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presents

EURO VISION LIVER LAUGHER LOVER POOL



EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to Eurovision 2023, or, as I like to call it, The Most Wonderful Time of the Year!

Eurovision isn't just a night. It's actually the culmination of months of activity. I've spent my Saturday nights juggling multiple devices, trying to watch simultaneous broadcasts of song competitions in languages that I don't understand. I've listened to hundreds of songs, discovered some fantastic new artists, and have travelled to multiple countries to watch these acts perform.

I know that I'm biased, but this year's Eurovision is a bumper crop of goodness. Even the most hardened Euroskeptic will find something to love among this year's 37 entries.

We've got a slew of pop girlie bangers. We've got sadboi ballads. We've got stadium anthems and indie rock and bar bands. We've got art punk and art pop and just plain art. There's metal and ethnobangers and Britpop and folk music and songs that make me break down into tears and Finland, which is in a category of its own.

Most of all, we've got a bunch of acts who are absolutely delighted to be part of Eurovision, and their enthusiasm is contagious. Even if I don't happen to like their songs (because not all types of music are for everyone) I like these people.

I know that many of you are reading this because you're coming in fresh to the shows, and want to get some inside information. Fortunately, you'll find some of that here. What you won't find is guesses of the winner.

That's because Eurofans are notoriously bad about predictions. Our inside knowledge is so deep that we often forget that people are going to be experiencing these acts for the first time this week. The decisions people make will be based largely on their first encounter of a three minute performance, and how that makes them feel. I can only hope that you love my favourites as much as I do. (Watching some of the rehearsal previews, I fear that the staging may make that difficult for some songs!)

However, taste is subjective, and you, dear reader, may end up loving what I hate, and vice versa. I hope you have fun watching the show and commenting on the acts. But as we enter the week, a quick plea from me: Don't be a dick on social media.

Finally, a reminder that if you'd like more information about any of the acts featured this evening, you can visit my blog - **dudepoints.fun**.

I hope that this year's Eurovision brings you even a small fraction of the joy that it's brought me. And if you see me next week, give me a hug to help with post-Eurovision depression.

EUROVISION TRENDS

After watching and analysing hours of Eurovision content, I've noticed that there are some things which keep coming up again and again in this year's performances. So I've pulled together this Eurovision trend list so you know what's hot and what's not.

hot!

- Sleep
- Nudity (partial or simulated; there are rules against full nudity on the Eurovision stage)
- Twinks (or am I misspelling Twins?)
- Pina coladas
- Literal ghost writers
- Daddies
- Mothers
- Dealing with problems in a healthy and constructive manner
- Moons
- K-Pop
- Primary colours
- Boybands, and boys in bands
- Returning entrants
- Long nails
- Earnestness
- Being nice
- BANGERS
- Gustaph's hats

not!

- War
- Romantic love songs
- Being inauthentic
- Actual ghost writers
- The Coronation of King Charles III
- Irony
- Sadbois
- Black, white and grey
- Booty
- Jury bait high notes
- Juries
- Juri Pootsman (he didn't enter Eesti Laul, boo)
- Vladimir Putin
- Lack of effort from the Big Five
- Crystal Ball
- Being mean
- *The Sun*
- Ticketmaster
- TikTok rehearsal clips filmed in portrait, not landscape

SEMIFINAL ONE

Semifinal One will air on Tuesday, May 9.

In addition to the acts, there will be entertainment from:

- Julia Sanina, the lead singer of the Ukrainian band the Hardkiss
- Alyosha, who represented Ukraine in the 2010 contest, performing with British singer Rebecca Ferguson, and
- Rita Ora, who almost represented the United Kingdom at the 2009 contest, but dropped out of the running. She missed the chance to sit on stage with Andrew Lloyd Webber! (Jade Ewen was the eventual 2009 representative and placed 5th with the song 'It's My Time.'

Ten of the fifteen entries performing this evening will qualify to perform in Saturday's Grand Final. All entries will be chosen by televote only; no jury scores will be given.

The UK **cannot** vote in this semifinal. However, the Rest of World can, so please ask your friends in non-Eurovision competing countries to vote on your behalf.

Take your pee break at song 8.

This whole semifinal is fairly high-energy, with only two ballads in the entire lineup, so pace yourselves accordingly. Don't wear yourselves out on the first few dance tracks, because some bangers are coming at the very end!

