



ESC Insight Unofficial Guide to Eurovision 2011



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Foreword

Willkommen nach Düsseldorf!

Fifty-four years after Germany played host to the second ever Eurovision Song Contest, the musical jamboree comes to Düsseldorf this May. It's a very different world since ARD staged the show in 1957 with just 10 nations in a small TV studio in Frankfurt.

This year, a record 43 countries will take part in the three shows, with a potential audience of 35,000 live in the Esprit Arena. All 10 nations from 1957 will be on show in Germany, but only two of their languages survive. The creaky phone lines that provided the results from the 100 judges have been superseded by state of the art, pan-continental technology that involves all the 125 million viewers watching at home. It's a very different show indeed.

Back in 1957, Lys Assia attempted to defend her Eurovision crown and this year Germany's Lena will become the third artist taking a crack at the same challenge. Potentially, Lena may find herself up against another former Eurovision winner, Dana International; whilst former contestants Dino Merlin, Zdob i Zdub & Gunnar Ólafsson are also back for a further stab at Euro glory. Another artist who's competed in the past, Stefan Raab, will co-present the show alongside Anke Engelke and Judith Rakers.

With no withdrawals, Italy, Austria, Hungary and San Marino re-join the contest this year, the Italians becoming the fifth member of the elite group of Big 5 nations with direct entry to the final.

With no clear favourite yet emerged from the field, it will all make for a very exciting contest. The ESC Insight team will be bringing you all the exciting stories from the rehearsals and the shows themselves in preparation for the biggest musical TV show in the world.

Hier ist zu einem großen Wettbewerb!

JKO x

John Kennedy O'Connor

The Eurovision Song Contest: The Official History

www.carltonbooks.co.uk

Editors Introduction

Ewan's word...

As we all left Oslo last year, knowing that we'd be heading to Germany, the big winner for me was the Eurovision Podcast. Thousands of listeners around the world had downloaded and listened to the interviews, the news, the judges and the commentary. It was time to take it off my personal site and give it a dedicated home . ESC Insight.

Not just a new Eurovision site, but one with a slightly different goal to the daily news and reaction that was already online. Out of that grew a site based around spending more time on topics, looking in-depth at issues around the Song Contest, going for a more magazine-based feel with the articles and the podcast supporting each other.

Twelve months later it's looking good so far, and as the Sharleen, myself and the rest of the team board the flights to Dusseldorf, we're looking forward to our first ESC Insight Eurovision.

I hope you are too!

Sharleen's word...

For our first years presence online, ESC Insight aims to provide Eurovision fans with a different, more personal coverage to the events surrounding the song contest.

This book serves as a fan resource for now and the years to come, with statistics, knowledge and rundown of the national finals as well as the individual entrants place within the contest as a whole. Yes, this information is available across the spectrum of websites many fans would use for research, but this document pools all that into one handy reference that you can print or keep online at your convenience.

In addition, both Ewan and myself have spent many hours reviewing and re-reviewing the entries for 2011, giving a rundown of each ones chances in Dusseldorf come May 2011. Strengths and weaknesses of the songs, artists and presentations are all assessed. We hope to give fans a holistic view of the odds for qualifying and winning for each artist should you wish to take a bit of a bet on the events. Nevertheless, keep in mind that the only time the performance really counts is when these countries hit the stage and are beamed into 125 million viewers homes across the world.

Enjoy our labour of love, use it wisely, maybe even make some notes of your own (we have provided the space!).

Special thanks to...

Ben Morris for amazing mini-pops that have allowed us to illustrate each artist in this book. And to our regular writing contributors John Kennedy O'Connor and Paul Jordan who provide us with wonderful and thought-provoking pieces for the website every week.

Albania



AL 2011

At a Glance

Song: Kenga Ime (%My Song+)
Artist: Aurela Gace
Composer: Shpetim Saraci
Lyricist: Sokol Marsi

About the Artist

Aurela Gace born in Llakatundi, Albania but now lives in New York.

Gace sees herself as a folk/pop singer. Entered the singing festival circuit in 1994, she racked up numerous victories, including wins in the Festival i Kenges in 1999 and 2001. She moved to America in 2002. This was to both challenge herself and drive her career forward by promoting Albanian-American music, including a performance to President Bill Clinton in 2004.

<http://www.aurelagace.com/> <http://www.myspace.com/aurelagace>

Albania in Eurovision

Appearances: 7
Debut: 2004
Victory: -
Best: 7th
- 2004: The Image of You, by Anjeza Shahini, with 106 points
Semi Finals: Qualified 2004, 2005, 2008, 2009, 2010.

Recent History

2010: It's All About You, by Juliana Pasha, 16th with 62 points.
2009: Carry Me In Your Dreams, by Kejsa Tola, 17th with 48 points.
2008: Zemren E Lame Pang, by Olta Boka, 16th with 55 points.

2011 National Final

Held on Christmas Day 2010, was the 49th Festival i Kenges, the national song contest run since 1966, and since 2003 has selected the Eurovision song for Albania. Two semi finals on 23rd and 24th December, resulted in 18 acts taking the stage. Gace scored 6 12's and 1 10 from the 7 judges.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

One of the few songs in this year's contest that has improved now it is being sung in English. Unfortunately she sounds a bit too much like Liza Minnelli for my liking, and the temptation to over-sing this on the Dusseldorf stage will not benefit the song.

Sharleen says...

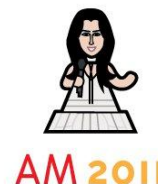
Reflecting on the change from Albanian to English, I don't think the remix and language change has given this song more of a chance. whilst lyrically its great to understand the song, its very shouty and abusive to listen to. Very borderline to qualify.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- Ende ka shprese, by Alban Skenderaj, ft Miriam Cani.

Your Notes

Armenia



At a Glance

Song: Boom Boom
Artist: Emmy
Composer: Hayk Harutyunyan, Hayk Hovhannisyan
Lyricist: Sosi Khanikyan

About the Artist

Born Emma Bejanyan, 26-year-old Emmy is considered to be one of Armenia's most popular and influential singers, being labelled as a "pop princess" and "Armenian pop icon".

Emmy's career took off immediately after she recorded her first song, "Hayastan," and released its video, in 1993. While she earned reward after reward at song competitions in Armenia, Russia, Turkey, Europe, and elsewhere, she sang and toured with the all-female folk-pop quartet Hayer (1994-2000).

Emmy competed in the Eurovision selections in 2010 alongside male singer Mihran with the song "Hey (Let Me Hear You Say)", but missed out, running second behind Eva Rivas.

<http://emmy.am/en>

About the Composer

Both are members of the Armenian band Apricota.

Armenia in Eurovision

Appearances: 6
Debut: 2006
Victory: -
Best: 4th
- 2008: Qele Qele, by Sirusho, with 199 points
Semi Finals: Qualified in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010

Recent History

2010: Apricot Stone, by Eva Rivas, Final, 7th with 141 points
2009: Jan Jan, by Inga and Anush, Final, 10th with 92 points
2008: Qele Qele, by Sirusho, Final, 4th with 199 points

2011 National Final

On 11th December it was announced that Emmy was internally selected to represent Armenia.

The Armenian entry for the 2011 Eurovision Song Contest was picked out of four songs, all of which were performed by Emmy. A 50/50 combination of televoting and the votes of an expert jury decided that she should sing "Boom-Boom" in Düsseldorf.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

Feels like a Turkish or Greek with the fusion of tribal elements on top of a light dance/pop number. There's nothing new to Eurovision in here, and actually feels a touch dated. Maybe 5 years ago this would have been a strong entry, but not now. And then there's the lyric "Your kiss is like a laika". Oh dear. Taxi for the songwriter please.

Sharleen says...

Starting off promising with a Spanish-rumba opening it descends into bubblegum pop lyrics. Yes it is catchy enough and will stick in the minds of all who hear it, so it should qualify easily from semi 1. Nevertheless, is it just a bit too childish for people to like and vote for? Guess this where the diaspora and demographics of the voting will be really tested, cause I'm not feeling any potential for a top half finals finish here.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- Ayo, by Emmy

Your Notes

Austria



At a Glance

Song: The Secret is Love
Artist: Nadine Beiler
Composer: Thomas Rabitsch
Lyricist: Nadine Beiler

About the Artist

20-year-old Nadine hails from Innsbruck in Austria.

Nadine's first performance on a big stage came in 2006 at the ORF *Starmania* casting show, where a little girl with a great voice won against 2,500 candidates, and later went on to prevail over all other contestants during the finals in January 2007.

She since returned to school to graduate and now studies law at the University of Innsbruck.

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/NadineBeilerGoesEurovision>

About the Composer

Thomas Rabitsch is an Austrian keyboardist and record producer who has previously been involved in productions for film, tv as well as artists Falco and The Slow Club.

Austria in Eurovision

Appearances: 43
Debut: 1957
Victory: 1
- 1966
Best: 1st
- 1966: Merci Cherie, by Udo Jurgens, with 31 points
Semi Finals: Automatically qualified to final in 2004, but missed out in 2005 and 2007.
Withdrew from 2006. Have been absent since 2008.

Recent History

2007: Get a Life Get Alive, by Eric Papilaya, 27th with 4 points.

2011 National Final

ORF and radio station Hitradio Ö3 cooperated to find the artists for the national final. From October until 10 December, Austrians were invited to nominate artists that could represent their country.

A jury decided which 30 artists were to proceed to the online voting to be held in January 2011. The 10 artists receiving the most votes were then asked to participate in the national final on 25 February 2011, where televoting decided the Austrian Eurovision entry.

Nadine was ranked as second in the jury vote that was announced in February that allowed her to participate at the late February 2011 final. At the national final, Nadine Beiler won 34.95% of the vote in the initial national televote, and then 46.73% of the vote in the superfinal against Trackshittaz and Klimmstein.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

The Austrian national final was either going to go for Alf Poier redux, or take Eurovision seriously and send this "end of a Jerry Bruckheimer" ballad. They plumped for the latter, and with a poor draw in the second final Beiler is going to have to sing her socks off to make any progress.

Sharleen says...

Even months before it was selected something screamed dark horse to me. Having seen Nadine Beiler live now with her amazing voice, even more so. For me this still stands as the ~~as~~ It True? for 2011. If it qualifies through its tough semi (and thus surprisingly many), stand by for a possible top 10.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- Oida Taunz, by Trackshittaz

Your Notes

Azerbaijan



At a Glance

Song: Running Scared
Artist: Eldar and Nigar (also known as Ell and Nikki)
Composer: Stefan Örn, Sandra Bjurman, Iain Farquharson
Lyricist: Stefan Örn, Sandra Bjurman, Iain Farquharson

About the Artist

Nigar Jamal was born in Baku on 7th September 1980.

In 1996, she was recognised in the popular Azerbaijani vocal competition *Pöhrə*.

Eldar Gasimov was born in Baku in 1989.

In 2001, Eldar began his studies the piano class at a Baku music school, from which he graduated with distinction.

<http://eldarnigar.eurovisiontalents.com>

About the Composer

Were also responsible for the 2010 entry Drip Drop, by Safura.

Azerbaijan in Eurovision

Appearances: 3
Debut: 2008
Victory: -
Best: 3rd
- 2009: Always, by AySel & Arash, with 207 points
Semi Finals: Qualified in 2008, 2009, 2010.

Recent History

2010: Drip Drop, by Safura, 5th with 145 points
2009: Always, by AySel & Arash, 3rd with 207 points
2008: Day After Day, by Elnur & Samir, 8th with 132 points

2011 National Final

On 6 October, ctimai TV announced their selection process for Eurovision 2011. In this preliminary phase of the national selection, ctimai chose 100 hopefuls to participate in the process.

In November 2010, it was announced 77 people were selected. 11 participants appeared each week, the candidates performed a foreign song on Monday, an Azerbaijani song on Tuesday, a Eurovision entry on Wednesday, song of their choice on Thursday, and on Friday the winner was determined by televote and jury.

On 11 February, the jury selected Eldar Gasimov and Nigar Jamal to represent Azerbaijan as a duo at Eurovision 2011.

The song was internally selected amongst 15 songs submitted from Sweden, Azerbaijan and Australia.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

One of the marathon national searches ended up with two singers, who were handed this song. It's a slower number from Azerbaijan, very radio friendly, but it's pretty bland and not easily remembered. You can't count them out, especially with the hunger they have for a victory, but this may not be it.

Sharleen says...

What a lovely radio friendly song, like last year really. But I don't think it's an equal paring of singers, and judging from the national finals, Nigar might be the one to bring the song down from a possible top 3 position. But even without seeing this live it's screaming a top qualifier from semi 1 and an easy top 10 placing.

Your Notes

Belarus



At a Glance

Song: I Love Belarus
Artist: Anastasiya Vinnikova
Composer: Eugene Oleinik
Lyricist: Eugene Oleinik, Svetlana Geraskova

About the Artist

Anastasia was born in 1991.

The stage became a significant event in the performer's life and work. She has participated in university contests, and then she successfully passed audition and was admitted to the Youth Variety Theatre directed by Vasily Rainchik. From that moment Anastasiya got acquainted with a famous Belarusian song writer and producer Evgeny Oleinik, who wrote five songs especially for the young performer.

(no websites available)

Belarus in Eurovision

Appearances: 7
Debut: 2004
Victory: -
Best: 6th
- 2007: Work Your Magic, by Dmitry Koldun, 145 points
Semi Finals: Qualified in 2007, 2010.

