



ESC Insight's Unofficial Guide to Junior Eurovision 2011



Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Hello, Internet!..... | 3 |
| Ewan's Introduction..... | 4 |
| Sharleen's Introduction..... | 5 |
| Armenia..... | 6 |
| Belarus..... | 8 |
| Belgium..... | 10 |
| Bulgaria..... | 12 |
| Georgia..... | 14 |
| Latvia..... | 16 |
| Lithuania..... | 18 |
| Macedonia..... | 20 |
| Moldova..... | 22 |
| The Netherlands..... | 24 |
| Russia..... | 26 |
| Sweden..... | 28 |
| Ukraine..... | 30 |
| Enjoy the Junior Eurovision Song Contest Online..... | 32 |

Hello, Internet!

This year's Junior Eurovision Song Contest will be held in Yerevan, Armenia, on Saturday 3rd December 2011. The ESC Insight team will be on the ground reporting from backstage, but before then we've put together our guide to the countries, songs and singers of JESC 2011, along with the thoughts of Ewan Spence and Sharleen Wright on the songs.

We hope you find our guide useful. Pop by ESC Insight (www.escinsight.com) and tell us what you think!

Ewan's Introduction

This is the ninth Junior Eurovision Song Contest, and while it might seem dwarfed by its more grown up parent, JESC (as the abbreviation goes) is maturing into a contest with its own quirks, fans, rituals and history, and one we are proud to support here at ESC Insight.

Looking back on the ninth Adult Eurovision is hard - mostly because the video recordings have long since been deleted - but you can see similarities. The comings and goings of various countries kept the number of entries in those early years as variable as JESC is now (16 in 1964, and 13 in 2011), there are various genres to listen to, a returning artist (Switzerland's Anita Traversi, Russia's Katya Ryabova), but above all there is the feeling of a community coming together from across Europe. That is something that has never left Eurovision!

You can see where Eurovision as a family continues to make a difference. It reaches across nations, and even in countries that do not take part, JESC has many supporters and fans; the technology of the day is tested like few other events on the planet, with P2P internet streaming, videos from backstage, and the loose family of web journalists, bloggers, and the occasional podcaster, making their way to the host country - who this year for the first time are also the winning country from the previous contest.

Junior Eurovision is a unique part of Eurovision, and an important contest when it stands proud on its own two feet. Music is universal, no matter where you are, no matter how old you are, or who you are.

Long may it continue.

Sharleen's Introduction

Junior Eurovision means many things to many people.

For the hardcore Eurovision fans, it might just mean the half way mark to the next senior contest. To the kids of Europe, its the chance to see people from other countries much like themselves sing songs made just for them. For the contestants, its the opportunity of a lifetime to take to the stage and be seen across Europe. And for the countries involved, its a yearly event that gives them the chance to show the world who they are and compete against their neighbours for an important title.

For me, Junior Eurovision is above all an important extension of the original contest - giving young people the chance to express themselves through music and dance, and thus educate and communicate to others what their nationalities and cultures are all about. The different competitions under the Eurovision banner aren't so different, they all have that core value of bringing Europe together through the medium of performance. Every time I step foot on the grounds of any Eurovision-related event, the principles set out back in 1956 are in the forefront of my mind.

As I head off to my first live Junior contest in Yerevan, I cant wait to see how the show is brought together and listen to the immense talent of todays youth, giving me just an inkling as to what lies ahead for the future of the music industry. The Junior Eurovision Song Contest is a rare opportunity for youth across Europe to stand up, be front of stage and take a bow.

Best of luck to all the competitors. And of course, thank you for the music.

Armenia

At a glance

Song: Welcome to Armenia
Artist: Dalita
Composer: Dalita
Lyricist: Dalita

About the Artist:

The 12 years old Dalita is the girl that will represent Armenia at the 2011 Junior Eurovision Song Contest in... Armenia! And she sure will greet everyone with a nice 'welcome'.

Dalita is the author of six songs and winner of various contests and festivals and she has also participated in many beauty contests.

In 2005 Dalita became Miss Yerevan, Miss Armenia. She was nominated for the title Miss Advertising in 2006, and Miss Talent in 2007. Dalita became Miss Top Model 2009 and was awarded a special prize by famous boxer Alex Abraham.

Armenia in Junior Eurovision

Appearances: 5
Debut: 2007
Victory: 2010, Mama, by Vladimir Arzumanyan, 120 pts

Recent History:

2010: Mama, by Vladimir Arzumanyan, 1st, 120 pts.

2009: Barcelona, by Luara Hayrapetyan, 2nd, 116 pts.

2008: Im Ergi Hnchyune, by Monica Manucharova, 8th, 59 pts.

