



AUSTRIA

“MAN IS THE MEASURE OF ALL THINGS” ALF POIER



Austria's entry this year at first appears mediocre, with notable Austrian music critic, Marie Herberstein describing it as “a stinker”. Closer inspection however, reveals a more complex story behind Alf Poier, a story likely to appeal to the biologically minded. The lyrical genius behind lines such as:

“I like most animals on this earth, but I really prefer little rabbits and bears” and

“Whoever wants to know more about animals should study Biology or inform himself on my homepage”

more than makes up for the lack of melody. Perhaps criticizing the competitive nature of the entire Eurovision establishment, Poier states:

“The difference between animals such as apes and primates is no bigger than between noodles and pasta”

This kind of anti-establishment jibe is unlikely to win him any favours from the judges.



BELGIUM “SANOMI” URBAN TRAD



I like the cut of Urban Trad’s jib. They are combining traditional folk tunes with a more modern rhythm, and it works. Perhaps they are playing a very Celtic sounding tune because of Ireland’s success through Eurovision history. Perhaps Flemish folk music sounds like this too.

Perhaps the greatest surprise with Urban Trad is that they have invented an

“imaginary and thus universal language”

for their song. With current pushes for unity in Europe, perhaps this will resound strongly with the judges.



CROATIA

“VISE NISAM TVOJA” CLAUDIA BENI



Seventeen year-old hairdressing student, Claudia Beni will be disappointing many young European boys when she proclaims to the Latvian audience “I can’t be your lover”.

She has a powerful voice and knows how to move around a stage, but in her film-clip, she appears to be wearing a large cheezel.

Former ‘Sale of the Century’ host, Glenn Ridge describes ‘Vise Nisam Tvoja’ as

“o.k.”

and I tend to agree.



GREECE

“NEVER LET YOU GO”

MANDO



Being described as a “miracle child” by the Greek music establishment, the only miracle that I am aware of in Mando’s video-clip is the holy intervention required to stop her exploding from her dress.

She is the only Greek artist to have formed her own fan-club, and the ‘hum-alongability’ of her song may explain it’s 20,000 members. If any of these fans are amongst the judges in Latvia she may stand a chance, but I suspect Nando has been busy creating 20,000 pseudonyms. Lyrics such as:

“I’d die for you but I’d never let you go”

bring to mind a corpse having to be physically removed from the person whom she is singing about. It is all a bit creepy for me.



Iceland

“Segou Mer Alit (Open Your Heart)”

Birgitta



Birgitta’s Madonna-esque entry for Iceland this year will attract some fans this year, but most of them will be members of her family. Her name is indeed up in lights on the film-clip for this tune, very large lights that look like the neon advert for a rollerbowl. At least they take your mind off the music. Her lyrics include:

“The sum of you and me is we”

I believe that Iceland needs to acknowledge that Bjork will be the only good thing to ever come out of their country’s music industry.



IRELAND “WE’VE GOT THE WORLD” MICKEY JOE HARTE



Ireland has won Eurovision more than any other nation. Not surprising, considering their musical heritage..... but definitely surprising after listening to the schmaltz that Mickey Joe Harte has produced. He teases us with a slightly Celtic opening, charms us with his boyish good looks, dares us to ask him

“Why the sun and moon go round”

and then leaves us feeling unmoved and dissatisfied. I for one am not convinced by his supposed knowledge of stellar and planetary kinematics.... nor of his musical talent.



ISRAEL

“WORDS FOR LOVE”

LIOR NARKIS



Israel has come up with an interesting follow up to their controversial transvestite winner of 1998. It is a bouncy and upbeat tune that could well be used for an ad jingle.

In fact it sounds like the jingle for an ad for marshmallows in the shape of flightless birds that come with a choco-nana dipping sauce. If any of the judges in Latvia are 6 years old, Israel are a shoe-in.



LATVIA “HELLO FROM MARS” F.L.Y



F.L.Y. have proven that the whole can be greater than the sum of its parts. Each of this Latvian threesome has tried to make the Eurovision finals individually but eventually, only made it by working as a team. This team was

“conceived at a Latvian golf tournament”,

which is a coincidence, as my parents tell me that I was also conceived at a Latvian golf tournament. If that in itself weren't enough for my seal-of-approval, the following example of lyricism melted the wax and put the stamp in my hand.

“I'm not afraid of a blade that we need to cross today”



Malta

“To Dream Again” Lynn Chircopp



Last year we witnessed the entire population of Malta fall to their knees in disappointment, and martial law being declared in the Maltese quarter of Latvia’s capital, Riga. This was not the first time Malta and Latvia had reached loggerheads (who could forget the badminton semi-final at the Barcelona Olympics), nor was it the first time Malta had finished second at Eurovision. Unfortunately for the tiny island, Lynn Chircopp has delivered a luke-warm and cheesy entry (just like the pastizzi you buy on Maltese beaches) for Latvia 2003. If Malta dreams of victory this year, they will just have to “dream again”.



NETHERLANDS

“ONE MORE NIGHT”

ESTHER HART



“There’s a bright light that shines upon us
A light as old as time
And there’s a flower that keeps on growing
As long as we two rhyme”

It appears that Dutch singer, Esther Hart (her stage name, it is quite catchy isn’t it?) has placed too much emphasis on rhyme, and not enough on creating a grammatical sentence.

