

2011 Reviews

And the winner is....

May 16, 2011

Friends of Eurovision,

I am utterly exhausted after an unbelievable final in sunny Duesseldorf. The winner of the 2011 Eurovision Song Contest is: Azerbaijan!!!! Azerbaijan????? Where on earth...? Right here:



The evening was hosted by the charming and patient Anke, Stephan, an aging pornstar of sorts, and Judith who probably got the gig because she can speak French.

Finland kicked the evening off, with a feelgood ballade performed by manchild Oskar (place 21); Bosnia & Herzegovina did much better (6th) although points were deducted for that jacket! Denmark's boyband inexplicably came 5th with their beer-song 'come on boys, come on girls'. Lithuania tested our patience with a classic chanson, a lot of fog on stage and a white piano (one of many to come)...place 19! Then came my personal favorite Hungary, who powered out a brilliant Eurovision anthem, but I was apparently the only one who liked it...place 21.

Ireland's twins, Jedward were up next, and clearly struck accord with the Eurovision audience, place 8. I think they were marginally better than the stuffed turkey Ireland sent some years ago (seriously, they did!). Another manchild entered the stage, Eric, for Sweden, who mysteriously came third. Not even geopolitical block voting can explain this!

I think the use of hot pink is the reason for Estonia's second last placing (24th)...oh and the song was pretty awful too... Now, I have seen a lot of madness in Eurovision, but Greece coming 7th I can not explain. Maybe it was the way he flipped open his jacket on stage...Russia's manchild Alexey gave us the sleaziest performance of the evening...place 16. France, the apparent favorite, could not get beyond place 15 for the operatic performance by Amoury, who sported the most unkempt hair of the evening.

Italy did brilliantly with a swing/jazzy piano (see I told you) type song...second place! Poor old Switzerland did not deserve last place for this happy go lucky song...it even had soap bubbles, I suspect Europe is still angry about Celine Dion (who sang for Switzerland in 1988)...instead, the UK definitely deserved the last place, but came 11th with boy band Blue: metallic grey suits with ripped off sleeves...that's all I have to say!

Moldova was the joke entry (there is one every year), but this time I think the joke was on us: place 12. Germany's Lena was up next, defending her last year's win. The song was ho-hum, but intriguingly she was surrounded on stage by what looked like the German speed skating team – place 10.

When Romania came on (with a piano!) everyone in the room started tapping along to this happy go lucky song...it should have done better than place 17!

Nadine, from Austria, with her concreted hair, pelted out a big, yet forgettable song...18th! Next, the winners, manchild Ell and Nikki performed a song that appeals to tormented teenagers in love. They finished a comfortable 40 points ahead of Italy and we are all going to Bacu, Azerbaijan's capital, next year!

Slovenia had fingerless gloves, that's all I remember, place 13. Poor old Iceland must be hard hit by the country's financial crisis, judging by the second hand outfits and haircuts...place 20. The most annoying song (and outfits: white suited backup dancers) of the evening goes to Spain....a deserved 23rd!

The Ukraine distracted the audience from a screechy song and questionable outfits by having a sand painter on stage, projected onto the gigantic screen. It must have worked as they came in 4th. The cutest performance goes to Serbia, who did a delightful 60's number with authentic costuming...sadly only place 14. Georgia concluded the performances with a screeching number by Eldine and her mascara boys...9th.

Eurovision sets the fashion trends for the year, but this time, it was difficult to detect a strong pattern. There was the trusted 'all white' (Spain, Azerbaijan,), the winning 'all black' (Denmark, Greece, Russia), and a smattering of primary

colours (Hungary, Ireland, Estonia). I also detected some military themes (France). In any case, a piano and some breakdancers should set you up nicely for 2011.

From all of us, thank Darwin Eurovision is over!

Serbia, Slovakia & Slovenia

May 13, 2011

Serbia



Artist: Nina



Song: Čaroban

Reviewed by Aaron Harmer

This year, Serbia delivers up the delightful Nina (although unfortunately not Nena of 99 Luftballons fame). With this jaunty number the days of Serbian schmaltz are definitely over, and Marija Šerifović, if she weren't alive and well, would be rolling in her grave. Nina has gone for a retro 60s look, complete with trowel-applied make-up, that may just make her stand out among this year's crop of Eurovision hopefuls. Sporting a turquoise dress that will surely be the envy of chameleon grasshoppers everywhere, Nina is going to turn heads, even if her song doesn't.