Here's the running order guide to what you can expect from each song tonight:

NORWAY

Alessandra
Queen of Kings

banger!



Who they are: An Italian-Norwegian powerhouse vocalist who has a big whistle note moment

What it's about: She, the conqueror of the North and Southern Seas

The song: A high-energy electroshanty that fits into the tradition of Scandi fantasy songs; could be nightcore if it was just a little more uptempo

Fun fact to sound like an expert: Artists can't use autotune at Eurovision, but the Norwegian national final - in a very risky move - allowed it in their competition

Jokes that have already been made: "My pronouns are she/queen of the kings"

The verdict: It's a crowd-pleasing banger that is going to make the arena pop off, but there's drama as to whether Alessandra will hit that whistle note

Best National Final reject: Tresko, a song about getting drunk in clogs

Who they are: A meme-aware, TikTok friendly three piece boy band

What it's about: Introverts partying at home.

The song: A catchy bop for the first minute. Which is identical to the second minute. And getting wearisome in the third minute.

Fun fact to sound like an expert: The sweater in question? Now sold out on ASOS! (I've seen it on at least one person in Liverpool)

Jokes that have already been made: Epic Sax Guy comparisons (Another fun fact - Epic Sax Guy was once again in the running to be Moldova's entry this year)

The verdict: Based on stagings to date, there's going to be lots of distractions from its descent into repetitiveness - some pyro here, some confetti there. Just lean into everything they are throwing at you.

Best National Final reject: UP, a song about getting drunk with chaos goblin Matt Blxck. (No, that's not a typo; he tells us how to spell his name during the song)

MALTA

The Busker
Dance (Our own Party)

cute, I guess?



Who they are: A terminally online artist who is ennuie and drama and a ton of references that would take the entire show to unpick

What it's about: War, death, destruction, plagues, and just wanting to escape and sleep.

The song: The staging is going to tell a story; you may not understand what is going on, but you'll certainly enjoy watching it unfold.

Fun fact to sound like an expert: Luke Black was mentored by Konstrakta, the artist who brought the Meghan Markle handwashing song to Eurovision last year

Jokes that have already been made: No jokes here, but to seem in the know, post a lobster emoji

The verdict: It's one of my favourite songs in the competition this year; Luke Black has not only written an excellent piano hook, but has created a song where the three minutes are unpredictable and mesmerising.

Best National Final reject: Novi Plan Drugi San, a banger about heartbreak from Andy Samberg lookalike Filip Balos

SERBIA

Luke Black

Samo Mi Se Spava

intellectual
banger!



LATVIA

Sudden Lights

Aija

Who they are: An indie band from Latvia

What it's about: It's meant to be a modern-day Latvian folk song; it's about bad things in the world and wanting to just sleep. (Yes, this is the second song in a row on this theme!).

The song: It's been compared to solo Thom Yorke; I find the opening synth clicks very satisfying

Fun fact to sound like an expert: Aija means Lullaby in Latvian

Jokes that have already been made: Nobody's joking about Sudden Lights; they're just too earnest

The verdict: People who love Aija REALLY love Aija; I find it to be a pleasant way to spend three minutes

Best National Final reject: Markus Riva's Forever, a breezy summer bop that marked his 9th attempt to represent Latvia



indie rock
darlings!

PORTUGAL

Mimicat

Ai Coração

manic!
pixie!



Who they are: Screwball meets burlesque

What it's about: The pains of love

The song: It's very cute, in a manic pixie theatre girl kind of way. If this were in the West End, Mimicat would be the second female lead - the kooky friend - who is getting their big showcase number

Fun fact to sound like an expert:

Mimicat participated in the 2001 Portuguese National Final when she was just 17

Jokes that have already been made:

Mimicat is too much of a whirlwind for jokes

The verdict: Portugal always sends something a little different and distinctive; this song is breezy but is more Broadway than a standalone song

Best National Final reject: Former Eurovision competitor Claudia Pascoal with Nasci Maria, a mid-2000s ethnobanger (which is a compliment!)

Who they are: The GenZ U2

What it's about: Unity! Anthems! Cliches!

The song: It's bland stadium rock with lyrics that sound like they were written specifically as a "Eurovision" song. However, it's still completely satisfying to scream along the lyrics with an arena full of people.