Selection Process

Live final with 16 songs held on 17 September 2011. Winner was selected by a 50/50 split of jury and public voting.

ESC Insight Thoughts on Armenia

Ewan

It ticks a lot of traditional Eurovision boxes, although there is a question mark over the power that Dalita can give this in a live performance. There's also two other issues that I think dull the song. It feels like it should be the "big brash opening number" to Armenia hosting the contest, rather than their entry in the contest itself. There's just a little bit too much flag waving going on here. There's also the video with the airline pilots, stewardesses, and primary colours. Who would have thought someone could have out-Scooch Scooch?

Sharleen

Bravo to the hosts for giving us a song that not only says 'Welcome to Armenia', but gives us just a sense of the culture of the country; something which is sadly lacking in this year's selection of songs. Nevertheless, the guitar solo/traditional music refrain is the highlight in a song that otherwise falls into a less than memorable pile. Whilst nicely and confidently performed by Dalita, lyrically it's repetitive, and the staging owes more than a nod to UK Eurovision entry Scooch. Rather than the chorus being catchy and feeling the need to join in on a singalong, I find myself wanting to press the 'next' button just a minute in on an already short tune.

Belarus

At a glance

Song: Angely Dobra (Angels of Goodness).
Artist: Lidiya Zablotskaya.
Composer: Lidiya Zablotskaya.
Lyricist: Lidiya Zablotskaya.

About the Artist:

Lidiya Zablotskaya (13) was born in of Mogilev. In 2010 she decided to take part in the Belarusian national selection for JESC, finishing 4th.

The question "what is your song about" she answered: "In our world there are a lot of tragedies. People are dying in earthquakes. And a lot of mistakes we made ourselves. The tragedy touched our country in spring when in Minsk's subway dozens of people suffered because of the explosion. We ask angels to stay with each of us, to protect our country and our world. This song is not about the heavenly angels, but about people who do good things. I think great power of goodness can animate even inanimate. Let the angel of goodness live in each of us!".

Belarus in Junior Eurovision

Appearances: 8
Debut: 2003
Victory: 1st 2005, My Vmeste, by Ksenia Sitnik.
1st 2007, S druz'yami, by Alexey Zhigalkovich.

Recent History:

2010: Muzyki Svet, by Daniil Kozlov, 5th, 85 pts.
2009: Volshebniy Krolík, by Yuriy Demidovich, 9th, 48 pts.
2008: Sertse Belarusi, by Dasha, Alina, & Karyna, 6th, 86 pts.

Selection Process

Live final with 10 performers, broadcast on 23rd September, through a combination of jury and public voting.

ESC Insight Thoughts on Belarus

Ewan

Is a ballad as powerful at the Junior Contest as it would be at the Adult Contest? If this song had been sent to Dusseldorf instead of Anastasia Vinnikova's 'I Love Belarus', they might have made the Saturday night final... if it had been paired with as confident a singer as Lidiya. I'm not so sure that a technical song will do as well on the Yerevan stage. Figure on Belarus being thereabouts with a good wind blowing it high up the table, but it's not a dead certain Fairytale for Lidiya.

Sharleen

"Hello Yerevan, this is Belarus calling! Send the trophy over cause we have a winner!". The backstory of 'Angels of Goodness' coupled with the angelic voice of Lidiya shall doubtless melt the hearts of every viewer come 3rd December. I have goosebumps just looking at the national final footage, and in a rare turn, believe that live, Lidiya's voice has far more affection, warmth and strength than the studio version. I have to say, I'm starting to wonder if its illegal to be talented post-16 years of age in Belarus, because the level of young talent in the country and the number of wins for Belarus at Junior Eurovision is most certainly not translating to the more senior competition.

Belgium

At a glance

Song: Een Kusje Meer (One More Kiss).
Artist: Femke.
Composer: Peter Gillis, Vincent Goeminne, Femke Verschueren .
Lyricist: Peter Gillis, Vincent Goeminne, Femke Verschueren .

About the Artist:

Femke Verschueren (11) lives in Morkhoven, Antwerp

For her Junior Eurovision Song Contest entry *One More Kiss* (*Een Kusje Meer*), Femke took her inspiration from the retro-style fun of her favourite song *Pack Up* by Eliza Doolittle. *One More Kiss* is about that unforgettable first kiss. Femke is too young to speak from experience, but her older sisters sometimes chat about those kisses, and Femke does have her secret dreams... But so far, only her dog has stolen her heart.

The young and happy spirit of Femke inspired music producers Peter Gillis and Vincent Goeminne to write and compose *Een Kusje Meer* (*One More Kiss*).