Slovenia



Artist: Maja Keuc



Song: No One

Reviewed by Aaron Harmer

She was runner-up in 2010's 'Slovenia's Got Talent' and has been described as Slovenia's answer to Christina Aguilera or Anastasia (or perhaps both?). She is Maja Keuc, and she explodes onto the Dusseldorf stage in a quintessential Eurovision performance. This song has the perfect euro balance of subtle wind machine, energetic backing dancers, climactic key change, and copious amounts of dress fabric that utterly fail to cover any skin. With this in mind, the song is very appropriately named. As a mark of true Eurovision standard, 'No One' is exactly the number of people who will remember any detail of this song 3.6 seconds after the closing credits on Sunday night. Finally, a special mention must go to the backing dancers; picture a pair of Cossack dancers doing the Robot and you've got these guys in one.

Slovakia



Artist: TWiiNS



Song: I am still alive

Review by Felipe Gawryszewski

After several nights of insomnia and nightmares I finally decided that it was time to stop procrastinating and gathered courage to press play and listen to Eurovision's Slovakia entry. I wish I could have procrastinated a little bit more.

I am not sure what happened in Bratislava when citizens voted for their Eurovision contestant, but something went really wrong. Apparently one singer was not good enough and Slovakia comes this year with identical twins, Daniela and Veronika. They sing the typical pop-melodramatic song and recently released a single named "Boys Boys Boys". The mathematics of Eurovision are quite complex, however I suspect the presence of twins makes the song twice as bad, their chance of success in the contest twice as high and my ears four times as painful.

Russia and Ukraine

May 13, 2011

Russia



Artist: Alexej Vorobjov



Song: Get you

Review by Olga Kazakova

Well the boy has definitely lost his mind, as he claims. He may be telling us that he's "gonna get you" but I'm not sure he "gets" what he's saying. His lyrics are as ridiculously inappropriate as Russia's usual collection of short-skirted teenage contestants. Although, as a woman, I can appreciate having some man-candy to feast on, this boy's jarring English and monotonal, wavering attempts at pitch make this a disappointing entry for Russia.

Kudos to the band for composing in a language so obviously foreign to them, but overall I'd have to say they're not going to get me, or my vote this year.

Ukraine



Artist: Mika Newton



Song: Angel

Review by Olga Kazakova

What a disappointment! Another lackluster song sung by a beautiful girl with a pretty voice. No folksiness, no exciting costumes? There was so much that could have been done with this entry. The spinning was as lifeless and tacky as the lyrics. To boot, it looks like it confused a band of acrobats on their way to a performance. But good on them – they continued their stretches and practiced on stage despite Mika’s ceaseless spinning.

Ms Newton loses points for not composing the music or writing the lyrics (though, with the quality of the two, perhaps this should mean that she gains points – after all, its not her fault that its so bad!)

At least it was in Russian this time! Oh wait...this was a Ukrainian entry!

Belarus & Croatia

May 12, 2011

Belarus



Artist: Anastasia Vinnikova



Song: I Love Belarus

Reviewed by Rachael Gallagher

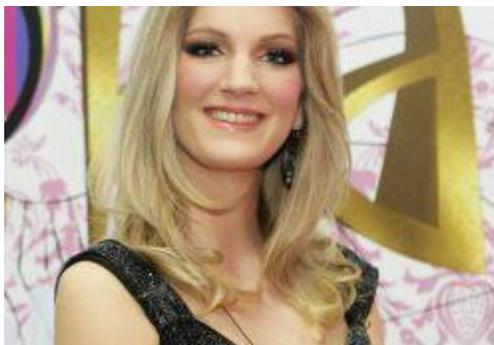
"I love Belarus!" exclaims Anastasia Vinnikova. Unfortunately, I don't. This year's effort from the landlocked nation sounds more like a tourist advertisement than a Eurovision entry. Perhaps, "Where the bloody hell are you, Belarus?" may have been more fun and that adorable Lara Bingle could have performed??

I can say that despite having an 'artist' whose name reads like a tennis scorecard, the Belarusians have successfully married traditional costuming with techno-stylings. Good luck to them I say...just another disco pop tune gone wrong.

