaders.

ELVIS IS IN THE BUILDING

After a short break, which included a conversation between young host Karina and the Dutch delegation, the songs recommenced with France. Inspired by Elvis Presley in both look and style, 13-year-old Lissandro performed on a mini-stage surrounded by four dancers. Co-written by Barbara Pravi (France 2021), who also co-wrote the French Junior winner in 2020, *Oh Maman!* (*Oh Mother!*) was expected to score well with both juries and online voters. Next it was time for Albania and another 11-year-old singer. Dressed in a pastel-pink short dress with a longer train at the back,





MALTA

FRANCE



ITALY



ALBANIA



GEORGIA

Kejtlin Gjata displayed an amazing vocal range for someone so young, while *Pakëz Diell (A Little Sun)*, was an atmospheric ballad. The live performance actually sounded better than the recorded version!

Being the most successful country at Junior Eurovision with three wins to date, expectations were high for Georgia and singer Mariam Bigvava (11). *I Believe* was certainly a strong, midtempo song confidently performed by Mariam and her four friends, but what were they wearing? Combining red and white colours, the dresses were fine but the headdresses were almost nun-like or even borrowed from a science fiction movie. And yet, the precise and dramatic choreography coupled with the costumes actually made the Georgian entry strangely addictive. Representing Ireland, 13-year-old Sophie Lennon comes from Mayobridge, Co.

Down which, of course, is in Northern Ireland and therefore part of the United Kingdom. However, there are no borders in Eurovision and the young Irish singer gave a very haunting and Gaelic-inspired performance of *Solas (Light)*. Dressed in a lacy cream dress, this was probably Ireland's best junior entry so far.

CONFIDENT

North Macedonia was the only country to send a group to Yerevan, although the threesome were actually billed as Lara feat. Jovan & Irinam, all of whom were aged 14 or under. Lara wore a purple dress, while Jovan and Irina were wearing a mixture of reds, greens and blues. The trio were also accompanied by two dancers, which created a mini-musical effect from the five youngsters. *Zivotot E Pred Mene (I Have My Life In Front Of Me)* was confidently performed, but the melody also had a strange familiarity

about it. Eleven-year-old Carlos Higes was almost too confident while singing *Señorita (Miss)* for Spain. Dressed in white with four similarly attired young male dancers, the song was full of Spanish influence, but became shouty, repetitive and messy as the performance progressed. It was definitely time for a break, allowing Karina to speak with the Georgian and Irish delegations.

It was then time for the long awaited return of the United Kingdom, represented by 13-year old Freya Skye who once lived not too many miles from the writer of this review! Unfortunately, Freya had been unwell during her time in Armenia and had only completed one rehearsal, but the determined teenager still gave an accomplished performance of *Lose My Head*. Dressed in red, as were her four dancers, this was the most commercial-sounding song of the show and, had Freya not been ill, it would have

been even more amazing than it was. Following Freya was Portuguese rocker Nicolas Alves (13) who, with his long hair that complemented his black clothing and white t-shirt, certainly looked the part. He even played the guitar break on his own electric guitar! However, *Anos 70 (Born In The 70s)* did sound like two songs combined into one, although Nicolas' vocals were confident in a rather unusual sounding way.

RECORDED FOOTAGE

Katarina Savic (13) had been expecting to represent Serbia with *Svet Bez Granica (A World Without Borders)*, but became unwell between the jury final on the Saturday and the live show the following day. However, the Serbian entry still competed after permission was granted to use recorded footage from the previous day's jury final. Multi-talented Katarina gave a good performance of her



IRELAND



SPAIN



NORTH MACEDONIA



UNITED KINGDOM



PORTUGAL

song, even managing to show off her trombone-playing skills during one part of the song. Starting the song in a white dress and with marionette-style choreography, a young traditional male dancer appeared as a subtle costume change saw Katarina emerge in a red, glittery ballet style dress. It must have been very disappointing for her not to be at the grand final on the advice of the medical team.

With two songs remaining and both of these among the pre-show favourites, there was deafening applause for the host nation, Armenia, and its singer, Nare (14). Wearing a pink shimmery outfit with two male and two female dancers wearing similar costumes in different shades, *DANCE!* was the disco song of the night. Uptempo, confident, foot-tapping, body-popping... this was a strong contender for victory. The final

song, performed by Zlata Dziunka who was representing Ukraine, was the one which many thought would win Junior Eurovision 2022. Entitled *Nezlamna (Unbreakable)*, the 14-year-old accomplished singer sang an emotive and powerful number that questioned the killing of innocent children in the Russian-Ukrainian war. Dressed in white to represent peace, the lyrics did have clear political influences but, perhaps, the ongoing crisis made that unsurprising in many ways.

MINOR GLITCHES

Sixteen songs had been performed by sixteen acts, all of whom were hoping for victory. Despite some minor glitches with vocals at times, the standard of each entry had been more than acceptable and, after Robin the Robot had asked the audience and viewers who would win, the online voting re-opened and the

customary reprise of each performance was shown.

Maléna commenced the interval proceedings by performing her latest single, *Can't Feel Anything*, displaying with confidence the reason why she was already a Junior winner. With her 16th birthday rapidly approaching, this teenage singer must surely have her sights set on the main Eurovision event by now. Talking of which, Rosa Linn (Armenia 2022) then performed a new version of her unprecedented global hit, *Snap!* Along with Sam Ryder (UK 2022), Rosa is one of the success stories to have developed a far wider fan base after Turin, and long may it continue for both of them. The voting was then closed, followed by a further visit to the Green room and conversations with the delegates from France, Portugal and Spain who all took part in a short TikTok challenge.

Being the 20th Junior contest, the interval highlight was the return of previous winners who performed their winning songs in what Robin the Robot introduced as "The Winner's Show". Those performers who were not present, most noticeably the winners from Belarus and Russia, had their entries performed by the Tavush Diocese Children's Choir. Appearing on stage alongside Maléna (Armenia 2021) and the choir were Bzikebi (Georgia 2008), Ralf Mackenbach (Netherlands 2009), Vladimir Arzumanyan (Armenia 2010), Candy (Georgia 2011), Gaia Cauchi (Malta 2013), Vincenzo Cantiello (Italy 2014), Destiny Chukunyere (Malta 2015), Mariam Mamadashvili (Georgia 2016), Viki Gabor (Poland 2019) and Valentina (France 2020). However, it was disappointing not to see the first two winners, Dino Jelusic (Croatia 2003) and María Isabel (Spain 2004), taking part,

SERBIA



ARMENIA



UKRAINE

THE WINNER



	Netherlands	Poland	Kazakhstan	Malta	Italy	France	Albania	Georgia	Ireland	North Macedonia	Spain	United Kingdom	Portugal	Serbia	Armenia	Ukraine	Online Vote	TOTAL
Netherlands			3	8		3	7		4	3	8	7		6	6	3	70	128
Poland	2			5	5		8		3	4	2				7	6	53	95
Kazakhstan					4	1											42	47
Malta							1				5				3	1	33	43
Italy			4	2		2	12	12					6	3	1		53	95
France	12	5	8		12		10	10	12	10	6	10	12	10	10	5	71	203
Albania		6	6	7	3	8		4	7			4	1	5			43	94
Georgia	8	12	7	6	10	5	2		2	8	10	5	10	7	12	10	47	161
Ireland	7	10		12	6	10		2		7	3	6	4	12	2	7	62	150
North Macedonia	1								5						4		2	54
Spain	3	1	2	10	1	4	4	1	1	5		12	2	1	8	4	78	137
United Kingdom	6	3	1	1	8	7	6	8		2	4		3		5	12	80	146
Portugal	4	4	5		7	6		7		6	7	1					70	121
Serbia	10	8			2			3	8	1	1	3	5				51	92
Armenia	5	2	12	4		12	5	5	10	12	12	8	7	8		8	70	180
Ukraine		7	10	3			3	6	6			2	8	2			64	111

although Maria is known to be expecting her first child.

Once EBU Executive Supervisor Martin Österdahl had confirmed that the voting was complete and had been independently verified, Iveta and Garik called on the 16 spokespersons from each of the 16 juries. France took the first 12 points, but were instantly overtaken by Georgia when the second jury score was announced. Georgia maintained this lead until the seventh jury had confirmed its points but, for the remainder of the process, France held a strong lead. Once all juries had been announced, France was in first place, closely followed by Georgia in second and Armenia in third. However, the online voting which represented viewers in no less than 178 countries around the globe was yet to be revealed and, as Eurovision fans now know, everything could still change.

As each country received its share of online votes, the lead changed several

times with Spain, Ireland and the United Kingdom all taking first place. However, as the two final sets of votes were announced, it became a simple two-way battle between Armenia and France... with *Oh Maman!* pushing Armenia into second place while claiming victory for an ecstatic Lissandro who, after being presented with the trophy, gave an emotional reprise of his winning song during which he was joined by all the other performers from the show. There was also victory for the United Kingdom which achieved fifth place overall, but came first in the online voting, proving once again that the rest of the world does like us when a quality song is entered!

At the time of writing, it is not known whether the 2023 Junior Eurovision will be held in France as, unlike the main show, the winning country does not automatically have to host the following year. ■

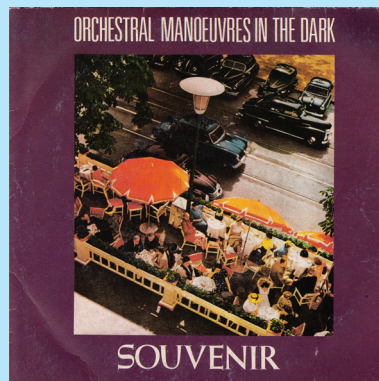
THE 10 ESSENTIAL SONGS BY LIVERPOOL ARTISTS



With Liverpool being the chosen host city for the 2023 Eurovision, all eyes turned to the northwestern giant of the music scene. Of course, we are familiar with the exploits of Sonia and Jemini, but with Liverpool's heritage of great music contributing to the successful bid, **Marcus Keppel-Palmer** chooses ten songs and artists that you may have forgotten about.