Recent History

2010: Butterflies, by 3+2, 24th place with 18 points
2009: Eyes that Never Lie, by Petr Elfimov, 13th in the semi with 25 points
2008: Hasta La Vista, by Ruslan Alekhno, 17th in the semi with 27 points

2011 National Final

Both the song and artist were internally selected on 28th February, first announcing the song ~~Born in Byelorussia~~q This song was later disqualified due to lyrical content and also breaking the 1st September rule . the song having first been performed in May 2010. It was replaced on 12th March with ~~I Love Belarus~~q

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

As a song this has a lot going for it, with a fast tempo, a consistent feel to the verse and chorus, and an easily to sing stomp along chorus. But if it does well (or even manages the victory) it's going to cause all sorts of political fun for the organisers.

Sharleen says...

It's cheesy and dancey, the kind of thing that sucks in most of the people who attend Eurovision live but will fall flat on its face with the tv viewing/voting public. Potentially a lot of people could also be offended by the nationalistic sentiments on display in the lyrics too. It will (and should) stay firmly back in the semi 2.

Your Notes

Belgium



BE 2011

At a Glance

Song: With Love Baby
Artist: Witloof Bay
Composer: Benoît Giaux / RoxorLoops
Lyricist: Benoît Giaux / RoxorLoops

About the Artist

Witloof Bay started in 2005 and is a group of 5 professional singers and a world-renowned beatboxer. They come from the 3 regions of Belgium and draw on very varied musical styles, ranging from pop to jazz. With a repertory consisting initially of cover versions. The group is currently working on their second album of original songs.

In 2010, they won the *Contemporary A Cappella Recording Award* for best Folk/World song and they have supported big name groups such as The Manhattan Transfer, The Swingle Singers and The Real Group.

RoxorLoops - beatboxing.

Benoît Giaux - baritone.

Florence Huby - alto.

Etienne Debaisieux - bass.

Nicolas Dorian - tenor.

Alexia Saffery - soprano.

<http://users.skynet.be/sb248981/WitloofBay.html>

Belgium in Eurovision

Appearances: 52

Debut: 1956

Victory: 1

- 1986

Best: 1st

- 1986: Joëlle La Vie, by Sandra Kim, with 176 points

Semi Finals: Auto-qualified in 2004, and qualified in 2010. Did not qualify between 2005-2009.

Recent History

2010: Me and My Guitar, by Tom Dice, 6th place with 143 points

2009: Copycat, by Patrick Ouchene, 17th place in the semi with 1 point

2008: O Julissi, by Ishtar, 17th place in the semi with 16 points

2011 National Final

The first phase of the Belgian selections for the Eurovision Song Contest 2011 finished on 31 December. Almost 200 artists subscribed with a song on Akamusic. and 30 artists raised " 20,000 for qualification. RTBF introduced an additional round in which the number of finalists will be reduced to 14. The semi-final was held on 30 January and judged by a professional jury, by the listeners and on the internet. Witloof Bay was selected in the 12th February national final 12 points from both the jury and televote.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

It's a courageous choice to send an acappella band to Eurovision. History says that this sort of thing simply does not work, and I can't see Witloof Bay breaking that tradition.

Sharleen says...

After the hard work done in 2010, this is a letdown. Despite recognising the talent that lies behind this act, I can't see this appealing to anyone on the Eurovision stage and if there is a bet for bottom of the table this might be worth taking.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- Elle Merveille, by Alexandre Deschamps

Your Notes

Bosnia & Herzegovina

At a Glance

Song: Love In Rewind
Artist: Dino Merlin
Composer: Dino Merlin
Lyricist: Dino Merlin



About the Artist

Born in 1962 in Sarajevo, Dino Merlin is the most renowned songwriter from Bosnia & Herzegovina. In 1983 Dino established the pop rock band Merlin. He started his solo career in 1991 going by the stage name Dino Merlin.

He has released ten studio albums (5 with the band Merlin and 5 solo albums) as well as several greatest hits editions and live concert recordings.

In 2000 Dino performed for the first time at Kosovo Olympic Stadium in Sarajevo in front of 80000 spectators, as part of the tour surrounding his album *Sredinom* which was one of the best selling albums in Southeastern Europe in the last decade.

Dino wrote the music and co-authored the lyrics for the first ever entry of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1993 at the ESC (*Sva Bol Svijeta*). In 1999, Dino represented Bosnia and Herzegovina in Jerusalem with his song *Putnici* featuring Beatrice Poulot. He ended up in seventh place.

Dino wrote the lyrics for the first official national anthem of Bosnia & Herzegovina titled *Jedna Si Jedina*.

<http://www.dinomerlin.net>

Bosnia & Herzegovina in Eurovision

Appearances: 16
Debut: 1993
Victory: -
Best: 3rd
- 2006: Lejla, by Hari Mata Hari, with 229 points
Semi Finals: Qualified every year 2004-2010

Recent History

2010: Thunder and Lightning, by Vukasin Brajic, 17th with 51 points
2009: Bistra Voda, by Regina, 9th with 106 points
2008: Pokasaj, by Laka, 10th with 110 points

2011 National Final

Both the song and artist was internally selected, with the announcement occurring on 1st December and the song presentation on 20th February

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

Autocorrect brought up Dinosaur for Dino, but while he is going to be seen as one of the older acts, this returning performer carries on the tradition of Bosnia & Herzegovina; sending music that's not shaped for Eurovision, but is a piece of music the performed and delegates believe is a great track. It falls a little bit after the opening, but perhaps the strong opening is enough.

Sharleen says...

Hard to put my finger on it, but this song has something magical about it. When the stomping and clapping kicks in I find it hard not to smile and join in. The more I listen, the more I think it has the potential to be a Olsen Brothers surprise. Pure joy . easy qualifier from its starting position in semi 2 and likely top 10.

Your Notes

Bulgaria



At a Glance

Song: Na Inat
Artist: Poli Genova
Composer: Sebastian Arman, David Bronner, Borislav Milanov and Poli Genova
Lyricist: Sebastian Arman, David Bronner, Borislav Milanov and Poli Genova

About the Artist

Born on 10th February 1987 in Sofia, Poli started singing at the age of 4 in the popular children's vocal ensemble with the National Palace of Children. Later she joined the children's vocal ensemble Bon-Bon after it was set up in 1995. Bon Bon represented Bulgaria at the Junior Eurovision Song Contest in 2007. Poli graduated from The National Music School "Ljubomir Pipkov", focusing on clarinet. Now she is in her third year of study to become a film director. Even so, she continues her singing career and is involved in several projects. Genova is part of the Unicef Charity Project "The Magnificent Six", stands as a vocalist for "Azis' Show" and "Dani Milev Band" in the first edition of the reality show "Dancing with the Stars: Bulgaria". Poli has attempted to represent Bulgaria at Eurovision a number of times - In 2005 and 2006 she took part in the National Selection of Eurovision Song Contest as a member of the trio "Melody". In 2009 Poli received a wildcard with the song *One Lifetime Is Not Enough*. Eventually she finished second in the final after landslide-winner Krassimir Avramov, singing *Illusion*. In 2011 she will represent Bulgaria alone, with her song *Na inat* (Defiance). Her debut album is also being prepared at the moment.

<http://www.facebook.com/people/Poli-Genova/100000584375831#!/>

Bulgaria in Eurovision

Appearances: 6
Debut: 2005
Victory: -
Best: 5th
- 2007: Water, by Elitsa Todorova and Stoyan Yankoulov, with 157 points
Semi Finals: Qualified in 2007

Recent History

2010: Angel Si Ti, by Miro, 15th in the semi with 19 points
2009: Illusion, by Krassimir Avramov, 16th in the semi with 7 points
2008: DJ Take Me Away, by Deep Zone and Balthazar, 11th in the semi with 56 points

2011 National Final

The Bulgarian National Final took place on 23rd February with 18 other competitors fighting it out amongst each other via 50% televote, 50% jury vote.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

It threatens to be a ballad, but then switches into a nice slice of pop rock. Like many tracks this year, it wouldn't sound out of place in the modern charts, but this is going to need a favourable draw to stand out musically in the live shows.

Sharleen says...

First listen didn't grab me, but now I'm starting to see its potential amongst all the other guitar driven acts this year. Strong female performance of the ilk of Pink, terrific stage presence. The best Bulgaria has put forward in years, but still feels like it's a borderline to qualify.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- Teen Life, by Mona.

Your Notes

Croatia



At a Glance

Song: Celebrate
Artist: Daria Kinzer
Composer: Boris Djurdjevic
Lyricist: Boris Djurdjevic & Marina Mudrini

About the Artist

Born on May 29th, 1988 in Aschaffenburg in Bavaria, Germany. Her mother is Croatian and her father German.

As a child she studied piano and took voice coaching lessons, first with Thomas Frank, an Austrian actor, director and jury member of *Starmania/Singing With The Stars*, in Vienna, and after that she concentrated on jazz with Elly Wright, the white woman with a black voice. Daria continued her education with a Viennese musical singer Cornelia Zenz and with pop singer Monika Ballwein, a vocal coach at *Starmania*.

Daria also studied at the Viennese conservatory Franz Schubert Konservatorium and had additional voice lessons with Dutch musical star Susan Rigvava-Dumas.

So far she performed live at Puls TV and taken part in various concerts and productions. Apart from *Chicago* and *Cats*, she also appeared in *Hair*, *Jekyll & Hyde*, *Little Shop Of Horrors* and at solo concerts in Wiener Konzerthaus, Wiener Rathaus, Stadttheater Wels, Wiener Börse, Orangerie Schönbrunn and in the Viennese Ronacher Theater.

Upon winning the Croatian national final, she moved from Vienna to Croatia to concentrate on Eurovision.

<http://www.darakinzer.com>

Croatia in Eurovision

Appearances: 18
Debut: 1993
Victory: -
Best: 4th
- 1996: Sveta Ljubav, by Maja Blagdan, with 98 points
- 1999: Marija Magdalena, by Doris Dragovic, with 118 points
Semi Finals: Qualified in 2004, 2005, 2006 (auto qualification), 2008, 2009 (through jury vote/save).

Recent History

2010: Lako Je Sve, by Feminem, 13th in the semi with 33 points
2009: Ljepa Tena, by Igor Curkov feat. Andrea, 18th with 45 points
2008: Romanca, by Kraljevi Ulice feat. 75 cents, 21st with 44 points

2011 National Final

Taking 7 weeks to select, 24 participants were whittled down to just 2 where on the final week they competed with 3 songs each and judged by jury and televote. The song *Lahor* was selected as the best for both artists (to be then retitled in English as *Break a Leg* then *Celebrate*). Daria won over her competitor Jacques Houdek by almost double the vote at the superfinal.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

There's a hint of Celine Dion in here, but only a hint. It's very much a dance floor number with a driving beat and light lyrics. Great to fill three minutes in the Euroclub, but it's hard to see this being a memorable moment in time on the Dusseldorf stage.

Sharleen says...

First she said ~~B~~reak a Legq but now they are ~~C~~elebrateqing? A bit premature to celebrate methinks. This is a good song in itself, but mixed amongst a pack of stronger dance-pop songs I think it will most likely stay put in the first semi.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- Lahor, by Jacques Houdek

Your Notes

Cyprus



At a Glance

Song: San Aggelos S'agapisa
Artist: Christos Mylordos
Composer: Andreas Anastasiou
Lyricist: Mihalīs Antoniou

About the Artist

Christos Mylordos was born on the 30th of April 1991 in Nicosia. At the age of 13 he started piano, guitar and vocal lessons and had a degree from Royal School of Music and Rock school of Music.

On 10 September 2010, Mylordos won the singing competition of the talent show *Performance* and, as a result, he will represent Cyprus at the Eurovision Song Contest 2011 in Germany.

He has worked for 2 years as a professional singer, performing in many festivals. He has 2 CD singles which were launched in Cyprus and Greece.

<http://christosmylordos.com/>

Cyprus in Eurovision

Appearances: 28

Debut: 1981

Victory: -

Best: 5th

- 1982: Mono I Agapi by Anna Vissi, with 85 points

- 1997: Mana Mou by Hara & Andreas Constantinou, with 98 points

- 2004: Stronger Every Minute by Lisa Andreas, with 170 points

Semi Finals: Qualified 2004, 2005, 2010

Recent History

2010: Life Looks Better in Spring by Jon Lilygreen and The Islanders, 21st with 27 points

2009: Firefly by Christina Mextaxa, 14th in the semi with 32 points

2008: Femme Fatale by Evdokia Kadi, 15th in the semi with 36 points

2011 National Final

CyBC announced in December 2009 that the Cypriot entry for the Eurovision Song Contest 2011 will be selected through the singing competition of the new talent show, *Performance*. CyBC accepted applications from anyone between 16 and 30 years old. 13 weekly shows were held from 19 March 2010, with 39 contestants being selected by a jury (60% of the vote) and a public televote (the remaining 40%) to progress to the next stage.

On 10 September, Christos Mylordos won the *Performance* talent show, singing "Supreme" by Robbie Williams. The song was internally selected, and on 20 January, CyBC announced the song title of the song, "San Aggelos S'agapisa"

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

After controversially sending Welsh guitarist Jon Lilygreen last year, Cyprus aren't going to upset their audience with this number. To be honest, this could easily be mistaken for the Greek entry (and Greece would probably rather have this than what they've ended up with). A strong live performance will lift this song, but it's a risky thing to rely on.

Sharleen says...

Oh dear Cyprus, did you not see Poland last year? So many different sounds, so confusing, and something threatening bubbling deep underneath. At least spare us the domestic violence on stage, ok? Semi 2 is far too strong for this to escape.