Croatia



Artist: Daria



Song: Celebrate

Review by Rachael Gallagher

It seems the theme for this year's Eurovision is Diva. It's Divas at ten paces – and Croatia is no exception. *Celebrate* is your usual Eurovision fare; loads of lights, make-up, close-ups, extras, synthesizers, barely intelligible lyrics ("e.g. shine

like a comet in a musical galaxy”), bubbles, break-dancing, key changes, strobe lights and hand-claps. With all that I still think it is too lacklustre to make it on the night, but with 147,000 hits on youtube someone seems to be watching. Could it be Croatia’s turn to ‘Celebrate’? (bad pun, please accept my apologies).

Austria, Cyprus & Latvia

May 12, 2011

Austria



Artist: Nadine Beiler



Song: The Secret is Love

Reviewed by Mariella Herberstein

Austria won Eurovision once...in 1966...thanks to Udo Juergens’ *Mercy Cherie*. Since, Austria has been on a precipitous decline and came last seven times and rightly so, as most of Austria’s entries are untalented or comedians or both. Not so this year.....the country has decided to send someone who can sing – Nadine...the love child of Liza Minelli and Mariah Carey. Yep, the lady can sing and hold a tune, command the stage and she wears a sequenced dress. It is possible that she is actually not from Austria.

The only fly in the ointment is that the song itself is rather lame – Nadine needed something bigger and better. So, definitely not the wooden spoon for Austria this year, but I am not sure Nadine will make it into the finals with this song.

Cyprus



Artist: Christos Mylordos



Song: San Aggelos S'Agapisa

Reviewed by Mariella Herberstein

I have reviewed Cyprus for Eurovision many many times, and this year I will try to say something positive, but the incessant fiddling in this performance is already giving me a cluster migraine. Ok, I tried, but I honestly can not say much about this...it is a tedious and boring song, the performance static without energy.

The video is somewhat mysterious, I think something terrible happened to young Christos – he is mangling red roses in the video and we all know that things are pretty dire when flowers are violated. I hope the lyrics make more sense in Greek...the English translation comes straight from Google:

In my loneliness dead ends

My tear went down unstoppable

Like Jesus secret dinner

Latvia



Artist: Musiqq



Song: Angel In Disguise

Review by Mariella Herberstein

I can not explain it, but I am strangely attracted to this dyslexic duo. Is it the line: kill me with killer kiss, is it their white shoes or the side mullets (sides short, back and front long)? I predict this will actually make it into the final, against all reason!

Armenia & Italy

May 12, 2011

Armenia



Artist: Emmy



Song title: Boom Boom

Reviewed by Kerinne Harvey

"Quizás, Quizás, Quizás" translated to "Perhaps, Perhaps, Perhaps" translated yet again to "Boom Boom Chucka Chucka your love is lika lika".

All I can say is "What the!"

And yes another tune destroyed. Does anyone else notice that for the most part the tune is pinched and turned into a mosh pit of boom boom chucka chuckas. Please refer to an old version of "Quizás, Quizás, Quizás". <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sihiw6u5TqQ>

Quizás, Quizás, Quizás was a popular hit song originally written by Cuban songwriter Osvaldo Farres in the mid 40's. It was then translated and written into something completely different and became a popular theme song for British sitcom

"Coupling", to now be destroyed by Chucka Chuckas. Come on Armenia get something decent and original. The song is dedicated to fighter Arthur Abraham but what is this song about anyway? The lyrics are definitely original but aren't there any rules as to how much of a tune you can pinch?

Italy



Artist: Raphael Gualazzi



Song: Madness of Love

Reviewed by Kerinne Harvey

Michael Buble move on over we have a new star. He's hot, jazzy and makes your toes tap, hips wiggle and head bop all at once. I have no idea what he's singing about but it sounds happy and romantic. He has it all: talent, awesome shoes, lack of sequins, no silly choreography and is all class. But according to our Euroquation the lower the talent score and the more bling the greater the success interia. So Raphael Gualazzi will be soon out of the competition. Such a shame as he and can actually play the piano, write his own tunes and lyrics to match. Playing and singing at once is tricky and, well, his song has made it into my iTunes library, so there. According to one reviewer however, Italy shouldn't be aloud in Eurovision as when they talk they do so in song. Well that's tough, they have just upped the stakes for Eurovision.