Orchestral Manoeuvres In The Dark *Souvenir*

The synthpop duo of Andy McCluskey and Paul Humphreys hailed from the Wirral and had 30 chart hits between 1980 and 1999 spending some 200 weeks in the charts. Their brand of catchy melodic synthpop and synthdance may have seemed lightweight to some but holds up well. *Souvenir* reached number three in 1981 and was their largest hit; and was also the debut hit in Germany for Nino de Angelo (Germany 1989) with a German lyric, *Und Ein Engel Fliegt In Die Nacht*. Check out OMD's other big hits such as *Enola Gay*, *Joan Of Arc*, and *Dreaming*.



Frankie Goes To Hollywood *Relax*

Holly Johnson and co reigned supreme in 1984 with three Number One chart hits all produced by the magic hands of Trevor Horn. As well known for their "Frankie Says ..." T-shirts as for their music, it was almost impossible to escape the pumping driving beat of *Relax*, except when Mike Read arbitrarily banned the song for its somewhat X-rated lyrics live on Radio 1. *Relax* reached Number One and was the second biggest selling song from 1984, staying in the charts for 70 weeks. Follow-ups *Two Tribes* and *The Power Of Love* both topped the charts. Of the band, only lead singer Holly Johnson actually performed on *Relax*!

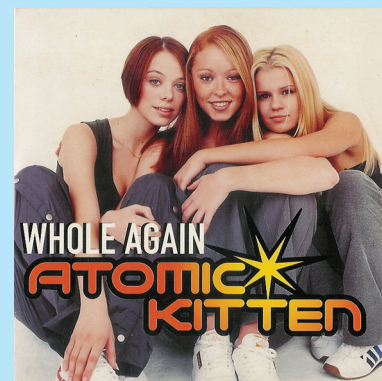


Gerry and The Pacemakers *You'll Never Walk Alone*

Two decades before the first three FGTH singles reached Number One in the charts, the feat was accomplished by Gerry Marsden and his band, which included his elder brother. Their cover of the Rogers and Hammerstein song from *Carousel* was their third Number One, but possibly now the most famous as a result of its popularity at Liverpool FC. *How Do You Do It*, their first chart-topper, was written by Mitch Murray who had three songs in Song For Europe over the years, while *Ferry Cross The Mersey*, though again iconic and the title theme to Gerry's film, actually didn't top the charts.

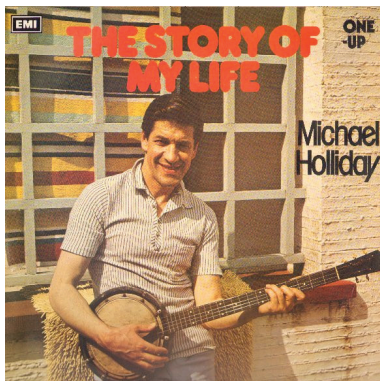
Atomic Kitten *Whole Again*

It may come as a surprise that the 2000s trio Atomic Kitten had three Number Ones, *Whole Again* and covers of *Eternal Flame* and *The Tide Is High*. Formed by OMD's Andy McCluskey, the group hit the Top Ten straight away with *Right Now*. *Whole Again* was originally released featuring Kerry Katona, but she left while the song was being promoted so the song was re-recorded with new member Jenny Frost (ex-Precious, UK 1999) now on vocals. Founder member, Liz McLarnon appeared in the UK Eurovision pre-selection in 2007 with *Don't It Make You Happy*.



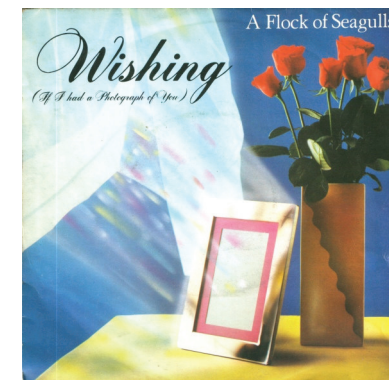
Michael Holliday *Story Of My Life*

Of all the artists in this rundown of Liverpool stars, Holliday is probably the least well-remembered, although he had two Number Ones in the 1950s and was the star of his own popular TV show. Holliday had served in the navy with Russ Conway, the piano player, before being recognised for his uncanny vocal similarities to crooner Bing Crosby. He won a contest in New York and was signed to Columbia. While both *Story Of My Life* and *Starry Eyed* topped the charts, maybe his fellow Liverpoolians, The Beatles, essentially ended his career as Merseybeat took hold. Ever a sufferer from stage fright, Holliday took his own life in 1963.



A Flock Of Seagulls *Wishing (If I Had A Photograph Of You)*

The early 1980s saw an explosion of Liverpool synthpop bands hit the charts, but the Mike and Ali Score led AFOS were somewhat unusual in that their success in the USA exceeded their success in the UK. It may have been thanks to their striking videos which featured an unsurpassable hairdo that Mike Score wore. Just check out the video of *Wishing* to see it in full. This was the only Top Ten hit for AFOS in the UK, but recently they have recorded two albums with the Prague Philharmonic Orchestra.



Wah! (Pete Wylie) *The Story Of The Blues*

Multi-talented Pete Wylie had originally been a member of the legendary proto-Liverpool band, The Crucial Three, before forming a shifting set of bands known as Wah! or The Mighty Wah! (and indeed many other names) in the early 1980s. *The Story Of The Blues*, ostensibly about Everton FC, was his biggest hit and reached number three, and Wylie is also well remembered for *Hope, Come Back, Sinful* and *Heart As Big As Liverpool*. Big voices and big choruses were the trademark sound of Wylie's songs – almost perfect for Eurovision.

The Real Thing *You To Me Are Everything*

Liverpool also was the home of the UK's top soul band of the 1970s, The Real Thing formed by brothers Chris and Eddie Amoo. After initially struggling, the band were signed to support David Essex on tour and as a result signed a record contract. Almost immediately, success beckoned as this all-time classic disco-pop swayer reached Number One – it would hit the charts in two subsequent years as well – and has become a staple on radio and dance floors ever since. Follow-ups including *Can't Get By Without You* and *Let's Go Disco* cemented their reputation.



Cilla Black *Alfie*

Born Priscilla White, Cilla was discovered by Brian Epstein, the manager of The Beatles, while she was working as a cloakroom assistant at the Cavern Club. Accidentally called Cilla Black in a magazine review, the name stuck and Cilla was propelled to stardom thanks in no small amount to songs written for her by Lennon and McCartney. Two Number Ones early in her career, including *Anyone Who Had A Heart*, cemented her pop career, but one of her most everlasting songs is *Alfie*, used over the credits of the 1966 film starring Michael Caine. Cilla went on to be the star of Saturday night TV.



The Beatles *Penny Lane*

Finally, we could not run down some of the artists from Liverpool without mentioning the Mop Tops, the band that led the British Invasion of the USA. It is almost impossible to narrow down the Beatles' repertoire to a single song, but of all their songs about Liverpool, *Penny Lane* is the one that most directly mentions the city. If you go to visit Penny Lane, be warned that the barber shop mentioned in the song is actually on Smithdown Place and not on Penny Lane itself! There are plenty of Beatles Tours around Liverpool, so you can visit other locations such as Strawberry Fields and the Eleanor Rigby sites! ■



This time our quiz focuses on comperes of the contest. This will really test your knowledge – Good luck!

1

Who is this and which contest did they co-compere?



- 2 Which TV presenter, comedian and actress compered the 2013 contest in Malmo and co-compered the 2016 contest in Stockholm?
- 3 Who is the only solo male comperer in the contest's history?
- 4 Which was the first contest to have two comperes?
- 5 Which comperer published their memoirs under the title *Paper Tigers* and was voted Most Stylish Woman in Ireland in 2003?
- 6 Which comperer famously signed off with "I hope to see you at the same time next Saturday" and recorded a duet with Austrian singer Falco?
- 7 Which two comperes of back-to-back contests had both previously represented their countries as performers at the 1966 contest?



8

One of the three male presenters of the 2017 contest in Kyiv joined the Ukraine defence forces last year to defend the country against the Russian invasion. What is his name?

- 9 Viktor Lazlo (real name Sonia Dronier) compered the 1987 contest in Brussels. From which film did she take her professional name and which song did she perform to open the contest?
- 10 Which comperer has since gone on to fame playing Euron Greyjoy in the HBO series *Game Of Thrones*?
- 11 Which comperer – an actor, theatre director and author – published his first novel, *Variété*, in 2021 and starred in the Netflix series *Vikings: Valhalla*.
- 12 Who is the only comperer who has presented a contest in which they had co-written one of the competing songs?
- 13 Singer-songwriter Mika co-compered the 2022 contest in Turin. What was the name of Mika's UK Number One hit from 2007?



14

Renata Mauro hosted the 1965 contest in Naples, but what other televised international competition did she also present on Italian TV?

15

Corry Brokken, who compered the 1976 contest in The Hague, had previously won the contest for the Netherlands. In what year did she win?



- 16 Who was the first person to comperer two contests?
- 17 Who was the first transgender person to comperer the contest?
- 18 Yardena Arazi co-compered the 1979 contest in Jerusalem. What was the name of the female trio in which Yardena had represented Israel three years earlier?
- 19 Gigliola Cinquetti co-compered the 1991 contest in Rome. She had previously represented Italy twice in the contest, but in which years?

20

Who is this and which contest did they comperer?



