

VISION

THE OGAE UK MAGAZINE

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132

**WILL
MAE
BEAT
IT IN
MAY?**



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DEADLINE All contributions for issue 133 of *Vision* should reach the Editor no later than Friday, 23 June 2023.

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EDLINES



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THE BEAT IS ON!

Apologies for the late arrival of this edition of *Vision*, but we've all experienced manic times. We've however tried to keep to the motto: keep calm and carry on!

• The whole ticket ballot process has caused many headaches for the club - especially Simon who did his utmost to accommodate everyone! He really does deserve a medal. Life would've been easier if so many members didn't pull out of the process at the last minute. But the reluctance to spend money on expensive tickets and silly-money accommodation in our current cost of living crisis is quite understandable. The good news though is that those who really wanted a ticket probably got one - even if you were way down in the ballot!

• Accreditation is still limited this year, but we'll do our best to keep you informed on rehearsals, activities, etc.

• Our Liverpool Organising Committee headed by Alasdair Rendall are doing a splendid job to welcome and entertain all of you heading to Liverpool. The Euroclub is already buzzing with excitement in anticipation of our arrival!

• Watch out for info on our big OGAE UK gathering near the end of Eurovision week in Liverpool. We usually have camera crews at the event so glam up with the Union Jack outfits!

• This edition of *Vision* is missing some of our usual member focus articles, but we're concentrating on the contest itself and all things connected with Liverpool or the UK. Many thanks to everyone who has contributed.

• For the next edition please send us your photos of how you celebrated this year's contest - either in Liverpool, at home, or abroad. We'll try and use as many as possible. Be brave and whacky - but within reason - please remember we're a family magazine so nothing too rude! Anyway, have fun, enjoy the event and remember - KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON!



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www.ogae.uk

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NEXT ISSUE: OUT BY THE END OF JULY 2023



EUROVISION 2023

LIVERPOOL, UK

EUROVISION
SONG CONTEST
UNITED KINGDOM
LIVERPOOL 2023

SEMI-FINAL 1 TUESDAY 9 MAY

Running order	Performer	Song
1	Norway Alessandra	<i>Queen Of Kings</i>
2	Malta The Busker	<i>Dance (Our Own Party)</i>
3	Serbia Luke Black	<i>Samo Mi Se Spava</i>
4	Latvia Sudden Lights	<i>Aijā</i>
5	Portugal Mimicat	<i>Ai Coração</i>
6	Ireland Wild Youth	<i>We Are One</i>
7	Croatia Let 3	<i>Mama ŠĆ!</i>
8	Switzerland Remo Forrer	<i>Watergun</i>
9	Israel Noa Kirel	<i>Unicorn</i>
10	Moldova Pasha Parfeni	<i>Soarele Si Luna</i>
11	Sweden Loreen	<i>Tattoo</i>
12	Azerbaijan Tural TuranX	<i>Tell Me More</i>
13	Czech Republic Vesna	<i>My Sister's Crown</i>
14	Netherlands Mia Nicolai and Dion Cooper	<i>Burning Daylight</i>
15	Finland Käärijä	<i>Cha Cha Cha</i>

Also voting France, Germany and Italy

SEMI-FINAL 2 THURSDAY 11 MAY

Running order	Performer	Song
1	Denmark Reiley	<i>Breaking My Heart</i>
2	Armenia Brunette	<i>Future Lover</i>
3	Romania Theodor Andrei	<i>D.G.T. (Off And On)</i>
4	Estonia Alika	<i>Bridges</i>
5	Belgium Gustaph	<i>Because Of You</i>
6	Cyprus Andrew Lambrou	<i>Break A Broken Heart</i>
7	Iceland Diljá	<i>Power</i>
8	Greece Victor Vernicos	<i>What They Say</i>
9	Poland Blanka	<i>Solo</i>
10	Slovenia Joker Out	<i>Carpe Diem</i>
11	Georgia Iru	<i>Echo</i>
12	San Marino Piqued Jacks	<i>Like An Animal</i>
13	Austria Teya and Salena	<i>Who The Hell Is Edgar?</i>
14	Albania Albina and Familja Kelmendi	<i>Duje</i>
15	Lithuania Monika Linkytė	<i>Stay</i>
16	Australia Voyager	<i>Promise</i>

Also voting Spain, Ukraine and United Kingdom

BIG FIVE AND WINNING COUNTRY

Country	Performer	Song
France	La Zarra	<i>Évidemment</i>
Germany	Lord of the Lost	<i>Blood & Glitter</i>
Italy	Marco Mengoni	<i>Due Vite</i>
Spain	Blanca Paloma	<i>Eaea</i>
Ukraine	Tvorchi	<i>Heart Of Steel</i>
United Kingdom (host)	Mae Müller	<i>I Wrote A Song</i>

GRAND FINAL SATURDAY 13 MAY

Running order (TBA)

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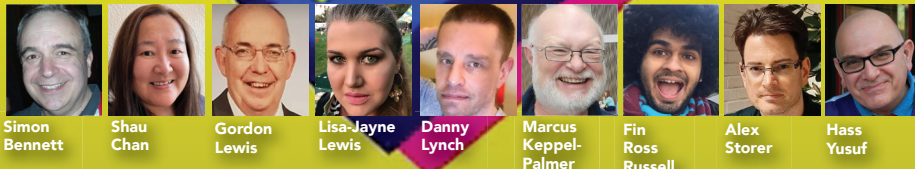
VOTING ORDER

Fill in the Jury order
when announced



THE MERSEY BEATS

Vision presents its annual preview of all the songs in this year's Eurovision being held in Liverpool



Simon Bennett Shau Chan Gordon Lewis Lisa-Jayne Lewis Danny Lynch Marcus Keppel-Palmer Fin Ross Russell Alex Storer Hass Yusuf



You can always expect three minutes of intense passion with most Albanian entries, and this year it's true to form. *Duje* is very much a family affair - how love and support of the family can help with life's challenges. As with most large families there will always be some conflict and drifting apart, but in the end they all come together. Albin reached the final of *The Voice Of Albania*, aged 16, and hasn't stopped since. Her rise to stardom was helped along by her musical family - most of them talented musicians. On stage Albania is joined by her mother, Albana, Bujar, her father, and siblings, Albin, Vesa and Sidorela. The song is very much an ethnic offering which seems to help with the story - and helped by Albin's powerful lungs. If you like the traditional Balkan sound, full of meaning, remembering happier times and angst, then this is for you. With a professional performance expected at its semi, this will be a worthy entry for the Grand Final. **Hass Yusuf**

Albin & Familja Kelmendi won the national final

Image © RTSH

Song: *Duje (Love It)*
Performers: Albin & Familja Kelmendi
Songwriters: Eriona Rushiti, Enis Mullaj

Albin & Familja Kelmendi sing
*They're falling apart
Just for a word
They're falling apart
They killed love
They're falling apart
And they forgot
How we were a home,
A table filled with kids*



SEMI-FINAL 2 ARMENIA



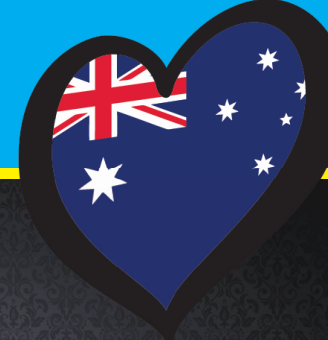
Song: *Future Lover*
Performer: Brunette
Songwriter: Brunette

Brunette sings
Oh future lover, I hope it all comes naturally, I hope our love is quiet outside, but loud inside oh baby, Oh future lover, this song I wrote for you, This song I wrote for you my future lover. I decide to be good, do good, look good

Elen Yeremyan (21), known professionally as Brunette, was internally selected by ARPTV as this year's Armenian entrant. She will be hoping to follow in the footsteps of last year's Armenian singer, Rosa Linn, who despite only finishing 20th in the Grand Final, went on to have the biggest hit of the contest with her song *Snap* thanks to it going viral on TikTok, and hitting the charts worldwide, including the US! Brunette has released several singles since her debut in the music industry in 2019. She is also known for advocating for young girls and women in Armenia. She will head to Liverpool with her self-penned song *Future Lover*, which is sung in English and Armenian. Brunette says she got inspiration for the lyrics from quotes she saw on social media, and the song isn't about anyone in particular, but is 'a poetic canvas, a letter with no addressee. Throughout our lives we're all looking for the one – the future lover, the embodiment of our dreams, ideals and fears.' **Danny Lynch**

Brunette was internally selected

Image © AMPTV/Robert Koloyan



SEMI-FINAL 2 AUSTRALIA



Had the stars aligned last year, we would have seen progressive synth-metal band Voyager on the Eurovision stage performing *Dreamer* – but that wasn't to be, so it felt quite fitting that the band were internally chosen this year to represent their country. Voyager were formed in Perth, in 1999 by German-born Daniel Estrin. They've released seven albums and Estrin has described the band's epic sound as "Like Duran Duran, but heavy". Indeed, Voyager draw influence from the rock and pop of the 1970s and 1980s, but their sound is anything but retro. Band-penned, *Promise* emulates the feeling of a journey, beginning with an atmospheric arpeggiated synth loop before bursting into the band's signature thrash-guitars and an anthemic sing-a-long chorus. Voyager are proud of their roots in Western Australia, and regularly showcase the stunning landscapes – the video for *Promise* is no exception. I imagine the band will want to reflect this somehow in their Eurovision performance, but two things are at least guaranteed – a lot of hair and a Keytar! **Alex Storer**

Voyager was internally selected

Image © Nick Wilson

Song: *Promise*
Performers: Voyager
Songwriters: Daniel Estrin, Alex Canion, Ashley Doodkorte, Scott Kay, Simone Dow

Voyager sing
Have you ever just lost your mind when you try to unwind or are you coming right back for more? I'm here tonight Promise me you'll hold me till I die I'm by your side Promise me it's gonna, promise me it's gonna be alright



SEMI-FINAL 2 AUSTRIA



Song: *Who The Hell Is Edgar?*

Performers: Teya & Salena

Songwriters: Pele Loriano, Ronald Janeček, Selina Maria Edbauer, Teodora Spiric

Teya & Salena sing
Oh my god, you're such a good writer
Oh no it's not me, it's Edgar
Who the hell is Edgar?
There's a ghost in my body
And he is a lyricist
It is Edgar Allan Poe
And I think he can't resist

This catchy EDM tune has one of the strangest Eurovision lyrics of all time as the girls are possessed by the ghost of famed writer Edgar Allen Poe (*Fall Of The House Of Usher, The Raven*) and suddenly can write super great lyrics. The video features ghost and zombie dancing ala *Thriller* and is sure to have the audience dancing along and hopefully ringing up to send this cracking belter through from semi two. Teya and Salena met on the reality show *Starmania 21*, having both narrowly failed as soloists to win tickets to Eurovision stardom in 2019 and 2020. The girls co-wrote the song with Pele Loriano (who produced Vincent Bueno's song in 2021) and Czech rock guitarist Ronald Janeček, who is a member of the band John Wolfhooker. **Marcus Keppel-Palmer**

Teya & Salena were internally selected

Image © Huy Tran

SEMI-FINAL 1 AZERBAIJAN



Azeri twins, Tural and Turan Baghmanov, were internally selected to represent Azerbaijan and will be facing what is certain to be their biggest gig so far. Performing as TuralTuranX, the brothers are more used to entertaining people in the parks and squares of Baku where they seek to perfect their skills as magicians. As budding singers and songwriters, Tural and Turan are strongly influenced by the music of the 1960s and 1970s, and there is definitely a Merseybeat feel to their Eurovision entry *Tell Me More*. The rapping adds a more contemporary sound, while the brothers promise to deliver a chilled yet powerful performance on the Liverpool stage. With a catchy melody and strong vocals, it is now down to Tural and Turan to work their magic on the Eurovision world. *Tell Me More* could turn out to be the biggest surprise this year. **Gordon Lewis**

TuralTuranX were internally selected

Image © Khalid Zeynalov

Song: *Tell Me More*

Performers:

TuralTuranX

Songwriters: Tural Baghmanov, Turan Baghmanov, Nihad Aliyev, Tunar Taghiyev

TuralTuranX sing
I'm running from fate I'm giving up my dream
And I'm carrying all the pain
All the sorrow that's in vain
That's my way of staying sane
On this sad and lonely train



SEMI-FINAL 2 BELGIUM



Song: *Because Of You*

Performer: Gustaph

Songwriters:

Gustaph, Jaouad Alloul

Gustaph sings
Remember when they told us
You're not good enough
Then you came into my life
And you changed my world for good
You told me to love myself
A bit harder than yesterday
Cause life is too short
And we sure got to celebrate

During the last ten years, Belgium has experienced mixed results with two top four placings while failing to qualify from the semi-finals on three occasions. Chosen through a closely fought national final, with just one point separating the winner and runner-up, will Gustaph be the one to bring Eurovision glory to the Belgian nation for the first time since 1986? *Because Of You*, which Gustaph has co-composed, is a strong disco-sounding number that speaks of self-belief in a world where people will still find it easy to judge those around them without realising the hurt that such judgements cause. This is an up-tempo anthem which oozes positivity and that alone should get people dancing and singing along. If the promotional video provides any indication of how this song will be interpreted on stage, it certainly promises to be an interesting performance that will not disappoint. **Gordon Lewis**

Gustaph won the national final

Image © Roen Lommelen



SEMI-FINAL 1 CROATIA



Has someone put something into the water in Croatia? This is so unlike the country - but good on them for trying something new - as well as bringing the outrageous to the contest this year! Many seemed to have missed the message of the act when first released - their imagery with overtones of Hitler and Stalin probably didn't help. But you can look at this song from many angles - one being apparently an anti-war song attacking the presidents of various countries as 'psychopaths'. But it needs to be a bit vague to keep the EBU happy when it comes to politics. The group are an interesting rock band known for outrageous costumes and shenanigans - including apparently performing in the nude. Let's really hope not! But putting all that aside *Mama ŠČ!* is a lively number with fun key-changes to help you hum and tap along. The song was composed by the members of band who were originally Let 2 which became Let 3 when a new member joined. Though where does that leave the other two members of the band? Maybe they don't talk about them. Hopefully we'll see all five in the Grand Final! With clothes on. **Hass Yusuf**

Let 3 won the national final

Image © Franko Kelam

Song: *Mama ŠČ!*

Performer: Let 3

Songwriters: Damir Martinovic, Zoran Prodanovic

Let 3 sing
Mommy, mommy,
mommy, mommy
I'm going to play
Mom, I'm going to
war
That little
psychopath
War war
Evil little psychopath
War war
Alligator psychopath
War war
Mommy, I'm going
to war



SEMI-FINAL 2 CYPRUS



Song: *Break A Broken Heart*
Performer: Andrew Lambrou
Songwriters: Jimmy Jansson, Jimmy 'Joker' Thörnfeldt, Marcus Winther-John, Thomas Stengaard

Andrew sings
*I see you
For who you are
But you can't break
... a broken heart
You lift me up and
leave me in the gutter
Tear me up and
move on to another
I'm torn apart but I
am a survivor*

Australian members may recognise Andrew from that country's last year's national final. He obviously must have made an impression as this year he was asked by the Cypriot broadcaster to represent them in Liverpool. Andrew's parents were from Cyprus so there's a strong connection there. Andrew's mum was so impressed by her five year-old son winning a talent contest at his school singing *Do-Re-Mi* from *The Sound Of Music* that she enrolled him into music school. A wise decision because as a teenager he began to get a following on YouTube and at 17 appeared on *X Factor Australia*. And at the moment he's all over social media. He certainly deserves the attention as he appears to have a very fine voice with excellent pitch. He expertly tells the story of this impressive rock ballad, *Break A Broken Heart*. Well, you can guess what it's about, can't you? Take a look at the lyrics on the left - it's all rather sad. And who needs all that angst? But such is life. Hopefully he'll get through to the Grand Final - there's only so much heart-break a young man can endure. **Hass Yusuf**