[Albania & Ireland](#)

May 12, 2011

Albania



Artist: Aurela Gaçe



Song: Feel the Passion

Reviewed by Jasmin Ruch

Is it Marry Poppins almost naked? Is it Arielle, the little mermaid? No!!! It's Aurela from Albania! "Feel the passion" is a really, hmmm, let's call it 'interesting' pop-song, underlined by a very, very, very professional Albanian video (especially the eagle persuades), performed by a woman with an outstanding sensitivity for appropriate dresses and subtle hair colour & make-up. Will she make it? I think not! But hopefully she's not that high up in the sky when she realises that the audience does not feel the passion – or at least there's an eagle to rescue her from falling!

Ireland



Artist: Jedward



Song: Lipstick

Reviewed by Nansi Ngahere Richards

Jedward is what happens when Take That! and Spandau Ballet are left alone in a room together for a couple of decades past their due date, after a raiding party through Split Endz's wardrobe. He's a bouncy, tumbling, back-flipping little Irish lad, with a swag of blue-velvet cheekbone moves and some natty footwork. Unfortunately he seems to have been bouncing

off the ceiling at some point when the wind changed and the hairdresser hasn't been able to do anything about it yet. His trade-mark mirror image has also been practised on far too many times since mummy last cleaned up after him, leaving a messy array of mwah! marks all over the show.

Looks aside, Jedward has a cheerful little pop ditty going for them. The prophetic lyrics ("Oooo-arr, am I headed for a car crash?...I'm about to fall in head-first") are probably an impassioned plea for help, given the state of the Irish economy but it's hard to tell over the din of autotune reverb. The E.U.-urovision council may well hear their cry though – they're tipped as hot favourites. Well Katy Perry likes them anyway.

She's (like) got her lipstick on, (like) no doubt. But she's (like) certainly not the (like) only one!

Switzerland, Georgia & Estonia

May 10, 2011

If there is anything you can trust, then it is Anne Wignall's insights into Eurovision (and her remarkable ability to find chocolate).

Switzerland



Artist: Anna Rossinelli



Song: In Love for a While

Reviewed by Anne Wignall

Oh, such a pleasant entrant to review – she can sing!! The press release for the Swiss entry began with 'light and bubbly'...always a worry. At Eurovision, that could mean 3 minutes of watching air-headed 80's pop princesses flit about the stage while the lead wails like a banshee on a winter's day.

But no, Anna Rossinelli was very impressive, especially given her brave choice of singing an acoustic song live in front of an audience. There's something a little bit country, a little bit reggae about the song that, even if you're not a fan of either style, together makes you smile and think of skipping down to the tearoom for a cuppa and braiding each others' hair. There was something oddly dichotomous about a ukelele and a double bass playing side by side at the start with poor Anna somewhere in the middle, but at Eurovision, who cares, it works, it's charming and yes, it's 'light and bubbly'.

Georgia



Artist: Eldrine



Song: One More Day

Reviewed by Anne Wignall

Sophio Toroshelidze is the lead vocalist of rock band 'Eldrine', Georgia's entry in Eurovision. Sophio studied at the "Music College for Remarkable Students", and remarkable she certainly is. In fact, it's predicted that Georgia are going to do extremely well this year – top 5 for sure according to one keen YouTube Eurovision aficionado. Eldrine have managed to throw in something to appeal to everyone. 5 back-up musicians, one keyboard player with big hair, one rock chick in heels, a great deal of strobe lighting, one set of fireworks, one wind machine, one unidentifiable musical key and one rap bridge. Apparently the fireworks are there to breathe energy to the audience.

Eldrine are supported by previous Georgian Eurovision entrants backstage and they seem like a lovely, collegial bunch. Interestingly, the 2007 Georgian entrant was recently asked if she'd consider returning to Eurovision. Her reply: 'I don't think so, once is enough'.