Your Notes

Denmark



DK 2011

At a Glance

Song: A New Tomorrow
Artist: A Friend In London
Composer: Lise Cabbie & Jakob Schack Glæsner
Lyricist: Lise Cabbie & Jakob Schack Glæsner

About the Artist

A Friend In London was formed in 2005 when four guys met at a boarding school in Vostrup, Denmark. In 2008 A Friend In London won the European final of the *Bodog Million Dollar Battle of the Bands*, with more than 40,000 bands from around the world participating. This event ignited a spark for the band in Canada and since 2009 there has been two successful tours in the state of Ontario, including shows at North by NorthEast 2009 and Canadian Music Week 2010 as well as a performance at Breakfast TV, no.1 morning show in Toronto.

They most recently performed at the Canadian Music Week 2011 launching another Canadian spring tour in conjunction with this performance. Alongside the expansive Canadian activity the preparations for the anticipated debut album have also been kicked off with album release set in 2011.

<http://www.myspace.com/afriendinlondon>

Denmark in Eurovision

Appearances: 39
Debut: 1957
Victory: 2
- 1963: Dansevise by Grethe and Jørgen Ingmann, with 42 points
- 2000: Fly on the Wings of Love by The Olsen Brothers, with 195 points
Best: 1st
Semi Finals: Qualified 205, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010

Recent History

2010: In a Moment Like This by Chanee and Nøvergren, 4th with 149 points
2009: Believe Again by Niels Brinck, 13th with 74 points
2008: All Night Long by Simon Mathew, 15th with 60 points

2011 National Final

On 3rd February, 10 acts were announced to compete in the Melodi Grand Prix including Jenny Berggren from Ace of Base. In the second round of voting at the final on 26 February, the four qualifiers competed against each other in pairs, with only two progressing to the final round. Stine Kinck, with the song "Hvad Hjertet Lever Af" squared off against Anne Noa, who performed "Sleepless" and Le Freak, with the song "25 Hours A Day" faced off against A Friend In London and "New Tomorrow". Both of the latter songs won, making the Final Round a match-up between Anne Noa and A Friend In London. The winner was determined by 100% televoting.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

It's strong and anthemic, it's got a strong musical thread to go with the lyrics, you can imagine lighters being held aloft at the chorus (or at least some Swedish red glow sticks). It just needs to lift the last chorus from a refrain to a rousing 'get on your feet and sing!' moment to make it a strong contender.

Sharleen says...

Yet another guitar driven act, but with a very commercial sound and some charisma up front gives it a chance. The hook is good, but not enough to win - just one more bit of oomph towards the end could take it from simple qualifier and mid-table to top 5 contender.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- Sleepless by Anna Noa

Your Notes

Estonia



At a Glance

Song: Rockerfeller Street
Artist: Getter Jaani
Composer: Sven Lõhmus
Lyricist: Sven Lõhmus

About the Artist

Getter was born February 3, 1993 in Tallinn. Her rise to stardom was sparked off by the TV programme *Estonian Superstar*. She was the youngest finalist in the programme's history and the jury's favourite, winning everyone's hearts as a beaming sunshine girl.

She also takes acting classes at the School of Fine Arts, lead by Kaari Sillamaa who has written the Estonian lyrics for the Estonian Eurovision entries of 1996 ("Kaelakee hääl") and 1999 ("Diamond of Night"). In 2010, Getter Jaani played one of the leading parts in the popular youth musical *High School Musical*. Her debut single *The Best Day* ("Parim päev") was produced by Sven Lõhmus and it became the most played Estonian radio hit of the year.

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Getter-Jaani/191248767576069>

About the Composer/Writer

Sven Lõhmus previously wrote the Eurovision entries *Lets Get Loud* for Suntribe and *Ranjadad* for Urban Symphony.

Estonia in Eurovision

Appearances: 16
Debut: 1994
Victory: 1
- 2001: Everybody by Tanel Padar Dave Benton & 2XL, with 198 points
Best: 1st
Semi Finals: Qualified in 2009

Recent History

2010: Siren by Malcolm Lincoln, 14th in the semi with 39 points
2009: Randajad by Urban Symphony, 6th with 129 points
2008: Leto Svet by Kreisiraadio, 18th in the semi with 8 points

2011 National Final

Eesti Laul 2011 started on 12th February, with 2 semi finals and a final featuring 19 entries. 5 entries were selected from each semi to compete in the final on 26th February with a 50% jury vote and 50% televote. Two artists qualified to a superfinal, where the result was determined purely by televote. Getter Jaani won with 62% of the vote.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

Another of the modern songs this year, and this has all the elements needed for a victory. There's a strong song that never gets boring, there's an infectious chorus, a gutsy refrain that changes tempo, and a stage showed that worked well in the National Finals. Barring disaster, this should be in the top few songs on Saturday night.

Sharleen says...

One of the few instant songs in 2011 and looks great on stage. On first listen I already had the chorus down-pat and that's a very good sign the public will follow suit and remember to vote this straight into a top 5 position.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- I Wanna Meet Bob Dylan by Outloudz

Your Notes

FYR Macedonia



MK 2011

At a Glance

Song: Rusinka
Artist: Vlatko Ilieski
Composer: Grigor Koprov, Vladimir Dojchinovski
Lyricist: Marko Marinkovikj-Slatkaristika, Jovan Jovanov

About the Artist

Vlatko was born in Skopje on the 2nd of July 1985. His fascination with music began when he started playing the guitar and the piano at the age of nine. After performing with his band at F.Y.R. Macedonian rock festivals, he was offered a lead singer role in the hard rock group Moral. During this time he was known as the Macedonian Jon Bon Jovi.

Their album *Koga Patuvam*, released in 2003, was a big success, and two years later Moral performed at Deep Purple's concert in Skopje as their opening act.

Vlatko launched his solo career with the hit *Uste Si Mi Ti* and has since made numerous successful appearances at many festivals, such as *Skopje Festival*, *Ohrid Fest*.

His first solo album *So Drugi Zborovi*, released in 2008, was a huge success both with the audience and music reviewers. Many songs from his second album *Najbogot Na Svet*, released in 2010, still top national charts.

Vlatko Ilievski is the first Macedonian singer who performed in the country's biggest concert venue in June 2010, in front of 10,000 fans.

He has won numerous awards, including two first prizes at *Ohrid Fest 2009*, both in the Macedonian Pop Songs Selection and the International Selection, together with Risto Samardziev for the song *Za Ljubov Se Pee Do Kraj*, Macedonian Radio Hit Award for 2009 for *Najbogot Na Svet* and the Macedonian Radio Hit Award for 2010 for *Srekja*.

<http://www.facebook.com/ilievskivlatko#!/VlatkolievskiPage>

FYR Macedonia in Eurovision

Appearances: 10
Debut: 1998
Victory: -
Best: 12th
- 2006: Ninanajna by Elena Risteska, with 56 points
Semi Finals: Qualified in 2004-2007

Recent History

2010: Jas ja imam silata by Gjoko Taneski, 15th in the semi with 37 points

2009: Ne zto zto kje ostane by Next Time, 10th in the semi (jury voted out) with 45 points

2008: Let Me Love You by Tamara, Vrak and Adrian, 10th in semi (jury voted out) with 64 points

2011 National Final

Skopje Fest 2011 took place on 27th February with 20 entrants. The winner was determined by 50% jury vote and 50% televote. Vlatko won convincingly with 12 points from both the jury and televote.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

I've a soft spot for this one. Again it's taking the ethnic feel of a country, throwing a modern structure on top, and presenting something unique. It's constantly shifting in terms of rhythm and tempo, and is a foot tapper whenever it comes up on shuffle. If this was from one of the bigger countless, you'd pick this as a top five finisher. I hope Macedonia are rewarded well for this.

Sharleen says...

It all starts off nicely with a bit of a ethno-pop beat, a rather attractive guy at the front, then he starts to sing. Vlatko's gravel-like voice certainly matches the style however erring on the abrasive, but amongst the younger fresher faced pop artists, could appeal to those who like a bit of rock and rough. A pure guilty personal pleasure of mine, but admittedly I don't think we won't be hearing this again on the Saturday night.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- Ram Tam Tam by Martin Srbinovski

Your Notes

Finland



At a Glance

Song: Da Da Dum
Artist: Paradise Oskar
Composer: Axel Ehnström
Lyricist: Axel Ehnström

About the Artist

20-year-old singer/songwriter Axel Ehnström hails from Helsinki but is part of the Swedish speaking minority population, and currently studies music at the Pop & Jazz Conservatory in Helsinki.

The name Paradise Oskar comes from author Astrid Lindgren's childrens book "Rasmus and the Vagabond", where Paradise Oskar is a vagabond who plays accordion.

Last summer during improvisation, he quickly came up with a melody and wrote the partly sarcastic lyrics about people's indifference. He decided to send his shoebox budgeted demo to the Finnish national final for the Eurovision Song Contest. His only wish was to get feedback from his music.

<http://www.myspace.com/paradiseoskar>

Finland in Eurovision

Appearances: 44
Debut: 1961
Victory: 1
- 2006: Hard Rock Hallelujah by Lordi, with 292 points
Best: 1st
Semi Finals: Qualified in 2006-2009

Recent History

2010: Työlki ellää by Kuunkuiskaajat, 11th in the semi with 49 points

2009: Lose Control by Waldos People, 25th with 22 points (qualified from semi by jury vote)

2008: Missä miehet ratsastaa by Teräsbetoni, 22nd with 35 points

2011 National Final

The 15 entries selected consisted of 12 entries chosen by a jury, and 3 from a online voting process that was held the previous November. Starting on 14th January, 3 semis were held with 5 entries each. 3 of which qualified to the final. An additional wildcard was determined by the jury to make a total of 10 entries for the final held on 12th February. 3 superfinalists were determined and by 46.7% of the televote, Paradise Oskar was selected as the 2011 Euroviisut winner.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

A boy with a guitar, singing a little song about trying to save the world from the human race. It's sweet, simple and captured the votes in Finland, and was the best song from their National Finals, even if some of the others had a better performance. Arguably it could get lost at Eurovision, but didn't we think the same with Tom Dice?

Sharleen says...

It's a grower, and that is its only letdown; when there is only 3 minutes you need instant impact. Tom Dice comparisons aplenty with a guy and his guitar, but stronger song lyrically and if the message hits home and personality shows on stage could be a surprise qualifier from semi 1.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- Blessed With Love by Saara Aalto
- Good Enough by Father McKenzie
- Pamela by Stala & Co

Your Notes

France



At a Glance

Song: Sognu
Artist: Amaury Vassili
Composer: Daniel Moyne, Quentin Bachelet
Lyricist: Jean-Pierre Marcellesi, Julie Miller

About the Artist

Vassili is the worlds youngest tenor.

His first album went double platinum in France, and Vassili has also performed a sell-out gig at *L'Olympia*, a duet with Katherine Jenkins and achieved international success (over 50,000 album copies sold worldwide with releases in Canada, South Africa, South Korea and the UK).

In November 2010, Amaury Vassili released his new album *Cantero* containing combination of original compositions by Davide Esposito and Jean-Félix Lalanne and passionate new versions of classics from the Italian repertoire such as *Caruso*, *Con Te Partiro* (Andrea Bocelli), *Dietro L'amore* (Toto Cutugno) and *Il Volo* (Zucchero).

<http://www.amauryvassili.com/>

France in Eurovision

Appearances: 53

Debut: 1956

Victory: 5

- 1958: Dors mon Amour by Andre Cleaveau, with 27 points
- 1960: Tom Pillibi by Jacqueline Boyer, with 32 points
- 1962: Un Premier Amour by Isabelle Aubret, with 26 points
- 1969: Un Jour Un Enfant by Frida Boccara, with 18 points
- 1977: L'oiseau et l'enfant by Marie Myriam, with 136 points

Best: 1st

Semi Finals: Auto-qualify (Big 5)

Recent History

2010: Allez Ola Ole by Jessy Matador, 12th with 82 points

2009: Et s'il fallait le faire by Patricia Kaas, 8th with 107 points

2008: Divine by Sebastien Tellier, 18th with 47 points

2011 National Final

Both the artist and song were internally selected, The artist and song title was announced on 4th February, and the song first airing on 7th March.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

A singer whose name looks Russian, a song that you'd think would belong to the returning Italians, and a bit of lite-opera. Hmm, what were the French thinking? This is going to be hard to look good on the night, because it really needs the illusion of an Orchestra. If only we still had one...

Sharleen says...

The first time I heard this song stands as my only jaw dropping moment from the 2011 selections. Immediately I was divided . either this an out-and-out winner or complete flop. I'm still none the wiser, opera is hardly the popular choice for Eurovision, but I have a feeling this could do it. Remember before you all scoff . who voted for Paul Potts? Who and how many people buy Josh Groban albums?