Fun fact to sound like an expert: We Are One was co-written by Jorgen Elofsson, who wrote Kelly Clarkson's 'Stronger' and Britney Spears' '(You Drive Me) Crazy'.

Jokes that have already been made:

'Mild Youth.' Seriously, this band got a lot of flack from TERFs in what is a long story, so please show them some love, no matter how generic their song is

The verdict: Four nice boys that your Nan will love (as long as she doesn't follow JK Rowling on Twitter)

Best National Final reject: A lot of people love Connolly's ballad Midnight Summer Nights, but I like Leila Jane's Wild

IRELAND

Wild Youth

We Are One

aggressively ok!



Who they are: Legendary arty pranksters who have been together for years; it's akin to having KLF storming Eurovision

What it's about: Putin, obviously. I mean, they can't say it, but we all know it.

The song: Under the guise of a children's song, and with the help of some provocative stage moments, Let 3 are criticising Russia's sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. The tractor in question is one delivered by Belarussian dictator Alexander Lukashenko as a gift to Putin in 2022

Fun fact to sound like an expert: They defended themselves against a charge of performing nude by claiming that their cork buttplugs constituted clothing. (The judge did not buy it)

Jokes that have already been made: Don't tweet! Literally anything could happen and you don't want to miss it.

The verdict: In my top 5

Best National Final reject: Detour and Master Blaster, a blast (sorry) of harmonic joy

CROATIA

Let 3

Mama Sc

the punkest!



SWITZERLAND

Remo Forrer

Watergun

Who they are: A talented winner of The Voice of Switzerland

What it's about: War, obviously

The song: A dreadfully-written, tone deaf, antiwar message coming from the famously neutral (but not pacifist) nation of Switzerland.

Fun fact to sound like an expert:

The song was written by songwriters from Britain and Poland, and I suspect it was shopped around to multiple countries

Jokes that have already been made: The producers have pulled the biggest joke of all programming this mildest of antiwar messages after the very pointed critique of Putin's expansionist warmongering

The verdict: Remo is a good singer who deserves better

yikes!



ISRAEL

Noa Kirel

Unicorn



yeah i don't
know either!

Who they are: Israel's premiere pop star

What it's about: Five songs in one

The song: A K-pop influenced song that seems like some beats and lyrics mashed together for the sole purpose of getting to a dance break.

Fun fact to sound like an expert:

Noa Kirel opened the 2021 Miss Universe contest performing her (better) song Bad Little Thing

Jokes that have already been

made: There will be tweets of 'No' after Kirel sings 'Do you want to see me dance?' There will be people tweeting 'It's a CENTAUR' but again, a long story

The verdict: Messy, high-energy, and with a dance break that is not really achieving what Israel thinks it is!

Best National Final reject: None; this was an internal selection

Who they are: A Moldovan daddy who churns out the ethnobops

What it's about: Folklore!

The song: What if you crossed a river and fell in love with it and then got married before the sun and the moon and quite frankly I bet the lyrics were written after someone ate shrooms on a camping trip

Fun fact to sound like an expert:

Pasha Parfeni is a returning Eurovision veteran. He last competed in the 2012 contest with the song Lautar, although I prefer his 2020 National Final entry My Wine

Jokes that have already been made:

See above

The verdict: Ethnic bangers are a staple of Eurovision, and Pasha's bringing something that we'll all be singing along to by the end

Best National Final reject: This year was a big year for artists who have represented Moldova before (Aliona Moon, Sunstroke Project), but Pasha's was the best song

MOLDOVA

Pasha Parfeni

Soarele Si Luna

ethnobanger!



Who they are: Eurovision royalty - the winner of the 2012 contest with the song Euphoria

What it's about: Love and obsession

The song: The opening note is like someone is injecting ASMR into my spine, and it just gets better from there. Are the lyrics good? Not really, but Loreen could sing the Avanti West Coast timetable and get douze points from multiple countries. She has a way of interpreting a song which makes it absolutely mesmerising.

Fun fact to sound like an expert: A co-writer of this song is Thomas G:Son, who also co-wrote Euphoria. (He's the Max Martin of Eurovision)

Jokes that have already been made: Panini press/George Foreman grill, etc.