Estonia



Artist: Gettar Jaani



Song: Rockefeller Street

Reviewed by Anne Wignall

1-2-7-3 down the Rockefeller Street...arithmetic or an actual address? This really was a drop in standard for Estonia, considering their stellar entry with Randajad in 2009 and last year's Siren with beautifully co-ordinated harmonies and strangely fascinating lead singer. Eurovision has come to depend on Estonia over the years for talent and novelty, a breath of fresh air over a pool of stagnant water. However, even considering the drop in standard, there's nothing really wrong with this year's entry, especially considering the popularity of Katy Perry mimics around pop music today. Perhaps that's it. Too many Katy Perry's. Where's the individuality, the flair, the big flashing neon sign that screams talent above their heads? For a song contest, there's nothing here that makes the Estonian entry stand up and be counted. This is just, well....boring.

[Hungary, San Marino & Greece](#)

May 10, 2011

Hungary



Singer: Kati Wolf



Song: What about my dreams

Reviewed by Mariella Herberstein

I LOVE this song (and possibly Kati)! This is Eurovision in its purest form – the essence of Eurovision. A big song, huge voice, disco beat and snippets of Hungarian. The video is also great: She is crying so hard, her mascara is running down her cheeks.

For the finals I predict double strength wind machines and a spot in the top 10 (the lack of a key change might cost her the win though). In the long term, this song will definitely shoot to number one in Hungary and will be on repeat in discotheques all along the Black Sea. Hungary, you have my vote!

San Marino



Singer: Senit



Song: Stand by me

Reviewed by Mariella Herberstein

San Marino is slightly smaller than the Macquarie University campus but sports a Formula One racetrack. This is only the second time that San Marino is participating in Eurovision, and clearly, they have not caught up with the rules of engagement. Don't get me wrong, this is a lovely song, well sung, with a subtle melody and sensitive lyrics. Everything a Eurovision song should not be!

I am sure San Marino will secure the full douze points from Italy (being embedded into Italy like a tapeworm cyst in a brain), but probably not much more.

Greece



Artist: Loucas Yiorkas feat. Stereo Mike



Song: Watch my dance

Reviewed by Mariella Herberstein

Take a baseball capped hip-hop dude and add Zorba the Greek (just better groomed and younger than Anthony Quin in the movie) and presto – Greece’s entry for 2011. So, Stereo Mike (Greece’s only hip-hop artist) raps away about being betrayed, and that we should not believe what we hear. Certainly, I can’t believe it AND I do feel betrayed and a bit dirty after having listened to this entry. Then Loucas chimes in with your average Syrtaki music (yep, the same as in the movie). All in all pretty boring, not even Cyprus is going to dish out 12 points for this stinker...

Moldova & Romania

May 9, 2011

And more gold from Scott:

Moldova



Artist: Zdob și Zdub



Song: So lucky

Reviewed by Scott Fabricant

I copy this quote directly from their bio page on the Eurovision website: "Since the mid 90's Zdob si Zdrub combines the hardcore and Moldovan folklore in a unique and elegant way." This can only be awesome. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to chronicle their true awesomeness, since the official video gave me an induced seizure. So instead I watched the toned down Rehearsal. In which they dance around in giant pointy wizard/fairy hats while one of them cavorts around stage on a unicycle while playing a vuvuzela.

As they say themselves, they are the cream of the crop, and they love to rock. Rock on, you oboe-and-trombone-playing hipsters. We really are So Lucky to have you in the contest this year.

Romania



Artist: Hotel FM



Song: Change

Reviewed by Scott Fabricant

Aren't you guys a bit old to form a boy band? Of course you can't Change The World. You can't even change yourselves out of the mid-90's paradigm you've never left. Seriously, your band name is Hotel FM. We use mp3s now. That said, your saccharine, pop-catchy time-warp ways may find niche acceptance among fans of Eurovision chic.

And you've got some sweet scarves. +1 for that.

Bosnia & Herzegovina



Artist: Dino Merlin



Song: Love in Rewind

Reviewed by Kate Umbers

Bum dance by woman on the keyboard

Oh the manscaping!

Sing it back baby!

Nice plaid jacket and a matching plaid dress

I think they are faking playing their instruments- well the keyboard at least

Awonderful example of Punctuated Tambourine Technique

&

Hearty power in the singing

Even a moustache salute at the end

Really really white socks or are they shoes? I can't see, am blinded

Z-rated silking in the background

E nergetic strumming at the beginning

G reat spinning of the double base

O nly one key for the whole song!