Peter Gillis is somewhat the king of Belgian kidspop and has a noted history in the Junior Eurovision Contest. He composed several of the Belgian entries, and moreover, produced the winning song of the last three Belgian National Finals

Belgium in Junior Eurovision

Appearances: 8
Debut: 2003
Best: 4th, 2009, Zo Verliefd, by Laura Omloop.
Recent History:

2010: Get Up, by Jill & Lauren, 7th, 73 pts.

2009: Zo Verliefd, by Laura Omloop, 4th, 113 pts.

2008: Shut Up!, by Oliver, 11th, 45 pts.

Selection Process

Four live semi-finals, two songs in each, with one winner from each progressing to a live final on 30th September.

ESC Insight Thoughts on Belgium

Ewan

Can Femke last a week of rehearsals in Yerevan? 2009's Junior Eurovision singer for Belgium, Laura Omloop, had an impressive song in 'Zo Verliefd', but as the week went on, the yodelling vocals lost a tiny bit of their power, allowing Ralf Mackenbach to sneak ahead for victory. 'Een Kusje Meer' is in a similar situation, the song is cute, powerful, timeless, but it relies on the lead singer more than most songs in this year's contest. If the delegation can manage Femke, this is a potential winner.

Sharleen

Femke captures a spirit of 1950s sweetness and innocence with her song 'One More Kiss', and its beautifully mirrored in the staging. Her biography already highlights her interest in the retro sounds of the likes of Eliza Doolittle, and she pulls off that old-time sound and style with ease and a sense of believability that other JESC competitors looking to the past for inspiration lack. On a plus side, the chorus is ridiculously catchy. On the negative, the light 1950s feel may not be as attractive to a target audience too young remember the era and not greatly exposed to the sound. As a song, it comes across far more genuine than its soundalike 'Sha-la-lie' by Sienke from the 2010 Eurovision, and for that reason I'll give it the benefit of the doubt to feature in the mid to top of the board.

Bulgaria

At a glance

Song: Supergeroy (Superhero).
Artist: Ivan Ivanov.
Composer: Ivan Ivanov.
Lyricist: Ivan Ivanov.

About the Artist:

Ivan Ivanov was born in 2000 in the town of Gorna Oryahovitsa in Bulgaria. He is in the fifth grade and loves Mathematics, English and Music. In his free time he plays football and goes to hip-hop dancing lessons. His sign is Aries, but his favourite animal is the lion. He likes computer games and collects robots.

He also likes reading books. At present he is reading Karlsson-on-the-Roof and Pirates of the Caribbean. He likes Nicolas Cage movies. His music idols are Adam Lambert, Jon Bon Jovi and Bulgarian singers Grafa and Vassil Naydenov.

Young Jon Bon Jovi as his friends call him, won the Bulgarian contest with his song Superhero together with the backing vocals Mikhaela Marinova and Ioanna Marinova. Although they have the same family name, the two girls are not related.

Bulgaria in Junior Eurovision

Appearances: 2
Debut: 2007
Best: 7th, 2007, Bonbolandiya, by Bon-Bon, 86 pts.
Recent History:
2010: Did not participate.
2009: Did not participate.
2008: Edna Mechta, by Krastyana Krasteva, 15th, 15 pts

Selection Process

One live final, with a Jury and Public 50/50 voting split. Ivanov took second place in both the Jury and Public vote, which was enough to win.

ESC Insight Thoughts on Bulgaria

Ewan

To me this doesn't have any flow. There's some great hooks and riffs in here, a driving base line, and Ivanov has an interesting voice to listen to. But when mixed together, these great ingredients don't make for a memorable song. It lumbers from chorus to verse, and listening to the song feels like hard work. There's hope, as Sharleen is about to point out for the staging to provide some impetus, but the song on its own is forgettable.

Sharleen

Every contest has a song that utterly divides my mind, and for 2011' Junior Eurovision Song Contest, 'Superhero' is it. There is no denying that Ivan can belt out the tune and has the confidence of a far more aged performer on the stage. The opening drum beats set the tone for a strong tune, but after a minute in I feel the melody plodding along; there's a lack of obvious hook to join in on, and judging by the national final performance, the stage presence also starts to lose my attention with repetition. I believe the position at the final will be entirely dependent on what Ivan can bring to the stage on the night - cause the gridiron and ballet/hip-hop dancers aren't currently cutting it for me. If it's lively, colourful, and visually-related to the song however, this could be a top five threat.