Andrew was internally selected
Image © Nikos Zikos



SEMI-FINAL 1 CZECHIA

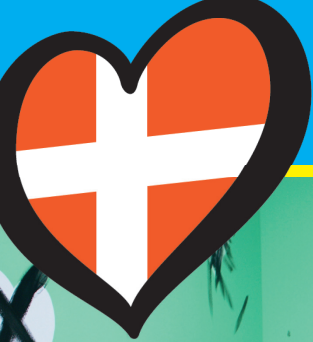


Czechia (Formally the Czech Republic) showed the world that you don't have to have loads of money to put on a decent national final. Yes, it might have been a bit chaotic at times, but we got there in the end and boy did they pick a great song. From 170 entries, five made it to the live final and Vesna romped home winning both the Czech and the International votes by a country mile. The group is made up of six female artists and is a celebration of women and a protest against gender inequality. The group is lead by Patricia Kaňok, the acclaimed singer-songwriter who co-penned *My Sister's Crown*. The ethnic pop genre has been gaining ground at Eurovision in recent years, could this give Czechia their best ever finish? Maybe? **Lisa-Jayne Lewis**

Vesna won the national final
Image © Milan Vopalensky

Song: *My Sister's Crown*
Performer: Vesna
Songwriters: Kateryna Vatchenko, Patricie Kaňok, Tanita Yankova, Adam Albrecht, Michal Jiráň, Šimon Martínek

Vesna sing
*My sister's crown
Don't take it down
Don't take it down
Nobody has right to do it
She's beautiful
And capable
She is her own queen
And she will prove it*



SEMI-FINAL 2 DENMARK



Song: *Breaking My Heart*
Performer: Reiley
Songwriters: Bård Bonsaksen, Hilda Stenmalm, Rani Petersen, Sivert Hjeltnes Hagtvet

Reiley sings
Couldn't meet me in the middle
I got lost
Still thinking 'bout September
If we could go back to the start
Bet we'd still be falling apart
I'm not scared to love you
But I'm scared of breaking my heart

As well as flying the flag for Denmark this year, Reiley is the first Faroese artist to compete at the Eurovision Song Contest. Having risen to fame on TikTok, Rani Petersen has managed to build up a following of over ten million followers from making short covers of existing songs (or almost 500 times the population of his native Tórshavn). *Breaking My Heart* combines a thumping bass line, an artistic use of autotune and colourful synths in a package that feels colourful and energetic (matching the bright uses of green, blue and pink in both the song's music video and stage performance). The lyrics tell the story of a toxic relationship with Reiley unable to back away from somebody he knew was bad for him. Despite the difficult subject matter, Reiley packs his performance full of energy, symbols and even some graffiti. It would break our hearts to miss out on Denmark in the Grand Final for the third successive year, especially with such a vibrant and unique act. **Fin Ross Russell**

Reiley won the national final
Image © Reiley



SEMI-FINAL 2 ESTONIA

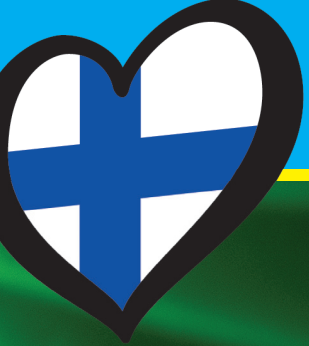


As soon as the songs for Estonian selection *Eesti Laul* were released, it was clear that there was only one winner and that was Alika Milova. Alika rose to prominence in Estonia after participating in several singing competitions including *The Baltic Voice*, *New Wave Junior*, *Kaunas Talent*, *Bravo Song Contest* and *Berlin Perle*. It was her victory in the 2021 edition of *Eesti Otsib Superstaari* (Estonia's version of *Pop Idol*) that launches her into local super-stardom. *Bridges* was written during a recording session in the Netherlands in which she felt a lot of unexplained anxiety. The end result is a graceful piano-led ballad with strings, soaring vocals and delicately written reflective lyrics. We can only hope that on the banks of the Mersey, her 'bridges' will be able to span the gap between Semi and Grand Final and mark Estonia's fourth appearance on Saturday in five contests. **Fin Ross Russell**

Alika won the national final
Image © Silver Mikiver

Song: *Bridges*
Performer: Alika Milova
Songwriters: Alika Milova, Nina Sampermans, Wouter Hardy

Alika sings
There is always time
To get back on track
Tearing down the walls
Slowly every step
Now I see myself
Building up a world of bridges



SEMI-FINAL 1 FINLAND



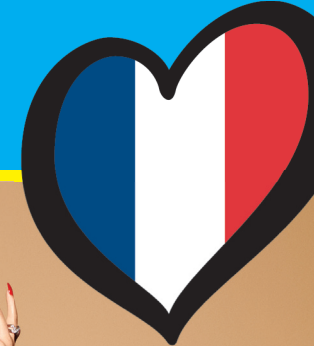
Song: Cha Cha Cha
Performer: Käärijä
Songwriters: Aleksi Nurmi, Jere Pöyhönen, Johannes Naukkarinen

Käärijä sings
This exhausting week and the many long days are behind There's only bar and piña colada on my mind There is some time for a few, the night is still youngish This icy shell is something I have to demolish

Käärijä is a Finnish rapper, singer and songwriter, whose real name is Jere Pöyhönen. He discovered his passion for music while learning to play the drums at high school. At the start of his career he began writing his own music, which revolved around the theme of gambling. One of his musical influences is the band Rammstein, where he has the group's logo tattooed on his chest. Quality of the entries from *Uuden Musiikin Kilpailu 2023* has been exceptional, with *Cha Cha Cha* being the favourite to win the ticket to represent Finland in Liverpool. I would describe the genre as electro-pop and Finnish hip-hop. The song's slogan is named 'It's Crazy, It's Party!' The lyrics are about having an exhausting week with lots of long days ahead, thoughts of going to a bar drinking Pina Colodas and holding them with both hands to say *Cha Cha Cha!* Interested to see if the performance on the Eurovision stage will have that cheeky floor dance to make it more memorable to everyone and give Finland their second Eurovision victory since 2006. **Shau Chan**

Käärijä won the national final
Image © Nelli Kentta

GRAND FINAL FRANCE



Having initially said there would be a national final for France, the broadcaster then decided to continue with the internal selection and announced in January the artist would be Canadian singer La Zarra. The song came to us on 19th February and has been very, very well received. It's a bluesy mix of French chanson, burlesque and pop that on paper maybe shouldn't work yet in the hands of the effortlessly stylish and sexy La Zarra not only works, but glows. Some might say France are due a win, their last trophy moment was in 1977 and they got pretty close in 2021. Since returning to Junior Eurovision they've become one of the solidly great nations in that contest and are desperate to find the song that will give them the same glory in the big show. Could this be it? Well it's riding high on people's favourites lists so I don't think we can rule it out yet. **Lisa-Jayne Lewis**

La Zarrax was internally selected
Image © SLAM

Song: *Évidemment (Obviously)*
Performer: La Zarra
Songwriters: Benny Adam, La Zarra. Banx & Ranx

La Zarra sings
My heart, my hand, my eyes, my hips Nothing's mine anymore I kill myself To give them life And act like it was nothing In my hell garden The plants are watered with the dreams and tears



SEMI-FINAL 1 GEORGIA



Song: *Echo*
Performer: Iru Khechanovi
Songwriters: Beni Kadagidze, Iru Khechanovi, George Kukhianidze

Iru sings
 Days in a row
 I'm thinking, I know
 My love is not a
 fake(One)
 This feeling is lord
 (It) Will be better way
 (It) Will be better day
 now
 It is not a secret
 My soul's like a
 fortress
 I feel I'm progressed
 Words getting
 worthless

Iru Khechanovi, 22, who is of Armenian descent, is no stranger to the Eurovision stage. As a member of girl group Candy, she won Junior Eurovision in 2011 when she was just 11 years-old with the song *Candy Music*, and she becomes the third Junior Eurovision winner to head to the adult contest after the Tolmachevy Sisters from Russia and Destiny from Malta. Earlier this year she won the fifth season of *The Voice Georgia* after an amazing performance of Loreen's *Euphoria* and got the right to represent Georgia in Liverpool. Her song, *Echo*, was the very last song to be revealed for this year's Eurovision! Iru co-wrote the song herself, alongside Giga Kukhianidze, who is responsible for all three of Georgia's winning Junior Eurovision songs. A true Eurovision legend! Iru said her song is about "an inner power that comes through me. The gibberish part of my song represents the echo effects of love, and how powerful the feeling is of being completely in love." **Danny Lynch**

Iru was internally selected

Image © Vakhtang Alania (Kikala Studio)

GRAND FINAL GERMANY



Lord of the Lost is a German industrial rock metal band from Hamburg, Germany founded in 2007 by lead singer Chris Harms. The band have already released 11 studio albums with the last four releases with great success. I would describe their genre as heavy metal, dark/industrial gothic rock and with musical influences including Rammstein and Marilyn Mason. *Unser Lied Für Liverpool* was their national final song contest to select Germany's representative for this year's Eurovision. Out of the 548 submissions, Lord of the Lost and their entry named *Blood & Glitter* were shortlisted as one of the eight finalists to compete for that ticket to Liverpool. The winner was selected with a 50/50 combination of eight international juries and public televotes. Lord of the Lost became victorious after winning with an overall score of 189 points - jury 46 points and televotes 146 points. The band are planning a glamorous rock show for their Eurovision staging and want to include red pyrotechnic rain to reflect the message of their song. **Shau Chan**

Lord of the Lost won the national final

Image © Germany 1VDPictures

Song: *Blood & Glitter*
Performer: Lord Of The Lost
Songwriters: Anthony J. Brown, Chris Harms, Pi Stoffers, Rupert Keplinger

Lord of the Lost sing
 Blood and glitter,
 sweet and bitter,
 We're so happy we
 could die,
 Blood and glitter,
 Saint and sinner,
 We do fall before
 we rise



SEMI-FINAL 2 GREECE



Song: *What They Say*
Performer: Victor Vernicos
Songwriter: Victor Vernicos Jørgensen

Victor sings
Late August
Feet start to shake
heart starts to ache
Can't focus
Panic I lay on the
floor and I hate
That I'm holding on
My lungs'll break
can't stop to make
My mind up
Time starts to rain
clouds not afraid

At just 16 years old, Victor Vernicos will be the youngest singer ever to have represented Greece and was selected through an internal process which began with seven potential acts. Reaching the final three performers, Victor was then confirmed as the Greek representative earlier this year. If Eurovision was about finding the most contemporary and chart sounding song, Victor's self-composed *What They Say* would almost certainly push every other song into second place. With vocals that are not dissimilar to George Ezra and a song which could easily be included on James Arthur's next album, Greece may have played its ace card by sending the young teenager to Liverpool with a song that will hopefully get the scoreboard recognition which it deserves. However, just one question remains. Will Victor wear his shorts on the Eurovision stage? **Gordon Lewis**

Victor was internally selected
Image © Nikos Zikos



SEMI-FINAL 2 ICELAND



Diljá Pétursdóttir aka Diljá is an Icelandic singer/songwriter. She participated in the talent show *Ísland Got Talent* back in 2015 when she was 13 years old. Diljá grew up in Kópavogur and moved to Copenhagen in 2020 to study physiotherapy, combining this with singing lessons. She is very energetic and into Crossfit workouts. Diljá was confirmed as one of the ten artists in this year's annual contest *Söngvakeppnin*. Her song, which she co-wrote, is named *Power* with the Icelandic version named *Lifandi Inni Í Mér*. In the grand final, she qualified as one of two finalists to move onto the superfinal, where she emerged as the overall winner beating Langi Seli og Skuggarnir, an Icelandic rockabilly band with their song *OK*. I would describe the genre as electro pop/breakbeat pop style. **Shau Chan**
Diljá won the national final

Image © Helgi Omars

Song: *Power*
Performer: Diljá
Songwriters: Diljá Pétursdóttir, Pálmi Ragnar Ásgeirsson

Diljá sings
But I got my power
in my hand, You
hold no power over
me, I'll take my
flowers while I
can, So let the love
shower over me,
You hold no p-p-p-
power over me



SEMI-FINAL 1 IRELAND



Song: *We Are One*
Performers: Wild Youth
Songwriters: Conor O'Donohoe, Edward Porter, Jörgen Elofsson

Wild Youth sing
You might be a leader, I might be a freak,
And we might be different but under the falling sun,
Tonight...
We are one!
We are one!
When we rise, we rise like the sun,
When we go down, we go down

Making the eight hour ferry journey from over the Irish Sea this year will be Dublin four-piece Wild Youth. Having formed in 2016 and released their debut single in 2017, the band has since enjoyed a steady rise in the Irish music scene which included local hits and opening for Lewis Capaldi and Westlife on their respective tours. The song is called *We Are One* and is an anthemic number written specifically about the message of unity and peace that Eurovision brings to people around the world. The music sees drums, electric guitars and piano mix nicely with the lead singer's vocals to create an atmosphere that will have the Liverpool Arena rocking come Semi-Final 1. The music video sees the band perform in sparkly mirrorball hoods, ending the mystery of what happened to Gina G's dress from her performance at the 1996 contest in Oslo. Only time will tell if they bring this look to the stage in Liverpool and if the performance sees them "rise like the sun" or "go down, go down, go down" to a fourth consecutive semi-final exit for the Emerald Isle. **Fin Ross Russell**

Wild Youth won the national final
Image © Mollie McKay/RTE



SEMI-FINAL 1 ISRAEL



Noa certainly doesn't pull any punches in this classic summery EDM anthem as she proclaims she has the power of a unicorn, that you can call her queen, and that she is "phenomen-phenomen-phenomenal"! Alexander Rybak won with a *Fairytale* so who is to say that Noa won't win with her own venture into the land of the fairies. There's even a dance opportunity break in the song. A quasi-symphonic opening can also have you harking back to the days of the orchestra. A great chance of getting through semi one. Noa is no stranger to TV having had her own show and having been a judge on *Israel's Got Talent*. Noa has co-written *Unicorn* with Doron Medalie, who has Eurovision form having co-written the 2018 winner *Toy* (Netta) as well as the 2015 entry (*Golden Boy*) and the 2016 entry for Hovi Star (*Made Of Stars*). Yinon Yahel also co-wrote *Golden Boy*. **Marcus Keppel-Palmer**
Noa won the national final was internally selected

Image © Eran Levi

Song: *Unicorn*
Performer: Noa Kirel
Songwriters: Doron Medalie, May Sfadia, Noa Kirel, Yinon Yahel

Noa sings
I'm gonna stand here like a unicorn
Out here on my own
I got the power of a unicorn
Don't you ever learn?
That I won't look back
I won't look down
I'm going up
You better turn around



GRAND FINAL ITALY



Song: *Due Vite* (*Two Lives*)

Performer: Marco Mengoni

Songwriters: Davide Petrella, Marco Mengoni, Davide Simonetta

Marco sings

**How two lives keep turning
We're the only ones
awake in the whole
universe
Shouting out a bit
of our anger on a
rooftop
That no one feels
this way
That no one watches
movies anymore**

Italy has another returning artist in the form of Marco Mengoni. The 34-year-old winner of the Italian *X Factor* in 2009 is best known to Eurovision audiences for his participation in 2013 with the song *L'essenziale* which finished seventh, but Mengoni is a major star in Italy having sold more than 2.8 million records and achieved 15 Top Ten hits. *Due Vite* or *Two Lives* was a runaway winner of the *Sanremo Festival*, having topped the scoreboard right from the beginning of the five-night extravaganza. The emotional ballad is a quintessentially Italian song and was a clear favourite with the domestic audiences but was perhaps not the most Eurovision-friendly entry in the competition. Mengoni initially said that he might consider singing a different song in Liverpool, especially as *Due Vite*, as seems to be traditional with Italian entries, was well over the three-minute time limit in its initial form. However he confirmed that he would indeed be singing the song albeit in a modified and rearranged form perhaps more appealing to an international audience. As usual, Italy is likely to be a strong contender. **Simon Bennett**