V ibrant waving = nice finale

I feel more sequins would have helped

N ot this year B&H!

A wooden spoon for them

Azerbaijan



Artist: Ell/Nikki



Song: Running Scared

Reviewed by Kate Umbers

A t least there's a dog in the clip

Z -rated for every facet of the performance

E ll & Nicki – more like smell and sickly

R eally nice dress the girl's wearing, can't say the same for Ell's beige coat

B land mix of the boring and the predictable

A song from the pop cereal box

I mpressive use of cablecars into film clip – but will they fit into the stadium?

J amboree of girl scouts could do better

A song that's so bad it has stoped being funny

N octurnal numbats will sing their way to Eurovision fame before this lot

Anne Gaskett is our international Eurovision correspondent in Auckland and for her reviews this year has recruited the help of a journalist. I can smell a Pulitzer...

Sweden



Artist: Eric Saade



Song: Popular

Reviewed by Jodie Holwell & Anne Gaskett

One-man boy band, Eric Saade, brings us an explosive, yet oddly plaintive, mix of high energy choreography and devastating glass destruction. He and his thoroughly waxed and judiciously shaven backing dancers pop-and-lock their way through a peppy tune that switches between defiant posturing and desperate pleas for popularity. Eric's Bieber-style hairdo, maroon vinyl jacket, and single Kevlar glove create an unstoppable force against the large panes of glass that compose his stage set (yes, he literally smashes glass on stage, three times). In a way, Eric smashes the glass ceiling for all the young men of Sweden who also hope someone will "want my body when I'm popular". Eric might be number one amongst Swedish glaziers, but will he capture the notoriously glass-hearted Eurovision viewers? We suspect not.

The Netherlands



Artist: 3Js



Song: Never Alone

Reviewed by Jodie Holwell & Anne Gaskett

The 3Js, Jaap, Jaap and Jan (Kwaakman, Dulles & De Witt), have done it again! This really is a great song. Three good-looking blokes who can write music, sing, harmonise, play instruments and don't take their clothes off – clearly they don't belong in the Eurovision song contest at all. Sure, their film clip suggests a penchant for overly gritty production values, but after the neon pinball CGI of other competitors, the 3Js are like a crème-de-menthe fluffy duck on a hot day to these reviewers.

The Twitterverse provide these pithy comments:

Once again, The Netherlands has a great song and Europe will be unfair.

i like you Nethrlands<33 Greats song!!!! in my top 5

Nikolai Tatarnic is Canadian and knows only too well the devastating effect that Eurovision can have: that's right, I am talking about Celine Dion who sang for Switzerland in 1988. He has discovered a possibly worse fate for Spain:

Spain



Artist: Lucia Perez



Song: Que Me Quiten Lo Bailao

Reviewed by Nic Tatarnic

Lucia Perez is all smile. I mean, she has a very large mouth. Very, very large. It completely bisects her head – it's like watching a muppet, as the whole top of her head rolls back to reveal all 120 of her pearly white teeth. Also very muppet like, she hardly ever blinks. She closes her eyes at 1:51, then again at 2:16, and finally at 2:30 she does a real, deliberate blink, just to try and convince us she's human. Have you ever seen V? You know, that sci-fi show about a race of alien lizard people who don human disguises and come to Earth to take us over and eat us? Well, I think she's a V overlord (or overlady, I guess I should say). That would explain the dislocating jaw and rabbit-swallowing gape. Oh, but you probably want to hear about the song, right? The song is crap. It's about what you'd expect from an alien lizard woman who wants to eat each and every one of us.

Louise Allen has had a drink in every single Eurovision host city since its inaugural screening in 1956: warm beer in London (host in 1977); Glögg in Stockholm (host in 2000) and molten cheese in Lausanne (host in 1989).

Norway



Artist: Stella Mwangi



Song: Haba Haba

Reviewed by Louise Allen

The bright young star from Norway, Stella Mwangi, seems to be lighting up the stage and getting the crowd roaring. Originally from Kenya the star was given some wise advice from her grandmother that small steps in life will make her happy, and so this upbeat song 'Haba Haba' was born! Stella bounces around the stage and seems to have achieved perfect counter balance for her hair by the addition of a peacock like tuft at the back of her outfit. One thing is for sure, this crowd just can't get enough of young Stella and her tail waggle! Keep up that beat!!