ANSWERS

- 1 Chantal Janzen, Rotterdam 2021.
- 2 Petra Mede.
- 3 Lohengrin Fillipello, who hosted the very first contest in Lugano in 1956.
- 4 Paris 1978: Denise Fabre and Léon Zitrone. Léon was the first male presenter since the very first contest in 1956.
- 5 Mary Kennedy (Dublin 1995).
- 6 Désirée Nosbusch (Luxembourg 1984).
- 7 Lill Lindfors (Gothenburg 1985) and Åse Kleveland (Bergen 1986). In 1966 they finished second (with Svante Thuresson) and third respectively.
- 8 Volodymyr Ostapchuk.
- 9 The film was *Casablanca*. She opened the 1987 contest with her hit *Breathless*.
- 10 Pålun Asbæk (Copenhagen 2014).
- 11 Søren Pilmark (Copenhagen 2001).
- 12 Željko Joksimović (Belgrade 2008).
- 13 He co-compered the contest with Jovana Joksimović and had also co-written the Serbian entry, *Oro*, which finished sixth.
- 14 *Jeux Sans Frontières*, from 1967 to 1970.
- 15 1957 in Frankfurt (the second contest, and the first Dutch winner). Corry also announced the Dutch votes in the 1997 contest.
- 16 Jacqueline Joubert (Cannes 1959 and 1961). She is the mother of TV presenter, actor, director and writer, Antoine de Caunes.
- 17 Nikkie de Jager (Rotterdam 2021).
- 18 Shokolad, Menta, Mastik (Chocolate, Mint, Gum).
- 19 1964 in Copenhagen (Italy's first win, with *Non Ho L'Eta Per Amarti*) and 1974 in Brighton (second place with Si).
- 20 Karin Falck, Stockholm 1975.

5 MOMENTS IN MY FANDOM



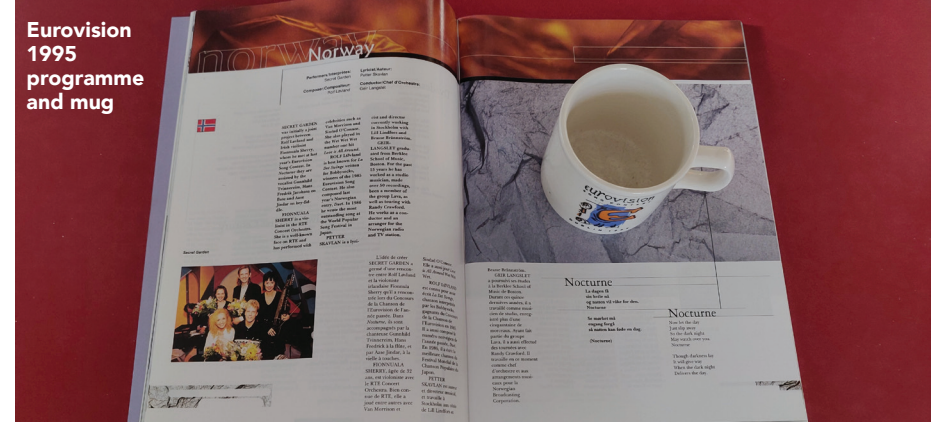
He was the video techno whiz that put the graphics of Eurovision itself to shame for many years at Eurobash. While he had a long career in banking **Robin Scott** perfected his trade as a DJ for a local radio station in his native Belfast.

Being a Eurovision fan can be a mixed blessing. It isn't cheap if you want to go to national selections or the Big Show, wherever it is held across Europe. At work my first holiday choice had to be in May, much to the joy of my colleagues, as it left more of the summer for them to choose from. But it was my passion.

MOMENT 1 IT'S 1995 AND A EUROVISION MOMENT HAD ARRIVED



It was a couple of weeks before the contest, which was to be held in Dublin. A research assistant at the BBC contacted me and asked if I would pre-record an interview about my love of the contest for inclusion in a Radio Ulster programme on the day of the dress rehearsal. I duly arrived at Broadcasting House. With me I brought all sorts of statistics and information. I remember being incredibly nervous and feeling like I was having an out of body experience. Thankfully their editing made me seem almost intelligible. This first 'official' recognition was surreal and only dampened a few days later by having to refuse their invitation to travel to the RDS (Royal Dublin Society) on the Friday, and take part in a live broadcast with the great and the good, including Terry Wogan. I had tickets for the show so recovered well.



Eurovision 1995 programme and mug

MOMENT 2 MY MOMENT OF FAME WAS OVER, OR WAS IT?

As luck would have it, the Programme Director of Downtown Radio, the biggest commercial radio station in Northern Ireland, had a suggestion. I had previously been an evening presenter there and still kept contact. In one of our conversations I happened to mention my attendance at the contest and he asked me if I would be interested in working for them at the next year's edition. You can imagine the hesitation while I thought about it (all two milliseconds worth) and a letter was sent to the BBC press office. Those were the days before computers and the world wide web were common place. A letter of acceptance came back and I was ready to go to Oslo. Life was about to change forever and, until Covid-19 struck, I reported on the contest every year, from the host city, up to Tel Aviv in 2019.



Robin at Downtown Radio

In the UK booth at Tel Aviv

MOMENT 3 THE TIME I WAS RECOGNISED AT PASSPORT CONTROL

It was 2014 and I was accredited to work at the Norwegian *Melodi Grand Prix*. I invited a long term friend, David Elder, to be come with me. The event was held in the Oslo Spektrum, a huge area that has also staged the Eurovision Song Contest. The production team had a good relationship with the local branch of OGAE and I was contacted by Morten Thomassen (president of OGAE Norway) so see if we were happy to do a short interview during the show. The instant reply was a YES, and the next afternoon we headed off to the dress rehearsal not just to see the artists but to go through the questions and answers for our part. All was agreed and we knew what we would be doing, except that during the broadcast interviewer Erik Solbakken missed a question out and we suddenly got each others answers. Nerve wracking is the polite description of how I felt. Nothing like feeling like a rabbit in the headlights with thousands in the arena listening to every word, no matter those watching the broadcast. The next day we were travelling home but were stopped at passport control. The officer took a look at our passports and promptly announced "So you are Robin Scott and David Elder from last night's television! Hmmm. Once we let you out I'm not sure that we should let you back in again!" The serious expression turned into a big smile and I felt as near to a media personality as was possible. That was truly my five minutes of fame.

Robin and David's interview was watched by millions, including a passport control official. We're not sure if Robin has tried to enter Norway since then...



MOMENT 4 MY FIRST FAN EVENT

Eurovision is not just about the contest but the people, the fans like us, the artists and the broadcasters. My next Eurovision moment is really an all encompassing one. Attending my first fan event in the late 1980s was a step into the unknown. I had made some contacts through what used to be the annual video tape exchange to see those selection shows, sometimes weeks later, often in terrible quality. Through that I made contacts, but meeting people face to face in Bingley (which held the Network Convention) was the next step. I remember asking myself if I was walking into the lion's den. How was I going to survive a weekend of the weird and wonderful? Would

I end up sitting in a corner? It was something that was going to change my life. Seeing the dedicated folk who had spent their time arranging the guests, preparing the videos, organising the quiz, booking the hotel gave me a sense of awe but in later years I also learned my trade when I was asked to help by providing some of the material and designing a scoreboard. This grew into my involvement in OGAE UK and Eurobash for many productive years.



MOMENT 5 LIFE IS FULL OF SECOND CHANCES



My last moment is one that not many will know about. It's the second chance competitions. The first contest was part of the Eurovision Network Convention. Then, when that ended, three of us (David, Dale Langford and myself) decided to carry on the tradition by making a 'home' version. The Convention Song Contest became ConSong and still survives to this day. Up to 30 people gather in either Edinburgh or Belfast each October. London's Second Cherry guys asked me to compile the material for their version for many years and so the Eurovision world had begun to take over most of my free time. Capturing the national finals, working at the contest proper, providing the material for Eurobash, ConSong, Second Cherry and more. Eurovision may be changing beyond recognition but I'm privileged to still be a part of it. Hopefully there will be many more Eurovision moments to come. ■

NIGHT OF THE STARS



On Saturday 13th August 2022, **EuroStarz in Concert** showcased artists from Portugal, Denmark and the United Kingdom for its sixth concert in London

Now in its sixth year, **EuroStarz in Concert** has nicely nestled itself into the Eurovision calendar, bringing fans back year after year. The event is an annual concert that showcases some of your beloved artists from different countries and decades of the Eurovision Song Contest. Each artist performs a number of tracks and then the evening is rounded off on the dance floor with everyone's favourite bangers, courtesy of our friend and euro DJ extraordinaire, Alasdair Rendall!

This year featured a mix of artists across a variety of years and countries, including:

Suzy (Portugal 2014) brought warmth and passion to the concert this year, opening the show with a powerful rendition of *Rise Like A Phoenix*. Suzy really got the party going straight away, which considering she had come straight from another gig in Portugal with no time to stop, was no mean feat! She thrilled us with a selection of Eurovision party tunes including her own *Quero Ser Tua*. Even treating us to a moving performance of her beautiful new single, *Higher*.

Next up was **James Fox** (United Kingdom 2004). Having not performed on the Eurovision circuit for a while there was much anticipation to see James perform. He did not disappoint performing a range of surprising Eurovision covers and his own new reflective

material, many of which accompanied by his own acoustic guitar. Viral hit *Think About Things* was a particular favourite with our excitable crowd. Rounding off his set, it was so lovely to hear *Hold Onto Our Love* after all this time!