Your Notes

Georgia



GE 2011

At a Glance

Song: One More Day
Artist: Eldrine
Composer: DJ BE\$\$
Lyricist: DJ Rock, Mikheil Chelidze

About the Artist

Eldrine - Mikheil Chelidze (MIKEN) - Guitar, Irakli Bibilashvili (BIBO) - Bass Guitar, David Changoshvili (Chango) - Drummer and Beso Tsikhelashvili (Dj BE\$\$) formed a band named BIOS in 2007 but after 3 years, they decided to form their current band. Tamar Shekiladze - Keyboard joined them in 2010. Sophio Toroshelidze - the lead vocalist of Eldrine - studied at the Music College for Remarkable Students. In 2006 Sophio Toroshelidze composed the song *Surprised Again*, that won the title of the Best Song of the Year. In 2009 she passed into the final of the popular Georgian vocal competition . *Stars' Academy*. The same year she started up teaching children and was a selected vocal coach for participants of the Junior Eurovision Song Contest 2009. In 2010 she appeared as a backing vocal in the Eurovision Song Contest. She joined Eldrine following their win at the national final at the request of the record company.
<http://www.eldrine.com/>

Georgia in Eurovision

Appearances: 3
Debut: 2007
Victory: -
Best: 9th
- 2010: Shine by Sopho Nizharadze, with 136 points
Semi Finals: Qualified 2007, 2008, 2010

Recent History

2010: Shine by Sopho Nizharadze, 9th with 136 points
2009: (withdrawn . We Don't Wanna Put In by Stefane & 3G)
2008: Peace Will Come by Diana Gurtskaya, 11th with 83 points

2011 National Final

10 entries were announced in early February, and following the withdrawal of 3 entries, 7 artists competed on 19th February for the national final. The winner was decided by jury.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

While it's great to have so many styles in this year's contest, Georgia's rap-rock fusion is traditionally not one of the genres that does well in the Song Contest... It's one of the genres that's hard to pull off live no matter where, let alone in the tiny three minute window in the Esprit Arena. And they don't have butterfly wings as a gimmick.

Sharleen says...

Nu-metal mixed with rap; its a rather tenuous mix even in the charts and doesn't appeal to most, so this rather average garage band offering from Georgia isn't going to suddenly win the genre fans on the night. Whilst the female lead is strong and its something new for the Eurovision stage, the shouty chorus grates and hardly looks as appealing as the previous Georgian ~~Σophos~~

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- Rejected by Nini Shermadini

Your Notes

Germany



DE 2011

At a Glance

Song: Taken By A Stranger
Artist: Lena Meyer-Landrut
Composer: Gus Seyffert, Nicole Morier, Monica Birkenes
Lyricist: Gus Seyffert, Nicole Morier, Monica Birkenes

About the Artist

Born 23 May 1993, Lena Meyer-Landrut represented Germany in the Eurovision Song Contest 2010 in Oslo, Norway, and won the contest with the song "Satellite". With her three entries from the German national final *Unser Star für Oslo* (Our Star for Oslo), Meyer-Landrut set an all-time chart record in her home country by debuting with three songs in the top five of the German singles chart. Both "Satellite" and her first album *My Cassette Player* debuted at number one in Germany, while the former has been certified double Platinum since, the album has been certified five times Gold for sales of over 500,000 units.

Since her 2010 win at Eurovision Lena's trophy cabinet in her first own apartment in Cologne is filling up with awards quickly: SWR 3 Radio has decorated her as *Newcomer Of The Year* in 2010, she received two 1Live-Krone for %Best Single+and %Best Artist+, and the magazine Hörzu just awarded her the Goldene Kamera for *Best Music Act National* on February 5th, 2011.

Lena's second studio album *Good News* has been released in Germany on February 8th topping the German charts as well as achieving Gold status in its first week.

<http://www.lena-meyer-landrut.com/>

Germany in Eurovision

Appearances: 55
Debut: 1956
Victory: 2
- 1982: Ein Bisschen Frieden by Nicole, with 161 points
- 2010: Satellite by Lena Meyer-Landrut, with 246 points
Best: 1st
Semi Finals: Auto-qualify (Big 5)

Recent History

2010: Satellite by Lena Meyer-Landrut, 1st with 246 points
2009: Miss Kiss Kiss Bang by Alex Swings Oscar Sings, 20th with 35 points
2008: Disappear by No Angels, 23rd with 14 points

2011 National Final

It was announced on 30th June that Lena would officially return to defend her title. Through January and February, Lena performed 12 tracks from her 2nd album which televoting decided the top 3 from 6 in each semi. During the final, 2 songs were chosen for the superfinal *Taken By A Stranger* and *Push Forward* *Taken* won with 79% of the televote.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

Not since Lys Aysia and Corry Brokken has a singer decided to defend the title. Certainly this is a more adult song from Lena, but the darkness is much closer to the surface than last year's Satellite. Neither is the composition as complicated or well put together as the 2010 winner. So a poor song but a strong personality in Lena. I'm still not sure which will win out.

Sharleen says...

Lena does The Cure. Its very left of centre which makes it stand out, but it is not as instant as Satellite. I personally like it as a song, I love the filmclip, but live on the Eurovision stage I think it falls down and I'm not so certain the audience is ready to vote for this bizarre mid-tempo tune.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- Push Forward by Lena Meyer-Landrut

Your Notes

Greece



GR 2011

At a Glance

Song: Watch My Dance
Artist: **Loukas Giorkas feat. Stereo Mike**
Composer: Giannis Christodoulopoulos
Lyricist: Eleana Vrachali

About the Artist

Loucas was born and raised in Cyprus. His first official attempt as a singer gave him the first prize in the *12th Cyprus Song Composition Competition* hosted by the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (RIK). In 2008 he auditioned for *X FACTOR* where he was the overall winner and received excellent reviews on his vocal abilities and his stage presentation. Following his victory, he released his first single titled *Den Fantazesai* (You cannot imagine).

Since 2009, he has been performing live with many famous Greek artists such as Elena Paparizou,. He has also formed his own band which performs in various music halls around Greece.

Born in Piraeus, Mike Exarchos, known as Stereo Mike moved to England at age 18 to study Music Technology and Audio Production. Since then he has composed soundtracks for short movies and begins sound-engineering at London's Vault Recording Studios with clients including the cream of the crop of UK hip-hop.

In 2006, he released the first ever Greek hip-hop DualDisc.

In 2007, he released the first album from his trilogy *XLI3H-ANELI3H-KATALH3H*, featuring many internationally acclaimed Greek artists and in 2008, he won the Best Greek Act and received a nomination for Europe's Favourite Act at the MTV European Music Awards.

In 2009, he toured all over Greece and also receives a nomination for Best Male Artist of the year. In 2010, Stereo Mike accepted the position of Senior Lecturer in the Music Department of the University of Westminster. Stereo Mike enters 2011 having completed the second part of his album trilogy, *ANELI3H*.

<http://www.facebook.com/ilievskivlatko#!/pages/Loucas-Yiorkas/36080223637>

Greece in Eurovision

Appearances: 31
Debut: 1974
Victory: 1
- 2005: My Number One by Elena Paparizou, with 230 points
Best: 1st
Semi Finals: Qualified 2004-2010

Recent History

2010: Opa by Giorgos Alkaios, 8th with 140 points
2009: This Is Our Night by Sakis, 7th with 120 points
2008: Secret Combination by Kalomira, 3rd with 218 points

2011 National Final

Six entries competed on 2 March in the national final, with the results decided with 50% jury, 50% televote.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

To be honest this feels like the soulful power ballad the male lead performs before the end of Act 2 if Andrew Lloyd Webber had Linkin Park helping him with the musical book. If Greece didn't have such a strong diaspora vote this could have been a disaster. As it is, it'll just be another Greek song that "doesn't do very well."

Sharleen says...

This has to stand as the worst choice of song Greece has sent since SAGAPO. I'd like to think that in 2011 we have moved on from voting on a country and are starting to actually judge the song. Step aside Greece from your fine record and let another country through. This a borderline qualification (on the side of not) for me.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- (I Don't Wanna) Dance Alone by Nikki Ponte

Your Notes

Hungary



At a Glance

Song: What About My Dreams
Artist: Kati Wolf
Composer: Viktor Rakonczai, Gergő Rácz
Lyricist: Péter Geszti, Johnny K. Palmer

About the Artist

As a seven year old girl, she sang the title track of the popular Hungarian cartoon *Vuk* - and the whole country fell in love with her. Besides singing she also took piano and jazz dance classes and never stopped making music.

After her graduation as a chorus master at the Hungarian Music Academy, she worked with numerous bands in different genres but her big breakthrough came in 2010 as a finalist of the Hungarian version of the talent show called *X-Factor*.

At the beginning of this year, Kati started working on her solo album. Her first single *Szerelem, Miért Múlt?* became a big success immediately.

<http://www.wolfkati.hu/>

About the Composer

The song is a composition of Viktor Rakonczai and Gergő Rácz, two former members of the boygroup V.I.P. who represented Hungary at the Eurovision Song Contest in 1997 in Dublin.

Hungary in Eurovision

Appearances: 8
Debut: 1994
Victory: -
Best: 4th
- 1994: Kinek mondjam el vétkeimet? by Frederika Bayer, with 122 points
Semi Finals: Qualified in 2005, 2007

Recent History

2010: -
2009: Dance With Me by Zoli Adak, 15th in semi with 16 points
2008: Candlelight by Csezy, 19th in semi with 6 points

2011 National Final

Internal selection of both song and singer, announced on 9th March.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

It's not that far removed from Hera Bork last year - strong female vocals, driving dance beat, a twist of schlager lurking in the background. This could be one of the fan favourites this year, but like Hera last year stays mid table. Which I think Hungary would count as a success.

Sharleen says...

Just when Hungary faded into the background of my mind . BAM! Out they come with one hell of a tune that keeps all the fans happy and screams commercial dance hit. Should sail through the first semi qualifications, but their finals result shall be determined by the singers talent and stage show which is a big unknown.

Your Notes

Iceland



IS 2011

At a Glance

Song: Coming Home
Artist: SjonnisqFriends
Composer: Sjonni Brink
Lyricist: Thorunn Clausen and Sjonni Brink

About the Artist

Sigurjon Sjonni Brink sadly and unexpectedly passed away on January 17th this year. Following this his wife and friends decided that Sjonni would have wanted his song to remain in the competition, so they agreed they would carry on and perform *Coming Home* in his memory.

Gunnar, Vignir and Benedikt have all participated in Eurovision before; Gunnar as part of TwoTricky in Copenhagen 2001; Vignir played guitar with Birgitta in Latvia in 2003 and co-wrote Selma's entry in 2005; Benedikt was in Eiríkur Hauksson's band in Helsinki 2007. Furthermore, Vignir, Benedikt, Gunnar and Hreimur performed with Sjonni when he presented his song *Waterslide* in Söngvakeppni Sjóvarpsins, the Icelandic Eurovision preselection contest, in 2010.

Guitarist - Vignir Snaer Vigfusson (produced the song along with Sjonni)

Drummer - Benedikt Brynleifsson

Piano - Palmi Sigurhjártarson

Guitarist - Gunnar Olason

Bass - Hreimur Örn Heimisson

Singer - Matthias Matthiasson

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Sjonnis-Friends-Coming-Home-Aftur-heim-Icelandic-ESC-entry-2011/207161585961546>

Iceland in Eurovision

Appearances: 23
Debut: 1986
Victory: -
Best: 2nd
- 1999: All Out of Luck by Selma, with 146 points
- 2009: Is It True? by Yohanna, with 218 points
Semi Finals: Qualified in 2004, 2008, 2009, 2010

Recent History

2010: Je Na Sai Quoi by Hera Björk, 19th with 41 points

2009: Is It True? by Yohanna, 2nd with 218 points

2008: This Is My Life by Euroband, 14th with 64 points

2011 National Final

15 entries took part in the national finals from 15th January, with 2 entries qualifying from each semi final of 5 acts. A auto-qualifier was given to Sjonnis Friends following their performance in the 3rd semi. Magni Ásgeirsson placed 2nd in the final.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

You can't escape the backstory of a song written about making the most of each moment in life, whose composer then dies before he can sing it at the Icelandic finals. Put aside any thoughts of sympathy voting, this is a good song in its own right, magnified by the poignancy of his friends carrying on with the song. A dark horse on the night, but it does depend on how the national commentators introduce that back story to the TV audiences.

Sharleen says...

Obviously there is sentiment behind this, but its also a good toe-tapper that has growing appeal. Remains to be seen if its charm is retained in English. I believe its a 1st semi qualifier and if carried on a wave of emotion could go mid-table or higher at the final.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- Nott by Yohanna
- Ástin mín eina by Erna Hrönn Ólafsdóttir

Your Notes

Ireland



At a Glance

Song: Lipstick
Artist: Jedward
Composer: Daniel Priddy, Lars Halvor Jensen, Martin Michael Larsson
Lyricist: Daniel Priddy, Lars Halvor Jensen, Martin Michael Larsson

About the Artist

Jedward AKA brothers John and Edward Grimes are an Irish singing pop duo who became a huge hit after appearing on the UK's *X-Factor* in 2009.

Following their success on the show Jedward collaborated with 90s hip-hop star Vanilla Ice on their debut single *Under Pressure (Ice Ice Baby)*. It was a No.1 hit in the Irish singles charts and No.2 hit in the UK singles charts on downloads alone. The twins then went on to release their debut album *Planet Jedward* in July 2010 which became the fastest selling record in Ireland in 2010.

Their first solo tour was extended from 28 to 75 dates following phenomenal demand from fans. The twins have also had their own reality show *OMG Jedward* for Irish television which proved to be a huge hit with viewers and offered an entertaining insight into the world that is Planet Jedward.

The twins are currently recording their 2nd album, featuring their first original songs including Lipstick.