Denmark



Artist: A Friend in London



Song: New Tomorrow

Reviewed by Louise Allen

Unfortunately for the Denmark competitors, A Friend In London, it appears the competition was so jealous of their talent that they got a hold of the boys and so they appear in their feature photo all with one eye shut. Tragic! However these boys are resilient and appear bright and perky on stage singing 'New Tomorrow'. This boy band really does show that bromance can pull you through all times and has the potential to result in really awesome hair!

Greg Holwell has come back from his Eurovision-sabbatical to ask the hard-hitting facts: where is this land of Eurovision and where the hell is Malta?

Israel



Artist: Dana International



Song: Ding Dong

Reviewed by Greg Holwell

Israel's inclusion in Eurovision has always been controversial, but this year Dana International hopes to reclaim her past triumphs and return the Eurovision trophy to its rightful place.....outside Europe.

Dana International has returned from retirement (much like this reviewer) after having claimed victory at Eurovision 1998 with the hit *Diva*. However, if song titles are meant to be self-referential, her latest offering *Ding Dong*, promises to expose the hidden idiot lying beneath all divas.

Again, this year we return to the question "Does Israel belong in Eurovision?". Geographically, the answer was always no, however Dana International's own testimony during Papua New Guinea's 2001 application for entry into Eurovision, was "Eurovision is not about geography, it is about the music". And she may have a point. If you close your eyes and listen to the cheesy lyrics of *Ding Dong*, the open them again to look at Dana's 'dime a dozen' stage arrangement, and then close them again for a little nap, when you wake up you will realise that Dana International has musically uprooted Israel and its millenia of traditions and deposited it somewhere between the tedious rhythms of German pop and the vacuous glamour of French easy-listening. To claim a right to Eurovision glory, one no longer needs to be European, one simply needs to sound European.....in other words, terrible.

Of greater concern to this reviewer: the office of births, deaths and marriages in Tel Aviv has no listing of the surname 'International'. This clearly needs to be investigated.

Malta



Artist: Glen Vella



Song: One Life

Reviewed by Greg Holwell

The first internet image I found of Glen Vella took me back to the glory days of MC Hammer, when spectacles were not just the realm of the vision-impaired, and when pluralistic trousers were ready to support any crotch, any time. Perhaps MC actually stood for Maltese Chap. Why am I rambling? Because I have nothing really to say about *One Life*, except that it stinks. It stinks so bad I had to spray my computer screen with Pine-o-cleen, and now it is partially melted, and I really regret it.

Enough with the negativity.....I am sure Glen Vella is a lovely gentleman, with many wonderful qualities, I wish him all the best with his future ventures.

Matthew Bubert knows a thing or three about good music. He picked last year's winner (Lena) and has sage predictions for this year.

Belgium



Artist: Witloof Bay



Song: With Love Baby

Reviewed: Matthew Bulbert

This number is surely what Manhattan Transfer would have come up with if they had had the courage to ask Michael Winslow* to join their group. It is truly acapella at its best. They acapellarise all the instruments in a manner I guess normally reserved for beatboxers. They vocally imitate drums, brass, and even singing. The fact they could not afford to use actual instruments is surely an indication of how hard the global financial crisis has hit the small nation of Belgium – I guess not even chocolate, beer and female tennis players are immune to this devastating fiscal epidemic.

Prediction: It will not make it out of the semis: far too sophisticated for this comp.

*Aka Sgt. Larvelle "Motor Mouth" Jones from Police Academy and also known as the "Man of 10,000 Sound Effects" (this is for the people that unfortunately did not experience the wonders of the 80s)

Portugal



Artist: Homens Da Luta



Song: Luta É Alegria

Reviewed by Matthew Bulbert

This entrant is remarkably easy to describe – it is simply the Village people singing Broadway – oh in Portuguese (that is the twist). The press in Portugal have latched onto this song like a leech claiming it is spouting left-wing political ideals – a protest song designed to unite the people to overthrow the government. I can see what they mean with lyrics such as:

Bring on the bread, bring on the cheese, bring on the wine

The old will come, the young will come, the boy will come

Come celebrate this situation

And let us sing against reaction

It is truly revolutionary Viva la Portugal!!!