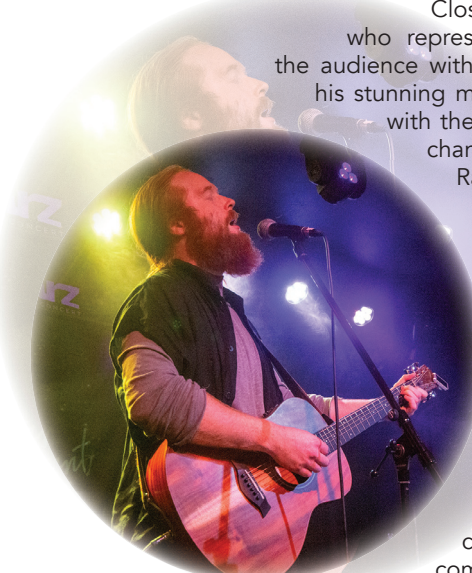
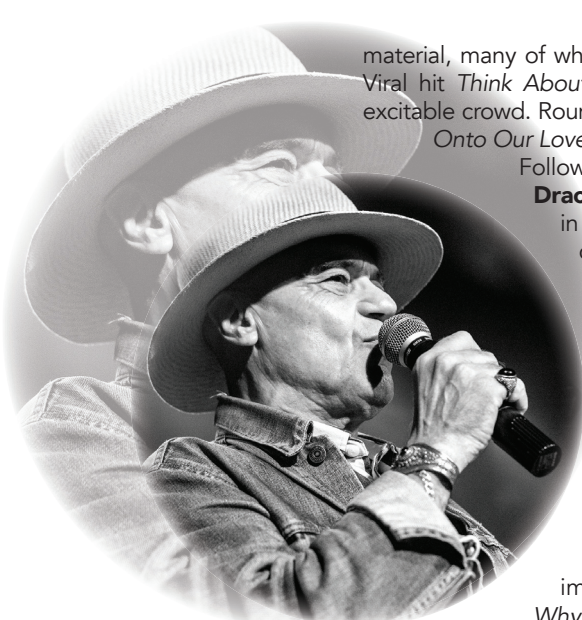
Following James, saw a EuroStarz return for **Lindsay Dracass** (UK 2001). Lindsay performed for us in 2018 and considering her classic Yorkshire charm and energy we couldn't wait to get her back. She lifted the audience with Eurovision dance floor classics like *Ooh Aah... Just a Little Bit* and *Euphoria*. Of course rewarding us with *No Dream Impossible* to conclude her set.

Regular EuroStarz attendees will know we love to keep you on your toes with a few surprises, and this year was no different. Our dear friend **Ray Caruana** (UK 1989), who performed for our concert last year charmed the crowd with an impromptu performance of his Eurovision hit *Why Do I Always Get It Wrong*.

Closing the show was the mighty **Rasmussen**, who represented Denmark in 2018. Rasmussen lifted the audience with a set full of Eurovision favourites including his stunning medley of famous British songs, delighting us with the inclusion of Sam Ryder's *Space Man*. We all channeled our inner Viking to march along with Rasmussen as he finished off his performance with *Higher Ground*.

At the end of the show, all of the artists came together to conclude a fun evening with a good old songalong to *Love Shine A Light*. Keep an eye on our YouTube channel to relive the moment once more with the night's best performances.

With Eurovision coming to Liverpool, the EuroStarz team are ready to build on the excitement of the contest and bring you another show full of live Eurovision magic. Make sure you follow our social media channels for date and ticket information and come Relive the moment once more! ■



STAMPING ON EUROVISION

UPDATE

It's been very quiet in the philatelic world of Eurovision for more than three years, but **Gordon Lewis** has discovered a handful of new releases that have appeared in the last 12 months



A miniature sheet of nine stamps, each featuring a cartoon image of Kalush Orchestra's rapper Oleh Psiuk, was recently released by Ukrposhta, the official postal service of Ukraine. However, it would appear to be a souvenir release, so don't expect to see this stamp on any letters or postcards from Kyiv.

Elsewhere in the same war torn country, Maydan issued a miniature sheet of three different stamps celebrating Ukraine's third Eurovision victory. Two of the stamps feature stage photographs taken in Turin, while the third shows Oleh Psiuk wearing an army uniform and his trademark pink bucket hat.



Armenia marked its hosting of the 20th Junior Eurovision Song Contest by issuing a souvenir miniature sheet of ten identical stamps. Depicting the colourful spinning logo, the contest slogan, Spin The Magic, is written in both English and Armenian.

Last but not least, Poste Italiane has featured two of many renowned Italian singers with Eurovision connections as part of a five-stamp set. Franco Battiato (Italy1984), who performed the haunting *I Treni Di Tozeur* with Alice Visconti, is honoured just 18 months after his death. The second singer to receive the same accolade is Raffaella Carrà, best known outside of Italy for her 1978 global hit, *Do It, Do It Again (A Far L'Amore Comincia Tu)*. The singer, who died a few weeks after Battiato in 2021, may not have represented Italy at Eurovision, but she did provide the Italian commentary and acted as voting spokesperson when her country returned to Eurovision in 2011.



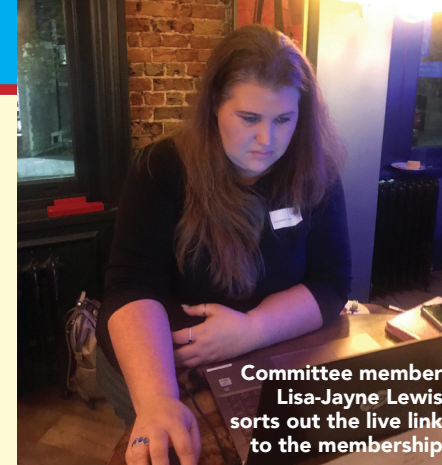
With thanks to Matteo Aldrovandi for providing information from Poste Italiane.

OGAE UK AGM AND ANNUAL REPORTS

The 2022 OGAE UK Annual General Meeting was held at 15:00 on Saturday 12 November 2022, at The Hercules, 2 Kennington Road, London, SE1 7BL



Vaughan Staples



Committee member
Lisa-Jayne Lewis
sorts out the live link
to the membership

The following are the reports that were submitted to the meeting for discussion. Images are from the AGM.

2022 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By Vaughan Staples

Well, what a first year. Since becoming OGAE UK President at the closing of last year's AGM it's been an incredibly busy, challenging, and exciting year and a real baptism of fire that has seen the UK's Eurovision fortunes change overnight, membership grow at an incredible rate and the UK looking forward to hosting its first contest in 25 years. This report sets out an overview of the club activities this year and accompanies the annual reports drawn up by the Membership Secretary and Treasurer.

EUROVISION 2022

The build-up to the contest began in earnest and many members joined in by watching at viewing parties or arranged events, commenting from home on our Facebook Members Group or supporting in attendance the many national finals that took place across Europe and Australia. Working with our colleagues across the OGAE network we were able to offer ticket discounts and after-party opportunities to various shows and a great time

seems to have been had. Thank you to everyone that engaged and joined in.

Following our disappointment with the result in Rotterdam, this year the BBC moved to work with TaP Music, a move that certainly seemed to pay off. From the start of Sam Ryders announcement as the UK artist to his amazing second place at the contest in Turin the support, vibe and excitement from members has been transformative and renewed an optimism and vibrancy both within the fan network but across the country too and gave hopes to any country that their Eurovision aspirations can be realised. Let us not underestimate the achievement of going from double nil points in 2021 to winning the jury vote and fifth with the public vote to secure second place overall in the contest in 2022. We of course congratulate Ukraine on their symbolic and emotional win in such difficult circumstances for the nation currently and I know we will take pride in taking on hosting duties on behalf of Ukraine in 2023. The BBC worked with us well before and during the contest

and we hope to continue that in the future and build on our relationship with the UK delegation.

The road to Turin was more challenging than many can remember previously with information on tickets and events scarce, late, and not what was hoped for despite the best efforts of the OGAE network. The ticket process was particularly challenging with more people than ever taking part in the UK ballots and very little time offered to us to facilitate the distribution of tickets. Thank you to everyone who worked with us to facilitate this process and out of the 999 members who took part, we were proud to be able to offer a ticket package to the last member drawn in Ballot 2 who wished to have a ticket. Many people dropped out or refused packages which further delayed the process and so following our experiences we agreed to relook at the ticketing system and ballot process for 2023.

The host city experience was also disappointing for many of the 400+ members who travelled to Turin compared to previous years and while we can sympathise somewhat with Italy hosting the first in person post pandemic contest and working within their own tight restrictions, the overall enthusiasm given to the contest by the host city did not live up to expectations.

OGAE UK tried to ensure our annual Euro-social event went ahead at the Isle of Skye pub in the city and huge thanks to them for hosting throughout the week as a UK fan base, an idea we want to take forward in future years. Where possible we also looked at advertising any events or media opportunities that took place and did a joint gathering with the Australian and Irish clubs. EuroClub was far from ideal, but we were pleased an offering was in place for those who were able to secure tickets to the venue. All the experience has been fed back to the EBU and other relevant parties and with the UK now hosting we will ensure where in our control that any lessons are learned, and Liverpool lives up to expectations. For those who did not travel and experience the contest in Italy, it was great to see the photos of how people celebrated and interacted. On the note of Liverpool, we have not experienced an off season this year either as with the honour to host we have had the excitement of seeing which city will be given that privilege.

EUROBASH AND EVENTS

This year's Eurobash, our annual fan convention took place in Cardiff for the first time and from the feedback appeared to be a success. Chiara and Katrina were our fantastic guests who



entertained as well as our usual array of regular and loved features. This was our biggest bash to date with tickets available to all who requested one despite the challenges thrown at us through train strikes and other events scheduled to take place after the booking was made. The format which has been in place now of a venue that is suited to hosting the event while enabling people to book their own accommodation elsewhere at a level that suits their needs and budget appears to work best. We continue to look at how we can evolve the event while keeping the aspects people love and will continue to do so with the planning for 2023.

We continued our partnership and sponsorship with the London Eurovision Party, the UK's biggest pre-party in 2022 which saw many of our members attending. We want to continue to build on this relationship into the future as well. For the first time OGAE UK took part in Manchester Pride. This was a great opportunity to showcase the club to a wider audience in a potential host city and to celebrate the inclusive nature the contest is proud to exhibit. It was great to have so many members take part and to see the OGAE UK brand being publicised, and the contest discussed. The crowds joined in with our Eurovision disco and the

atmosphere was incredible. We want to continue to look at other opportunities and events in the future across the country that give us the chance to showcase and advertise the club to potential new members and celebrate the contest we all love.

We continue to share and publicise your locally run Eurovision themed events that take place across the country and are always willing to see how the club can support these. The start of the year also saw me host an online disco between Christmas and New Year which many of you joined and while we may now be back to attending events in person we will still look to see where there is a desire or need, that virtual events can also enable members at home or unable to travel to take part.