The verdict: This song has been tipped to win and it's easy to see why

Best National Final reject: Septuagenarian charmers Eva and Ewa, who brought a wholesome and joyful showtune titled Länge leve livet (or, in my mind, Live Laugh Love)

SWEDEN

Loreen

Tattoo

queen!



AZERBAIJAN

TuralTuranX

Tell Me More

twins!



Who they are: Gen Z twins who seem to have spent the pandemic mainlining Britpop

What it's about: Relationships and the chance to dress up like the glam rock Proclaimers

The song: It's a 1990s jangle band throwback with a little bit of Beatles and a whole lot of white boy rapping (which is less dire than it sounds)

Fun fact to sound like an expert: They're twins, obviously, and play in a band called The Red Jungle

Jokes that have already been made:

Everyone will be tweeting "Is this Sixpence None the Richer" or "Is this the Lightning Seeds"

The verdict: I personally love this song, but it may struggled to stand out in a night of spectacle. A lot will depend on whether they can nail the vocal harmonies.

Best National Final reject: n/a

CZECHIA

Vesna

My Sister's Crown



TL;DR!

Who they are: A pan-Slavic girl group

What it's about: Oooh, this is controversial - ostensibly, feminism; really, Ukraine.

The song: It's... a lot. A group of women doing white voice adjacent folk singing is usually my catnip, but this just seems a bit messy.

Fun fact to sound like an expert: The song is performed in Czech, Bulgarian, English, and (controversially) Ukrainian

Jokes that have already been made: I haven't seen a single joke about Vesna, largely because everyone's been talking about the concept of pan-Slavism (which has been co-opted by right wing Russians) or whether a band without a Ukrainian member should be singing in the Ukrainian language like they're representative of Ukrainian views

The verdict: I honestly don't know how viewers are going to react without all the context - will it read as a feminist anthem? Maybe?

Best National Final reject: Rodan's Introvert Party Club or Pam Rabbit's Ghosting.

Who they are: A duo put together expressly for Eurovision

What it's about: Depression; finding your way out of depression; finding your person

The song: The first time I heard it, I thought it was okay. The fifth time I heard it, it clicked. Now I find myself belting this out whenever it comes on my playlist.

Fun fact to sound like an expert:

Remember Eurovision winner Duncan Laurence? He is the mastermind behind this act.

Jokes that have already been made:

When it first came out, everyone was making jokes about the photo. More recently, there have been some really shitty articles in the Dutch press after some shaky pre-party performances. It looks like everything has been fixed for Eurovision, but show them some love!

The verdict: One of the few ballads in this semi and it will stand out. I bet this is going to make me cry when I see it live.

Best National Final reject: n/a

NETHERLANDS

Mia and Dion

Burning Daylight

angst pals!



Who they are: Finland's Andrew WK

What it's about: A night of alcohol turning us into a confident person

The song: The first half is an industrial rap song; the second half is a frenzied pop song; the whole thing is an absolute mesmerising spectacle. Käärijä won by a landslide in his National Final, and he's one of the favourites

Fun fact to sound like an expert: That tattoo on his chest? It's the Rammstein logo.

Jokes that have already been made: Just tweet 'It's crazy! It's party!' and sit back and enjoy the demented chaos.

The verdict: Käärijä's song is good, but Käärijä the experience is even better. He's a man who is wholly comfortable with who he is and is putting his unapologetic self into the world

Best National Final reject: Hoida Mut by Benjamin, which is basically pure sex on wheels. For a cold nation, Finland produces some steam!

FINLAND

Käärijä

Cha Cha Cha

it's crazy!
it's party!



THE EUROVISION ICEBERG

Part of the reason I love following Eurovision all season is the amount of ridiculous memes and jokes that arise over the course of many national finals. I've put some of them without context here so if you see reference to these, you can at least pretend you are in the know.