Marco won the national final

SEMI-FINAL 1 LATVIA



There is a nice little Britpop vibe heading into 2023 and that is quite interesting. The north of England is of course home to the Britpop scene and while some might argue that this is bringing coals to Newcastle, the fact that Latvia chose this as the *Supernova* winner, for me at least, is a great alignment for the contest in Liverpool. This song, *Aijā*, is effortlessly cool and while it has all the elements of the 1990's and 2000's Britpop scene, it is incredibly current and contemporary. How this will land in May is anyone's guess, but Latvia have really struggled to grab the zeitgeist in recent years and I would truly love this to be the one that works for them - they could sure use a break having not made it to the Grand Final since 2016. This one, performed by Sudden Lights who wrote their song, really deserves to be there, but Semi-Final 1 is brutal and some of the good songs are simply not going to make it, I really hope this one does. **Lisa-Jayne Lewis**

Sudden Lights won the national final

Image © Andris Barbans

Song: *Aijā*

Performer: Sudden Lights

Songwriters: Andrejs Reinis Zitmanis, Kārlis Matīss Zitmanis, Kārlis Vārtiņš, Mārtiņš Matīss Zemītis

Sudden Lights sing
**You said some words
Didn't hear you fall
asleep
People were talking
louder
From my TV screen
I heard them
scream
It was too dark to
see
Don't cry**



SEMI-FINAL 2 LITHUANIA

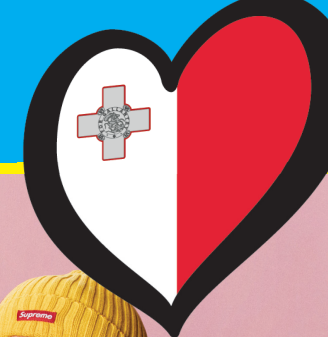


Song: Stay
Performer: Monika Linkytė
Songwriters: Kristis Indrišonoks, Monika Linkytė

Monika sings
As I look back to all these years
To broken dreams disguising fear
Being someone that I'm really not
Just stay with me
My heart is bleeding
I need your healing

Monika Linkytė is a familiar face to many of us following her participation for Lithuania at the 2015 Eurovision Song Contest alongside Vaidas Baumila with the song *This Time*. This year she returned to Lithuanian national selection *Pabandom Iš Naujo* and narrowly won the competition to secure her return to Eurovision. *Stay* is a piano-led ballad with gospel influences and Lithuanian lyrics which refer to local folk sutras, building the song's unique musical identity. Despite sounding like a plea to a lover, the song is a message from Monica to herself about the importance of listening to your heart and stopping to reflect on yourself. Having studied at the famed British & Irish Modern Music Institute in London, we consider her one of our own and will be hoping that upon her return to the UK that she can 'stay' in the competition long enough to return to the Grand Final stage. **Fin Ross Russell**

Monika won the national final
Image © Reda Mickviciute



SEMI-FINAL 1 MALTA



The Busker have been around since 2012 with several singles and two studio albums to their name. Their early work might be best described as easy listening with a 1960s vibe, perhaps thanks to the novelty of having a saxophone player in the band. After a change of line-up in 2020, the band now consists of Dav Jr on vocals and guitar, Sean Meachen on saxophone and Jean Paul Borg on drums. Big, ballsy brass riffs are the order of the day for *Dance (Our Own Party)* as the band's new sound won the votes of both jury and televoters in the Maltese national final. The song is about escaping the anxiety of huge crowds and inviting your friends home for a more intimate party where you can quite simply, be yourself. Written by the band, *Dance (Our Own Party)* is one of those songs guaranteed to get your foot tapping from the offset. It's fun, funky and will stick in your head for days. **Alex Storer**

The Busker won the national final
Image © Daryl Cauchi

Song: Dance (Our Own Party)
Performers: The Busker
Songwriters: David Meilak, Jean Paul Borg, Matthew James Borg, Micheal Joe Cini, Sean Meachen

The Busker sing
Wait now,
Can you speak up
It's a little bit loud
I'm a little bit lost
Oh
Fogged up
Might be the drinks
Or the social tease
Of anxiety
The tension
I'm getting
The faces I drew on



SEMI-FINAL 1 MOLDOVA



Song: *Soarele Si Luna*
(*The Sun And The Moon*)

Performer: Pasha Parfeni

Songwriters: Yuliana Parfeni, Andrei Vulpe, Cătălin Temciuc, Pasha Parfeni

Pasha sings
I sang her so many songs
Until she wanted to kiss me
Like this, like this,
like this, like this,
like this, like this
I sang to her, I danced with her,
I pampered her in all sorts of ways

Soarele Si Luna (*The Sun And The Moon*) brings a mystical dose of ethnotronica to this year's contest, delivered by the charismatic Pasha Parfeni. He's no stranger to Eurovision, having previously entered the Moldovan national selection several times, finally making it through to Eurovision in 2012 with *Lăutar* and appearing on stage alongside Aliona Moon in 2013. Written by Pasha, *Soarele Si Luna* explores folk symbolism and the natural elements – earth, fire, water, the sun, moon and stars – all wrapped up in a song about love and marriage, as Pasha sings “The Sun and the Moon will hold our wedding crown.” The forces of the cosmos propel the song forward with deep bass and driving rhythm along with a thoroughly addictive chorus. Both the song's video and Pasha's live performances have brought those elements to life alongside pounding drums, mysterious antlered women and a little person with a flute. I dare say we can expect to see all of this and more on the Eurovision stage. **Alex Storer**

Pasha won the national final

Image © Alex Ioradche



SEMI-FINAL 1 NETHERLANDS



The last duo to represent the Netherlands were The Common Linnets who finished second in 2014, and Mia and Dion will be hoping to go one better and emulate the success of co-writer Duncan Laurence who of course won the contest in 2019 with *Arcade*. You can tell it's a Duncan song as it starts out as a piano ballad with Dion vocalising emotionally before the song kicks up a gear when Mia takes the second verse before they both rock out saying goodbye to their old lives! In between there's plenty of running, losing, chasing, falling, crying, and also burning daylight. Exhausting! Mia and Dion will be hoping that they sail through semi one and burn daylight on the Saturday night. Duncan and fiancé Jordan Garfield were impressed by Dion when he supported Duncan on tour, while Mia has had a pop hit *Mutual Needs* in 2020. So they put the pair together to perform in Liverpool! **Marcus Keppel-Palmer**

Mia and Dion were internally selected

Image © Jasper Suyk

Song: *Burning Daylight*

Performers: Mia Nicolai & Dion Cooper

Songwriters: Dion Cuiper, Duncan de Moor, Jordan Garfield, Loek van der Grinten, Mia Nicolai

Mia and Dion sing
Between falling and running
I've been trying to get on my feet in time
I've never been good at crying
always wanted to be the tough type



SEMI-FINAL 1 NORWAY



Song: *Queen Of Kings*

Performer:

Alessandra

Songwriters:

Alessandra Mele, Henning Olerud, Linda Dale, Stanley Fernandez

Alessandra sings
She, queen of the kings, running so fast, beating the wind.

Nothing in this world can stop the spread of her wings
She, queen of the kings, broken her cage, threw out the keys.

This is everything it needs to be and more. It's a powerful rock/pop/dance fusion piece and, were it not for a certain other Scandi nation, is probably one that folks would be talking about more. Alessandra won the ticket through Norway's national final *Melodi Grand Prix* having won both the jury and televote with *Queen Of Kings* which she co-wrote. *MGP* is one of the shows that a lot of fans enjoy, myself included, and it's always great when there is synergy between the jury and the people's votes. It's rare to see Norway finish badly these days, opening the show can be a blessing or a curse, but in this instance I would have absolutely chosen this as the opener too. This will set quite the scene for Semi-Final 1. **Lisa-Jayne Lewis**

Alessandra won the national final

Image © Marius Sorgjerd

SEMI-FINAL 2 POLAND



Blanka has enjoyed a meteoric rise over the last few months that has culminated in her winning the Polish ticket to Liverpool. Born in Szczecin to a Polish model and a Bulgarian businessman, Blanka Stajkow was encouraged from a young age to try a range of different activities but ultimately settled on music as her passion resulting from her mum's love of music video channels like MTV and Trace Urban. Blanka's second single *Solo* is a tropical-influenced bop with a steady beat and bright synths for a fresh sound. The lyrics focus around people in bad relationships realising that they are better off alone, a positive and upbeat perspective on not being with the right person. The song has certainly stood out from the crowd with 14 million YouTube views of the song's music video - but will Blanka be able to "show us what it is [we're] missing out on" and strut her way into the Grand Final? **Fin Ross Russell**

Blanka won the national final

Image © Magic Mars

Song: *Solo*

Performer: Blanka

Songwriters:

Bartłomiej Rzczycki, Blanka Stajkow, Maciej Puchalski, Marcin Górecki, Mikołaj Trybulec

Blanka sings
Ya hot and cold, high and low
You're messin with my mind
No oh oh, that's not how it goes
So let me spell it out
Now I'm better solo solo
I never let me down



SEMI-FINAL 1 PORTUGAL



Song: *Ai Coração (Oh Heart)*
Performer: Mimicat
Songwriters: Marisa Mena, Luís Pereira

Mimicat sings
*Oh, heart that won't let me be,
You won't give me peace, you leave me unfit!
My head and throat are circling around,
That won't undo itself, and yet you feel no sympathy!
I feel dizzy, and every day worse,
I don't know things that I used to know!*

What do you get when Moulin Rouge meets Eurovision? This year the answer is simple... Mimicat. One of the last acts and songs to be confirmed for Liverpool 2023, the 57th *Festival Da Canção* saw the enthusiastic singer win her ticket to the international contest by the narrowest of margins. The jury vote saw her tied with Edmundo Inácio in first place, but the Portuguese viewers decided that Mimicat was the singer they wanted to represent them. *Ai Coração* combines the sounds of Paris theatres with the flamenco styles of Andalusia, yet maintains the overall Portuguese influences that make this song stand out from the crowd. Up-tempo, catchy, memorable, foot tapping... *Ai Coração* has it all and Mimicat, together with her four dancers, is the perfect performer for this number. Hopefully the staging used at the national final will be retained and, although the song could go either way, it will certainly be the guilty pleasure of many watching the show. **Gordon Lewis**

Mimicat won the national final

Image © Jorge Simao

SEMI-FINAL 2 ROMANIA



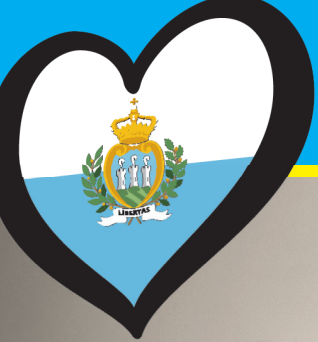
By common consent, it seems any entry may qualify from semi two, so who's to say that Theodor Andrei and his rock song may not qualify? After all, this won the Romanian *Selectia Națională* by winning the online vote and narrowly coming second in the televote. A clear choice by the public. The song is sung partly in Romanian and partly in English and seems to be about a lady who is the object of Theodor's affections, though he wants more. The performance in the national final was lively with Theodor climbing up on objects in the style of Guildo Horn, as much shredding of clothing as Marie N – at the end Theodor is topless with "Make Love Not War" written on his torso - and he's also possessed by a voodoo doll. It's a surprise his glasses stay on! *D.G.T. (Off And On)* originally featured on his album *Fragil* as a duet with co-writer Luca Ștefan Udățeanu, but has been reworked as a solo song for Liverpool. **Marcus Keppel-Palmer**

Theodor won the national final

Image © Teodora Ungureanu

Song: *D.G.T. (Off And On)*
Performer: Theodor Andrei
Songwriters: Luca De Mezzo, Luca Ștefan Udățeanu, Mikail Jahed, Theodor-Octavian Andrei

Theodor sings
*Take a little sip of venom, now
Say you love me,
say you want me now
Fool me all over again, baby
Lost in your eyes
Nights I crave the touch of you*



SEMI-FINAL 2 SAN MARINO



Song: *Like An Animal*
Performers: Piqued Jacks
Songwriters: Andrea Lazeretti, Francesco Bini, Marco Sgaramella, Tommaso Oliveri

Piqued Jacks sing
You have snake eyes
With your hips, with your sexy look
You paralyse
And I get butterflies
In my ears, in my stomach
All the time
Come on baby
Come and find me
I can smell you like an animal

Despite failing to qualify for the final in 2022 San Marino's raunchy entry by Achille Lauro was one of the talking points of the Turin contest and attracted a great deal of attention from the Italian audience. It was therefore no surprise that San Marino TV decided to repeat the format used last year to select their entry for Liverpool. *Una Voce Per San Marino* gave the *Sanremo* endurance-festival a run for its money with an initial 106 acts competing across five nights for a place in the final. Eventually whittled down to just 21 finalists, the competition was won by the Tuscan four-piece rock band Piqued Jacks with their song *Like An Animal*. The band was formed in 2006 in the small village of Buggiano. Although they have had a few line-up changes over the years, they have released four albums in Italy as well as supporting some major artists on the Italian touring circuit. With *Like An Animal* they are bringing one of a number of traditional rock songs that will be competing in this year's contest **Simon Bennett**

Piqued Jacks won the national final was internally selected
Image © Aurora Cesari



SEMI-FINAL 1 SERBIA



Could this be the dark horse of the contest? It's a fab and unusual fascinating techno-sound that can take you to places if you close your eyes and open your mind - very mesmerising! Luke appears to be a performing all-rounder - writes well, sings well, moves well. No wonder some refer to him as a 'pop alchemist'. Hopefully he'll be able to turn his semi-final performance into solid gold and reach the Grand Final. If he can stay awake of course - his song translates as 'I just want to sleep'. Not yet young man, not yet - you'll have plenty of time after May 13th! Luke's made quite a name for himself in recent years - impressive releases, a successful tour in China and he even performed at the world famous Berlin nightclub Berghain - the Mecca for techno-lovers. He nearly made it to Eurovision in 2016, but now he has the chance to impress - put us into a trance and vote for him. **Hass Yusuf**

Luke won the national final
Image © Vasso Vu

Song: *Samo Mi Se Spava (I Just Want To Sleep)*
Performer: Luke Black
Songwriter: Luke Black

Luke sings
Baby watch the world on fire
It is all a game to me
I don't wanna choose my fighter
Who's taking control of me?
Hello?
Samo mi se spava



SEMI-FINAL 2 SLOVENIA



Song: *Carpe Diem*
(Seize The Day)
Performers: Joker
Out
Songwriters: Bojan
Cjeticanin, Jan Peteh,
Jure Maček, Kris
Guštin, Nace Jordan

Joker Out sing
**Ever fewer words,
thin ice burning
under our feet,
But we're running
away from the
draught
You must only work
for 810,000 years
to make your soul
breathe a little**

The five-piece indie rock band – all the members composed *Carpe Diem* – was formed in 2016 and after two successful albums the band was internally selected to go to Eurovision. *Carpe Diem* was written by the band especially for the contest and involves the ‘softboi’ rockers (as they style themselves) singing in Slovenian about living their best life and partying away. The video positions the group somewhere between the Beatles and the Backstreet Boys as they party in the Grand Hotel Union in Ljubljana because “you must only work for 810,000 years to make your soul breathe a little” – which is a little lyrically suspect. Surely Slovenes would go on strike at such an increase in the retirement age! The song features a lovely instrumental solo and Joker Out will be hoping to be out of semi two and into the Grand Final. **Marcus Keppel-Palmer**