Georgia

At a glance

| | |
|-----------|---|
| Song: | Candy Music. |
| Artist: | Candy. |
| Composer: | George Kukhianidze. |
| Lyricist | Candy (Irina Khechanova, Mariam Gvaladze, Ana Khanchalyan, Gvantsa Saneblidze, Irina Kovalenk). |

About the Artists:

Irina Khechanova was born in Tbilisi, Georgia on December 3, 2000. In 2009, Irina was the winner of the best singer prize of Tbilisi Olympic song contest. **Mariam Gvaladze** was born in Rustavi, Georgia on February 9, 1997. Since 2007 she has been a participant of numerous music festivals. **Ann Khanchaliani** was born in Tbilisi, Georgia on May 19, 1996. In 2010 she was the winner of the International Music Contest in FYR Macedonia. **Gvantsa Saneblidze** was born in Kutaisi, Georgia on October 26, 1997. She has also done very well at many music festivals. **Irina Kovalenko** was born in Tbilisi Georgia on March 29, 1997. Outside school hours she is fond of tennis. In 2007 she placed 6th in Tennis Championship of Georgia.

Composer George Kukhianidze has become associated with JESC since 2007, first with Mariam Romelashvili song, next in 2008 the winner, Bzikebi with their Bzzz... and in 2010 Mariam Kakhelashvili's song Mari-Dari. He is the author of Candy music, with the band writing the lyrics.

Georgia in Junior Eurovision

Appearances: 4
Debut: 2007
Victory: 2008, Bzz, by Bzikebi, 154 pts.
Recent History:

- 2010: Mari-Dari, by Mariam Kakhelishvili
- 2009: Lurji Prinveli, by Princessess, 6th, 68 pts.
- 2008: Bzz..., by Bzikebi, 1st, 154 pts

Selection Process

National selection of 9 songs, with Candy winning the jury vote and finishing second in the public vote (from band 3T).

ESC Insight Thoughts on Georgia

Ewan

Let's be honest, I think the adult viewers of JESC are going to appreciate the retro sound of this song a lot more than the younger audience, where it's likely to divide opinion. It also feels like the sort of number that was written with the input of a record label looking to tick off a bundle of demographics and clichés to maximise sales. That's not against the rules of Junior Eurovision any more, but Candy Music feels like it pushes the envelope with too much manufacturing involved.

Sharleen

Who doesn't love candy? What if its presented in a disco wrapper, and tastes a bit stale? 'Candy Music' is not my taste at all, and not just because I prefer savoury to sweet. This all just appears to be a little too manufactured and sweet and repetitive on stage, to the point that I feel the target audience will look for their sugar fix elsewhere. After a series of different and edgy entries including the 2008 winners Bzikebi, and the imaginative and brilliant performance back in 2010 by Mariam with 'Mari Dari', I'm let down by the 70s cliché sound and staging. But its good to see the wig from the disqualified 2009 Eurovision entry hasn't gone to waste.

Latvia

At a glance

Song: Moondog.
Artist: Amanda Bashmakova.
Composer: Janis Lusens, Guntars Racs, Amanda Bashmakova.
Lyricist: Janis Lusens, Guntars Racs, Amanda Bashmakova.

About the Artist:

Amanda (14) is from the city of Aluksne, and she's got help from some of the best known Latvian songwriters. Amanda likes to dance and travel together with her parents. She's also had a lot of success at different festivals and contests from Russia to Moldova!

Amanda also got a bit of help from Janis Lusens and Guntars Racs. They both are well-known song musicians.

Lusens has a lot of experience with different musical styles and roles, the latest being theatre. Shows with his input have been visited tens of thousands of times. The audience for Janis Lusens musical productions adds up to 450 thousand people! The poet and musician Guntars Racs started to write poetry and at the age of 16. His first poems were published in the local newspaper and regional publications.

Latvia in Junior Eurovision

Appearances: 4
Debut: 2003
Best: 9th, 2003, Tu Esi Vasara, by Dzintars Cica.

Recent History:

2010: Viva La Dance, by Sarlote Lenmane & Sea Stones,
10th, 51 pts
2009: Did not enter.
2008: Did not enter.

Selection Process

Bashmakova was selected to represent Latvia by winning the televised Balss Paveiknieks finals.

ESC Insight Thoughts on Latvia

Ewan

A simple song, and to be fair, these can do well in singing competitions, but Eurovision needs something special, be it in the staging, the voice, the lyrics or the composition. Moondog scores well in all the above, but none of the areas reach an exceptional level. It's likely to do well - how well might come down to how Amanda looks on TV around Europe while she stands at a microphone with this essentially solo number.

Sharleen

I always thought diamonds were a girls best friend, but not according to Amanda in her song 'Moondog'. The tale of her faithful companion and her only best friend who waits for her, is heartfelt yet somewhat sad and depressing. Despite her faultless vocals on the studio version, I am left to wonder whether, on the live stage she can hit the highest notes heard in the 2011 contest. And as the only performance we have seen is the video clip, the staging also has a huge question mark hanging over it (but 8 points if it features a live puppy). So despite the heavyweights in the Latvian songwriting industry being behind this entry, and Amandas' gorgeous voice on the studio track, I don't have high hopes that the song, with its lack of hook and its sombre mood, will result in multitudes of votes going Latvias' way on 3rd December.