VISION MAGAZINE AND COMMUNICATIONS

Vision continues to be our primary source of communication and we have refreshed the look of the magazine and have continued to get as much member content as possible featured and thank you to so many new and experienced members who have contributed over the past year. We want the magazine to continue to evolve and your input is invaluable in this. Along with the magazine I was also keen to refresh the

OGAE UK brand which now features prominently across our communications alongside our revamped, easier to navigate website which is continuing to be updated as time allows and contains all the relevant club information and announcements from the club. Social media still plays a big part of our methods of communication, and I have been determined to increase our engagement and posts across these including our Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and newly launched Tik Tok accounts as well as our Facebook members group, giving us the opportunity to interact, debate and share. Complimenting this are regular communications from myself and our secretary and our recently relaunched monthly email update, there have never been more ways to engage and be informed. It is an impossible task to be able to capture everyone through one form of communication, often due to issues or filters outside of our control but by using several methods the hope is communication can filter through to everyone.

Another launch this year was a number of regional societies following on from the success of the established North West and West Midlands fan groups. This has enabled every region of the UK now to have a dedicated Regional Eurovision Society to enable

members locally to engage and organise local meet ups and events. Some of these societies have really taken off and have good interaction levels and it is hoped that local members in these groups can take the initiative to engage and manage these and is another way of enabling communication.

OGAE INTERNATIONAL AND CONTESTS

This year's OGAE Poll which ranked every song in the contest took place and saw more members than ever take part. It was also great to see once again after several years of not featuring highly, the UK do so well in the overall rankings. Thank you to every member who took time to vote. The **OGAE Second Chance Contest** took place and our thanks to OGAE Norway for hosting and congratulations to OGAE Sweden who won with their entry. The UK did not take part as an entrant this year as our entry was chosen internally but thank you to everyone who voted and to Gary Spiers who organised the UK jury and voting for the last time after 30 years. The contest will now return inhouse and be managed by Fin Ross Russell our Contests Co-ordinator. Most will be aware of the circumstances that surrounded the **OGAE Song Contest**



that led to its eventual cancellation this year, but we now look forward to next year's contest hosted by OGAE Australia.

In Turin the OGAE Presidents met together, and it was a great opportunity to meet other presidents and to form relationships which can benefit our clubs. Several of us were new presidents recently elected and it was a great forum to be able to share together the opportunities and challenges each club faces. I was also able to connect with the OGAE Ireland, OGAE Australia and OGAE Rest Of The World presidents and we were able to do a joint gathering open to our members in Turin and we want to look on building how our clubs can work together particularly in the host cities in future.

The OGAE International AGM took place online at the end of May and was attended by the OGAE International Committee and the various presidents who represent each national club.

Key things to note as follows:

- The OGAE International Presidents Report, Treasurers Report and Financial Statement were approved.
- There was a full de-brief of the Eurovision 2022 in Turin experience and recommendations formed for future years based on feedback.
- **The OGAE Song Contest** and **OGAE**

Video Contest merger was approved.

- The OGAE International Committee elections took place. Simon Bennett (OGAE UK Secretary and Treasurer) was re-elected as OGAE International President and Alasdair Rendall (former OGAE UK President) was elected as a Deputy Member of the Bureau.

Congratulations to both.

CODE OF CONDUCT

At last year's AGM a Code of Conduct was suggested to be looked at and developed. This has been done and a draft proposal is just being looked at by the committee and professionals with expertise in this area to ensure that if any issues arise by or between members, in person or online, they can be dealt with in a fair way with due process given. Once the document is ready it will then be distributed, and a vote taken on its adoption and any changes to the constitution that its introduction would entail.

EUROVISION 2023

With Liverpool now announced as the host city and with OGAE UK now the host club for the preparations for the world's fans including responsibility for running and hosting the EuroClub/EuroCafe elements, work is now underway to ensure we host the best possible experience for everyone.

Meetings have taken place between Liverpool City Council, venues and OGAE UK and OGAE International and plans are advancing well and at this stage are promising. We are in the process of establishing an Organising Committee for Liverpool 2023 and thank you to members who have applied and who are willing to share their time and expertise. We are finalising with our partners in the city responsibilities and a timeline for arrangements to be agreed and once those are in place in the coming weeks, we will be able to appoint members to the Organising Committee that fill those responsibilities that we will have. I have also had meetings with the OGAE Ukraine president, and more meetings are planned to ensure that as hosts for Ukraine, they are part of this journey as well and we can incorporate Ukrainian elements where possible. I would ask members to have patience and we will announce as soon as possible any plans in conjunction with the city authorities, BBC, EBU and OGAE International.

Communication has also now gone out regarding this year's ticket process. A planned review was already agreed of how we would conduct the ballot and ticket allocation following our experience of managing the challenges with Turin. With our huge growth of over 6,000 members which would

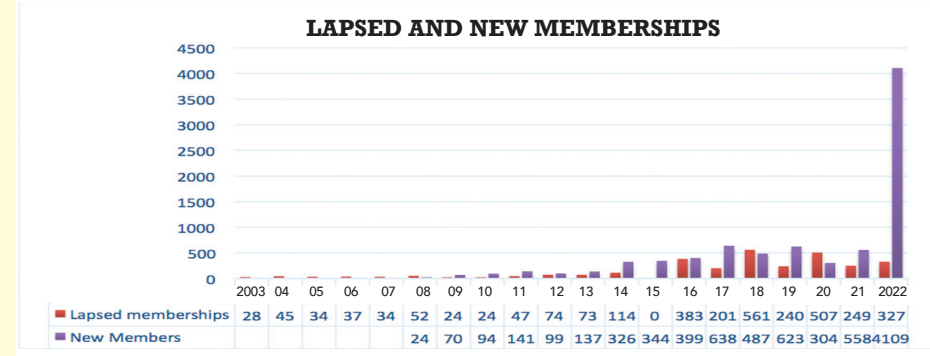
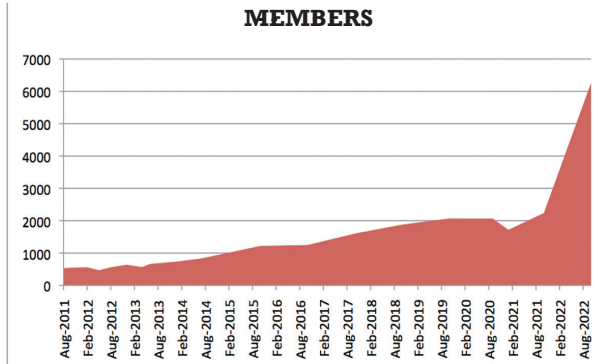
mean a much bigger allocation of the overall ticket allocation provided to OGAE International thanks to these new members we have tried to ensure that for this year's contest the right balance is struck for opportunity to get tickets for newer members while still rewarding loyalty to long standing members.

THANK YOU

I would like to thank the OGAE UK Committee - Simon, Hass, Lisa-Jayne, Fin and Danny for all their hard work, support, and dedication throughout the year. We all do our best in often challenging circumstances in our own time and for no reward. Thank you to every member who has supported both the committee and me in my first year as president. So many of the challenges we have faced this year could not be foreseen a year ago, but I am so proud to be president of this club that brings so much enthusiasm, dedication, passion, and love for a contest that we all cherish and adore. How wonderful for us now to see so many more joining us for this pleasure we take in Eurovision and for sharing the journey of what I know will be an incredible year ahead and where we will be front and centre of hosting the biggest celebration of our lifetimes.



Simon Bennett



2022 SECRETARY'S REPORT

By Simon Bennett

CONSTITUTION AND ELECTIONS

There have been no changes to the constitution since our last meeting.

The new committee took over after the last AGM. As was reported at the time, the committee was one person short as no one put themselves forward for the position of **Vision** Editor-in-Chief. Although the constitution sets out the required procedure if a committee member resigns, there is no specific guidance on what to do if no candidate puts themselves forward for a particular position.

The committee has discussed this at great length over the year. More broadly, the committee has been deliberating over the structure of the committee itself and the need to fill specific roles. The **Vision** editor positions are a particular challenge as the holders need to have specific skills and competencies in order to do the required work and so the roles do not lend themselves to an open election.

The committee has decided to propose an amendment to the constitution which will abolish the two

elected **Vision** editor roles. Instead, the committee will propose that the editorship of **Vision** become a committee appointment with the holder having full committee participation and voting rights. In addition, the committee will propose the creation of two appointed deputy editor roles to provide succession and contingency planning. At the same time, the committee will propose an amendment to the constitution to address any future situation where no candidates present themselves for a specific role or where there is a shortfall of candidates.

In order to maintain an odd number of committee members (to avoid deadlock), an additional general committee membership role will be created.

The committee proposes to begin the constitutional amendment process shortly with a view to getting it completed within the next six months, after which there will be a by-election for the newly created general post. It is likely that this election will only take place after Eurovision 2023.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP

OGAE UK in 2022 has been dominated by an absolutely massive increase in membership numbers. This began even before the Turin contest but has been sustained throughout the year, with particular surges after the UK's success in May, when the UK was announced as the host country and again when the host city was confirmed.

At times we were adding hundreds of members per day and this has put a considerable strain on our procedures that were designed to handle far fewer new joiners per month.

We are now the largest OGAE national club by far, more than five times larger than the next biggest club.

As at 24 October 2022 OGAE UK membership was as follows:

- Five Fellowships
- 15 Honorary members
- 3,798 Joint members
- 2,146 Sole members
- 304 Family members

This makes a grand total of 6,268 paying members and 20 honorary members and fellowships, a net increase of 3,986 or 175% over last year. 4,109 members have joined since 1 November 2021, an increase of 636% over the same period last year.

At the end of 2021 we managed to just about stay above 2,000 members

and the challenge for the future will now be to retain as many of the new members as possible at the end of 2023 when all the hype around Sam Ryder's performance and Liverpool hosting has abated.