Joker Out were internally selected

Image © Ursa Premik

GRAND FINAL SPAIN



Set and costume designer and singer Blanca Paloma first entered *Benidorm Fest* in 2022 with *Secreto De Agua*, finishing fifth in the final. With a new look and sound, Blanca returned in 2023 and took the contest by storm with *Eaea*. Penned by Blanca, *Eaea* fuses modern electronica with traditional ‘Bulería’ – a fast flamenco rhythm. The song is a lament to the artist’s late grandmother, whom she cites as a big inspiration to her work. The song also celebrates the power and strength of female ancestors – it is that haunting, ancestral mysticism which gives the song edge and atmosphere, all amplified by a stunning, tightly choreographed performance, drenched in red, aside from Blanca, who cuts through the vermillion dressed in stunning white. If the striking visuals aren’t enough, the power and precision of Blanca’s vocals are guaranteed to give you goose pimples. Spain has really upped their Eurovision game – the first time I saw Blanca’s performance of *Eaea*, it already felt like Spain had got it in the bag. **Alex Storer**

Blanca won the national final

Image © RTVE-Valero Rioja

Song: *Eaea*
Performer: Blanca
Paloma
Songwriters: Alvaro
Tato, Blanca Paloma,
Jose Pablo Polo

Blanca sings
**Oh, come to me,
child of mine (oh
child of mine, kid
of mine)
Kid of my loves
Whose eyes like a
Sun
Illuminate me at
night
Ya ea ea, Ya ea ea
Ya ea ea, Ya ea ea**



SEMI-FINAL 1 SWEDEN

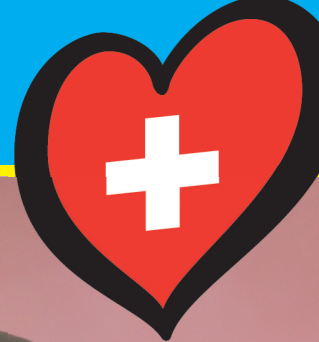


Song: *Tattoo*
Performer: Loreen
Songwriters: Jimmy Jansson, Jimmy "Joker" Thörnfeldt, Loreen, Moa "Cazzi Opeia" Carlebecker, Peter Boström, Thomas G:son

Loreen sings
No, I don't care about them all
Cause all I want is to be loved
And all I care about is you
You stuck on me like a tattoo
No, I don't care about the pain
I'll walk through fire and through rain

There was a ripple of excitement through the fan community from the moment that Loreen's return to the *Melodifestival* was announced. The 39-year-old is best known for winning Eurovision in 2012 with one of the all-time most popular entries, *Euphoria*. This year she made her fourth appearance in *Melfest* and it was clear that *Tattoo*, was going to be more successful than her last attempt in 2017. Even the short teaser became the bookies' favourite to win Eurovision even before the full song was made public. She easily qualified for the final where she was the runaway winner both with the foreign juries and the Swedish public. *Tattoo* is an extremely catchy and memorable song, ideally suited to Eurovision and this surely means that Loreen's place as one of the pre-show hot favourites is completely justified. Swedish TV are clearly hoping that they can achieve a record equalling seventh victory, that Loreen can join the exclusive club of double-winners, and that the contest will be returning to Sweden next year to commemorate what will be the 50th anniversary of ABBA's historic win with *Waterloo*. **Simon Bennett**

Loreen won the national final
 Image © Charli Ljung



SEMI-FINAL 1 SWITZERLAND



Once again Swiss broadcaster SRG used an internal selection to pick their entrant for Eurovision 2023. Remo Forrer's *Watergun* is very much in the tradition of the last three Swiss entries which have all been sung by male soloists. It is a haunting power ballad which is meant to talk about the powerlessness of people in a conflicted world with added meaning given the current conflict in Europe. The 22 year-old Remo has a very rich and distinctive voice which is slightly at odds with his boyish appearance. He first came to prominence, like so many other Eurovision entrants this year, by winning a local talent competition, this time *The Voice Switzerland*, in 2020. The German speaking St. Gallen native had a very musical childhood playing both the flute and the accordion before teaching himself to play the piano. He has appeared in German television broadcasts and so is known beyond the borders of his own country. The song seems to divide opinion but many feel that it will qualify and place well in the Grand Final. **Simon Bennett**

Remo was internally selected
 Image © RTVE-Valero Rioja

Song: *Watergun*
Performer: Remo Forrer
Songwriters: Argyle Singh, Ashley Hicklin, Mikolaj Trybulec

Remo sings
I don't wanna be a soldier, soldier
I don't wanna have to play with real blood
We ain't playin' now
Can't turn and run
No water guns
No, no, I don't wanna be a soldier, soldier
I don't wanna have to play with real blood



GRAND FINAL UKRAINE



Song: *Heart Of Steel*
Performers: Tvorchi
Songwriters: Jimoh Augustus Kehinde, Andrii Hutsuliak

Tvorchi sing
Sometimes gotta let it go
Sometimes gotta look away
Sometimes you just gotta know
When to stick your middle finger up in the air
I cannot explain
Tell you how I feel
Life is just a game
And I'm playing for the win

The dynamic duo known as Tvorchi was created when music producer Andrii Hutsuliak and Nigerian vocalist Jimoh Augustus Kehinde (aka Jeffrey Kenny) met at a medical university studying pharmacy. The call to music seems to have won out - with the duo producing four well-received albums that reached the top slot in Ukraine. The duo composed *Heart Of Steel*, and are hoping to achieve the double. The composition is an impressive techno offering with a message about bravery - which seems very apt with the continuing war with Russia. Jeffrey's vocals certainly hit the spot and mood of the message. Obviously many expect the title holders to do well with the 'sympathy' vote - but Ukraine has always qualified to the Grand Final, and war or no war, so would this - because it's just rather very good. **Hass Yusuf**

Tvorchi won the national final

Image © Michae Fedorak



GRAND FINAL UNITED KINGDOM



Our Mae! Oh how marvellous she is! She is a talented singer with a big social media following and a passion and energy for the contest, which although different to Sam Ryder, seems equal in her love for the show and a desire to do her best for the UK. *I Wrote a Song* is a female empowerment pure pop song and as we saw in Warsaw she can perform it well. I imagine it will be staged similarly to what we've seen at the pre-parties with backing dancers on stage with her. The one thing we cannot rely on however is complacency. France came 2nd in 2021 and 24th in 2022, and Germany came 4th in 2018 and then 25th in 2019 & 2021. One great result doesn't mean continued success and whilst we all wish Mae the absolute best it is down to the BBC to produce staging, styling and presentation on a par with what they did last year for Sam, and we all know that being the host nation comes with its perils too. I don't think this is a potential winner, but left hand side would be a decent enough result and a big message to the BBC and TaP to keep going on the path they are on. Fingers crossed everyone, here we go!! **Lisa-Jayne Lewis**

Mae was internally selected

Image © Harry Carr/Capitol Records UK/EM!

Song: *I Wrote A Song*
Performer: Mae Muller
Songwriters: Karen Poole, Mae Muller, Lewis Thompson

Mae sings
I got so mad was gonna
Cuss you out,
outside your house
For everyone to see.
Wanted to trash your Benz
Tell all your friends
How cruel you were to me.
Instead I wrote a song
Bout how you did me wrong



PREZ UPDATE

EUROVISION
SONG CONTEST
UNITED KINGDOM
LIVERPOOL 2023



STAY CONNECTED

The best way to continue to stay updated is on our website ogae.uk, **OGAE UK Members** Facebook page, on Instagram and Twitter (@OGAE_UK), and checking our email updates.

WELCOMING THE WORLD

We are almost ready to welcome the world to Liverpool for what will be the best fan experience that many will have had the opportunity to be part of. Not only will we be offering the biggest and best official EuroClub, open for more nights than ever and hosting a fantastic line up of artists, a EuroCafe open during the day offering members a place to socialise and meet with Eurovision music. Eurovision opportunities for members throughout Liverpool at museums, focal points, clubs and bars. Partnering with several companies and organisations to bring you a unique Eurovision experience from the EuroTrain and EuroFerry to the EuroVillage, EuroFestival and the Turquoise Carpet and Opening Ceremony. There is so much to see and do, you will be spoilt for choice. I encourage everyone, if possible, even if it's for an hour, to visit Liverpool at some point during Eurovision week and soak up the atmosphere, meet other fans and friends from across the globe and be part of this amazing and unique opportunity taking place here in the UK on behalf of our dear friends in Ukraine.

Whether you will be in Liverpool, or at one of the hundreds of parties and viewings taking place in the UK, or with friends and family at home, take time out of this crazy world we live in to enjoy Eurovision and all that it symbolises. The BIGGEST celebration of our lifetimes is HERE!

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



Mae Muller performs
I Wrote A Song

UK ENTRY

It was always going to be a daunting challenge for the BBC to select an artist to follow in the footsteps of Sam Ryder but personally speaking, bravo to Mae Muller for accepting that challenge with such good spirit and charm. As you will see in my own Top Three, I think the song is fantastic and the type of song and singer many of us have been waiting to see entered to represent the UK at Eurovision. For those of you less sure, I encourage you to watch some of the reaction videos from fans across the globe listening to *I Wrote A Song* for the first time, the consensus was very encouraging. For me, I am less bothered by our position on the final scoreboard but more pleased to be proud of our entry and feeling able to put my full support behind a quality song as was the case last year with Sam, however I do think a Top Ten finish is more than possible. As a UK fan, I have waited some time to feel like this, but like last year, I can once again hold my Union Jack proudly, screaming the lyrics of *I Wrote A Song* passionately, full of pride. I hope as many of you as possible feel able to get behind Mae and our entry this year and fingers crossed, we can do well on the night.

THANK YOU

I had hoped that the intense level of work that Turin had taken following the first fully accessible contest since the pandemic wouldn't need to happen again for some time but inevitably with hosting, and the club growing to over 6,500 members, it has been an extremely busy and at times stressful year to date. Thank you to everyone for their understanding while we have navigated the many opportunities and challenges that have been thrown at us. Thanks go to Simon in his dual role as UK Secretary and International President and both the UK committees and Organising Committee we have set up for their hard work and support in a year like no other. Many members have had opportunities to purchase ticket packages and to look forward to the many opportunities that we will be offering throughout the week in Liverpool. There will be time after the contest to learn, review and evaluate, but until then we will continue to do our best to make this year's Eurovision experience the best ever. All of us on the committees do all we do as volunteers and I want to thank the many members who are understanding that we do our best, sometimes in very difficult and pressured circumstances while at the same time juggling our own personal and work responsibilities to serve the club.

Well, that went quick, but here we are with all 37 songs ready to compete in Liverpool. It has been a treat to continue to see so many of you at national final events and pre-parties and I think we can all agree it has been a varied selection on show this year and it's a diverse range of songs that will be greeting us in May. Thank you to everyone who interacted on our socials during the shows and enjoyed passionate debate on which songs made it through and which ones didn't. It's great also to see the local Eurovision Societies I set up on Facebook last year growing and giving members opportunities to meet fellow fans and join in with events closer to home.



SHE'S SINGING OUR SONG!

The nation is in the middle of Eurovision frenzy! Let's meet our hopeful, Mae Muller.



Thursday 9 March was an exciting time for British Eurovisions fans - who would be our performer - and what of the song?

Last year, the BBC and TaP Music were spot on with Sam Ryder and *Space Man* - could they achieve a double? To say most fans were pleased by the decision would be an understatement! Singer-songwriter Mae Muller, 25, definitely got the thumbs up.

Mae has Jewish Austrian ancestry - her grandfather was a survivor from the Holocaust who settled in Wales, though Mae was raised in London's Kentish Town.

Her full name is Holly Mae Muller, and was a bit of child prodigy writing her own music since she was just eight years-old. Aged ten in 2007, she appeared in the music video for Mika's *Grace Kelly*.

She was still a teenager while working in a pub when she landed her first

publishing deal. Within two years she'd released three EPs full of pop gems that stood out for their melodic hooks and lyrics that were considered feisty and frank. Her debut product, *After Hours*, was released in February 2018 followed by the release of her second EP, *Frankly*, later in the year.

Millions

The industry took notice and Mae was soon supporting Little Mix on their 2019 stadium tour. She also landed millions of YouTube and TikTok views, and scored a Top Ten US chart hit with her platinum selling single *Better Days*. She performed on NBC's *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*, as well as *The Voice US*.

Mae signed to Capitol Records UK (part of Universal Music Group) and was nominated at the MTV EMAs (Europe Music Awards) and VMAs (Video Music Awards). Since then her music has



reached over two billion streams along with 5.5 million monthly listeners on Spotify!

She co-wrote *I Wrote A Song* with Brit-nominated songwriter Lewis Thompson, who worked on *Bed* (for David Guetta, Joel Corry and Raye), and Karen Poole who's written for Kylie Minogue, Lily Allen, David Guetta and Alisha's Attic.

Empowered

Mae revealed: "I'm SO excited to participate in Eurovision this year and represent the UK! I've loved watching Eurovision all my life, so to compete in such a massive music competition is simply brilliant. I'm a huge fan of so many of the artists that have found success at Eurovision, from ABBA to Måneskin! Sam Ryder was so amazing last year and proved the UK can be back on the left-hand side of the leader board! I wrote the song *I Wrote A Song* a few months ago when I was going

through a hard time and wanted to feel empowered about relationships, so for it to be chosen for this year's UK Eurovision song is honestly a dream!"

Mae's enthusiasm for the contest was equalled by TaP Music for their find. Co-founders Ben Mawson and Ed Millett said "We have always been fans of Mae for her voice, songs and star charisma, and when we heard *I Wrote A Song*, we were really taken by its impactful message - songs as a form of therapy, which is a great message for the biggest song contest in the world. From the moment we met Mae, we knew she would be an incredible ambassador for the UK at Eurovision. Alongside her abundant talent, she has the most wonderfully warm and fun personality and expressed positivity and excitement about the opportunity to represent the UK. We are super excited to work with Mae, EMI and her management company Modest! on supporting

"I'm so excited to participate in Eurovision this year and represent the UK! I've loved watching Eurovision all my life, so to compete in such a massive music competition is simply brilliant"

Mae to get another great result at Eurovision."

The BBC also got in on the act. As Suzy Lamb, MD of Entertainment & Music at BBC Studios said: "BBC Studios are so excited Mae Muller will be flying the UK flag on home turf in this very special Eurovision year. We could see from the very first time we met her that she is a ball of positive energy and we can't wait for the rest of Europe and beyond to fall in love with her and her fabulous song."

Such positivity from the organisers, as well as the reaction from fans, should really inspire Mae to fulfill her desire to achieve a British victory - which last happened 25 years ago - a few months before Mae was even born! C'mon Mae - give yourself and the nation a wonderful early birthday present! ■



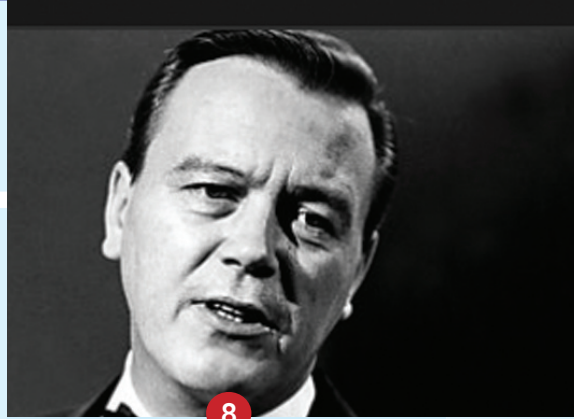
ANSWERS

As we look forward to a record ninth contest to be hosted by the UK, this time our quiz looks at the UK's performance in the contest. Good luck!



1

Vikki [Watson], who represented the UK in 1985 with *Love Is*, later moved to LA and switched to the New Age genre. By what professional name is Vikki now known?



8

Matt Monro came second for the UK in 1964. Which Bond theme had Matt recorded a year earlier?



15

The UK was represented by Belle & The Devotions at the 1984 contest. What is the name of the lead singer who fronted this trio?

16

Lulu was only 20 when she represented the UK in 1969, but two years earlier she had already had the biggest hit of the year in the USA. What was the record?



- Following his 2022 Eurovision success, Sam Ryder made the UK singles chart with a collaboration with Sigala and David Guetta. What was the song?
- Which UK performer later joined the swing vocal group, Jack Pack?
- Which British star was approached by the BBC about representing the UK in 1969 but declined because they thought it was too soon for another UK win? (It wasn't – the UK was joint winner that year.)
- Which UK representative was previously a member of the dance music project, Stunt?
- The UK's first entry in the contest was *All*, performed by Patricia Bredin, in 1957. What was its finishing position?
- Only two solo artists have represented the UK twice. Cliff Richard is one (1968 and 1973). Who is the other?