Lithuania

At a glance

Song: Debesys (The Clouds).
Artist: Paulina Skrabyte.
Composer: Paulina Skrabytė , Mindaugas Lapinskis.
Lyricist: Paulina Skrabytė.

About the Artist:

Paulina Skrabyte, from Palanga seaside, is 10-year-old. Singing from the age of 5, she plays the flute, piano and wants to learn to play the guitar. She is a winner of many national and international contests and TV projects. She won the first places in the Baltic Transit and Baltic Talents international contests in Jurmala.

She loves to listen to songs performed by Christina Aguilera and Eliza Doolittle. She dreams of becoming a professional singer and have her solo concert with Kenny G. Arturas Daunys, Grand Prix winner of the international contest Don Chento Jazz in Russia, accompanies the girl with the piano.

Lithuania in Junior Eurovision

Appearances: 3
Debut: 2007
Best: 3rd, 2008, Laiminga Diena, Egle Jurgaitye, 103 pts.
Recent History:
2010: Oki Doki, Bartas, 6th, 67 pts.
2009: Withdrew on financial grounds.
2008: Laiminga Diena, Egle Jurgaitye, 3rd, 103 pts.

Selection Process

The national selection process occurred during the show *Mažuju žvaigždžių ringas* (Young Stars Ring), in which young singers aged 10-15 took part with self-written songs.

ESC Insight Thoughts on Lithuania

Ewan

If there was a prize for "song most likely to appear in a romantic comedy with Matthew McConaughey and Lisa Kudrow", then Paulina would have something to put on the mantelpiece. Unfortunately, The Clouds has entered Junior Eurovision instead. Yes, it won through a solid National Final process, but I can't see this stepping up to the worldwide stage and having an impact.

Sharleen

'The Clouds' is a subdued ditty, and the stage performance by Paulina is rather mature but understated. Falling in between two of the most poppy and unbeatable songs in the middle of the contest, it could appear quite classy and thus, stand out amongst the crowd. However, watching the national final performance independently, the end result of the song is that it's nice enough but leaving me feeling uninspired and underwhelmed at the end. Paulina lacks the vocal abilities of her other contestants, and up against the likes of the more lyrically challenging songs, the stories behind them and the staging, I feel it gets lost amongst the crowd.

Macedonia

At a glance

Song: Zimi Ovoj Frak (I Swear By This Tailcoat).
Artist: Dorijan Dlaka.
Composer: Dorijan Dlaka.
Lyricist: Dorijan Dlaka.

About the Artist:

Dorjan Dlaka (14) lives in Skopje. He is a very talented boy singing, playing guitar, dancing and he has a talent for foreign languages: he speaks perfect English, very good German and a basic Dutch.

He started performing at the age of 7, on the festival Super Star as a chorister and as a dancer and continued as a soloist. Dorjan has participated in numerous festivals in FYR Macedonia and abroad. In 2008 he participated in the national final for the 2008 Junior Eurovision Song Contest and his song was awarded second prize.

In 2010 he travelled to Belarus as a member of the FYR Macedonian delegation for the 2010 Junior Eurovision Song Contest 2010 as a dancer. Dorjan is a very famous boy, he had many lead roles in numerous TV advertising commercials and his voice can be heard on the radio almost every day!

Macedonia in Junior Eurovision

Appearances: 8
Debut: 2003
Best: 5th, 2007, Ding Ding Dong, by Rosica Kulakova
and Dimitar Stojmenovski, 111 pts.
5th, 2008, Prati mi SMS, by Bobi Andonov, 93 pts.

Recent History:

2010: Eooo, Eooo, by Anja Veterova, 12th, 38 pts.
2009: Za Ljubovta, by Sara Markovska, 12th, 31 pts.
2008: Prati mi SMS, by Bobi Andonov, 5th, 93 pts

Selection Process

National Final with five singers on September 24th. Dorijan Dlaka selected, and will be the first male to represent Macedonia at Junior Eurovision.

ESC Insight Thoughts on Macedonia

Ewan

It's Bugsy Malone! Actually it's more than that, and there's a lot to like about this tiny bit of Little Lounge Lizarding, but before that can happen, someone in Macedonia needs to replace that Bon Tempi keyboard sound with anything else. Played on a classical piano, with a bit of jazz flair, and you'd have something to rival the surprising potential of Raphael Gualazzi and Italy's 2011 entry. Right now I can't help hearing "Long Haired Lover From Liverpool" at the refrain.