<http://www.planetjedward.net/>

Ireland in Eurovision

Appearances: 44

Debut: 1965

Victory: 7

- 1970: All Kinds of Everything by Dana, with 32 points
- 1980: Whats Another Year? by Johnny Logan, with 143 points
- 1987: Hold Me Now by Johnny Logan, with 172 points
- 1992: Why Me? by Linda Martin, with 155 points
- 1993: In Your Eyes by Niamh Kavanagh, with 187 points
- 1994: Rock n Roll Kids by Paul Harrington and Charlie McGettigan, with 226 points
- 1996: The Voice by Eimear Quinn, with 162 points

Best: 1st

Semi Finals: Qualified in 2004, 2006, 2010

Recent History

2010: It's For You by Niamh Kavanagh, 23rd with 25 points

2009: Et Cetera by Sinead Mulvey and Black Daisy, 11th in the semi with 52 points

2008: Irlande Douze Pointe by Dustin the Turkey, 15th in the semi with 22 points

2011 National Final

The national final was hosted on 11th February via The Late Late Show with 5 entrants. Voting was 66% Jury, 33% televote following controversy with Jedwards track being released online prior to the date allowed for public hearing. Jedward won by 2 points over Nikki Kavanagh thanks to a strong televote in their favour.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

This will divide opinions for a long time. Notorious as talent show runner ups in the UK, they've a fanatical following in the UK and Ireland, which drove the voting in the National Final. They'll need to win over the judges as well (they got two of the six in Ireland), but they've got a big PR budget from RTE and the best backing singers and sound engineers they can find. Is that going to be enough?

Sharleen says...

Despite what people say about these twins, inability to sing, etc the song is very instant and they appear likeable on camera. The performance is striking, ticks a lot of boxes in terms of being catchy, radio friendly and appealing to the younger audience, and I now expect this to qualify and feature at the top half of the finals table.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- Falling by Nikki Kavanagh

Your Notes

Israel



At a Glance

Song: Ding Dong
Artist: Dana International
Composer: Dana International
Lyricist: Dana International

About the Artist

Dana was born in Israel and grew up in Tel Aviv (originally Yaron Cohen).

At the age of 20, Dana started to perform in Tel Aviv nightclubs and was very popular amongst the crowd. A year later, she released a song from her club performances, *Saida Sultana* to the radio stations, and the song immediately became a big hit. This success led to the recording of a full dance album, and the second hit released from it was *Dana International*.

In 1994, Dana released her second album, *Yeshnan Banot*. The album became a big success, sold platinum records and Dana was chosen as Israel's singer of the year.

In 1998, she was chosen to represent Israel in the Eurovision Song Contest with the song *Diva*, written by Yoav Ginai and Tzvika Pick. She took the first place.

In the following years, Dana released two international albums, and went on a tour around the globe; from Japan to the United States, from Australia to England.

In 2003 she returned to Israel and released a new album in Hebrew. In 2005, she released the album *HaHalom HaEfshari* and in 2008, the album *HaKol LeTova* with the hits *Love Boy* and *Seret Hodi* became the greatest hits of that year in Israel. She also wrote the song that represented Israel in the Eurovision of that year, *Keilu Kan*, performed by Boaz Mauda.

<http://www.myspace.com/danainternational>

Israel in Eurovision

Appearances: 34
Debut: 1973
Victory: 3
- 1978: A-Ba-Ni-Bi by Izhar Cohen and Alphabeta, with 157 points
- 1979: Hallelujah by Milk and Honey, with 125 points
- 1998: Diva by Dana International, with 172 points
Best: 1st
Semi Finals: Qualified in 2005, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010

Recent History

2010: Milim by Harel Skaat, 14th with 71 points
2009: There Must Be Another Way by Noa & Mira Awad, 16th with 53 points
2008: The Fire In Your Eyes by Boáz Ma-aud, 9th with 124 points

2011 National Final

National final took place on 8th March with 10 entrants. Dana International won the televote with 270 points . 35 points more than the runner-up Idit Halevi.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

It's rare that returning champions put up a good performance, and while Lena has a fighting chance, the 1998 winner looks to be on a hiding to nothing. With a song that sounds like it should have been aired in the 80's, mismatching the lyrics to her vocals, this could be embarrassing for Dana International and Israel.

Sharleen says...

All jokes aside, it is lovely to have yet another familiar and favourite face back on the Eurovision stage. Dana International is hard to bet against for qualification, but gee, does Israelsq2011 entry want to push their chances back? Ding Dongqsounds dated, Dana International isnq shining like a diva with her singing; this is such a average song in a strong 2nd semi and so at best, a borderline qualifier with a right-hand side finish at the final. Shame.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- Rak al ahava by Adi Cohen

Your Notes

Italy



At a Glance

Song: Madness of Love
Artist: Raphael Gualazzi
Composer: Raffaele Gualazzi
Lyricist: Raffaele Gualazzi

About the Artist

Raphael Gualazzi was born in Urbino on the 11th of November, 1981. He studied pianoforte at the Rossini Conservatory in Pesaro, where he focussed on classical composers, he extended his musical research to include Jazz, Blues and Fusion.

Since 2005 Raphael Gualazzi has taken part in important festivals such as Fano Jazz, the Java Festival of Jakarta and Argo Jazz, Ravello International Festival.

In France in 2008 his compilation *Piano Jazz* was released on the Wagram label.

In September of 2009 Raphael Gualazzi met Caterina Caselli and signed with Sugar a recording contract.

After catching the attention of the general public with his cover of *Don't Stop*, the celebrated 70s success of the famous band Fleetwood Mac, which was chosen as the soundtrack of the ENI television ad.

In February 2011 Raphael Gualazzi took part in the Festival of Sanremo in Italy with the song *Madness Of Love*. The song won hands down, coming away with the prize for the Young Artists category, the Mia Martini+Critics Award and the Press, Radio & TV Award. The English version of *Madness Of Love* was included in the soundtrack of the film *Manual Of Love 3*, directed by Giovanni Vchosen and starring Robert De Niro and Monica Bellucci.

His debut album *Reality And Fantasy* was released on the Sugar label on 16th February.

<http://www.raphaelgualazzi.com/>

Italy in Eurovision

Appearances: 36
Debut: 1956
Victory: 2
- 1964: Non ho l'età by Gigliola Cinquetti, with 49 points
- 1990: Insieme: 1992 by Toto Cutugno, with 149 points
Best: 1st
Semi Finals: -

Recent History

2010: -
2009: -
2008: -

2011 National Final

Selection took place via the San Remo song festival in Italy on 19th February, with the jury making a special selection from the artists attending. The New Generation winner was selected to represent Italy at Eurovision for the first time since 1997.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

It's a welcome back to Italy, and thanks to their size, a ticket straight to the Saturday night final as one of the Big Five. Which is good because this jazz infused number is very much an acquired taste. I don't think the fans who watch the semi-finals would have let it out, but the more general audience in the Grand Final may be more accommodating.

Sharleen says...

Italy has spent over a decade away from Eurovision and it shows. This old fashioned jazz number is classy and toe-tapping, but it is hardly contemporary, and somehow I think it isn't going to gather the good result that they hope for on finals night. Having it as bi-lingual is a step up, but I think their first Eurovision back will serve as a lesson more than anything else.

Your Notes

Latvia



At a Glance

Song: Angel in Disguise
Artist: Musiqq
Composer: Marats Ogleznevs
Lyricist: Marats Ogleznevs

About the Artist

Musiqq is an R'n'B/Soul/Hip-Hop duet which consists of Marats Ogleznevs, who is the music author and the producer of the group, and Emils Balceris . the lead vocalist. Marats began his career in music as a member of the band Device, releasing 3 albums and finished after 10 years.

Emils participated in the TV3 show *Koru Kari* (Clash of the Choirs), representing the *Red Liepaja Choir*. At the moment, Emils is a student in Form 12 of Liepaja district Grobina Secondary School.

In 2009 Marats noticed Emils while he was performing a song on the LTV broadcast programme *Sems*. Four songs were recorded during their first meeting and they decided to launch a project . Musiqq.

In June 2009, radio stations started playing the first radio single of the group . *Climate Control*. By the end of the same year, their song *Abrakadabra* became a national hit record and was nominated for the Latvian Music Records Award in the nomination Best Song. The song reached the Top 10 of the music download catalogue Doremi.lv and made it to the final of the Latvian radio song competition Music Bank where it received the Grand Prix.

The band signed an agreement in 2009 with the leading music records company in Latvia . Mikrofon.

<http://www.draugiem.lv/musiqq>

Latvia in Eurovision

Appearances: 11
Debut: 2000
Victory: 1
- 2002: I Wanna by Marie N, with 176 points
Best: 1st
Semi Finals: Qualified in 2005-2008

Recent History

2010: What For? by Aisha, 17th in the semi with 11 points
2009: Probka by Intars Busulis, 19th in semi with 7 points
2008: Wolves of the Sea by Pirates of the Sea, 12th with 83 points

2011 National Final

From 5th February, 2 semis were held with 3 entries qualifying out of 10 in each semi via televote, and 2 selected via jury vote. The remaining acts also had a second chance round where 2 more entries were selected. The final 11 (Trianas Parks withdrew due to illness) competed on 26th February, and a superfinal of 3 acts were announced. Musiqq were the resounding winner with 4000 more televotes over 2nd place Lauris Reiniks.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

Another rap-rock number which may well have stood out in the Latvian final but there are a number of songs in this category this year, and Latvia, just like the others, doesn't do enough to stand out.

Sharleen says...

Angel in disguise is actually a catchy little R n' B tune performed reasonably well, but the lyrics are so ridiculous that I struggle to get beyond them. Another year of non-qualification for Latvia seemingly awaits.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- Banjo Laura by Lauris Reiniks
- Hop by Blitze

Your Notes

Lithuania



At a Glance

Song: Cæst Ma Vie
Artist: Evelina Sazenko
Composer: Paulius Zdanavi ius
Lyricist: Andrius Kairys

About the Artist

23-year-old Evelina was born into Polish-Ukrainian family, and started singing solo at tender age of 6. A year later, she made her debut in *Dainų Dainelė* (a wildly popular Lithuanian competition for singing kids and teenagers), becoming laureate six times. She has studied grand piano and violin, regularly sings in French, and has competed music competitions all over Lithuania.

Evelina has performed in Poland, Germany, Belgium and a number of other countries, international festivals. In 2009 she took part in a successful TV contest for classical singers *Triumfo Arka*. Subsequent to this, the country's most famous conductor Gintaras Rinkevi ius asked Evelina to take part in several projects with Lithuania's State Symphony Orchestra.

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Evelina-Sa%C5%A1enko/149654745094164>

Lithuania in Eurovision

Appearances: 11
Debut: 1994
Victory: -
Best: 6th
-2006: We Are the Winners by LT United, with 162 points
Semi Finals: Qualified in 2006, 2007, 2009

Recent History

2010: East European Funk by InCulto, 12th in semi with 44 points
2009: Love by Sasha Son, 23rd with 23 points
2008: Nomads in the Night by Jeronimas Milius, 16th in semi with 30 points

2011 National Final

Starting on 5th February, 3 semis with a total of 44 acts competed. The final on 26th February featured 13 entries and the 3 superfinalists were determined by 50% televote and 50% jury vote.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

It's the only French lyric you'll hear during Eurovision (thanks, Keith) and that's about all this song has going for it. No hook, nothing to grab onto, plain lyrics... If this makes the final pretty much every country will want to be drawn right after them.

Sharleen says...

Lithuania have given us a big, bold, brassy musical number that seems more appropriate for the theatre than the modern stages of Eurovision. Evelina has such a wonderfully strong voice, but shamefully I doubt its a qualifier.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- Floating To You by Linas Adomaitis

Your Notes

Malta



At a Glance

Song: One Life
Artist: Glen Vella
Composer: Paul Giordimaina
Lyricist: Fleur Balzan

About the Artist

Born on 14th May 1983, Glen started his singing career at the age of thirteen. He studied both practical and theory in voice and piano. He is certified in voice coaching from the Victoria Music and Arts College, London. Glen is a resident singer on several leading TV shows in Malta. He has recorded various jingles and theme songs for Maltese TV series and radio shows.

He also works in musical theatre and is actively involved in the prominent Maltese Gospel choir *Animae*, of which he is a member and founder.

He has performed in Toronto in honour of the Maltese settlers in Canada and given live performances at song festivals in Alexandria, Egypt and in Varna, Bulgaria.

He has managed to achieve outstanding results including a triple *FIDOF Award* obtained from three different festivals and the *Jury Award* which he received at the *Golden Stag International Festival* held in Romania in 2009.

In 2010 he placed as first runner-up at the Malta Eurovision national final, he was also nominated for the Best Male Artist at the Malta Music Awards. In addition, he has coached the team of Maltese singers at the Junior Eurovision Song Contest in Belarus.

<http://www.maltaeurovision2011.com/>

Malta in Eurovision

Appearances: 23
Debut: 1971
Victory: -
Best: 2nd
- 2002: 7th Wonder by Ira Losco, with 164 points
- 2005: Angel by Chiara, with 192 points
Semi Finals: Qualified in 2004, 2005, 2006, 2009

Recent History

2010: My Dream by Thea Garrett, 12th in semi with 45 points
2009: What If We by Chiara, 22nd with 31 points
2008: Vodka by Morena, 14th in semi with 38 points

2011 National Final

Over 11th and 12th February 24 artists competed with a 66% jury vote and 33% televote. Of the first 24 artists only 16 qualified to the final and Glen Vella won by 2 points over Richard Edwards.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

The song most likely to have a surprise appearance from Rick Astley, it really feels out of place in the line-up with lyrics and emoting that feels straight out of the late 1980's. Vella has been pushing to sing at Eurovision, it's just a shame it couldn't have been with something a bit stronger and modern.

Sharleen says...