- Cheryl Baker has performed in two groups representing the UK, Co-Co in 1978 and Bucks Fizz in 1981, but in which group did she enter the 1980 Song For Europe competition?
- Which UK entrant was the first artist signed to the Beatles' Apple record label?
- Which conductor represented the UK the most times?
- The UK has been runner-up in the contest a record 16 times. What was the first of these?
- I am 25 years old and from Hartlepool. I won the *All Together Now* TV talent show but I came last at Eurovision. Who am I?
- In all of Eurovision history the UK has only missed two of the 67 contests. What were the years we missed?

- What are the names of the duo who made up Electro Velvet, the UK act in 2015, and in which 1999 movie did one of this duo appear?
- Love Shine A Light*, the last UK winner in 1997, was originally written by band member Kimberley Rew as a tribute to which charitable organisation?
- Including the 2023 contest, which UK cities have hosted the contest?



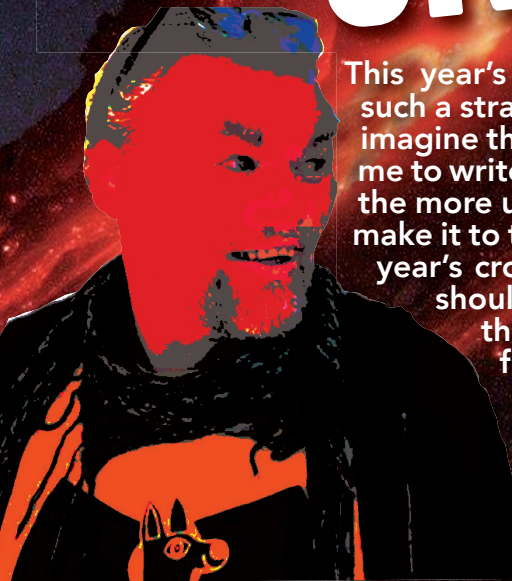
20

The much-missed Olivia Newton-John represented the UK at the 1974 contest in Brighton with *Long Live Love*. What had been Olivia's first UK chart hit, three years earlier?

- Aeone (pronounced Ay-own).
- Living Without You*.
- Joe Woolford (of Joe and Jake, 2016).
- Cilla Black.
- Molly [Smitten-Downes], 2014.
- Seventh (out of ten).
- Ronnie Carroll, in 1962 and 1963.
- From Russia With Love*.
- The Main Event. The song was *Gonna Do My Best*.
- Mary Hopkin, who came second in 1970 with *Knock, Knock, Who's There?*
- Ronnie Hazlehurst (seven times: 1977, 1982, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1991, 1992).
- Sing Little Birdie* by Teddy Johnson and Pearl Carr, in 1959.
- Michael Rice, 2019.
- 1956 and 1958 (the first and third contests).
- Kit Rolfe.
- To Sir With Love*, from the film of the same name. It didn't even chart in the UK as it was only released as a B-side, but it topped the US charts for five weeks.
- Alex Larke and Bianca Nicholas.
- Bianca appeared in the film *Sleepy Hollow*.
- The Samaritans.
- London, Edinburgh, Brighton, Harrogate, Birmingham and Liverpool.
- If Not For You*. It was a Top Ten hit in the UK, Australia and Canada and a Number One on the US Country chart.

APOCALYPSE

HAVE MERSEY ON ME!



This year's Eurovision qualifiers seem like such a strange and unruly bunch that you'd imagine there wouldn't be all that much for me to write about in our annual round-up of the more unlikely oddities that didn't quite make it to the big show. But if you think this year's crop of contenders are weird, you should have seen some of the ones that got away! **Roy D Hacksaw** from **Eurovision Apocalypse** takes a look at ten of the outliers and outsiders from this year's national final competitions. He watches this stuff so you don't have to!

POLAND

Ahlena
Booty

There's been much consternation and dismay over quite how bad a singer this year's Polish entrant appears to be. But trust us, on the night at their national final she wasn't even the third worst. A more generous soul might suggest there were problems with the sound monitoring on the night. However, this doesn't account for what is possibly the most lacklustre performance ever to be seen on a Eurovision-related stage. Ahlena here just shuffled about half-heartedly like she was waiting for a kettle to boil while simultaneously mumbling out a song that appears to be about showing her bottom to your dad. You think we're joking? Check out the lyric video!

tinyurl.com/poahlena



GERMANY

Ikke Hüftgold
Lied Mit Gutem Text

The German final was like a battle between good and evil. But if you think evil won then you are sorely mistaken. The fight was between the darkside of Ikke Hüftgold here and pretty much everyone else. If you've not had the displeasure before, Ikke is an enormously popular character comedian who caters to the summer holiday crowd with his deliberately dumb sing-a-long drinking songs. And whereas you might not initially be all that happy that Lord Of The Lost won through to Liverpool, listen to a mere 30 seconds of this song and you'll be very glad that they beat this chap into second place. But be warned - this song is catchier than Ebola! We also suspect that it's not the last we've heard of this chump. For everyone who insists that a country's song should be reflective of their national culture - this is the ultimate result!

tinyurl.com/geikkke





SPAIN

Fusa Nocta
Mi Familia

Now, if you were thinking that Paloma Blanca is offering some difficult flamenco rhythms in this year's contest, you should see one of the songs she was up against at *Benidorm Fest*. Because Fusa Nocta makes what Spain are actually sending to the contest seem relatively normal. It starts with some children talking as hot men fiddling with a long plait of hair. Then the camera reveals an angry looking women in a black PVC swimsuit and scary boots laying on top of an unremarkable family car, before she barks right into the camera for the next two-and-a-bit minutes, changing tempos and tones every now and again to keep us totally confused. Then she strips down to even less and ends up back on the car. What does it all mean? We have absolutely no clue.

tinyurl.com/spfusa



MOLDOVA

Valeria Coandrea
We're Now Different

You know sometimes when you're watching a live performance and you start to wonder "Has she forgotten the words or is it supposed to sound like that?" No? Well you're going to enjoy this one! The Moldovan live auditions are famed for attracting the occasional outsider artists - heck, I even wrote a book about it! But even my fevered imagination couldn't have conjured this one up. Valeria here stands barefoot in a tattered brown frock as she meaningfully excretes sounds that kinda sound like words, but you're not always entirely sure. Now and again she'll mumble for a bit, although it's never entirely clear whether that's either bad breathing practices, lyrical forgetfulness or actually part of her art. And then come the howls. Oh boy this takes you to all kinds of places in its three minutes of fun - a long three minutes at that.

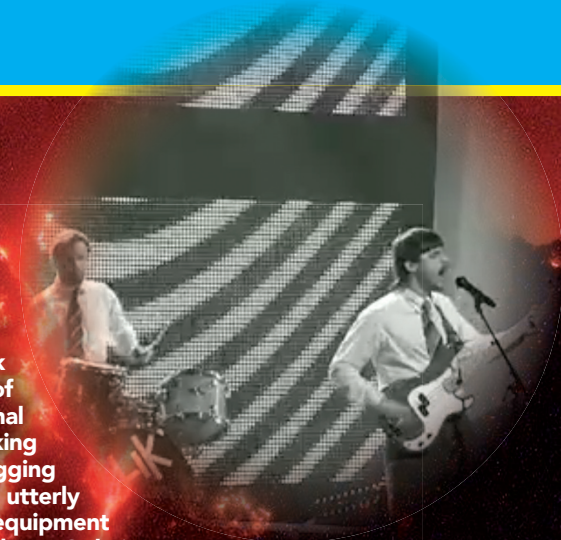
tinyurl.com/movaleria

ESTONIA

Meelik
Tuju

You can always rely on Estonia to provide an entertaining oddity, but the indie popstrels of Meelik delivered probably the best bit of honest, simple fun of the entire national season. Imagine four awkward looking scamps in boring office clothing chugging out a happy little surf pop ditty with utterly deadpan expressions, while their equipment decides to go on the wonk around them. Only it's far more entertaining than I just made that sound. Marvel as the drummer's spring-loaded drumkit gets more and more out of hand. Chortle as the mic stands start misbehaving themselves - all while our boys keep jangling away way insistently. And that's not all that goes wrong. An utter off-kilter delight from start to end.

tinyurl.com/esmeelik

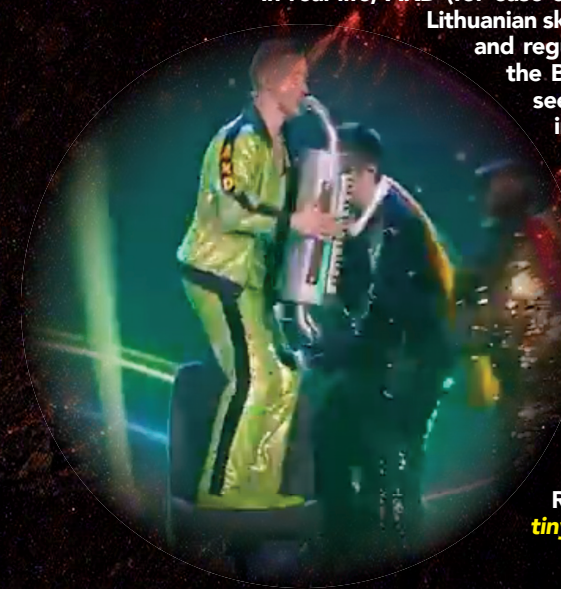


LITHUANIA

Antikvariniai Kašpirovskio Dantys
Sėdi Ir Važiuoji

In real life, AKD (for ease of reading) are a pretty big fish on the Lithuanian ska folk scene (yes, there is such a thing), and regularly play at big festivals right across the Baltics. But every couple of years they seem to like nothing better than to get involved with their nation's Eurovision selection process, seemingly for the sole reason of getting on telly and mucking about. This year's attempt saw them donning glittery outfits as they clod-hopped their way through a dance routine so hamfisted it was surely deliberately that bad. A touch of jeopardy was introduced when one band member stood on a wheeled office chair to mime out a sax solo on a car exhaust. No, really. File under: Knockabout; Well-meaning; Rubbish.

tinyurl.com/liantikd



IRELAND

Public Image Ltd.

Hawaii

Now I'm an old punk from the old days, so the thought of the man previously known as Johnny Rotten having a pop for Ireland with his band PiL should have filled me with delight. However, their output over recent years has been patchy, so I had my concerns from the off. The song itself is a lovely lilting pean to John's wife Nora, who is in the later stages of dementia. Indeed, most of what he does these days is almost entirely to entertain her - which is a deeply admirable aim. But when performed live it was a difficult watch. John's caterwauling vocal seemed to be even more off-pitch than usual, and the whole thing felt stilted and out of place, which was such a shame, given the sentiment behind it. I've got a lot of time for Mr Lydon, but this whole thing just didn't work at all.

tinyurl.com/irpil

(Since writing this piece, John Lydon's wife has unfortunately passed away - Editor)

SERBIA

Duo Grand
Viva La Vida

Right then, there's a lot to unpack here. It all starts perfectly reasonably. Two girls cavort on the big screen behind the stage - one in black, one in white - as a dramatically dressed man in a black hat sits in a big chair and growls out a standard emotive Balkan ballad. So far so usual. Then things go a bit Jacques Houdek as a man in white leather appears in a different chair to warble a dramatic baritone. It's a bit cheesy, but it kinda works. Then, on the crack of two minutes it all starts to go awry as a car boot Måneskin riff kicks in and the two girls from the screen bound on doing possibly the worst spot of guitar miming you'll ever see. It's totally needless and dumbfounding gear change - who ever thought this was a good idea?

tinyurl.com/

ALBANIA

2Farm
Atomika

Some things are strange even for Albania, but this one's next level odd. Three blokes in long black skirts and goggles trimmed with LED lights stand manfully with their legs apart, thumping their chests as they take it in turns to grumble out what sounds like a very serious song. It must have meant something to the locals, as it surprised the rest of us and made it to the final, but boy is it intense! With each new singer the slapping and chanting becomes more pronounced, and by the time it gets to the end you halfway expect the satanic underlord himself to burst through the stage and dissolve the first ten rows in the audience with his flaming eye-beams. By heavens this was terrifying!

tinyurl.com/alb2farm

FINLAND

Portion Boys
Samaa Taivasta Katsotaan

You know how songs that clumsily try to crowbar references in to other European countries are usually the most cringeworthy part of any national final? Well somehow the Portion Boys managed to turn conventional Eurovision wisdom on its head and come up with an absolute cracker. Despite being sung almost entirely in Finnish, many of the jokes come through, and their eighties power pop anthem just builds and builds and builds until you think that you will surely explode before the end. Nothing on this stage should actually work - especially the stand up drummer on a hoverboard - but somehow all these unpromising ingredients and dumbass leaping about managed to be so incredibly likeable that it powered its way to a second place finish. And had it not been for that *Cha Cha Cha* business it would surely have made it to Liverpool and a pretty decent result. How gutted must they be that they picked the wrong year, eh!

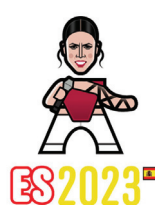
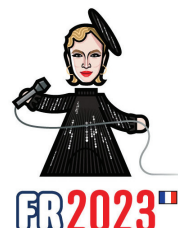
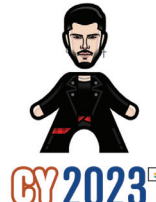
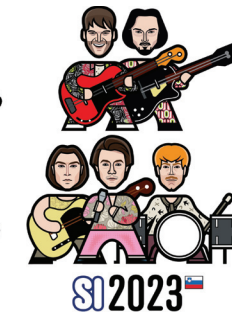
tinyurl.com/fiportion

Roy D Hacksaw writes the annual round up of Eurovision national final oddities on his blog www.eurovisionapocalypse.blogspot.com and is the author of the novel *Worst. Eurovision. Ever.* which is available on Amazon or from Earth Island Books. If he makes it to Liverpool this year it's be the 25th anniversary of his first in-person experience of the competition.

LET'S POP WITH THE EUROPOPS!



Ace designer **Ben Morris** returns again with his fab Europops! Fancy seeing your favourite 2023 performer on a T-shirt? Go to www.redbubble.com and search for 'Europops'. And check out Ben's website at www.benmorrisonillustration.com plus his instagram site [@europops](https://www.instagram.com/europops)



A SONG FOR SONIA

With Liverpool to the fore, **Vision** looks back to when Sonia represented the UK at Eurovision. In those days, she may have been pre-selected as the artist, but the public still voted on the song - yes did you ring in? **Marcus Keppel-Palmer** highlights several points from Sonia's career and the **Song For Europe 1993** – did you know these factoids?



1 Although Sonia is always said to come from Liverpool, in fact she was born in Skelmersdale in Lancashire. Although Skelmersdale was a small coal mining town in the 19th century, it was designated as a New Town in 1961, whereupon it grew into a relatively large town. Sonia was born in 1971, and in that year Skelmersdale United won the FA Vase Cup as the best non-league football club in the country.

2 Sonia started singing and performing early in her life. She went to the Elliott-Clarke Performing Arts school aged 8, the leading performing arts school in Liverpool. Fellow attendees at the school included Rita Tushingham, Claire Sweeney, Rachel McDowall (Mamma Mia), and Bill Kenwright, the theatre impresario.

3 After graduating from the Performing Arts school, Sonia started singing in the Liverpool club circuit and acting in TV shows, *Bread* and *Brookside*. In the former, Sonia played Ellia Stephens in one episode in series four, while in Phil Redmond's soap opera she was an uncredited extra. After Eurovision, she continued acting on stage (*Grease*, *What A Feeling*) and on TV (*The Lily Savage Show*).