Sharleen

Dorijan is arguably the most seasoned of the performers set for the stage at JESC 2011. He has been famous for sometime in his homeland, and the professionalism in both his stage presence and his voice is obvious. There is no doubt he'll perform on the night, however; the jazz-cabaret toned 'Till the end of time' appears a rather wrong choice in the hands of such a young performer. Rather than enjoying it purely on merit, I feel god-forbid, sleazy listening to it. Maybe its the cabaret-style, the picturing in my mind of a scantily clad girl draped over a seedy bar piano, the lyrics about luring ladies through song, or just the fact that similar songs have not worked on the JESC stage, but I can't see this featuring at the top end of the table on the big night.

Moldova

At a glance

Song: No-No.
Artist: Lerica.
Composer: Eugen Doibani.
Lyricist: Eugen Doibani.

About the Artist:

Lerika is the pseudonym of Valeria Engalycheva, who's just 12 years old. And she'll be the one representing Moldova at this year's Junior Eurovision Song Contest. Lerika might be young but she's no stranger to the world of music - she's already participated at many international children's music contests all over the world and very successfully.

Now she'll also take the wonderful task of representing Moldova at the Junior Eurovision Song Contest.

She'll do it together with Eugeniu Doibani who also has an impressive background in the entertainment world the same way as Lerika - taking part in many vocal competitions and has already released two solo albums.

Moldova in Junior Eurovision

Appearances: 1
Debut: 2010
Best: 8th, 2010, Ali Baba, by Stefan Roscovan, 54 pts.
Recent History:
2010: Ali Baba, by Stefan Roscovan, 8th, 54 pts.

Selection Process

Lerika was announced on October 5th, after being selected by an internal panel of judges for Moldovan broadcaster TRM.

ESC Insight Thoughts on Moldova

Ewan

Thankfully Moldova's track is well before Macedonia in the running order, because they could have easily cancelled each other out in terms of style and presentation. 'First kiss' songs abound both Eurovision and the pop charts for as long as Cliff Richard has been singing, Even then, this feels a bit more mature than you would expect at Junior Eurovision in terms of musical presentation, and could well suffer because of that in the voting.

Sharleen

Upon listen, 'No No' conjures for me the mental image of a young Amy Winehouse, given the sultry and mature jazzy tones of the 12 years young Lerica. The strength of her voice betrays her age, and the sound of 'No-No' grabs a 1960s girl group quality that is rather endearing. Detailing the story of searching out her prince for a first kiss, the song is a fine match for the target audience. However, distracting from the winning potential of 'No No', I find Lerica's youthful awkward stage presence is incongruous with her mature vocal performance. Another issue is that the lyrics are half in English and half Romanian - the English translation is somewhat lacking and therefore I believe lets the song down.

The Netherlands

At a glance

Song: Ik ben een Teenager.
Artist: Rachel.
Composer: R.Traets/W.Laseroms/J.Vermeulen Windsant/M.ten Hove.
Lyricist: R.Traets/W.Laseroms/J.Vermeulen Windsant/M.ten Hove.

About the Artist:

Rachel Traets (13) lives in Wouw. Teenager tells the story of the midway between childhood and adulthood. Rachel prefers to have fun with her friends and doesn't want to spend too much time on her homework.

Even the nerve damage in her left arm given to her by birth, doesn't limit her in her love for dancing and moving. As a special ambassador of the foundation for chronic illness and handicapped children, she believes that everybody should be treated equally and must realise their own dreams.

Her song was produced by the producers trio The Future Presidents. Formed in 2007, they are responsible for several chart hits performed by some of the biggest artists in their home country as well as having their own radio hits. They have achieved multiple gold and platinum success throughout Europe and they have produced official remixes for the likes of Justin Timberlake, Beyoncé, Jordin Sparks, Chris Brown, T-Pain and many others.

The Netherlands in Junior Eurovision

Appearances: 8
Debut: 2003
Victory: 2009, Click Clack, by Ralf Mackenbach, 121 pts.
Recent History:
2010: My Family, by Senna & Anna, 9th, 52 pts.
2009: Click Clack, by Ralf Mackenbach, 1st, 121 pts.
2008: One Dag, by Marissa, 13th, 27 pts.

Selection Process

Eight songs over two semi-finals, and then a final with jury vote (1/3rd), kids jury (1/3rd) and a televote (1/3rd). Rachel took the maximum in each section.

ESC Insight Thoughts on The Netherlands

Ewan

Modern, fresh and catchy, this would not sound out of place at the top of the charts, and Eurovision as a whole could do with another big international success. Perhaps this is it, because the Netherlands have a habit of sending songs with a huge amount of potential to JESC. If any moment is going to win it for Rachel, it's the cheeky pause in the middle of the song. The studio version has a little giggle, but a shrug of the shoulders on stage is going to send Europe into a collective "awww". Master that moment and the song is heading for the top.