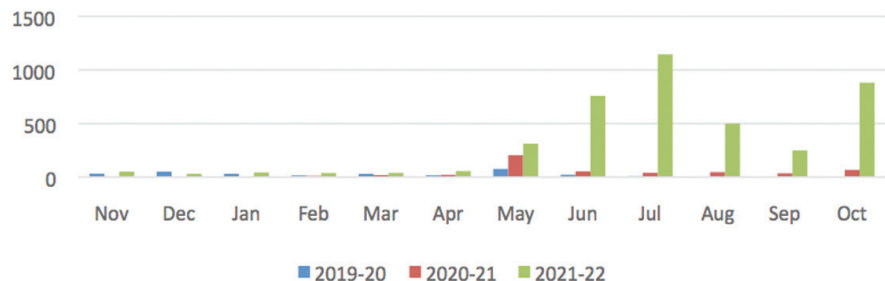
The graph on the next page shows the distribution of when people joined the club over the last three years. The increase in new joiners began even before the Turin contest but the real surges in new members came with the UK's second place in the contest in May, the announcement in July that the UK would host and the in October when Liverpool was confirmed as host city.

MEMBERSHIP ANALYSIS

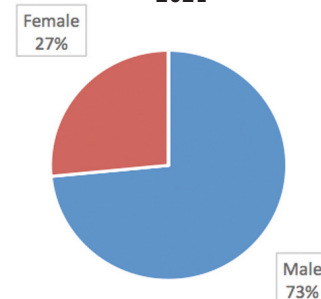
We currently have five Fellows who are typically people who have made an outstanding contribution to OGAE UK and who have been granted lifetime free membership in recognition of their services.

We have 15 honorary members who do not pay a subscription but cannot vote, have a membership card or participate in the ticket ballot. Typically, honorary membership is granted to former UK Eurovision participants who are active on the fan circuit or to other individuals who are connected with Eurovision.

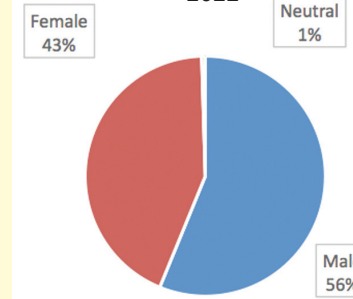
NEW MEMBERS 2019-22



MEMBERS BY GENDER 2021



MEMBERS BY GENDER 2022



Many honorary memberships date back to well before any of the current committee were in office and the rationale for their status is not documented.

Last year we reported that after years of very slow progress, the balance between genders was finally becoming more equal. That trend has continued very strongly during 2022, to the extent that we are getting close to an equal split between the genders. We introduced a gender-neutral option this year and 30 members have chosen to identify as such. The number of women joining the club has far outstripped men over the last year.

We have done a new analysis of where our members live. This year we based the classifications on post codes and so the methodology is slightly different to last year. We have also split out the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man that were previously included in the Southwest and Northwest respectively.

All areas have shown exponential growth with the exception of Northern Ireland where the increase in membership has been slightly weaker. Unsurprisingly the four areas where the seven potential host cities were located registered growth rates in excess of 200%, but the biggest percentage increase in members interestingly

came in East Anglia with a massive 298% rise over last year.

Please note that we did not previously separate out the Channel Islands and Isle of Man.

During the host city selection process, comments were made on our social media about the distribution of our members across the country. Many people seemed to believe that the majority of our members are located in the Northwest, in reality members are fairly evenly distributed across the country, but the largest proportion (37%) is located in London and the South East.

The average age of our members this year is 42, one year younger than last year. This slight decline has been driven by the big increase in younger members that has resulted from the introduction of family memberships. The number of teenage members has increased from 24 to 221 over the last year and we now have at least 24 members under ten years-old. Our youngest member appears to be just two years-old and the oldest at 84.

The overall distribution of members between different age groups has broadly remained the same despite the big increase in member numbers. However, we have seen a major increase in the proportion of younger members.

MEMBERSHIP SYSTEM

Membermojo is now very well established and working well. It is interesting to note that at least one other OGAE club has implemented the system on the back of our experience.

Without *Membermojo* we would not have been able to handle the massive surge in new members, something that was assisted by some changes that we made earlier in the year to the way we handle new membership applications. However, with so many new members our data quality issues have greatly increased. It is taking a lot of time to work through the thousands of new memberships correcting and completing address and contact details. It is disappointing that so many members provide incorrect data.

An increasing number of members are contacting us asking to check or update their details on the system despite the fact that they are able to do this themselves. The whole point of implementing *Membermojo* was to provide a self-service portal, but many members have either misunderstood or are reluctant to use it in this way.

We introduced a family membership earlier in the year. This new category, which is only available to UK residents and covers up to two adults and four under-18s, has proved very popular, and there are currently 88 family

memberships covering 299 individual members. We have had some teething problems, particularly from people trying to sign up more than two adults or using the family memberships instead of joint memberships. We have changed the sign-up process and are considering further changes to improve the way the system operates.

The number of members not using email remains at just seven.

DATA SECURITY

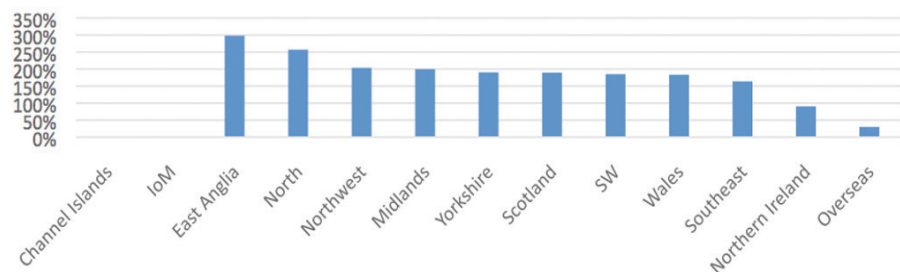
There have been no data security issues during the year.

The proportion of members opting out of receiving routine emails from us has increased considerably. 424 members (7%) have requested not to receive emails, up from 3% last year. Although all members will continue to receive election and vote related messages, it is important to note that the people who have opted out will not receive information about any ticket availability.

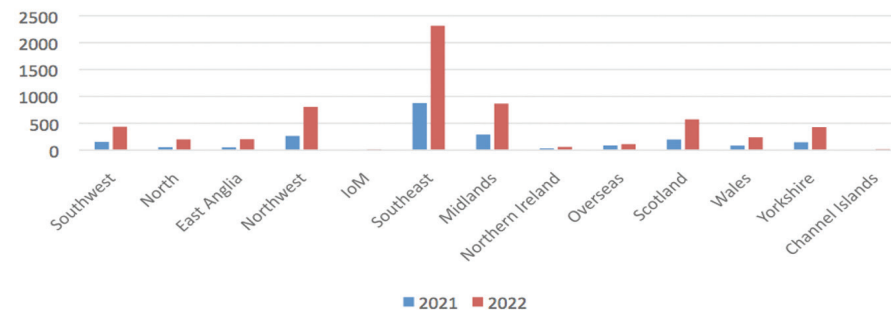
SUBSCRIPTIONS AND VISION MAGAZINE

At times in the last year, it has seemed that the only things increasing faster than OGAE UK membership were prices! Our costs continue to rise but we have budgeted very carefully for

% INCREASE IN MEMBERS BY REGION



LOCATION BY YEAR



the future. The big increase in member numbers has obviously given us a substantial amount of cash but this will be needed to pay for increased **Vision** print runs and postage costs as well as for activities associated with us being the host club in 2023. We are very proud and pleased that we have once again been able to hold subscription rates stable for the coming year with the notable exception of overseas printed **Vision** subscriptions which have regrettably had to increase to cover postage costs.

The electronic-only **Vision** subscriptions help us to control costs particularly for overseas members. 23% of current members have opted to receive **Vision** electronically, an increase of 3% over last year.

When we began the online publication of **Vision**, it was only visible in the members-only section of the website which could only be accessed using a separate user ID and password. We immediately began to experience problems with this set-up, especially as there seemed to be general confusion between **Membermojo** and the website. Maintaining an accurate list of people of authorised users, deleting non-renewers and adding new joiners proved immensely challenging, and we were eventually forced to disable the members-only area within the website.

Over the coming year we will look into alternative solutions.

MEMBERSHIP CARDS

Cardskipper is now well-established and proved invaluable in Turin when we were forced to deliver seat numbers via **Cardskipper** as a result of the Italian ticket agent refusing to issue tickets with people's seat details.

While a great tool, **Cardskipper** is also the cause of frustration for some members and is often misunderstood despite our best efforts to explain how the system works. The key points to remember are:

- **Cardskipper** is a service provider based in Sweden that is designed to deliver digital membership cards.
- Cards are issued by OGAE International through **Cardskipper** on behalf of the various national clubs including OGAE UK.
- The system is entirely separate to **Membermojo** and so there can be a divergence between data on the two systems.
- Cards are not issued to members under 16 years of age.
- Cards cannot be issued to members who have not provided a date of birth and UNIQUE email address and mobile number.
- Once set up members can amend the data on the card system themselves with

the exception of their name and the card expiry date.

We pay an annual fee for each card issued. When a member is first set up on the system, they receive an email and an SMS (text message) which are generated automatically by the system. These messages should be retained as they include the information required to set up and restore a card. We cannot resend these messages without a considerable administrative effort and, sometimes, cost.

As at the 25 October 2022, 5,603 members have been set up on **Cardskipper**, but 1,955 members have still not actually loaded the app and set up their cards despite numerous prompts and reminders.

Members are being asked to provide their card number when applying for the 2023 ticket ballot so we envisage a flurry of anxious emails from people who have not yet set up their card. We have set up a help process with a specific email address to handle these queries. At least 30% of the people contacting us so far saying they never received their card credentials had already been set up on the system but had missed the email and ignored the SMS from **Cardskipper**. In some cases, members had been sent up to six reminders over the years but had not picked up on the messages. It should be noted that such messages come from

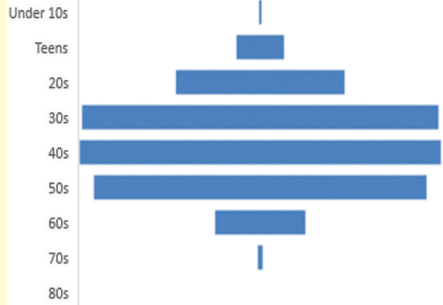
info@cardskipper.se or from "OGAE UK via **Cardskipper**" and so may go into people's spam folders.