SONG FOR EUROPE 1993

A SONG FOR EUROPE

Running order/Song title	Songwriters	Final place
A Little Love	Ian Curnow, Phil Harding, Shaun Imrei	4
I'm Gonna Put A Spell On You	Shaun Imrei, Graham Stack	6
Life After Love	David Harwood-Smith, Roger Graham Taylor	5
It's Just A Matter Of Time	Alan Glass, Gary Benson	8
Better The Devil You Know	Dean Collinson, Red (Brian Teasdale)	1
Our World	Johnny Warman, Nick Graham	2
So Much Of Your Love	Pat McGlynn, Janine Andrews	3
Trust	Simon Stirling, Geoffrey Williams, Phil Manikiza	7

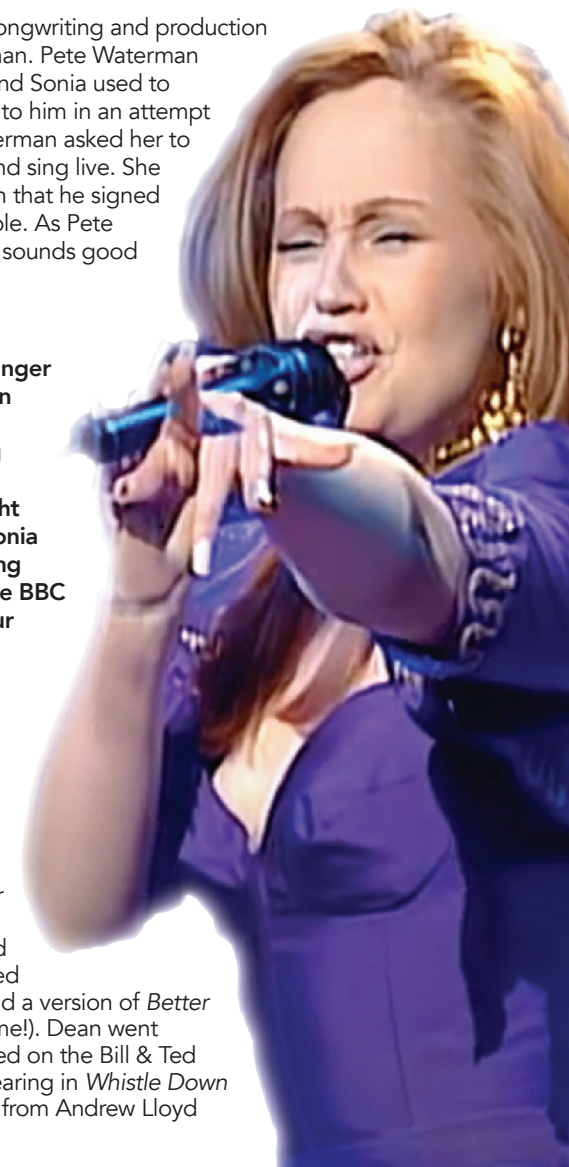
4 Sonia's big hits came under the songwriting and production guidance of Stock Aitken Waterman. Pete Waterman had a radio show on Radio City and Sonia used to doorstep him and sing to him in an attempt to be recognised. Waterman asked her to come on to his show and sing live. She impressed him so much that he signed her up to the SAW stable. As Pete might have said: "That sounds good to me".



5 The BBC in choosing a singer for Eurovision 1993 asked the other competing countries which UK artist they thought should be chosen. Sonia was the overwhelming favourite. And so, the BBC asked Sonia to be our representative.



6 Winning song, *Better The Devil You Know* received more votes than the songs which came second and third combined in Song For Europe. Dean Collinson and co-songwriter Red (or Brian to his Mum) had been together in a duo called Blue (not the group who would represent the UK in 2011) and had released several tracks including *Heaven Knows* and a version of *Better The Devil* (not that anyone knew at the time!). Dean went into musical theatre writing a musical based on the Bill & Ted films. However, he was injured while appearing in *Whistle Down The Wind* and successfully won damages from Andrew Lloyd Webber's Really Useful Company.



7 *So Much In Love* which came third was written by Pat McGlynn who was a former member of the Bay City Rollers and his wife Janine. McGlynn replaced Ian Mitchell in the Rollers but lasted only a few months, claiming later on that he had been the subject of unwanted advances from someone connected to the management team. McGlynn formed his own band The Scotties after leaving the BCR but without success, and became involved in the acrimonious lawsuits that dogged the Rollers later in life. Ever the one for a dispute, McGlynn made the newspapers a couple of years ago with a long-running court case against his own brother. Janine Andrews, co-writer and Pat's wife, was originally a pin-up girl appearing on Page 3 of *The Sun* in the 1970s and going on to feature as one of the Bond Girls in the film *Octopussy*.



8 Shaun Imrei who co-wrote the first two songs Sonia performed in *Song For Europe 1993* went on to become a well-known dance and hardcore producer in the 1990s. He worked under a plethora of aliases and several of his songs and tracks were used in computer games and films including *Mortal Kombat: Annihilation*. Graham Stack would go on to work with many *X Factor* contestants through his role as Music Producer and Music Director on that show. Ian Curnow and Phil Harding worked as engineers at Stock Aitken Waterman and after *Song For Europe* worked extensively with pop and boy-bands such as East 17, 911 and Deuce (for whom they wrote 1995 *Song For Europe* entry *I Need You*).



Screaming Jets

9 *Our World* which came second was co-written by John Warman, who had previously appeared as a member of Future in *Song For Europe 1986*. Under the name Johnny Warman, he had been signed to Elton John's Rocket Records in the late 1970s, releasing three albums of early synthpop that would go on to be successful for Gary Numan, Depeche Mode and OMD. Success may have eluded him in the UK, but in Australia in 1982 he had a Top Ten hit with *Screaming Jets*.

Our World which came second was co-written by John Warman, who had previously appeared as a member of Future in Song For Europe 1986.



Imaani

Simon Stirling would enjoy their moment in the sun as co-songwriters of *Where Are You?* sung by Imaani at Eurovision 1998 in Birmingham. However, although that song became runner-up, it was subject to a subsequent lawsuit alleging copyright infringement. Manikiza had been lead singer in a new wave synthpop band called Scary Thieves, while Simon Stirling had been co-writing songs with Geoffrey Williams which the latter recorded. Williams reached the charts five times, but never cracking the Top 40.

10

Trust may only have come seventh but Phil Manikiza and

11

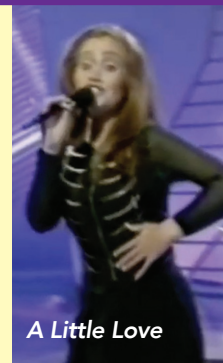
As well as her solo chart hits, Sonia charted duetting with Big Fun with *You've Got A Friend* (a charity single for Childline) and also as part of Band Aid II with the second version of *Do They Know It's Christmas*. If you are checking it out, Sonia takes a couple of lines in the second verse and bridge. Big Fun were originally known as Seventh Avenue, appearing regularly on the gay club circuit before *Blame It On The Boogie* catapulted them up the charts under the guiding hands of Stock Aitken Waterman.

12

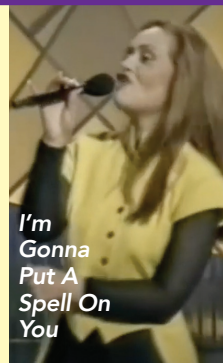


Finally, at Millstreet, Sonia was supported on stage by Carol Connor, Mick Wilson, Neil Wilkinson, Pam Sheyne and Pete Adams. Carol is Sonia's sister and also acted in *Brookside* playing Carmel O'Leary. Pam Sheyne would go on to be a vocal coach and mentor on *Fame Academy*. Mick Wilson went on to join Graham Gouldman's touring version of 10cc.

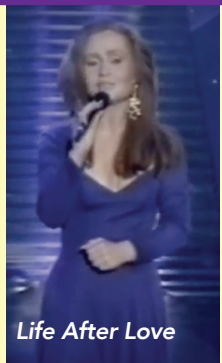
SONIA SINGS...



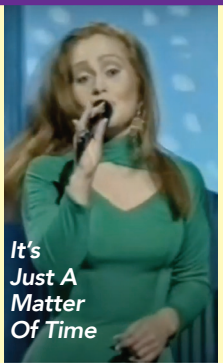
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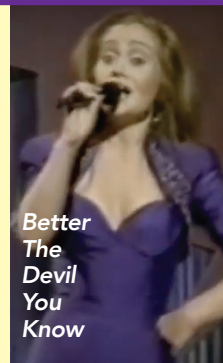
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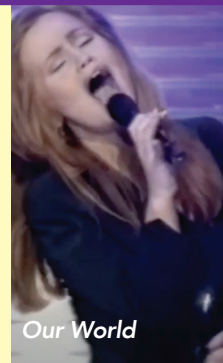
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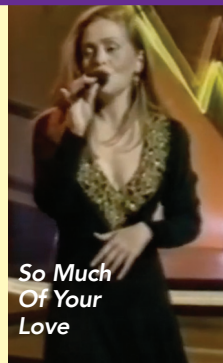
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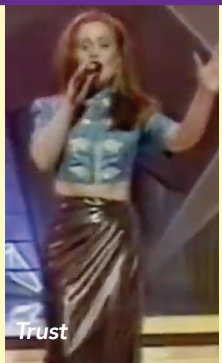
Better The Devil You Know



Our World



So Much Of Your Love



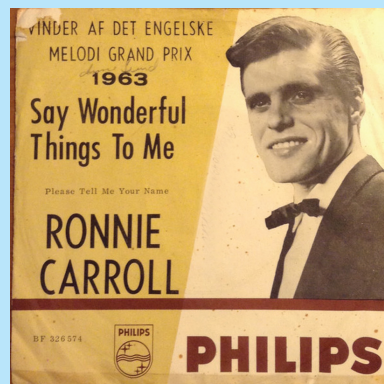
Trust

THE 10 ESSENTIAL UNITED KINGDOM SONGS



For this edition of the Ten Essentials, **Marcus Keppel-Palmer** looks at songs sent by the UK in years ending with a 3 and considers also what we might have sent from the Song For Europe pre-selection instead. As the Swedes might say, did the Rätt Låt Vann?

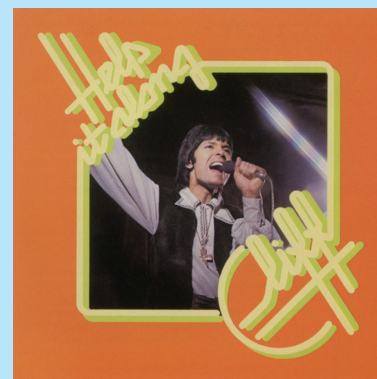
Ronnie Carroll
Say Wonderful Things To Me (1963)
 Sixty years ago, the UK hosted Eurovision and the home country song came fourth. Performed by Ronnie Carroll from Belfast – initially he was billed as Northern Ireland's answer to Nat King Cole – Carroll had actually been the UK representative in 1962 with *Ring A Ding Girl* and so became the first UK performer to appear twice at Eurovision. Written by Philip Green and Norman Newell, *Say Wonderful Things To Me* became a chart hit for Ronnie in the UK and a worldwide hit single for the American artist Patti Page.



Vince Hill
A Day At The Seaside (1963)
 Would Vince Hill have done any better at Eurovision with this jaunty confection extolling the joys of taking a charabanc to the seaside mentioning “kiss me quick” and “fish and chips” and having candy on the pier? Written by Les Vandyke, this sounds like early David Bowie or Anthony Newley and is very hummable as an earworm. Hill had been a member of the group, The Raindrops before going solo. He had his biggest hit with *Edelweiss* from *Sound Of Music*, but also charted with his cover of *Merci Cherie*, the Eurovision winner from 1966.



Cliff Richard
Power To All Our Friends (1973)
 Ten years after Ronnie Carroll's second appearance in Eurovision, that feat was emulated by Cliff with this classic oompah number. Notable for the flamboyant red and black jacket worn by Cliff and the dance in which he is trying to stop traffic, the song actually has environmental concerns which are somewhat lost in the incessant beat. Written by Guy Fletcher and Doug Flett, who were the first UK songwriters to have songs recorded by Elvis Presley, *Power To All Our Friends* reached number four in the charts and came third in Eurovision



Cliff Richard
Help It Along (1973)
 In 1973, Cliff supported by The New Shadows performed all six songs in the Song For Europe 1973 selection performed on Cilla Black's Saturday night show, *Cilla*. Would *Help It Along* written by Christopher Neil have been a better choice? The UK public didn't think so, as *Help It Along* trailed in third, almost 100,000 postal votes behind. But this anthemic gospel number was the lead track on the Song For Europe EP reaching number 29 in the charts. Cliff was clearly a fan as he re-recorded the song the following year and it became the title track to his album.

Sweet Dreams *I'm Never Giving Up* (1983)

Ten years later, the UK entry was to be the trio Sweet Dreams with a most underrated piece of schlager – key change et al – in our Bucks Fizz inspired era. Bobby, Helen and Carrie showed the value of stool based choreography well before Westlife perfected it. Written by Ron Roker, Jan Pulsford and Phil Wigger, *I'm Never Giving Up* finished sixth at Eurovision but charted respectably at 21. Although further success eluded the trio, Bobby went on to join The Fizz while Carrie (then Grant) became a TV judge on *Fame Academy*.



Emily Reed *Help Me* (2003)

Would Emily Reed have scored points in Riga? Finishing a close second in Song For Europe, Emily produced a confident vocal performance of a big ballad. She did go on to perform at Eurovision as one of Daz Sampson's backing vocalists. Simon Hill the songwriter launched a series of complaints to the BBC about perceived unfairness in the competition, not against Jemini but in the way the song *Now And Forever* was allowed to undergo changes after submission and acceptance, including several changes of singer. All complaints were rejected.



Mirror *We've Got All The Time In The World* (1983)

Sixth in 1983 was seen as a poor result at the time! Would we have done better with the runner-up in Song For Europe, another trio called Mirror formed of twins Tina and Sharon Enticott and Dave Lusher (son of famous Big Band trombonist Don Lusher)? Certainly the song has a jaunty tune and barrels along, but perhaps doesn't have the winning formula – surprising as it is written by Tony Hiller (*Save Your Kisses For Me*) and Paul Curtis (who wrote several UK entries).

Bonnie Tyler *Believe In Me* (2013)

In 2013, there was an internal selection with Welsh wonder woman, Bonnie Tyler appointed to be the UK representative. *Believe In Me* came from Bonnie's then album, *Rocks And Honey*, which saw Bonnie flirting with Americana and Country music. At Eurovision, Bonnie finished a slightly disappointing 19th position, disappointing as one of the co-writers was Desmond Child who had written hits for Bonnie previously. He also co-wrote *Jezabel* for The Rasmus (Finland 2022). Famously, Child finished writing *Believe In Me* over a dinner with Bonnie and famous producer, Bob Ezrin.



Jemini *Cry Baby* (2003)

Skipping over 1993 (Sonia gets profiled elsewhere in this issue), we move on to the infamy of 2003, when Liverpool's own Jemini (albeit formerly known as Tricity) travelled in hope to Riga and came back pointless, the UK's worst performance at that time. Chris Cromby and Gemma Abbey had performed together for a few years, however in Riga they struggled to hear the music and vocals and so the upbeat dance tune written by Martin Isherwood failed to deliver its potential. Jemini split up, but have announced that they are reforming to play at EuroClub this year.



And finally to take us to 2023 Mae Muller is featured elsewhere, so let's look at the 23rd song that represented the UK, which was only our most successful winner ever:

Brotherhood Of Man *Save Your Kisses For Me* (1976)

With a catchy chorus, a catchy dance, and a cheeky foursome, there was no stopping Brotherhood of Man as it swept to victory ahead of the French. As well as winning Eurovision, *Save Your Kisses For Me* topped the charts not only in the UK but also around Europe and the Easy Listening chart in the USA. Written by Lee Sheriden, Martin Lee and Tony Hiller (see also 1983), it was originally shelved under the name *Oceans Of Love*. Would it have won Eurovision under that title? Whatever, it became the UK's most successful winner of all time.