- Crystal Ball ESC
- Vidbir in a metro station
- Gustaph's shocked face after winning in Belgium
- La Zarra not knowing Snap
- Alike's Netherlands travelogue at EIC
- Norway's autotune decision
- Voting shenanigans in Poland
- Loreen hugging Rylan at Melodifestivalen
- Martin Osterdahl, I assume you are aware?
- Rina Sawayama
- King Charles III and the Eurovision button press that wasn't
- Patty Gurdy's hurdy gurdy (and how it was destroyed in a flood)
- Aidan being shock DQ'd from Malta
- Chris Harms' double take at Blanka's butt
- a good daddy in a hat
- Käärijä's bulbasaur and F1 sheets
- The vomit whirlpool at London Eurovision Party
- Chiara Ferragni's outfits at Sanremo
- Mel Giedroyc standing by the vomit whirlpool at London Eurovision Party
- So much Al Bano
- Ireland's great peanut butter giveaway
- Blue 65 in San Marino
- Bojan and Käärijä's bromance
- It's a centaur, not a unicorn

SEMIFINAL TWO

Semifinal Two will air on Thursday, May 11.

In addition to the acts, there will be entertainment from:

- Mariya Yaremchuk, who represented Ukraine at the 2014 contest. She was the one who brought the original man in a hamster wheel to the Eurovision stage! Royalty! She will be joined by Zlata Dziunka, who was Ukraine's entrant in the most recent Junior Eurovision. (Yes, there is a Junior Eurovision for child singers; no, I don't watch it because I don't trust myself not to be mean to children.)
- The Podilya dance ensemble doing a performance with several drag queens, with the title 'Be Who You Wanna Be'
- Alyosha, who represented Ukraine in the 2010 contest, performing on this evening with British singer Rebecca Ferguson, and
- Welsh actor Luke Evans with a spoken word history of the contest, which is...random? I've been looking through his filmography to try and find a connection to Eurovision, and have resorted to creating an elaborate backstory for the *Fast 7* villain Owen Shaw where he's made a killing betting on Eurovision with inside information from the Russian mafia.

Ten of the sixteen entries performing this evening will qualify to perform in Saturday's Grand Final. All entries will be chosen by televote only; no jury scores will be given.

The UK **can** vote in this semifinal, so I expect you to max out your coins for Austria and Belgium. Thank you in advance.

Take your pee break at song 6 or 8.

This semifinal has more musical variety than semifinal one, with a mix of fast and slow and uncategorizable songs. The same warning remains valid, though: Don't wear yourselves out on the first few dance tracks, because some bangers are coming at the very end!

Here's the running order guide to what you can expect from each song tonight:

DENMARK

Reiley

Breaking My Heart

TikTok
pinup!



Who they are: A TikTok viral sensation who's a big hit in South Korea

What it's about: Heartbreak; being adorable

The song: It's actually much darker than the bouncy tune suggests. What's interesting is whether Reiley will use the voice modifications present in his original track.

Fun fact to sound like an expert:

Reiley is 25 years old. And no, I don't know his skin care regime.

Jokes that have already been made:

Please, make more jokes about how Riley is a dead ringer for Chloe Grace Moretz

The verdict: It's cute and fun and not everything has to be for you, okay?

Best National Final reject: *whispers*

I skipped most of Denmark because they're such a happy nation they don't have the grit to make good music

Who they are: An Armenian singer-songwriter who can both croon and rap

What it's about: The dream of being in love vs. the reality of one's own hangups

The song: The first half is crooning and gentle; the second half is loud and angry. Somehow, it works!

Fun fact to sound like an expert: Not really fun, but Brunette plagiarised the song lyrics in the crooning bit from Tumblr posts from about ten years ago. She hasn't credited the original authors and that's not great!

Jokes that have already been made: Her plagiarism has a typo - instead of drinking smoothies in neat cafes, she's drinking smoothies in near cafes. So, Brunette's an urbanist, I guess? Girl loves her Fifteen Minute Cities.

The verdict: The abrupt shift in vocal styles is likely to be jarring to some viewers, but 'be good do good look good' is an undeniable earworm

Best National Final reject: n/a

ARMENIA

Brunette

Future Lover

abrupt
tonal shift!



Who they are: The 18-year-old alum of X Factor Romania. Let me stress - he's 18.

What it's about: An on-and-off relationship and somehow also fingers

The song: Did I mention he's 18? Because this song is full of teen relationship angst but also gratuitous nudity and the Romanian broadcaster isn't really giving him support so the whole thing is a bit of a mess

Fun fact to sound like an expert: His NF performance culminated in him ripping off his mesh shirt to reveal the phrase Make Love Not War scrawled on his chest, even though we could already see the phrase because mesh shirt

Jokes that have already been made: Let me just remind you - he's 18 and not getting support from his home country. Would you want your 18 year old theatre kid creative impulses to be televised for millions to see?