There is nothing wrong with this entry per se, it is in fact a good (if somewhat dated) dance number performed well and in the hands of the Swedes would have probably been highly tipped. But from Malta for some reason it doesn't feel right - I see this being passed over in the semi, or if lucky, bottom half of the table in the final.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- Moondance by Baklava

Your Notes

Moldova



MD 2011

At a Glance

Song: So Lucky
Artist: Zdob si Zdub
Composer: Mihai Gincu, Marc Elsner
Lyricist: Andy Schuman, Marc Elsner

About the Artist

Beginning in the mid 90s, Zdob si Zdub combines the hardcore and Moldovan folklore, utilising elements of hip-hop, drum'n'bass, jungle, and punk.

They have released 17 singles and filmclips over the course of their history.

In 2005 they placed 6th at the Eurovision Song Contest with song Boonika Bate Doba.

Since then Zdob si Zdub have performed in more than 20 European countries, from small clubs to big festivals. They have opened for renowned bands like: Red Hot Chili Peppers, Emir Kusturica & No Smoking Orchestra, Korn, Biohazard, Rollins Band, Rage Against The Machine, Soulfly, Garbage, and Fun Lovin' Criminals.

October 2010 brought an entirely Russian album, called *Beloe Vino / Krasnoe Vino*. The album includes Russian versions of some of their own songs, and cover versions of folklore and other songs.

They are currently working on their first English language album.

www.zdob-si-zdub.com/

Moldova in Eurovision

Appearances: 6
Debut: 2005
Victory: -
Best: 6th
- 2005: Boonika Bate Doba by Zdob si Zdub, with 148 points
Semi Finals: Qualified in 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010

Recent History

2010: Run Away by Sunstroke Project and Olia Tira, 22nd with 27 points

2009: Hora Din Moldova by Nelly Ciobanu, 14th with 69 points

2008: A Century of Love by Geta Burlacu, 11th in semi with 36 points

2011 National Final

On 26th February a total of 25 acts completed at the national finals following a long jury selection from over 100 acts. Results were determined by 50% televote and 50% jury vote. Zdob si Zdub were selected after coming 2nd in both jury and televote combining a total of 20 points against jury favourite Natalia Barbu and televote favourite Karizma.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

One of the few acts that look like they'll have fun on stage. They handed Moldova their best result back in 2005, taking the debutantes to 6th. This might not be the song to do it again, but it won't be through a lack of enthusiasm.

Sharleen says...

Welcome back Zdob si Zdub! Grandmama Plays the Drums it aint, but these boys know how to put on a show and work the stage. Memorable enough to go straight to the final (I feel much to many peoplesq disappointment and creating the shock of the 2nd semi) and frankly, catchy enough to go mid-table.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- Letø Jazz by Natalia Barbu

Your Notes

Norway



At a Glance

Song: Haba Haba
Artist: Stella Mwangi
Composer: Big City/Beyond51
Lyricist: Stella Mwangi

About the Artist

24-year-old Stella kicked off her career as a teenager when she had the privilege of being the support act for artists as diverse as Talib Kweli, Busta Rhymes, Flo-Rida, Rick Ross and Angelique Kidjo. In 2005 she performed with the group The Rise in front of Nelson Mandela. Several of her songs have featured in American films and TV series.

Born in Kenya, she was inspired to write the song Haba Haba from real-life events. Stella once complained to her grandmother that things did not move fast enough. Grandma dryly told her off by saying *Haba haba, Hujaza Kibaba*, which is Swahili and means that it's the little steps in life that's going to make you happy. She is currently busy in the studio she is trying to create the same vibe as *Haba Haba* on her sophomore album. Her first album *Living For Music* (2008) consisted of Stella rapping, now it's more focused on singing. www.stellamwangi.com/

Norway in Eurovision

Appearances: 49
Debut: 1960
Victory: 3
- 1985: La Det Swinge by Bobbysocks, with 123 points
- 1995: Nocturne by Secret Garden, with 148 points
- 2009: Fairytale by Alexander Rybak, with 387 points
Best: 1st
Semi Finals: Qualified in 2004, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010

Recent History

2010: My Heart is Yours by Didrik Solli-Tangen, 20th with 35 points
2009: Fairytale by Alexander Rybak, 1st with 387 points
2008: Hold On Be Strong by Maria Haukaas-Storeng, 5th with 182 points

2011 National Final

Melodi Grand Prix began on 15th January with 3 semis of 7 entries each. 2 acts qualified directly to the final with an additional 2 acts sent to a 2nd chance round. The final 8 entries went through a process superfinal selection with 4 entries competing in the final round. With a mix of jury and televoting, it came down to Blacksheeps and Stella Mwangi. Stella won convincingly in the final round with almost double the amount of televotes.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

This has the virtue of being unique. An African infused Ibiza dance hit, naturally with a rhythm line that works well, and a catchy chorus. Stella's voice isn't that great in a stadium setting, but that didn't stop her scoring more than double the next song in Melodi Grand Prix. The only flaw in this that I can see is at no point does it scream "Norway" at the listener.

Sharleen says...

Its the 2011 party anthem - the follow-up to 2010 entry from France. Enthusiastically performed, and bound to get the crowd on its feet. Despite all the detractors telling me the odds are against it, the singalong chorus leads me to think its top 10 material.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- Dance Tonight by Blacksheeps
- Depend on Me by Babelfish
- Fire Below by Lucky Bullets

Your Notes

Poland



At a Glance

Song: Jestem
Artist: Magdalena Tul
Composer: Magdalena Tul
Lyricist: Magdalena Tul

About the Artist

Started her career at age 12 performing in several local bands.

In 1999 when she was 19, she enrolled in a school of music of secondary level in Gdańsk, in a classical singing class. She was awarded MA in Arts in 2004.

In 2000 she moved to Warsaw where she started working as a singer and an actress for Studio Buffo, where she performed as a lead singer in several musical shows. Three years later she moved on to a new challenge and started her cooperation with another musical theatre, Roma. She performed there in lots of musicals like *Miss Saigon*, *Grease* and *Cats*.

In August 2005 she recorded a song for the Polish version of Walt Disney's movie: *The Emperor's New Groove*.

In 2005, Magda won two main awards at the International Music Festival Universe talent in Prague for The Best Singer and The Best Song. In June 2006 she won the third prize at Unisong, an International Songwriting Contest in the USA.

magdalenatul.pl/

Poland in Eurovision

Appearances: 16
Debut: 1994
Victory: -
Best: 2nd
- 1994: To nie ja! by Edyta Górniak, with 166 points
Semi Finals: Qualified in 2004, 2008

Recent History

2010: Legenda by Marcin Mroziński, 13th in the semi with 44 points

2009: I Don't Wanna Leave by Lidia Kopania, 12th in the semi with 43 points

2008: For Life by Isis Gee, 24th with 14 points

2011 National Final

National Final took place on 14th February with 10 entrants competing in 100% televoting. Magdalena won with an astounding 45% of the vote, the runner-up Anna Gogola scoring only 23%.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

I think everyone is agreed that Poland chose the best song in their National Final. It's going to look great on the Dusseldorf Stage, with a nice opening that builds quickly into the song, and should have a smart bit of dancing during the chorus. It's not enough for a win, but a strong showing for Poland is on the cards.

Sharleen says...

This is the best Polish selection in years! Its a definite qualifier for me, but the generic nature of the song will most likely land it a mid-table result at best.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- Supergirl by Shemoans

Your Notes

Portugal



At a Glance

Song: Luta E Alegria
Artist: Homens Da Luta
Composer: Vasco Duarte
Lyricist: Jel

About the Artist

Homens da Luta (Men of the Struggle) is a collective of traditional Portuguese music of an interventionist style.

Comedians inspired by the musical universe of the period after April 25, 1974, the band is led by the unavoidable Neto and Falâncio (brothers Nuno %el+ and Vasco Duarte), and first appeared on TV five years ago in a comedy show. However, soon they were travelling through the cities, towns, and villages of Portugal, spreading their music and their sense of humour.

The song *A Luta É Alegria* (The Struggle is Joy) is inspired by the tradition of collective singing, which was so fashionable in the late 1970s.

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/HOMENS-DA-LUTA/222620880121>

Portugal in Eurovision

Appearances: 44
Debut: 1964
Victory: -
Best: 6th
- 1996: O meu coração não tem cor by Lucia Moniz, with 92 points
Semi Finals: Qualified 2008-2010

Recent History

2010: Há dias assim by Filipa Azevedo, 18th with 43 points
2009: Todas as ruas do amor by Flor-de-lis, 15th with 57 points
2008: Senhora do mar (Negras águas) by Vania Fernandes, 13th with 69 points

2011 National Final

Online voting took place throughout late January to narrow down 25 entries to 12 for the final. The final took place on 5 March with 12 entrants competing in a 50% mix of televoting and jury vote. Homens da Luta received just 6 points from the jury, but the full 12 points from the televote, beating jury favourite Nuno Norte by just 1 point.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

An improv comedy group, who specialise on the Portuguese folk scene right after the 1974 Carnation Revolution? They might not be professional singers, but this song of struggle, hope and joy caught the mood of the Portuguese voting public in the National Final. It's going to be colourful and riotous on stage, but truthfully we need to see the stage performance before we can decide if this is stuck in the semi finals or heading to the Top Ten.

Sharleen says...

There always has to be one, the joke entry. And this one is armed with a political revolution message that the rulebooks have seemingly glossed over. Many are telling me its capturing the mood for change in the region and could therefore surprise, but I just don't think Europe will see it that way. Not a qualifier for me.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- Em Nome do Amor by Rui Andrade

Your Notes

Romania



At a Glance

Song: Change
Artist: Hotel FM
Composer: Gabriel B ru
Lyricist: Gabriel B ru and Alexandra Ivan

About the Artist

Singer David Bryan (26) lives in Newton Aycliffe, England. Studied performing arts at New College, Durham, before returning home to help his family by working both in local factories and as a binman. While volunteering in Romania (and falling in love whilst there) his karaoke act was spotted by music manager Florin Budeu, signed up, and joined the cabaret circuit. On piano is Gabriel Barura. On drums is Alex Szus. Hotel FM came fourth in the 2010 Romanian National Final with 'Come as One'.+ Outside of Hotel FM, David, as a true British guy living in Romania, is recording Shakespeare's sonnets on the music of Florian Chelulea (Rock Filarmonica Oradea) and plays with the only Pink Floyd tribute band in Romania, Speak Floyd. Gabriel is writing songs for talented children and has recently opened a brand new studio in Bucharest, while Alex is preparing for the last year exams in the University of Architecture.

<http://www.facebook.com/search.php?q=hotel%20fm&init=quick&tas=0.5576964050091195&ref=ts#!/HotelFM>

Romania in Eurovision

Appearances: 13
Debut: 1994
Victory: -
Best: 3rd
- 2005: Let Me Try by Lumini a Anghel & Sistem, with 158 points
- 2010: Playing with Fire by Paula Seling & Ovi, with 162 points
Semi Finals: Qualified 2004-2010

Recent History

- 2010 Playing with Fire, by Paula Seling and Ovi, 3rd with 162 points.
- 2009 The Balkan Girls, by Elena Gheorghe, 19th with 40 points.
- 2008 Pe-o Margine de Lume, by Nico and Vlad, 20th with 45 points.

2011 National Final

Taking place on New Years Eve 2010/2011, 13 acts competed with 50% split jury and televoting. Hotel FM won by a clear 5 points, scoring the top 12 points from the jury and 2nd place with the televote.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

It was always going to be hard following up Paula Selling and Ovi, so don't expect too much for this number. There's not much in the way of guitar based music this year, so Hotel FM shouldn't have a problem standing out, but gentle Coldplay style rock rarely does well at Eurovision.

Sharleen says...

It's a nice tune, a bit of toe-tapper, reminding me of a number of previous Danish entries. None of those were winners, so whilst it's a qualifier from semi 2, I don't see another top half of the finals board happening for Romania this year.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- It's So Fine by Blaxy Girls
- I Want U To Want Me by Claudia Pavel
- Cinema Love by Directia 5

Your Notes

Russia



At a Glance

Song: Get You
Artist: Alexej Vorobjov
Composer: Alexej Vorobjov, RedOne, AJ Junior, Bilal "The Chef", Eric Sanicola
Lyricist: Alexej Vorobjov, RedOne, AJ Junior, Bilal "The Chef", Eric Sanicola

About the Artist

This 23 year old Alexej is an actor, singer, musician and stuntman.

At the age of 16 Alex graduates in music at the College of the Arts, specialising on the accordion. He follows by graduating in vocals at Gnesins Jazz College. He is also awarded the Gold Medal for singing by winning Russian Delphic Games of Art.

As a 17 year old headed to Moscow and won the Russian version of the X-factor. His road to fame continues when he becomes the star of MTV comedy *Dreams of Alice* and in 2007 he gets The MTV Russia Music Awards *Breakthrough of the Year*.

In 2008 he graduated from Moscow Jazz College, and continued his studies at the famous acting school - Moscow Art Theatre (MHAT), founded by the legendary Stanislavsky.

Alex has already starred in 14 movies and written 11 soundtracks for Russian films. He is also the winner of the Russian version of *Dancing With The Stars - Fire And Ice*, skating and dancing together with the Olympic champion Tatyana Navka.

www.alexsparrow.com

About the Composer

Grammy-winning producer, RedOne, is one of the most successful and sought-after record producers and songwriters in popular music today. He won a Grammy for Lady Gaga's Poker Face in 2010 and was named Producer of the by Billboard Magazine in 2010. Nominated for multiple Grammys this year including Producer of the Year and Album of the Year; RedOne has written and produced 12 number 1 singles over the past 2 years, in 30 different countries, garnering over 50 million downloads worldwide.