THE
VISIONYOUR
TOP

3

The call went out on our Facebook site for your Top Three songs. Who would you award your 8, 10 and 12 points to from this year's contest? Here are the opinions of members who answered the call. Our **Vision Panel** chair **Vaughan Staples** leads the way.



IRELAND

**VAUGHAN STAPLES****8 points: Sweden**

A popular choice with many I am sure, I cannot deny this is a super strong entry from

Loreen with such a strong composition and if they can pull off the staging in Liverpool, it could well be the one to beat.

10 points: Ireland

Criminally underrated in my humble opinion, this is a great anthemic number in a Irish boy band style that I really enjoy. While it may struggle in the stronger semi one this year, it will remain a highlight on my playlist.

12 points: United Kingdom

OMG! For the first time EVER, the UNITED KINGDOM is my favourite entry at Eurovision, and you would not believe the emotion I have saying that. Barely has a UK entry come near my Top Five before yet alone Number One, but this is the female led empowering bop banger I have been waiting for us to enter all my life. This has been on repeat since day one. I LOVE the song, LOVE the lyrics and I LOVE Mae and her attitude. I don't care where we end up this year, as we have already won once again as we can hold our heads high with another respectable song and artist.



UNITED KINGDOM

**RICHARD JONES****8 points: Sweden**

I tried not to include Loreen in my Top Three just because I knew she would be popular but the quality of the song, performance and production mean I can't ignore it. Sweden have once again given us a

master class in how to produce a pop song.

10 points: Portugal

More fun and lightheartedness here from the charming Mimicat. The staging and choreo are a little Eurovision old school but that just adds to the charm. And this feels true to the musical roots of a country that has not been afraid to experiment in recent years.

12 points: Austria

Eurovision 2023 badly needed a fun bop and finally it got one courtesy of Teya and Salena. Complete with silly dance, this soon became the song I was most excited to see performed in the arena. But not only that, it's all very clever, taking a swipe at the pitiful pay out rates on music streaming sites.

JEN TURNER**8 points: United Kingdom**

My favourite girl bop this year. An ear worm - current and fresh which I feel reflects the UK charts at the moment. Fingers crossed for the staging!

10 points: France

Fantastic from France. French chanson mixed with a fabulous disco beat and La Zarra is very charismatic.

12 points: Czechia

Czechia were my Number One last year and they are again! Love the melody and the mixing of traditional elements with contemporary sounds and styles. Love the mix up of languages too.



Jen's getting into the mood



SLOVENIA



CZECHIA



ESTONIA

**SHAU CHAN****8 points: Switzerland**

What Eurovision needs is a brilliant power ballad, and this one is sung by Remo Forrer with his entry *Watergun*. As soon as I heard the snippet of this song, I was expecting good things about this entry. This is such a beautiful song with a powerful message about peace. If Remo nails the vocals on the Eurovision stage, I think this will do very well. It's one of those cases that his live performance will need to shine on the night.

10 points: Finland

Wasn't sure what to make of this entry when I first heard it nor did I expect so many people to love it. How wrong was I and it's no wonder it's fans' favourite from the get go. After a few listens and after watching Käärijä's live performance on *UMK*, I absolutely love it! Maybe it's not everyone's cup of tea but this is just so repetitive, with the very fast intro from the start and that key change is just brilliant! Makes you want to dance the Cha Cha Cha! I'd be interested to see how this will be performed live on the Eurovision stage proper, whether this will differ from *UMK* or not. However, I do have some concerns as to how this will go down with the international juries.

12 points: Slovenia

As soon as Joker Out were announced as their Slovenian representatives, I had high expectations of them releasing a great Eurovision entry. It's no wonder they're so popular in Slovenia and along with their unique sound that has become known as Shagadelic Rock n' Roll. *Carpe Diem* is a brilliant tune, which has some funky groove influence and with a little bit of indie vibe thrown in for good measure. The differences between the studio version and their live performance on their preview show (*Misija Liverpool*), I think, are huge. They are a live band, have stage presence as well as charm. Their song is definitely made for a live performance. I'm so pleased that they will sing their entry in the native Slovene language but be interested to hear how the English version of this song compares once this has been released. They mentioned in their interviews that they want to deliver a "three minute Joker Out live concert" on the Eurovision stage, so I'm intrigued to see their stage performance once I see them live in the second semi final.

**ADAM SAMWAYS****8 points: Czechia**

I am a sucker for a girl band so I'm always hopeful there will be a great girl band each year (and more often than not left disappointed!) I love the whole package here, they all seem very individually interesting and talented and I hope they can make this work on the big stage.

10 points: Finland

I have surprised myself with this song as I sometimes find entries that toe the line of novelty a bit much. This however is just undeniably awesome and you cannot deny his charisma! Will be chanting along with this in the arena!

12 points: Sweden

I hate jumping on the bandwagon but I have loved Loreen ever since I saw her win *Melfest* in 2012. I was so nervous about her returning but I had nothing to worry about as this is just glorious! Queen Loreen!

PAUL TYZACK**8 points: Estonia**

What could be just another ballad stands out with Aika's unique voice and staging. There is something extremely haunting and powerful about this song.

10 points: France

The first song from this year that I listened to on repeat when I first heard it. It starts off very simple but then the chorus brings the song alive and turns the song from a ballad into a dance track that everybody at Euroclub will want to dance to. The staging promises big things for this song.

12 points: Italy

A singer singing a beautiful song with a beautiful voice. The song is a somewhat sad take on a love story between two people. That although he lives with one person he longs for something more, something beautiful and the life of his dreams. I find

this a truly emotional song to listen to and to be captivated by.



So Paul goes to the Estonian national final for a photo opportunity but only gives them a measly eight points!

**DAVID PLEWS****8 points: France**

Chic, elegant, dramatic chanson that develops into a shoulder-shrugging bop.

10 points: Czechia

Moving message, great harmonies, exceptional video.

12 points: Spain

Top-quality performance, intense passion and drama, perfect staging.

**GARETH OWAIN****8 points: United Kingdom**

I'd never heard of her before, but this is a bop - let's hope we're all getting Mullered in the month of Mae!

10 points: Austria

A healthy dose of What the...?! A catchy tune and a little dance routine. My best friend's an English teacher and loves *The Raven* so I showed it her and now she loves it too!

12 points: Sweden

After no clear stand-out from the first 23 songs in *Mello*, I thought that Loreen only really had to attend to take the crown. But Loreen never just attends! I cried my eyes out the first time I saw it. Could she do a Johnny? Could she?

**LESLEY SIM**

Here is my Top Three in Eurovision 2023 – all female this year, because it is time for the winner to include female voices again.

8 points: Spain

Gosh for the second year running I have a Big Five country in my Top Three, but I had to, because I do love it when the entry includes some of the country's traditional music, and I do love a bit of Flamenco. Also I am expecting a striking presentation to go with Blanca's striking voice.

10 points: Portugal

Portugal are getting to be one of my most favourite Eurovision countries – there were quite a few in the final of the *Festival Da Canção* that I would have been happy with, but Mimicat was my favourite - colourful, catchy, stylish and different. She is in the first half of the first semi final and there is no English at all in the song, so she has a big job to do to qualify, but all my fingers will be crossed for her. Hoping that, as she is so different from anything else in there, she will stand out.

12 points: Czechia

The country has never been in my Top Three before, but this year Vesna and *My Sister's Crown* tick so many boxes for me – multiple languages with just a little bit of English, lovely traditional Eastern European harmonies accompanied by interesting different rhythms, quirky costumes and makeup and quite a strong message. Another one in the more difficult first semi-final so more fingers and toes will be crossed!

**ALEJANDRO MENENDEZ-LEIB****8 points: Spain**

Spain has a very brave choice of song. This is one you either love or hate - this won't leave anyone indifferent.

10 points: United Kingdom

The UK has an energetic display and put you right on your feet.

12 points: Israel

Israel surprised me with a great choice of rhythm and coreo.

RAY DUFFY**8 points: Serbia**

Honourable mentions to Australia (kudos for internally selecting Voyager) and Georgia (should have won Junior last year, and Iru's song builds on that and is amazing) but my third spot goes to Serbia. Uniqueness is unusual at Eurovision unless it's gimmicky – this is just so different from anything else. Can't pigeon-hole it, but equally can't stop myself whistling that de-tuned synth riff while walking round Lid!! Earworm!

10 points: Estonia

Aside from the pre-Christmas selections, this was probably the first national final song I heard and immediately knew finding better ones would be difficult. A little Kate Bush-esque, beautifully haunting, mesmerising yet a bit edgy. Such a different song for *Eesti* to send who've preferred male vocals in recent years. Another one I was delighted won its national final - which was very strong this year, and I hope it does well.

12 points: Spain

Once again I'm on the Spain train this year (see me as Miki in 2019). Blanca's *Secreto De Agua* should probably have won *Benidorm Fest* last year, so I was over the moon when she triumphed this year. I know she's not everyone's cup of tea, but her vocals are amazing (listen to some of her accapella performances), the song is traditionally Spanish yet the beat and synth makes it modern. The staging for the Spanish final was awesome, and while I don't expect her to win in Liverpool, she's my Number One.



Quick, turn the page before Ray gets out his castanets!



NICOLA WHITAKER

8 points: Portugal

With its beautiful Portuguese sounds and the cabaret atmosphere, Mimicat's song is a catchy song, which gets a foot-tapping thumbs up from me. Lyrical guitar flourishes with a traditional sound and the 'cha cha cha' at the end help to embed it firmly in my Top Three.

10 points: Finland

This song is a lot of fun! The catchy chorus helps this Finnish-language song get into your head and makes you smile. Its pulsating beat delivers a good song that pumps and jumps.

12 points: France

This song oozes pure class. From an enigmatic Bond-like opening to a pulsating beat, this song builds and delivers. La Zarra is a sophisticated chanteuse and she sings this song with a crisp vocal. C'est fantastique!

ANDREW MOFFAT

8 points: United Kingdom

OMG it's the best UK entry since *Sweet Dreams!* This is exactly what I wanted the UK to send for the last 20 years! I can't wait to see Mae strutting her stuff all over the stage in Liverpool and for the speaky bit in the middle - I'm hoping for full use of the catwalk right after that bit! Schlagertastic!

10 points: Portugal

This could be from 1985 which is probably why I adore it. Never mind your boring, earnest yawnsome bland ballads (yes I'm looking at you, * [redacted], * [redacted] frankly most of Semi-Final 2) we need more of this fabulousness in the contest!

12 points: Finland

I don't normally go for shouty unlistenable noise, but this is new-schlager at its best. I love the way it turns in to a proper song half way through too. Also I like his green frock.

* Sorry Andrew, mustn't be mean - Editor [redacted]!! - Andrew



DAVID ONION

8 points: France

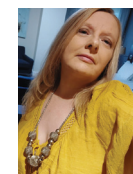
Fabulous Gallic disco tune and La Zarra has some amazing nail-ography. I also want a hat like that too.

10 points: Portugal

Just amazing. Keeps building and building like a mid-2000s Linda Bengtzing schlager stomper. Just when you think it's over there's a final manic burst and a Carola-esque dum-dum-dum-dum ending. And I hope she brings the sofa to Liverpool. If not, she can nip down the local DFS.

12 points: United Kingdom

for the first time since 1996 I can honestly say that the UK's entry is my absolute favourite. The whole contest will be leading up to Mae's banger, with what is sure to be an amazing stage show and it's bound to be 'big in the hall'. The BBC had better keep their cheque books open for Birmingham 2024!!!!



JOANNE POWELL

I'm always a bit different to the mainstream...

8 points: Slovenia

Just pipped Latvia .. again great rock track, with a dance element.

Fabulously sung and oh so catchy. Can imagine this one going big in the arena.

10 points: Malta

Really makes me want to dance and fabulous story telling. There's always a guy like that at every party, right?

12 points: Germany

I love rock and this is so different, totally stands out.



PORTUGAL



ALASDAIR RENDALL

8 points: Austria

At first you think 'oh just a novelty song', and then suddenly the beat kicks in

and you realise just how clever the lyrics are. It's insanely catchy, and one of the most original Eurovision entries in recent years.

10 points: Latvia

Always love a slightly offbeat entry. This takes me back to a bit of a late-1990s indie sound, and I really hope this song gets the recognition it deserves. But perhaps it's too downbeat for mass appeal.

12 points: Sweden

It's fairly rare for me to have such a fan favourite as my personal favourite. For my money this is better than *Euphoria*, and the last 30 seconds are spine-tingly amazing.



KRIS BALL

8 points: Finland

So, why Finland? You're going to notice a running theme with my Top Three, as

they all feature metal. I love the bounce between dark and dirty industrial, to the upbeat pop moments. This song really does such a great job of flitting between genres.

10 points: Germany

Why Germany? Lord of the Lost really bring a theatrical metal vibe to the contest, and in their heavier moments are almost Rammstein-esque, and while I know Rammstein are highly unlikely to ever represent Germany, this is a close second place.

12 points: Australia

Why Australia? Generally gestures in the direction of how epic this song is I fell in love with *Voyager* last year when I heard *Dreamer*, and I've been a fan since then. The world needs more melodic, progressive synth metal!

METAAAAAAAAAAAAAL
And that concludes the points from the Kris Ball jury.

Three wise men...



GARY SPEIRS

My Top Three have been very stable this year with little in the later announcements to trouble it changing. It was also great (if surprising) to see a few of my friends have the same Top Three (at one point).

8 points: France

Ooh la la... could only be French and it grabs you from the start - stylish, upbeat, beautifully produced and should be a crowd pleaser in Liverpool. It is definitely a Gary-pleaser...

10 points: Italy

the Italians keep coming up with classic heart-wrenching stylish music that brings class to Eurovision. This is beautiful and Marco's vocal makes me want to fly away with him... anywhere!

12 points: Finland

When I played this to my partner, he said "if this came on TV, you'd tell me to change channel." My reply was "but its entered into Eurovision and its in Finnish!" I haven't stopped playing it since - great impact, great energy - a new Eurovision masterpiece and definite potential winner.



DAVID ELDER

8 points: France

This is charming, sophisticated and fabulously funky. I've been a fan of La Zarra for just over a year and she's a terrific performer. I expect this to do really well.

10 points: Italy

Marco delivers this stunning ballad with such intent and passion. For me, this outclasses his previous Eurovision entry by a long way. Simply perfection.

12 points: Finland

The insane live performance lifts it head and shoulders above the pack for me. As Käärijä says "It's crazy, It's party" and I am SO here for what I hope will be Finland's very own Coronation party!



HASS YUSUF

8 points: France

After last year's shocking and undeserved result, hopefully France will be

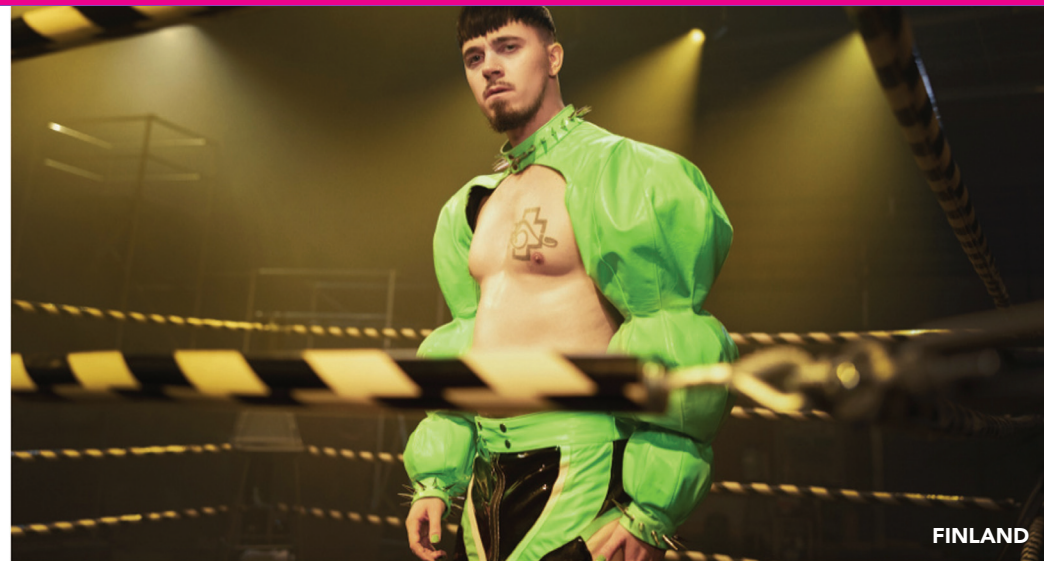
back on form with this more traditional offering. I just love all the passion La Zarra projects A lovely beautiful sound.. And I can't resist the great styling and drama.