From the queries raised so far, we have also identified an issue with members adding people to their memberships. The process for setting up new cards relies on the joining date recorded in **Membermojo**. If a member is added to an existing membership this is not captured during our monthly card set up procedure. We will be looking at how we can change our procedures to pick these people up but our standing request is that members email us before adding new people to an existing membership.

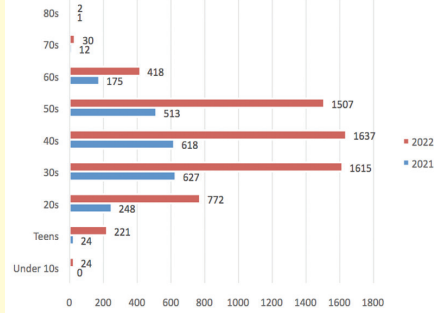
We continue to have some issues around members not providing unique email addresses or phone numbers. There seems to be a widely held belief that one card works for two joint members. This is not the case; each individual member must have their own card with their own photo. About 10% of new joiners are not providing the required information necessitating lengthy follow up procedures that greatly complicate and delay card issuance.

Members are asked to please ensure that they have added an APPROPRIATE photo to their card. Photos should be similar to those on driving licenses and passports, not snaps of multiple people on the beach or with drinks, etc,

MEMBERS BY AGE GROUP 2022



MEMBERS BY AGE GROUP 2021-22



obscuring their faces. Members without a clear face photo risk being denied access to events or facilities requiring the card.

A valid card is not only a pre-requisite for entering our ticket ballot, but also for using an OGAE ticket package, accessing some OGAE events, and using the OGAE Eurovision merchandise discount.

COMMUNICATIONS

We have continued to rely on a whole range of communication methods but

with all critical messages going out by email to all members and in **Vision** magazine.

Somewhat bizarrely, 420 members have exercised their right to be excluded from all email communications from the club. In addition, 33 of these (the majority being sole members) have also opted not to receive a printed issue of **Vision** magazine, meaning that they receive absolutely no communication from us other than membership expiry notifications.

2022 TREASURER'S REPORT

By Simon Bennett

We are happy to report that the club continues to be in good financial health.

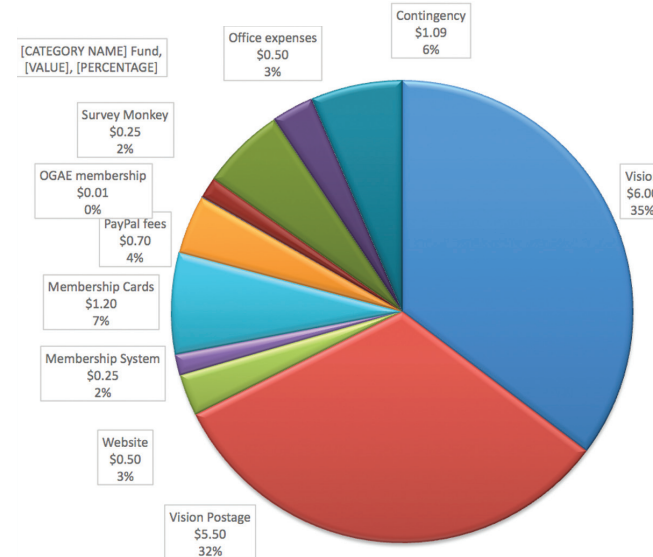
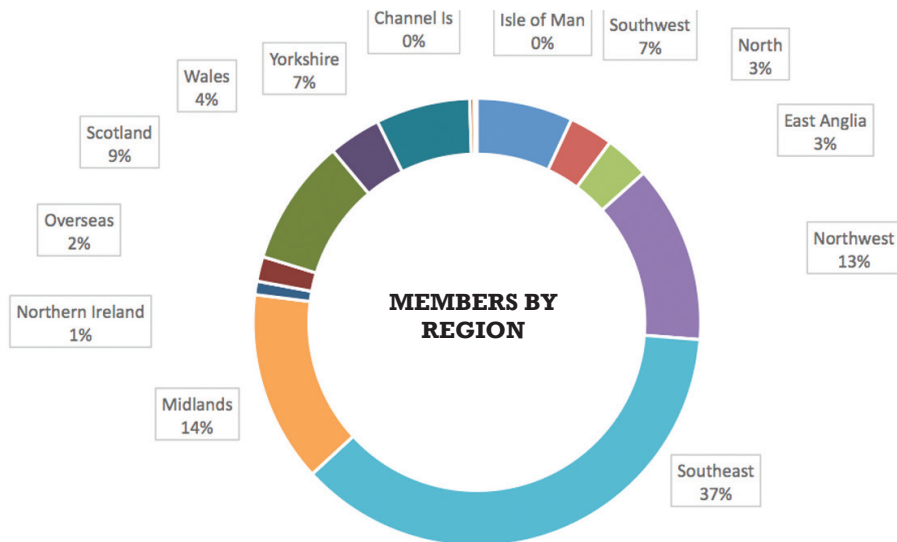
As reported previously, we aim to raise £26,000 per year to cover expenses and contingency, while maintaining reserves equivalent to one year's operations.

During the 2020-21 financial year we achieved a surplus of just £1,696.10,

less than half the surplus we enjoyed the previous year, but nevertheless a satisfactory result and in line with our budget planning.

BUDGETING & SUBSCRIPTIONS

Our current cash position is in line with our budget. We have about £57,000 in our bank accounts at



HOW WE SPEND A £17 SUBSCRIPTION

Cash Position as at 31 st March 2022		Cash position as at 26th October 2022	
Lloyds Main Account	£30,771.24	Lloyds Main Account	£86,432.91
Lloyds Events Account	£4,475.96	Lloyds Events Account	£4,975.96
PayPal Account	£21,288.92	PayPal Account	£22,953.96
Debts	£0	Debts/Payables	£9,185.77
Total assets	£56,536.12	Total assets	£105,177.06

INCOME		Change	EXPENSE		Change
Subscriptions	£35,493.38	+38%	Vision printing	£5,881.85	-34%
			Vision postage	£6,724.12	-33%
			Membership cards	£1,102.40	-49%
			Membership System	£400.00	0%
			Events	£950.00	+167%
			Website & tools	£964.35	+15%
			PayPal fees	£1,319.95	+33%
			OGAEI membership	£13.62	+24%
			Survey Monkey	£384.00	0%
			OGAEI contests	£42.79	
			Expenses	£56.90	
	£35,493.38			£17,839.98	-26%
SURPLUS	£17,653.40	+940%			

present. £5,000 will go on the delayed final edition of **Vision** in 2021, £26,000 is our expected spend in 2022, leaving us £26,000 in reserve, enough to support a year's activities. This is exactly in line with our budget.

EVENTS FUND

We continue to maintain a segregated events account funded by membership fees. Each year, £1 of each members' subscription is transferred to the events fund which is available to fund events during the year.

Very little was spent from the events fund during 2019-22 owing to the difficulties arranging in-person events during all the Covid restrictions.

For 2023, the committee has decided to boost the funds available for events, particularly in preparation for Eurovision in Liverpool.

CASH POSITIONS

Traditionally OGAE UK receives the vast majority of its income in October/November with the annual renewal payments. This money is then used through the year to pay for **Vision** and other expenses. The big surge in new members has meant that this has not been the case in 2022 with a lot of money coming in over the summer. Fortunately, we were able to update our budget for the coming year based on

the new membership numbers and we are confident that we can maintain a good financial position.

We maintain two bank accounts at Lloyds Bank, one for general membership and club expenses, the other for events. We also maintain a PayPal account that is used for processing almost all membership fees.

The cash balance at the end of October is particularly large owing to the increase in membership. The total assets still represent only about £17.53 per member.

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

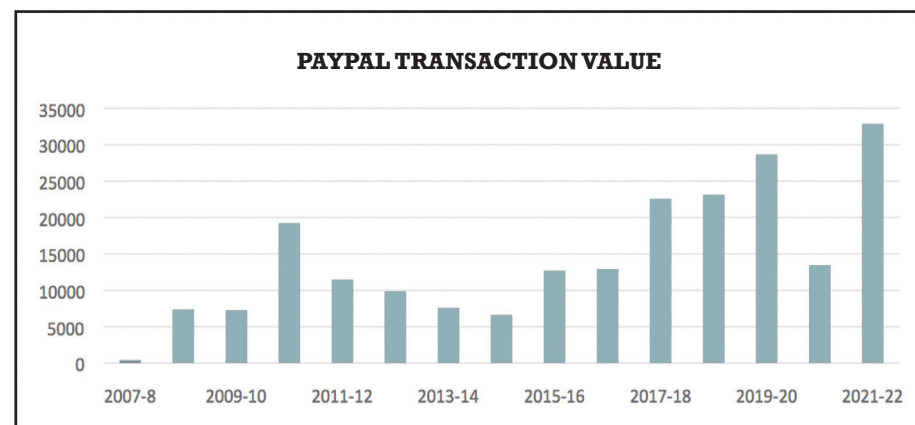
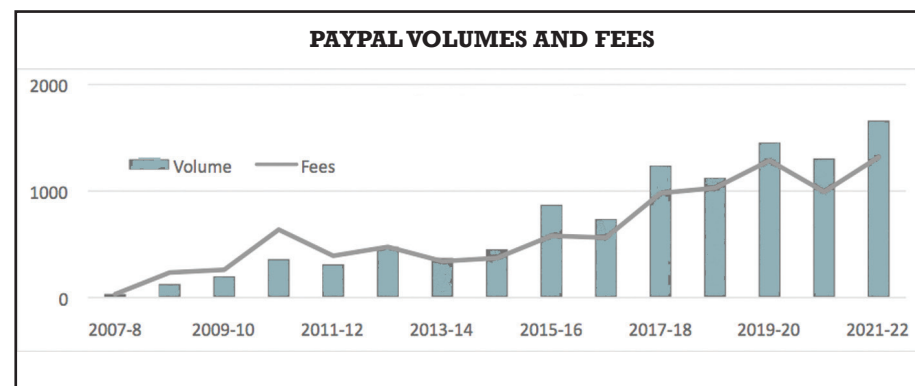
The detailed (unaudited) income and expense statement for the 2021-22 financial year is as follows:

The column headed "change" indicates the percentage change over the 2020-21 accounts.