Russia in Eurovision

Appearances: 14
Debut: 1994
Victory: 1
- 2008: Believe by Dima Bilan, with 272 points
Best: 1st
Semi Finals: Qualified 2004-2010

Recent History

2010: Lost and Forgotten by Peter Nalitch, 11th with 90 points
2009: Mamo by Anastasiya Prikhodko, 11th with 91 points
2008: Believe by Dima Bilan, 1st with 272 points

2011 National Final

Both the song and artist were internally selected and announced on 5th March. The song was leaked on You Tube on 6th March but officially presented on 12th March.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

A cheerful number, with enough swagger to rule the dance floor. The question isn't about the strength of the song or the performer, the question is how much does Russia actually want to win? If they put the PR effort in, we could be off to St Petersburg, but if they just coast (as appears to be the case) then they'll have a competent Top Ten placing.

Sharleen says...

High expectations for Russias selection with RedOne involvement were dashed on the first listen. This is sounding very generic although modern, and Alex isn't exactly armed with the best set of lungs on the male soloist front for this years competition. It should qualify easily, but if its amongst a bunch of other men at the final, it will struggle to go mid-table and above.

Your Notes

San Marino



At a Glance

Song: Stand By
Artist: Senit
Composer: Radiosa Romani
Lyricist: Radiosa Romani

About the Artist

Senit has Eritrean origin, was born in Bologna.

Her artistic debut was in Switzerland with the musical Fame (1999-2000), and in 2002 featured in the musical The Lion King.

Her recording debut Senit in 2006 sold thousands of copies in her local area and in 2007 the artist created her first album of Italian unpublished songs, with an original arrangement from *The Beauty And The Beast* musical theme.

In 2009 her third album, *So High*, was published. It was recorded in Los Angeles in collaboration with Michael Baker, a historic drummer who had also arranged and produced artists such as Missy Elliot, Christina Aguilera and Whitney Houston. That same year, Senit participated in the concert *Amiche Per l'Abruzzo*, a project born to raise funds to invest in the reconstruction of all that had been destroyed during the earthquake in Aquila. The event raised more than 1 million Euros.

In November 2009 Senit had her tv debut as the presenter of *Urban Charts* on HIPHOPTV, featuring charts and information about the world of black music. Her commitment on tv continued to the end of 2010.

Since 2010 she has focused on an international career, working with American producers for her next album.

www.senit.sm/

San Marino in Eurovision

Appearances: 1
Debut: 2008
Victory: -
Best: Last in semi final
- 2008: Complice by Miodio, 19th in the semi with 9 points
Semi Finals: Have not qualified, only 2nd year competing

Recent History

2010: -
2009: -
2008: Complice by Miodio, 19th in the semi with 9 points

2011 National Final

On 3rd February it was announced that the song and artist was internally selected. Senit debuted her song on 11 March.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

Only the second appearance, and this is a far stronger song than their 2008 entry. It might be another strong female singing a power ballad, but this is one of the better ones this year. The conspiratorial thought is they are only here to make sure Italy doesn't score nul points on their return, and that might be true. As long as Senit puts in a good performance, we'll hopefully have San Marino with us for the foreseeable future.

Sharleen says...

I had my fingers crossed for a great song from San Marino, but this has disappointed despite Senitsq obviously terrific vocals. It feels very dated and a slow toe-tapper that will easily get lost amongst the competition. It already had everything going against it for qualification, and what little that could have been done to save it just hasn't happened.

Your Notes

Serbia



At a Glance

Song: Caroban
Artist: Nina
Composer: Kristina Kova
Lyricist: Kristina Kova

About the Artist

Nina (Danica Radojicic) was born in 1989 in Belgrade. When she was six years old, she enrolled in primary music school *Vatroslav Lisinski* where she finished the piano and solo singing section. Her first public appearances as a vocal interpreter and later as a singer/songwriter are related to the Children's Cultural Centre and competitions called *Zlatna Sirena* (Golden mermaid) where she was a three-time first prize winner and once received a special reward. She also won several times the first prize for interpretation and composition at the *Fedemus* competition.

Since 2003, she has participated both in national and regional music festivals where she wins first prizes. She also participated in festivals abroad, such as *Coventry Peace Month* in England or *Srebrna Jantra* festival in Bulgaria where she was awarded first prize for interpretation. In February 2010, she started a band called Legal Sex Department.

<http://www.facebook.com/people/Danica-Radoji%C4%8Di%C4%87/100002143920477>

Serbia in Eurovision

Appearances: 4
Debut: 2007 (in 2004 as Serbia and Montenegro)
Victory: 1
- 2007: Molitva by Marija Serifovic, with 268 points
Best: 1st
Semi Finals: Qualified in 2007, 2008, 2010

Recent History

2010: Ovo Je Balkan by Milan Stankovic, 13th with 72 points
2009: Cipela by Marko Kon and Milaan, 10th in semi (voted out by jury) with 60 points
2008: Oro by Jelena Tomasevic, 6th with 160 points

2011 National Final

3 acts and 3 composers (all from the Kovac family) competed on 26 February. Kristina Kovac beat her family members with a whopping triple the amount of televotes and her entry Caroban sung by Nina.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

If Burt Bacharach had ever written a song for Europe, then it would have sounded a little bit like this. Lifted straight out of the late 60's, you can't help but use words like fab and groovy to describe this magical number from Serbia. You can't also help but think that the Song Contest is firmly entrenched in the 21st century and that kitsch appeal isn't going to be enough for Nina.

Sharleen says...

Serbia always divides the fans and critics, but they certainly do well on the night. Everyone loves a bit of 60s retro soul and pop; Duffy and Amy Winehouse have seemingly made careers out of it. Its eye-catching, its different, its starting to make me think easy qualifier and left hand side of the table at the final.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- Idemo dalje by Aleksandra Kova

Your Notes

Slovakia



At a Glance

Song: Iqñ Still Alive
Artist: TWiiNS
Composer: Bryan Todd, Sandra Nordstrom, Branislav Jancich
Lyricist: Bryan Todd, Sandra Nordstrom, Branislav Jancich

About the Artist

Identical sisters Daniela and Veronika were born on 15th May 1986.

Shortly after completing school in 2000, the pop sensations were scouted by a major Slovakian record label that went on to offer them a recording deal. The TWiiNS formed a joint venture and released four albums for which they were awarded three Golden and one Platinum record.

After taking some time off from recording, they teamed up in 2008 with noted American producer Jimmy Douglass. Jimmy Douglass is well known for his work with Timbaland, Nelly Furtado, Justin Timberlake, and many more. At the beginning of 2010, recorded a new single - a potential summer hit, remake of a song by Sabrina's *Boys*.

TWiiNS have since signed a contract with a newly established US based label - B RECORDS. And in July 2010, TWiiNS moved to Los Angeles and started working on the international version of their album whose release is planned for winter 2011.

www.twiinsmusic.com

Slovakia in Eurovision

Appearances: 5
Debut: 1994
Victory: -
Best: 18th
- 1996: [Kým nás máz](#) by Marcel Palonder, with 19 points
Semi Finals: Have not qualified

Recent History

2010: Horehronie by Kristina, 16th in semi with 24 points
2009: [Le tmou](#) by [Kamil Mikulík](#) and [Nela Pocisková](#), 18th with 8 points
2008: -

2011 National Final

The artist and song was internally selected, debuting on 5 March.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

So you have Jedward, under the careful eye of Louis Walsh (Boyzone, Westlife and Girls Aloud Nadine Coyle), and then you have Twiiins, under Bryan Todd (Ashley Tisdale, Jordin Sparks, and Pussycat Doll Ashley Roberts). It's an interesting battle of the two people that look the same on stage+genre, and while the press might want to get them all in the same picture, musically you have to hand this duel to the female of the species, even if neither ~~%~~live+or ~~%~~lipstick+are especially strong. But stranger things have happened in Eurovision that twins winning. I think.

Sharleen says...

It's the others twins for year . Twiiins! I really like this song; it's memorable, it feels modern with its slow ~~and~~ beat, repetitive enough to be memorable but not annoying. Yet amongst its competitors it feels a bit lost. I think this could go the way of ~~L~~ako je Sve~~q~~from last year and not make it past the semi. Shame as its a fantastic effort.

Your Notes

Slovenia



At a Glance

Song: No One
Artist: Maja Keuc
Composer: Matjaž Vlazi
Lyricist: Urza Vlazi

About the Artist

Maja was the runner-up of Slovenia's Got Talent in 2010.

She has participated in musicals such as *We Will Rock You*, and is a former member of the local rock band Bugs.

www.majakeuc.si/

Slovenia in Eurovision

Appearances: 16
Debut: 1993
Victory: -
Best: 7th
- 1995: Priluhni mi by Darja Švajger, with 84 points
- 2001: Energy by Nuša Derenda, with 70 points
Semi Finals: Qualified in 2007

Recent History

2010: Narodnozabavni rock by Ansambel Žlindra and Kalamari, 16th in semi with 6 points

2009: Love Symphony by Quartissimo, 16th in semi with 14 points

2008: Vrag naj vzame by Rebeka Dremelj, 11th with 36 points

2011 National Final

Final took place on 27th February with 10 acts, 100% televote reducing numbers to just 2 acts for a superfinal. Maja won over April with double the votes.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

It's a young female singer, on stage, with a song that starts out slow, builds up over time, and finally fights out a strong ending. It's great for radio, but really with no immediate hook this is going to slip out of a lot of people's minds, and there's always the threat that this is the song where people will put the kettle on.

Sharleen says...

As it stands on its own, yet another strong piece similar to Slovakia . great vocal, good song. It even has a kick at the end that will make everyone go ~~WOW!~~q But something tells me that it will be forgotten and left behind in the 2nd semi due to the tough competition.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- Ladadidej by April

Your Notes

Spain



At a Glance

Song: Que Me Quiten Lo Bailao (They Can't Take The Fun Away From Me)
Artist: Lucía Pérez
Composer: Rafael Artesero
Lyricist: Rafael Artesero

About the Artist

Lucía Pérez was born in 1985 in Galicia.

At age 17 she won her first TV contest and in 2003 she recorded her first album, which received the Galician *Gold Disc Award*. In the spring of 2005 she obtained the first prize in the *Galician Soloist Pop Album* awards. At the end of that same year she released her second album and travelled to Chile to represent Spain in the *Viña del Mar Song Festival*, where she came second.

Her song *Amarás Miña Terra* was selected for the Spanish Music Awards as one of the finalists for the *Best Song in Galician award*. In 2008, her third album was released simultaneously in Spain and Chile, where she toured extensively to promote it. She had such a good experience in the *Viña del Mar Song Festival* in Chile that in 2009 she took part in the contest again. In early 2010 she released her fourth album, recorded entirely in Galician language.

Lucía studies singing and classic guitar and is qualified as a music teacher.

www.luciaperez.net/

Spain in Eurovision

Appearances: 50
Debut: 1961
Victory: 2
- 1968: La La La by Massiel, with 29 points
- 1969: Vivo Cantando by Salome, with 18 points
Best: 1st
Semi Finals: Auto qualify

Recent History

2010: Algo pequeñito by Daniel Diges, 15th with 68 points
2009: La noche es para mí by Soraya, 24th with 23 points
2008: Baila el Chiki-chiki by Rodolfo Chikilicuatre, 16th with 55 points

2011 National Final

2 heats, a semi final and a final took place from 28th January to 18th February, reducing 24 acts down to just 3 acts via performances of Eurovision classics. In the final each of the acts performed 3 songs each, and then reduced to 1 song via jury vote for a superfinal. The final decision was made by 50% jury and televote, with Lucia received 68% of the vote.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

Guilty pleasure time . I'm enjoying this song almost as much as Soraya in 2009. I'm also pretty confident that this mix of Ibiza influenced summer beats is going to be just as successful as La Noche Es Para Mi. Thankfully Italy is in the Big 5, and likely to be the lowest in the table once we add up the votes around Europe.

Sharleen says...

Like a lot of the 2011 songs, this is poppy and inoffensive but does nothing for you after the 3 minutes. It's a nice little party song, but it doesn't feel fresh, and thus its bottom half of the table at the final for me.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- Abrázame by Lucia Perez

Your Notes

Sweden



At a Glance

Song: Popular
Artist: Eric Saade
Composer: Fredrik Kempe
Lyricist: Fredrik Kempe

About the Artist

Eric Saade grew up in Kattarp outside Helsingborg, Sweden . of Swedish and Lebanese parents. His first stage appearance was at age six, when he sang at his mother's wedding. Eric has been writing songs since he was 13 years old and has written songs to his debut-album *Masquerade* solo or in collaboration with various producers and songwriters such as Fredrik Kempe.

During the summer of 2009, Eric featured as host of Disney Channel's *My Camp Rock*, a Scandinavian music competition that draws inspiration from the channel's hit movie *Camp Rock*.

In August 2009, Eric was contracted to Sweden's most rapidly expanding record label, Roxy Recordings. He came second with Manboy at the 2010 Melodifestivalen.

www.ericasaade.com

Sweden in Eurovision

Appearances: 50
Debut: 1958
Victory: 4
- 1974: Waterloo by ABBA, with 24 points
- 1984: Diggiloo Diggiley by The Herreys, with 145 points
- 1991: Fångad av en stormvind by Carola, with 146 points
- 1999: Take Me To Your Heaven by Charlotte Nilsson, with 163 points
Best: 1st
Semi Finals: Qualified in 2004-2009

Recent History

2010: This is my Life by Anna Bergendahl, 11th in the semi with 62 points

2009: La Voix by Malena Ernman, 21st with 33 points

2008: Hero by Charlotte Perrelli, 18th with 47 points

2011 National Final

Once again the massive Melodifestivalen took place from 5th February . 12th March, with 32 entries competing. 2 entries per semi of 4 directly qualified to final, and another 2 entries qualified to 2nd chance round where they went through sudden death rounds. The final 10 entries at the final competed via international juries and a percentile scored televote selection. Both Danny and Eric lead the juries with just 2 points between them, but Eric convincingly won over Danny by 44 points.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

Let's face it, if Sweden and Saade could find a loophole, they would send %Manboy+to Germany. Unfortunately that song only managed third in Melodifestivalen last year (which sent Anna Bergendahl instead) so this %almost but not quite the same+song is bound for Dusseldorf, with a gimmick and a dance that's not as good as the one he could have brought last year. Expect lots of fans to like this, but the general public might be a bit indifferent. This might be the non-qualifying surprise of 2011.