10 points: Italy

Can Italy do no wrong? Of course not! Italian, like French, is the perfect language for passionate songs. I have no idea what Marco is singing about, but it's obviously something important. He offers a wonderful performance. And I can't resist the great styling and drama.

12 points: Finland

Every so often you hear a song for the first time that you just know is so different that it will stand out and tick all the boxes to be a winner. You don't actually have to like a song to realise its potential, but with *Cha Cha Cha* I just love everything about it - and I'm certainly no fan of rap! I loved it when I first heard it, and I loved it more when I saw the video. Its brashness and in your face attitude makes it unique in this year's contest. Sheer brilliance! Strictly was never like this! And I can't resist the great styling and drama.



...and he nearly is!



MARTIN PHILLIPS

8 points: Australia

Australia doesn't normally feature in my Top Three, but like Kaarija, they have put a total package together with enough variation and some lovely touches that keep you focused. The song is reminiscent of something my favorite glam band, The Sweet, would have put together in the late 1970's, but updated for 2023. And, through their Eurovision entry, I have been introduced to the solo work of their incredibly talented and ultra handsome bassist - Alex Canion. Eurovision - the gift that keeps on giving!

10 points: France

Two things I want more than anything before I stop attending Eurovision - wins by Iceland and France. I was not a huge fan of Barbara Pravi's "Voilà, Voilà, Voilà", and while I wasn't overly fond of this the first time I heard it - I thought it was underwhelming for La Zarra, given her back catalogue - it has TRULY grown on me. I think francophiles will love it, and La Zarra brings more glamour than we have seen in a while. The stage set for France could make the difference between it being Top Three or lower down the pack.

12 points: Finland

The live performance at the UMK final was my first introduction to Kaarija, and WOW, what an introduction! I am not much of a rap fan, but his delivery of the first part of this song, dark and menacing for the first few minutes, was quite compelling, and then the appearance of the *Cha Cha Cha* dancers with the frightening choppers upped the menacing ante somewhat before the third part of the song screamed "JOKE! We got you!"...but the whole thing comes seamlessly together as a package unlike anything gone before it at Eurovision! To me, it's a winner for this shy boy from Finland who has found something very special within himself - and don't even get me started on how beguiling he is!



AUSTRALIA



MOLDOVA



NORWAY

ALEXA DUBREUIL-STORER

8 points: France

A grower that I was unsure about initially, but when I noticed it was constantly in my head, I realised it was special. At first you think it's going to be a power ballad and then it takes you completely by surprise with the unexpected switch to disco. I love La Zarra's deep, powerful voice and I'm proud this very stylish lady is representing my home country.

10 points: Moldova

I've always loved that fusion of ethno folk/pop. The song is not only catchy and energetic, but I also find it poetic and mystical. I like the reference to natural elements – Sun, Moon, stars, forest and river. There is a certain magic to it and I am definitely under its spell!

12 points: Australia

For me, having Voyager in the contest is the best news of the year as it makes up for *Dreamer* not



No arguments who the favourite is!

being selected in 2022. *Promise* follows a similar structure and hits all the same spots! It's not all linear and I like the element of surprise in the way the song evolves. Danny is a charismatic, fun frontman and such a good singer. Voyager definitely have the kind of unique sound that does it for me.

ALEX STORER

8 points: Moldova

No Eurovision is complete without a healthy dose of ethno-electro, and *Soarele Si Luna* grabbed me from the first performance. It might be a genre we've seen many times over the years, but Pasha brings a renewed style and energy to it. Great sound, great vocals and really catchy.

10 points: Spain

This absolutely blew me away when I saw Blanca perform it at *Benidorm Fest*, with stunning staging and choreography – not to mention Blanca's powerful, flawless vocals. It is perhaps a song you need to see as well as hear, but it is a fine example of a perfect marriage between music and visuals; I really like the blend of modern and traditional – the whole thing is absorbing and mesmeric.

12 points: Australia

Justice for Voyager! *Promise* brings a style and energy we've never really heard at Eurovision before, along with a sing-a-

long chorus everybody can enjoy. I really like the unconventional arrangement, their fusion of styles and powerful sound along with Danny's fantastic vocals. The band have thrown everything and the kitchen sink into this, and the more I hear it, the more I love it!



LISA-JAYNE LEWIS

8 points: Czechia

For me and, if the wind is blowing in the right direction, this should finish easily in the Top Ten but, as we all know, Eurovision is a fickle mistress! This ticks all my sweet spots musically, it's a beautiful piece of music with excellent presentation. There is enough ethnic flavour in there to make it properly Slavic, but also pulls in western style beats to make it universally appealing. I think this one is sailing under the radar at the moment and folks just aren't talking about it enough.

10 points: Austria

I am really torn between my top two this year, I love them both for different reasons. This song is absolute genius. It's got a deep and challenging message in the lyrics and the juxtaposition of this to the upbeat, bouncy music is just fantastic. Austria have pulled a blinder this year, in the song, the artists, the presentation. The way it was leaked/released, everything is just sublime – could Austria be up for its third win? To be honest, I wouldn't rule it out.

12 points: Slovenia

If anything can be said about Joker Out for sure, it's that they are WINNING it on social media in the run up to the contest. I was prepared to be slightly disappointed with this when I heard that the band had been selected and boy was I anything but. *Carpe Diem* is a cool piece of music and the guys can really deliver it well as we've been seeing at the pre-parties. The release show on TV in Slovenia was just brilliant too, their cover of *Samo Ljubezen* with Sestre's very own *Tomaz Mihelic* was also brilliant. Joker Out are the real deal and I am so excited to see this in Liverpool. By rights this should bag Slovenia their best ever score, we wait to see.



DAVE PHILPOTT

8 points: Moldova

This is such a really good entry and I have liked Pasha's entries before.

10 points: United Kingdom

This is the first of my two earworm songs from this year. In my opinion, nowhere near as good as Sam Ryder's *Space Man* but I do love the beat and catchy chorus.

12 points: Norway

This, like the UK entry, has been stuck in my head from the first time I heard it. Absolutely love everything about this song and really hope it goes Top Three should it qualify. I would be thrilled if this song won this year.



SELINA HARGREAVES

8 points: United Kingdom

I love this catchy and rather humorous song! It's a funky version of a break up song, that's totally relatable, and everything you would like to do to your ex, if you did catch them cheating!! I look forward to seeing the staging for this one, and did I mention the nails...? Love it!!

10 points:

Norway

Queen Of Kings is incredibly well sung, staged, and is a great dance song. You'll find yourself toe tapping the whole way through to the end! It is sung strongly and confidently by Alessandra, who has a beautiful voice that can certainly hit those higher notes. I love the changes of pace throughout this song. Definitely a fav!

12 points: Sweden

Where do I start? Loreen has done it again! She has a strong, melodic voice and sheer emotion in her face, as well as in her theatrical performance. She's got it all really, the voice, the looks, and did I mention those nails...? I'm saving for a holiday in Sweden next year, she's brilliant!



Entente Cordiale for the 8 points!

FIONA GUEST

8 points: France

Edith Piaf meets *Cabaret* in a sleazy night-club? Throw in a gorgeous French accent and I'm already ordering baguette and brie and popping a Bordeaux to enjoy this moody song. It's sung with feeling, passion and power and transports me to Montmartre from the first few notes. It couldn't possibly be from anyone else – Vive La France!

10 points: Norway

I love the varied pace of this song, with some slow moody sections leading into a fast foot-tapping pace and just as you get used to that, it changes again. I'm also a sucker for an echo-y mix so putting the two bits together, I'm hooked! I'm not sure I can afford

Oslo next year, so second place would be just lovely.

12 points: Sweden

I know, I know – yes, it's the favourite and yes, it's Sweden again, but it's the fave for a reason: The staging with the Breville Sandwich Toaster, Loreen's powerful voice and a very dramatic ear-worm of a song all add up to Stockholm 2024 where we can celebrate ABBA's 50th anniversary - yes 50 – and I remember watching it, so boy, do I now feel old!



AUSTRIA

ITALY



ALEX DAVIS

8 points: Austria

This year my 8 points goes to the whacky but wonderful Austria. What a fantastic stand out song for the year!

10 points: Portugal

I've never actually had a Portuguese entry in my Top Ten let alone Top Three but they've hit the nail on the head this year, the song is great and her vocal is off the scale.

12 points: Sweden

Last but not least, my controversial opinion of the year (maybe even the decade) is that *Tattoo* is miles better than *Euphoria*, so very unsurprisingly my 12 points go to Sweden! I can't wait to see what they do with the staging and very much think Loreen will wear the Eurovision crown again in Liverpool! See you all there :)



ROBIN SCOTT

8 points: United Kingdom

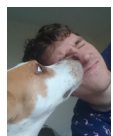
Mae had terrible reviews for her performance at the Spanish party. At the time of writing I haven't seen anything to indicate that she was better or worse elsewhere so I have to go by the polished, maybe autotuned (but aren't they all?) video. I find that it's an infectious song, what people have been calling an earworm. It's inside my head.

10 points: Italy

It is probably a song that younger people might prefer to many of the others in the contest and that seems to be the demographic of our audience these days. My top two have changed places several times and I believe that Marco from Italy, who sings a beautiful song in a simple but very emotive way, is deserving of the silver crown rather than the gold one. I have only heard the final version a couple of times and am relieved that the edit works well. I thought the original version very difficult to rewrite but my fears were unfounded. Let's hope the Italians' choice of staging reflect the song.

12 points: France

For me this year's gold crown should go to France. The singer, the words, the performance are all just pure class and, if I may say so, much more embracing than Loreen from Sweden where all the fans of the lady seem to have taken over everything rather than saying that the song is the best. Again, at the time of writing, I have not seen a live performance of the entry but I have faith that it will be excellent, going by other live videos that are available. It's about time that France won the trophy again as the quality of their merchandise has been so good in recent times.



SAM RABEY

8 points: Switzerland

Second year in a row the Swiss pick a great song that will be under appreciated at the contest. The lyrics are excellent and tell a really sad story. Yes it's about war but it's about the differences in growing up. Love this song.

10 points: Germany

I love rock music and this song really does remind me of my college days studying performance of music. I hope this really does well. Either this or Australia will get big votes.

12 points: Norway

I have loved this song since I heard it, even though I wasn't in her corner in the national final. The only song really capable of taking on you know who (and not the dark lord). Will be Top Five for sure.



FIN ROSS RUSSELL

8 points: Israel

So, yes, this takes the prize for the most What The.... music video of 2023 and

there's a lot going on in the song. However, I trust Noa has the stagecraft to bring it all together beautifully in Liverpool.

10 points: Norway

Music as storytelling at its finest! It's hard to say exactly what Alessandra was channeling when she wrote this but it's a classic for female-empowerment filled banger.

12 points: United Kingdom

Most chart-friendly UK entry I've heard in a long time. Mae is destined to return to the Top Ten in a second consecutive year for the first time since our last hosting in 1998.



SWITZERLAND



DEAN ASKER

8 points: Denmark

I've loved Denmark since Dame Kirsten of the Siggard and Lord Soren of Bungaard gave us the never to be bettered *Det'Lige'Det*. So I'm pleased

Denmark are back on form with this great slice of catchy pop. Surely the Grand Final beckons....!

10 points: United Kingdom

The UK is back, back, back. Being a fan of a certain age, I remember when Eurovision songs had very clear choruses. The vogue these days is for dance breakdowns after saying the title of the song a few times. Fair enough, but thankfully our Mae is having none of it, and rather than giving us one chorus, she's giving us two. Hooray! My favourite UK entry for a very long time.

12 points: Finland

Well, who knew I'd like something like this? Normally this might have me running to the hills, but it's just joyous and so infectious, and Kaarija is wonderfully engaging. I love it! Finland yet again gave us a brilliant national final, and this was the worthy winner. Can't wait for some *Cha Cha Cha* action on the Euroclub dance floor!



GORDON LEWIS

8 points: Greece

Victor Vernicos was not even born when Greece hosted Eurovision in 2006, but he will certainly leave his mark on this year's contest. With the vocals of George Ezra and the style of James Arthur, *What They Say* has chart success written all over it. Full of teenage angst, which Victor wants to use to benefit others who have experienced what he sings about, his self-composed song contains a maturity that belies his young age. This should appeal to younger and, dare I say, older listeners like myself who will hopefully say "douze points".

10 points: Switzerland

A subtle anti-war song that finds its strength through simplicity. Remo Forrer is another young singer who displays incredible maturity in his vocals. The theme of *Watergun* should almost certainly pull at the heartstrings of viewers and voters across the globe, as Remo pleads "I don't wanna be a soldier... I don't wanna have to play with real blood". In a world of conflict, this song not only reminds people of the unnecessary human cost of war, but also warns of the perceived innocence of children's games which can so easily become something more sinister.

12 points: France

If a classic French chanson has ever deserved to win Eurovision, then this is it. Channelling the glamour of Hollywood's golden years, French-Canadian Fatima Zahra Hafdi aka La Zarra brings a much needed sophistication to the international stage. Her style combines the legendary Edith Piaf with that of Eurovision runner-up Barbara Pravi (France 2021), while *Évidemment (Evidently)* is a stunningly powerful song that ticks all the boxes. The video performance is perfection and will hopefully be retained for Liverpool. Anything else would be criminal.

COUNTRY SCORES

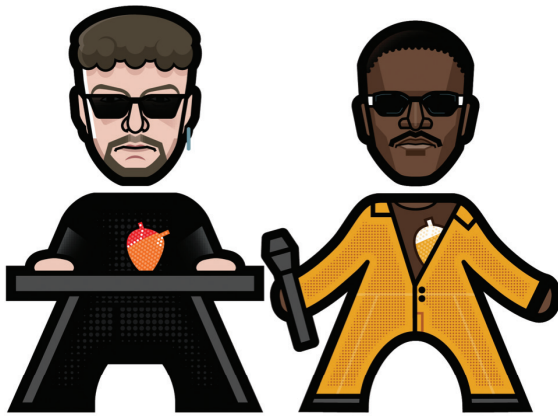
France	122
Finland	110
United Kingdom	106
Sweden	76
Norway	54
Italy	52
Czechia	50
Spain	50
Portugal	48
Australia	44
Austria	40
Slovenia	32
Germany	32
Moldova	26
Switzerland	26
Israel	20
Estonia	18
Ireland	10
Latvia	10
Malta	10
Denmark	8
Greece	8
Serbia	8

AND OUR WINNER IS FRANCE!

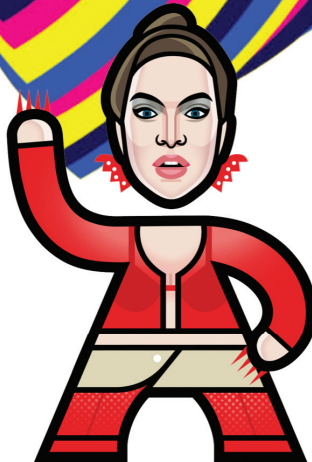


FRANCE

So there you have it - a win for France from our **Vision** jury - and the United Kingdom coming in at third (as last year)! Only Germany from the Big Five failed to make an impact. It's everything to play for in Liverpool. Will Ukraine get the solidarity vote again? Will the UK do one better than last year? Roll on May 13th.



UA 2023 



UK 2023 