Sharleen

'Teenager' sounds modern, speaks directly to the youth target, and is ridiculously catchy. Rachels voice and performance were striking at the national final, and a massive benefit for the song is that despite language barriers, the chorus is easy to catch up and stick in your mind on first listen. Well placed in the lineup at the contest between 2 more subdued tunes (albeit both excellent), I think it will be memorable. The only ridiculous thing in my mind as a detriment to their chances is that whenever I hear it a picture Eric Saade... Nevertheless, take a bow Netherlands! Not only is this is the sort of thing I believe you should be sending to the Eurovision contest proper, but it looks entirely possible that the hosts of next years JESC could be the winners of the previous contest once again. For me, *this* is the dark horse of the Junior song contest.

Russia

At a glance

Song: Kak Romeo i Dzhulyetta (Romeo and Juliet).
Artist: Katya Ryabova.
Composer: Katya Ryabova.
Lyricist: Katya Ryabova.

About the Artist:

Katya Ryabova was born in Schelkovo on August, 4, 1997. In 2009, Katya Ryabova won the national preselection and represents her country at Junior Eurovision Song Contest in Kyiv with Malenkiy Prints (The Little Prince) becoming the runner-up of the show.

After her Junior Eurovision Song Contest success Katya has performed at great music festivals as a guest. Katya's motto is: "There is only one thing that makes a dream impossible to achieve: the fear of failure" (from The Alchemist by Paolo Coelho).

Katya Ryabova will represent Russia at this year's Junior Eurovision Song Contest with the song Romeo And Juliet, in making of which she has been helped by Taras Demchuk and Dan Khrushchov.

Russia in Junior Eurovision

Appearances: 6
Debut: 2005
Victory: 2006, Vesenniy Jazz, by The Tomachevy Twins, 154 pts.
Recent History:
2010: Boy and Girl, by Sasha and Liza, 2nd, 119 pts.
2009: Malenkiy Prints, by Ekaterina 'Katya' Ryabova, 2nd, 116 pts.
2008: Spit Angel, by Mikhail Puntov, 7th, 73 pts.

Selection Process

National final held on 29th May 2011, with 20 singers qualifying from an internal Semi Final. Special dispensation was sought to allow Ryabova to sing for a second time at the contest – there is a rule against performer returning to Junior Eurovision.

ESC Insight Thoughts on Russia

Ewan

How much of an advantage will Katya have as a returnee to the Junior Eurovision stage? Statistically it has made little difference in the main contest, but having been through the experience and the schedule before, and being two years older, Katya will likely be on top of the mind games and the psychological battle. It's just a shame that her song sounds a little pedestrian. It goes exactly where you would expect it to go, there's no musical surprise, and there are far better singers going on stage at Yerevan.

Sharleen

There is no denying that the return of 2009 JESC runner-up Katya is a masterstroke for Russia, hoping for a Dima Bilan-esque win at the 2011 JESC contest. Nevertheless, when I listen to 'Romeo and Juliet', it doesn't stand out amongst the rest - despite her abilities as a performer, the song sounds very cookie-cutter. I feel like I have heard it a million times, and certainly there has been similar tunes before at Eurovision circa early 2000s, giving it in my mind a rather dated feel. But since when has it stopped a favourite from winning a song contest on their return with a lesser song to their previous entry?

Sweden

At a glance

Song: Faller (Falling)
Artist: Erik Rapp.
Composer: Erik Rapp, Johan Jamtberg, Mikael Gunneras.
Lyricist: Erik Rapp, Johan Jamtberg, Mikael Gunneras.

About the Artist:

Erik Rapp is 15 and lives in Leksand.

"The year 2007 I auditioned for my first singing contest. From the audition I got to the finals, which made both me and the rest of my family happy. After that, I started competing at singing contests all over Sweden, not just for competing, but also for having stages to perform at, doing what I love! It's getting serious now..."

"In the beginning, I sang cover songs, but for about six months ago, I started to write my own music together with Johan. The most important thing that I have before me now is that I will represent Sweden in the Junior Eurovision Song Contest. The final will take place on 3 December in the Armenian capital of Yerevan."

Sweden in Junior Eurovision

Appearances: 7
Debut: 2003
Best: 3rd, 2006, Det Finaste Nagon Kan Fa, by Molly Sanden, 116 pts

Recent History:

2010: Allt Jag Vill Ha, by Josefine Ridell, 11th, 48 pts.
2009: Du, by Mimmi Sanden, 6th, 68 pts.
2008: Withdrew due to low audience figures.