Sharleen says...

It's the guy everyone wanted from Sweden last year! But in 2011 he has a lesser song that many have interpreted as rather arrogant. It ticks all the boxes in terms of commerciality, singalong-ability, cute guy... but I have a feeling that Saade will have a tough competition on his hands to qualify from semi 2. Erring on the side he will qualify, I think Sweden should prepare itself for another bottom half of finals table result.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- In The Club by Danny Saucedo
- Oh My God by The Moniker

Your Notes

Switzerland



At a Glance

Song: In Love for a While
Artist: Anna Rossinelli
Composer: David Klein
Lyricist: David Klein

About the Artist

Rossinelli was born in Basel, 20 April 1987 (aged 24) and has been a professional singer-songwriter since 2000. Currently is the lead singer with pop-soul trio band %Anne Claire+ (www.anneclaire.ch), who join her on stage . Manuel Meiskel (Ukulele and Guitar) and Georg Dillier (Bass). The band are based in Basel, and %often play on the streets of Basel and other European cities.%

Rossinelli attended the Basel Jazz School from the age of 16, still continuing to further develop as a singer.

www.myspace.com/annarossinelli

Switzerland in Eurovision

Appearances: 51
Debut: 1956
Victory: 2
- 1956: Refrain, by Lys Assia
- 1988: Ne partez pas sans moi, by Celine Dion, with 137 points
Best: 1st
Semi Finals: Qualified 2005, 2006.

Recent History

- 2010: Il Pleut De L'Or, by Michael von der Heide, 17th in the semi with 2 points.
- 2009: The Highest Heights, by Lovebugs. 14th in the semi with 15 points.
- 2008: Era Stupendo, by Paolo Meneguzzi. 13th in the semi with 47 points.

2011 National Final

Held on 11 December 2010, and was thus the first national artist/song combination to be chosen for the 2011 Song Contest. 12 songs were performed (by 12 artists) in one live show. Judges passed comment, but voting was 100% public. Notably defeated former American Idol contestant Sarah Burgess (2007 season).

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

Along with Finland's Paradise Oskar, Anna Rossinelli is on stage with a guitar, a gentle bit of backing, and a simple sweet song that gives Switzerland a chance of getting out the semi-finals. It's not a big chance, but if it doesn't, Rossinelli should be able to sell the song to a big supermarket chain for their Christmas advertising jingle.

Sharleen says...

Yet another nice tune. Nice doesn't get you very far though. Goes in one ear and out the other without much effect. Quite forgettable in the end, and will struggle to qualify.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- Up To You, by Polly Duster.
- Barbie Doll, by Scilla.
- Just Me, by Sarah Burgess.

Your Notes

The Netherlands

At a Glance

Song: Never Alone
Artist: 3JS
Composer: Jaap Kwakman, Jan Dulles, Jaap de Witte
Lyricist: Jaap Kwakman, Jan Dulles, Jaap de Witte



About the Artist

3JS debut album *Watermensen* went gold, the trio were awarded a Silver Harp, they triumphed at the *Vrienden Van Amstel Live*, and their second album *Kamers Van M'n Hart* has been declared a Dutch pop classic.

Dromers En Dwazen, their third CD won the trio an Edison and their first number one single: *Wat Is Dromen*.

www.3JS.nl

The Netherlands in Eurovision

Appearances: 51
Debut: 1956
Victory: 4
- 1957: Net als toen by Corry Brokken, with 31 points
- 1959: Een beetje by Teddy Scholten, with 21 points
- 1969: De troubadour by Lenny Kuhr, with 18 points
- 1975: Ding-A-Dong by Teach-In, with 152 points
Best: 1st
Semi Finals: Qualified in 2004

Recent History

2010: Ik ben verliefd (Sha-la-lie) by Sieneke, 14th in semi with 29 points
2009: Shine by De Toppers, 17th in semi with 11 points
2008: Your Heart Belongs To Me by Hind, 13th in semi with 27 points

2011 National Final

Internal selection of the artist was announced in late 2010, with a 5 song selection performed on 30 January. The 50% jury and televote agreed to send the artists favourite song by a whopping 64%, with the 2nd placed song De Stroom only receiving 26% of the vote.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

I can't see the appeal in this song. It's stuck in third gear from the very start, not fast enough to be power, not slow enough to be ballad. This is the bridge song that the small cute one in a boy band would sing while everyone else takes a break backstage. It's certainly not the worst song out here're, but neither is it a song I'll listen to on May 15th.

Sharleen says...

Best effort from The Netherlands in years; with an amazing ~~u~~ighters in the airqanthem feel to it that would be welcome on any adult contemporary radio station. If this was not 2011 I would say its a qualifier, but this year already has a number of groups and bands and thus it could be lost. The strength of semi 2 also shamefully makes it an even tough call for qualification.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- De stroom by 3Js

Your Notes

Turkey



At a Glance

Song: Live It Up
Artist: Yüksek Sadakat
Composer: Kutlu Özmakinaci
Lyricist: Ergün Arsal

About the Artist

Founded in 1997 by songwriter and bass guitarist Kutlu Özmakinaci², Yüksek Sadakat released their self-titled debut album in January 2006 and its second album *Katil & Maktûl* (The killer and the victim) in March 2008 under the DMC label.

The first single video *Belki Üstümüzden Bir Kuş Geçer* (Perhaps a bird will fly above us) from the group's first album made it to the top of the charts in numerous national radio stations and became the most played song on Turkish radio stations based on the Nielsen music surveys held in 2006.

The country-wise success of Yüksek Sadakat (comprising Kenan Vural on vocals, Serkan Özgen on guitar, Kutlu Özmakinaci² on bass, Uğur Onatkut on keyboards and Alpay Alt on drums) continued with their second album *Katil & Maktûl*. Songs from that album made it to number 1 on the charts and airplays of many national radio stations.

Upon an offer from TRT (Turkish Radio and Television) in late 2008, the group started putting on a radio show for TRT Radio 1 called *İhtimaller Denizi* (The sea of probabilities).

In response to heavy demand from listeners abroad, the group went on a European Tour in November 2009 covering Germany, Holland, Belgium and Switzerland giving a total of 7 concerts to their European listeners. In May 2010, Yüksek Sadakat reached over 400,000 young people through its concerts in 14 universities.

They later started working on a third album and completed their studio work in December.

www.yukseksadakat.com/

Turkey in Eurovision

Appearances: 32
Debut: 1975
Victory: 1
- 2003: Everyway That I Can by Sertab Erener, with 167 points
Best: 1st
Semi Finals: Qualified in 2004-2010

Recent History

2010: We Could Be The Same by Manga, 2nd with 170 points
2009: Dum Tek Tek by Hadise, 4th with 177 points
2008: Deli by Mor ve Otesi, 7th with 138 points

2011 National Final

Both the artist and song were selected internally. The artist announcement was made on 1 January, with the song presentation taking place on 25 February.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

Yet again, Turkey have decided on the performer and song internally, and they've went for a harder edged sound. And why not, it's worked before, taking them to second place last year almost under the radar of most of the Eurovision watchers. Live it Up is accessible, has a unique sound in the contest, and the band know how to handle a stadium crowd and react to the camera. Should be a high finishing song.

Sharleen says...

People are saying this is the worst Turkish entry in years, but I am thinking this is perhaps the most accessible, commercial song they have actually put forward to date. When I hear this, I think it captures the modern rock song well with a memorable hook and could very well surprise with its finish. Qualifying easily, I think this will sneak into the top 10 at Eurovision and a lot of radio playlists afterwards.

Your Notes

Ukraine



At a Glance

Song: Angel
Artist: Mika Newton
Composer: Ruslan Kvinta
Lyricist: Maryna Skomorohova

About the Artist

Her first vocal success happened at the age of 9 when Newton started her active participation in various regional and international vocal contests where she always got either the Grand Prix or was one of the prize winners.

After her victory in *Black Sea Games 2002* international festival where she won a Grand Prix, Mika Newton signed her first agreement with a producer company. Her first single *Anomaliya* has hit number one on the record charts in Ukraine and Russia and got into rotation on MTV Russia.

Between 2005 and 2008 the singer released three albums *Anomaliya*, *Tyoplaya Reka* and one English album which was recorded in a studio in Great Britain. Mika also released 9 music videos.

Mika is called the Queen of Soundtracks, she sings in many Ukrainian and Russian films and TV series as well as in commercial videos of such products as Hubba-Bubba and others. In October 2010 Mika Newton was awarded with the title of the *Woman Of The Third Millennium* for her social and charitable work.

mikanewton.com/

Ukraine in Eurovision

Appearances: 8
Debut: 2003
Victory: 1
- Wild Dances by Ruslana, with 280 points
Best: 1st
Semi Finals: Qualified in 2004-2010

Recent History

2010: Sweet People by Alyosha, 10th with 108 points
2009: Be My Valentine (Anti-Crisis Girl) by Svetlana Loboda, 12th with 76 points
2008: Shady Lady by Ani Lorak, 2nd with 230 points

2011 National Final

Following the lengthiest selection process of 2011, starting on 31st October with televised semi finals, 30 artists were culled down to 19 artists for the final. Controversy ensued on the finals results with 45% jury vote, 10% internet vote and 45% SMS vote. Mika Newton won on sheer numbers scoring both the highest SMS and Jury vote, with Jamala and Zlata Ognevich following close behind.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

For all the fuss over the Ukraine National Final, to end up with an average ballad from a cookie cutter singer that has a huge profile inside the country. Were there better songs in the National Final that gathered more unique votes? It does look that way. I expect a middling result from Ukraine, which if they're honest, is probably what they want.

Sharleen says...

Maybe I'm still bitter about my certain pick of Jamala not winning in Ukraine, but I'm still not feeling Mika stands up in the 2011 selections. The song is good, her singing is wonderful, however it still leaves me feeling rather unimpressed at the end of the song. I'm well aware of Ukraines history to really turn it around live, so I can't discount it as a qualifier or possible top half of finals table contender.

ESC Insight Second Chance picks...

- Smile by Jamala
- The Kukushka by Zlata Ognevit

Your Notes

United Kingdom

At a Glance

Song: I Can
Artist: Blue
Composer: Ciaron Bell, Ben Collier, Ian Hope, Duncan James, Liam Keenan, Lee Ryan, StarSign
Lyricist: Ciaron Bell, Ben Collier, Ian Hope, Duncan James, Liam Keenan, Lee Ryan, StarSign



About the Artist

Between 2001 and 2004, Blue were Britain's premium pop export to Europe. They enjoyed 40 number one singles across the continent. Blue sold 13 million albums, from their precision-tooled debut *All Rise*, to the more contemplative parting shot, *Guilty*.

Their individual journeys over the last six years have taken in some heady heights. Opening the West End original cast of *Legally Blonde* and two starring stints as Billy Flynn in *Chicago* for Duncan. A recent stretch in *Blood Brothers* for Antony. Two solo albums and a trip into movie stardom alongside Vinnie Jones for Lee. And a further two solo records that clocked up over a million sales and No.1's across Europe for Simon, the lead track on the *Fantastic Four* movie, alongside three weeks with Whoopi Goldberg in the West End in *Sister Act*.

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Blue-Boyband/14890448243>

United Kingdom in Eurovision

Appearances: 53
Debut: 1957
Victory: 5
- 1967: Puppet on a String by Sandie Shaw, with 47 points
- 1969: Boom Bang a Bang by Lulu, with 18 points
- 1976: Save Your Kisses For Me by Brotherhood of Man, with 164 points
- 1981: Making Your Mind Up by Bucks Fizz, with 136 points
- 1997: Love Shine a Light by Katrina and The Waves, with 227 points
Best: 1st
Semi Finals: Auto-qualify

Recent History

2010: That Sounds Good To Me by Josh Dubovie, 25th with 10 points
2009: Its My Time by Jade Ewen, 5th with 173 points
2008: Even If by Andy Abrahams, 25th with 14 points

2011 National Final

On January 29th it was announced that both the artist and song had been internally selected for the UK for the first time in its history at the contest. The song debuted on the Graham Norton Show on 11th March.

ESC Insight Thoughts

Ewan says...

The slow recovery of the Song Contest in the UK continues, and after last year's mis-step of Josh Dubovie, the BBC for the first time went for an internal selection of the artist and song. They've ended up with former boy band Blue, who still have a huge number of fans across Europe. Will that be enough to lift the UK up from the bottom of the table? For sure. The question is just how high the boys can go. Top Ten is not out of the question, and you can't discount something even higher.

Sharleen says...

Is this the song the UK have been waiting for? Frankly, yes it IS the song that should change the opinions of many that the country can take it seriously and produce a good song. But a winner? I'm not so certain. Based on their previously popularity, their ability to perform in stadiums, etc I think its a contender for top 5 . and that is a solid good start to build on.

Your Notes