Income was substantially up on the previous year which had included the period with no Eurovision when many members allowed their membership to lapse, and we had unusually few new members. The increase in income also reflects the increased interest in the contest/club at the beginning of the year.

PAYPAL

We continue to rely heavily on **PayPal** which has an automatic interface with



Membermojo allowing seamless renewal of membership. Payment volumes and fees both recovered after the dip in 2020-21.

The total value of **PayPal** payments recovered in the financial year in line with the better renewal rate and increase in membership numbers. ■

BIG TALK WITH RICHARD DECKER

After winning the Eurostars contest at Eurobash it seemed a natural to feature rising star **Richard Decker** in this edition of Small Talk. But he had so much to say that we decided to go big!



Occupation: Currently a Masters student in singing at the Royal College of Music, alongside working as a freelance classical singer.

First Eurovision you watched: This is slightly complicated (when is Eurovision ever simple?!). My earliest memory of Eurovision is 2006; I would have been seven years-old at the time, and I remember having nightmares about Lordi, and thinking that my favourites were Las Ketchup from Spain. I really started getting into it in 2012 when I fell in love with *Aphrodisiac* from Greece. My first Eurovision as a fan was 2013, though; I was at a friend's 14th birthday party and he mentioned that it was Eurovision night. When I got home, I watched the entire thing, remembering *O Mie* from Moldova's Aliona Moon (which remains one of my Top Ten favourite songs of all time), and then the next day bought the album on iTunes. The rest, as they say, is history. So in a nutshell, everyone who has to listen to me ramble on about Eurovision can blame my friend Theo!

Favourite Eurovision year: 2010, 2012, 2015 and 2017 I love them because they had several songs which in my eyes score 10/10 (a rarity), and part of me wants to say 2012 just for the chaos of songs like *Quédate Conmigo* competing alongside *Euro Neuro*... But realistically 2021 was

a Eurovision that made me cry. After the cancellation the year before, I thought almost every country bar a couple had massively raised their game in 2021. Italy's win - having lived in Italy the year before and seen their struggles with the pandemic first-hand, was just the cherry on the cake (despite France being my Number One) and the whole thing was just perfect. So yes, while I love 2012, I'm going to say 2021.

Which Eurovisions have you attended, if any? Tragically I've never been to any live - they've always clashed with GCSEs/A-levels/University exams. I still haven't worked out how I'm going to get to Liverpool during my studies yet...

Favourite Eurovision entry: So one important thing to know about me is that I tend to love the ballads more than up-tempo songs, as they're usually far better sung and are in tune. But having to pick one is tough... Currently I think it's between Spain 2012 and 2014 (*Quédate Conmigo* and *Dancing In The Rain*), but others up there include Georgia 2010, Ukraine and Moldova 2013, and France 2015 which I stand by as being criminally underrated! As an opera singer myself, I have to give some credit to Elina Nechayeva (Estonia 2018) for being absolutely phenomenal, too! But yeah, Spain 2012 or 2014 at the time of writing.



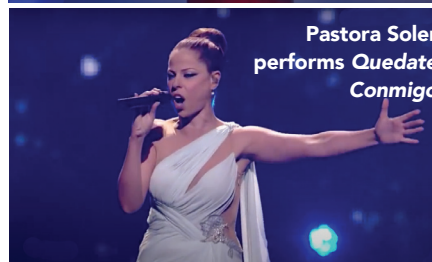
Running the London Marathon for Alzheimer's Research UK



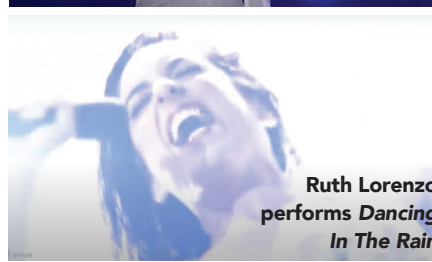
Teach-In perform *Ding-A-Dong*



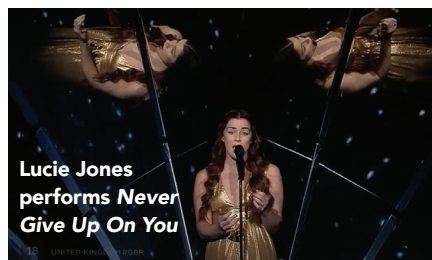
Aliona Moon singing *O Mie*



Pastora Soler performs *Quedate Conmigo*



Ruth Lorenzo performs *Dancing In The Rain*



Lucie Jones performs *Never Give Up On You*

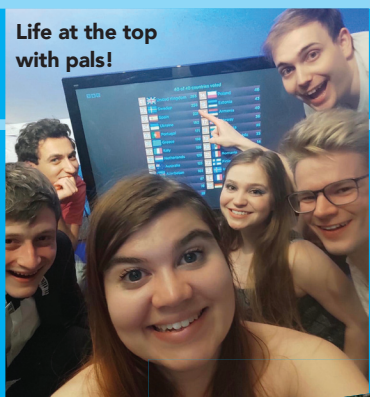
Favourite UK entry: Lucie Jones in 2017 - *Never Give Up On You*. I somewhat preferred the national final version with just the simple cello accompaniment the whole way through - it showed off Lucie's spectacular voice more and the whole thing seemed more subtle and understated. But then again, the power that came through on the Eurovision stage was immense.

Favourite winner: Ooh a tough one - I'm never a massive fan of the winners (as they're not usually ballads...). I love *Nocturne* (Norway 1995), even if just for the oboe section, I loved the Celtic simplicity of *The Voice* (Ireland 1996), but I think just topping them has got to be the bop the year after ABBA won, with *Ding-A-Dong* by Teach-In (Netherlands 1975)!

What are your interests or hobbies outside Eurovision: I do an awful lot of singing; mostly solo classical stuff (so opera, art song etc.) but also a lot of choral music and occasionally some a capella numbers. Outside of singing, I'm a pianist, oboist and occasional church organist too. My main non-musical interest is running, which I took up during the first lockdown, and in October 2022 I ran my first ever marathon, the London Marathon, raising nearly £3,000 for Alzheimer's Research UK. I love languages too - I studied French and Italian at university



Only the best for mum!



Life at the top with pals!



Young Chorister Of The Year



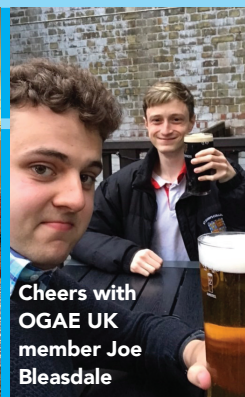
The One Show



Singing opera in a toga



With Chiara at Eurobash



Cheers with OGAE UK member Joe Bleasdale

for undergrad and I love hearing so many different languages on the Eurovision stage every year! I also love being able to travel and experience new cultures and languages; I'm fortunate enough to have been to six different continents (only Antarctica off the list), including scuba diving in Fiji and trekking in the Galapagos Islands! My dream is to one day sing at Sydney Opera House and then scuba dive around the Great Barrier Reef!

Favourite actor and actress: Don't know many, but I love everything I see Helena Bonham Carter do. And Maggie Smith – she's an icon!

Favourite movie: *Pitch Perfect*, no questions.

Favourite TV series: Honestly I love *Strictly Come Dancing* every year! The main reason I'd like to become famous is because I want to go on that show! I'm also a big fan of the US show *Survivor*, the social politics involved are so fascinating and I'd encourage you to check it out if you haven't come across it before.

Who do you most admire? My mum, she's my inspiration for everything I do.

Most embarrassing moment: Ooh lots! Probably when I (sort-of) proposed



to a girl on the *One Show*; I was 13 and singing on the Christmas special in 2011 as BBC Radio 2 *Young Chorister Of The Year*. Chris Evans asked whether there would be a wedding between me and the girl chorister in the future, and I thought it would be funny to go "well maybe, if she'll have me"... I've never lived it down!

A night on the town or a quiet night in? Oh a night out! Any excuse to get dressed up!

Favourite non-Eurovision song? A *Thousand Miles* by Vanessa Carlton (or if we're counting opera, the final trio from *Gounod's Faust*)

Best and worst Eurovision moments?
Best: The UK topping the jury vote this year!
Worst: Any of Zdob și Zdub's entries.

If you could go back in time, where would you go? I think it would be so cool to experience Roman civilization and see how different life was back then (plus I reckon I'd look hot in a toga...) so Italy in the early AD years I think.

What did you want to be when you were growing up? I've always wanted to be an opera singer, but when I was very young I wanted to be a vet or zoo keeper because I love animals.

Which yet-to-win Eurovision country would you most like to see win? I always cheer on San Marino because I love Valentina Monetta.

Apart from Eurovision, who was the last music act you saw perform live? I went to see ABBA Voyage recently with my mum – it was absolutely incredible!

Which words or phrases do you most overuse? 'Crucially', 'darling', and pronouncing 'rocket' the salad as 'roquette'.

What advice would you give your 16 year-old self? Tequila is not your friend... (I should probably write something sentimental but it was only eight years ago I can't really think of anything!)

What's on your playlist? Anything by OG3NE or Saara Aalto – Saara's album *You Had My Heart* is honestly so good!

What's your favourite animal? Rabbits – they're just so cute!

Guilty pleasure: *Give That Wolf A Banana* or *Hatrið Mun Sigrá*.

Tell us a secret: I still have some stuffed animals that I talk to... ■



OUR EUROBASH DIVAS