Selection Process

Erik Rapp, who will be the first male singer for Sweden at Junior Eurovision, was chosen by an internal selection.

ESC Insight Thoughts on Sweden

Ewan

Welcome to the song that I just don't get. Sweden was the last country to declare, and everyone else in the ESC Insight team jumped on this song as "the one," while I threw them a puzzled look. I listened again. And again. I still I can't hear how this song moved from the "good album filler" into the "winning" pile. Erik is a confident performer, who looks to carry a good stage presence, but this is one of the few JESC songs where I have no worries about the singer on the night. It's just the song that puzzles me.

Sharleen

If we were to judge purely on my own repeated listens, the strength and quality of the song, lyrics and performance on the studio version, 'Falling' would be my hands down winner of the 2011 JESC selection. The storyline of falling in love and the way one feels when they see that special someone is not unique to the world, but the maturity of the lyrics are unique to this years contest. Could it be speaking beyond the years of the artist and the target audience though? And the greatest unknown for me is; can Erik reproduce this live on stage?

Ukraine

At a glance

Song: Evropa (Europe).
Artist: Kristall.
Composer: Kristina Kochegarova (Kristall).
Lyricist: Kristina Kochegarova (Kristall).

About the Artist:

Kristina Kochegarova is a young singer and presenter of the music channel in Ukraine. In 2009 Kristina was awarded the title of Teen Miss Beauty Star 2009 and in 2010 released her first solo album under the title *Riznokoliorovyi Svit*. However, the highest achievement of the young singer is a victory at the national selection of the 2011 Junior Eurovision Song Contest.

Kristina's stage pseudonym is Kristall, which means "crystal", "pure", "strong" and "bright" and includes the girl's name.

Kristina persistently works and dreams to become a famous singer, to study many different languages, to learn playing different musical instruments. She is sure that dreams always come true, since her motto is the following: "Be faithful to your dream and it will return your feelings!"

Ukraine in Junior Eurovision

Appearances: 5
Debut: 2006
Best: 2nd, 2008, Matrosy, by Victoria Petryk, 135 pts.

Recent History:

2010: Miy Litak, by Yulia Gurska, 14th, 28 pts.
2009: Tri Topoli, Tri Surmy, by Andranik Alexanyan, 5th, 89 pts.
2008: Matroys, by Victoria Petryk, 135 pts.

Selection Process

14 songs were selected for a national final, with a week of vocal training and dance classes given to the singers leading up to the televised final on July 31st. Kristall won this with 20 pts, 5 more than second placed Victoriya Kobzar.

ESC Insight Thoughts on Ukraine

Ewan

Unlike Erik Rapp's 'Faller', I loved 'Evropa' from the first listen. The song's dance floor beat hits the sweet spot of rhythm catchy lyrics, and unpredictability. I think would carry over to the main contest in May and I wouldn't put it past Ukraine to try just that if this wins. Finally, with a video that looks like Ani Lorak crossed with Guys and Dolls, the Ukraine have ticked a lot of boxes. It's a shame that the English language version is a pale shadow of the original, but thankfully for Kristall, Europe votes for what's sung on stage. I expect a *lot* of people to vote for this.

Sharleen

Kristall's song, translated as 'Europe', sounds like a modern dancefloor classic; a song that could feature easily in the bigger Eurovision competition and gain an excellent result. With lyrics of the singer wanting to be like Madonna, Rihanna, Ronaldo and Beyonce, it speaks to youth clearly about ambition and striving to be the best at whatever you put your efforts in. Great that the artist has taken her message to heart, because she appears confident on stage, and live, her voice is well suited to the song. Would be highly surprised if Kristall isn't featuring in the top 3 at the end of the day.

Enjoy the Junior Eurovision Song Contest Online

The Official Junior Eurovision Site

Follow all the official news, watch the backstage YouTube videos, and tune in to a free live stream of the contest at **www.junioreurovision.tv**.

ESC Insight

In depth discussion and analysis of both this year's Junior Eurovision Song Contest, as well as features and commentary throughout the year at **www.escinsight.com**.

The Unofficial Eurovision Song Contest Podcast

Hosted by the ESC Insight team, and supported by the ESCxtra writing staff in Yerevan, the Podcast will bring a daily chat show from the Armenian capital, as well as looking at all the songs in the ever popular Juke Box Jury series. Find the podcast at **ESC Insight** or search for the podcast in **iTunes**.

ESCxtra

Up to date news and opinion from the fastest growing Eurovision news site on the internet, **www.escxtra.com**.

ESC Buzz

Answering the question "what's happening in the world of Eurovision right now?", ESC Buzz is your portal to the news, views, and opinions of every major Eurovision website on the internet, **www.escbuzz.com**.