And where is this flower of which she speaks? It must be incredible. Is it a Rafflesia or something even bigger? What would pollinate such a flower? Vultures? Brolgas? Those of you who are interested in viewing this flower should contact Ms Hart, although she hasn’t returned any of my emails.



NORWAY

“I’M NOT AFRAID TO MOVE ON”

JOSTEIN HASSELGAD



When I watched Hasselgad’s live performance of this song, I was moved to tears. He is exactly the kind of artist that Norway needs to reach Eurovision victory. His charm and passion had the audience in the palm of his huge Nordic hand.

When he asked us to “lay down with someone strange”, I immediately started searching for the strangest person I could find to lie down with.

And when Jostein proclaimed that he was “alone when the goast starts to hunt”, I wanted to protect him from this goast, or at least find out what the hell a goast is.

I sincerely hope that Hasselgad’s passion is rewarded with a top-three placing this year in Latvia.



POLAND

“ZADNYCH GRONIC (NO BORDERS)”

ICH TROJE



Ich Troje have produced a very heartfelt and political entry for Poland this year. Lyrically and tastelessly similar to Bette Midler’s “From a Distance”, the song is performed in Polish, German and Russian, so it should at least appeal to three judges.

I wholeheartedly support at least one of their messages, which is that:

“Everyone should go there (outer space) at least once”



PORTUGAL

“KEEP THE DREAM ALIVE”

RITA GUERRA



Portugal has also gone for the pop-diva, ‘four octaves in one day’ kind of approach that seems very popular at Eurovision. I for one, hope that the judges at Latvia see through this luke-warm approach to song-writing.

On a more positive note, Rita Guerra sang on the Soundtrack to “Tarzan”.



ROMANIA

“DON’T BREAK MY HEART”

NICOLA



Voted woman of the year by ‘Avantaje’ magazine, Nicola has delivered the goods in 2003. Currently, she is coming last in the internet-poll, but it must be due to the poor internet service in Romania because it is a great song.

I expect the song to do well in Latvia, although it does flirt with some unusual time-signatures, and this may not impress the “4/4” judges. This is my personal favourite this year.



RUSSIA

“DON’T BELIEVE, DON’T BE
AFRAID”
TATU



TATU has caused a storm for Eurovision this year. The filmclip for their entry has been banned in Russia itself, because of such shocking scenes as “two girls holding hands”. The most shocking thing of all however, is that TATU are already famous and do well on the charts. This is unheard of at Eurovision. How will the judges take it?

One theory, championed by Dr Marie Herberstein, is the “worm-hole principle” which suggests that whilst it is possible that an unknown and undiscovered contestant can enter the Eurovision ‘worm-hole’ and come out famous, the reverse is also true. Herberstein believes that TATU, entering the Eurovision ‘worm-hole’ as famous singers, will somehow be stripped of their fame, leaving Latvia as unknowns.

Only Sunday night will deliver us the answer.



SPAIN

“DIME (TELL ME)”

BETH



It is great to see a nation entering a song with obvious roots in their own musical traditions. Flamenco guitars give this tune a very Spanish feel, which the not-so-Spanish “Beth” does not take away from us.

A song, which begins by conjuring up an image of “Beth” subconsciously writing her lover’s name in the sand with her foot, then leads us nowhere. Musically however, it could well be popular in Latvia.



SWEDEN

“GIVE ME YOUR LOVE” JESSICA ANDERSSON AND MANGUS BACKLUND (FAME)



Sweden’s entrants for Latvia 2003 both claim to be heavily influenced by Stevie Wonder, whom they claim to be a ‘role model’. After listening to music of ‘Fame’ and conducting a great deal of research, the only parallel in the musical career of Andersson & Backlund, and Stevie Wonder, is the use of the words:

“you”
“love”
“and”
“time”
“just”
and “the”

amongst their lyrics.

Stevie Wonder is a brilliant mind. Sweden’s entry fails to show any connection with brilliance.



UKRAINE “HASTA LA VISTA” OLEXANDR PONOMARYOV



The Ukraine's first ever entry to Eurovision gives us some insight into the long and tumultuous 'shared musical history' that the former Soviet state has with Spain.

Ponomaryov's "Hasta la Vista" immediately brings to mind centuries of Ukrainio-Spanish tunes such as Igor Dziggetai's "Buenas Dias", and Pieter Romnakravov's haunting "Muchos Gracias".

Ponomaryov's number-one passion during his youth was boxing, which his doctor forced him to give up due to the risk of losing his eyesight.

After listening to "Hasta la Vista", I have drawn upon my growing knowledge of Otolaryngology to recognise the obvious signs of 'laryngeal nodules', and have sent him an email with my diagnosis.

Do you think he might consider returning to boxing?



UNITED KINGDOM “CRY BABY” JEMINI



‘Cry Baby’ songwriter Martin Isherwood explains that

“one of the most rewarding aspects of songwriting is when someone comes up to you after a gig and says that a song really touched them”

This person must have speaking of someone else’s song at someone else’s gig.

Disappointingly, Jemini are not even twins. They look like twins, they sound like twins, but I’m telling you now, they ain’t twins.

I like the dodgem car scenes in their film clip, and the tune is quite catchy, but I am not prepared for them to just cruise in and ride on the fame of honest hard-working twins like Bros, Nelson and Milli Vanilli. They don’t get my vote.