Prediction: will not even make it onto the stage – the Portuguese government will have no choice but to intervene.

United Kingdom



Artist: Blue



Song: I can

Review by Matthew Bulbert

This song is so hot it could turn a grasshopper blue, yet surprisingly not all agree.

Recently Simon Webbe from Blue had a 'boohoo' moment after expressing his frustration at a lack of support from Great Britain's radio stations.

Quote: "We're trying to do this for our country and our country isn't backing us"

A beautifully crafted reply from Radio 2 to *obviously* to diffuse the situation:

Quote BBC spokesman: "Radio 2 premiered Blue's Eurovision song across the schedule where editorially appropriate. It is not currently on the playlist but it may be considered on merit, in due course."

Is this PR code for the song is crap hence the reason why the radio stations do not play it? So I guess Simon Webbe is right! I have to say though that I am somewhat surprised. If you pare away the thick musical layers provided by the Beatles, Roxy Music, the Rolling Stones and Cliff Richard's face, the British music scene is essentially left with a fleshy pulp

of boy bands. Let's face it the boy band, and let's not forget the girl band, is quintessentially British. So it is not surprising Blue have produced the goods. This is a cleverly crafted number with a well-groomed boy band, a great key change and a universal message of hope. To win they not only have to sing the song but they have to live the lyrics. Can the poetry of the moment overcome the geopolitical prejudice shown by mainland Europe?

Prediction: I think not. Though I do honestly feel, deep down in my veins this will be UK's highest-ranking song for sometime and will eventually earn the right to be played on BBC Radio 2 next to Take That's "Pray" and the Spice Girls' "Wannabe".

FRANCE



Artist: Amaury Vassili



Title: Sognu

Reviewed by James O'Hanlon

Lock up your daughters and start placing your bets, because France is the odds on favourite to win Eurovision this year. With a the voice of an angel, the cheek bones of a super model and an ever-broken heart, the worlds youngest and most pash-able tenor, Amaury Vassili, weaves us an operatic odyssey of lost love and regretful goodbyes. Eurovision will no doubt catapult Vassili into the glittering heights of global superstardom. Whether he will continue earning fame, riches and beautiful women, or deteriorate into the realms of musical novelty has yet to be seen. If I were a betting man I would guess Vassili will soon be touring the world with Andre Rieu, releasing Christmas classics albums and leaving swathes of delighted little old ladies in his wake.

FYR MACEDONIA

 Artist: Vlado Ilievski



Song: Rusinka

Reviewed by James O'Hanlon

Vlato Ilievski, otherwise known as the 'Macedonian Jon Bon Jovi', brings us a rip-roaring, super-catchy, russko-punk classic. This is one of the catchiest, least annoying entries in this years contest. It is no surprise then that, in true Eurovision style, it is one of the least favourite entries. Currently the odds are on it coming dead last. My Macedonian is not quite up to scratch, but from the vibe of the song you can pretty much guess what it is about. Quite obviously it deals with the ultimate highs of being a super successful pop star, whilst simultaneously dealing with an ever-present guilt for bringing an end to his families centuries-long goat herding tradition. Actually, no... I just looked up the translation. It's a song about a girl.

I just made up the term 'russko-punk' by the way. Pretty good hey? Its not quite geographically correct but you get the Eastern European vibe right? Start using it, its gonna catch on big time!

FINLAND



Artist: Paradise Oskar



Song: Da Da Dam

Reviewed by James O'Hanlon

Each year Finland can usually be counted upon to bring us a gaudy Eurovision spectacle with inordinate amounts of blonde hair, wind machines, leather pants and electric violin solos. Unfortunately this year their tact has changed and they're approaching the competition from the humble folk ballad perspective. Axel Ehnstrom, a private school boy/forest minstrel hybrid, was picked from obscurity to represent Finland under the ridiculous moniker of 'Paradise Oskar'. I wouldn't usually predict that Finland's contribution of an underwhelming performer singing a dull repetitive song would be likely to win over many hearts. However, this year's Eurovision is looking pretty ordinary overall so who knows what the outcome is going to be. When the most interesting performance of the competition is a technicolour Serbian swinging sixties outfit then you know it's probably not going to be one of Eurovision's strongest years.