The verdict: He can sing, but that's not the only thing that counts in a performance.

ROMANIA

Theodor Andrei

D.G.T. (Off and On)



theatre kid!

ESTONIA

Alika
Bridges

*ballad
earworm!*



Who they are: An Estonian-Russian singer-songwriter who can belt it out

What it's about: Relationships? Forgiving yourself? Honestly, I've been listening to this song since last year and I still have no idea.

The song: It's a beautiful ballad with a catchy piano riff, and Alika can sing!

Fun fact to sound like an expert: Alika, an Estonian Idol winner, co-wrote this song with Wouter Hardy, who co-wrote Arcade, Duncan Laurence's winning song from 2019

Jokes that have already been made: "Infrastructure week again?" (Okay, maybe that's too much of a deep cut)

The verdict: Alika is undeniably talented; her song is very good; I will likely not listen to this again after this week

Best National Final reject: Tuju by Meelik, which is my favourite song of the entire Eurovision season! It's a garage rock song that seems very innocent and poppy but it's actually about being very horny and trying to have sex at every possible opportunity

BELGIUM

Gustaph

Because of You

the best
daddy!



Who they are: A veteran backup singer getting his shot at the big time

What it's about: Being queer; found families

The song: The 1990s called and sent over a complete house banger. It's also one of the most joyful songs in the contest. I have met only one person in the fandom who does not like the song.

Fun fact to sound like an expert: Gustaph backed Hooverphonic and Sennek at previous Eurovisions, so he's familiar with the show

Jokes that have already been made:

Please, just keep making hat jokes. Gustaph has not been seen in public without a hat, and all of us are slightly disappointed that his staging isn't just him emerging from a giant hat

The verdict: A crowd-pleaser with vocals that will win points from the jury - the arena is going to POP OFF when this is played

Best National Final reject: Cherine's upbeat Ca Ma'Ennuie Pas

Who they are: An Australian singer

What it's about: Heartbreak and resilience

The song: Our first angsty sadboi of the competition! He's also very handsome. While he has a lovely voice, the ultimate product is something that we've seen multiple times before at Eurovision.

Fun fact to sound like an expert: A panel of Swedish songwriters, including the prolific Jimmy 'Joker' Thörnfeldt, are behind this song.

Jokes that have already been made:

To be honest, people have been too mesmerised by his abs to make many jokes.

I remain fascinated by the video for this song, where he does a fakeout proposal and then can't understand why his girlfriend is mad at him. She was expecting a ring, Andrew!

The verdict: Another nice boy for your Nan to appreciate, but the song is a bit generic.

Best National Final reject: n/a

CYPRUS

Andrew Lambrou

Break a Broken Heart

blandsome!



Who they are: A powerhouse vocalist who has come to the contest via Iceland's Got Talent

What it's about: Realising one's own worth after a breakup

The song: It's an upbeat pop song that requires significant vocal gymnastics, to which Dilja adds physical gymnastics. Nevertheless, I do feel like Iceland has left her just hanging out on a big stage doing kicks by herself.

Fun fact to sound like an expert: Dilja loves Love Island, so she is in the perfect city!

Jokes that have already been made: Please note that her name is not Deal-ie-o, which is how some British commentators are pronouncing it.

The verdict: Dilja is clearly a talented singer, but the staging is basically, "Dilja has a lot of power; let's just let her move." It's a bit unfinished! I like it and I like Dilja, but I'm worried about this!

Best National Final reject: Celebs with Doomsday Dancing, a messy, chaotic song that had a red tinsel monster. It was just the type of thing I'd want to see at a club at 3 AM.

ICELAND

Dilja

Power

literal ball
of energy



GREECE

Victor Vernicos

What They Say

he's only 16!
be nice!



Who they are: A 16 year old singer-songwriter performing a song that he wrote when he was 14, and I'm on my couch writing this.

What it's about: Panic attacks and feeling lost

The song: A sadboi guitar ballad that's very well produced for having been written by a 14 year old, who is now performing to millions!

Fun fact to sound like an expert: I don't know if you've heard this, but he's only 16!

Jokes that have already been made:

Steve Irwin calling, because Victor is performing all in beige (much like his song! Did I mention he's only 16 and I'm making fun of a literal CHILD? A talented child, but a child who is in this vacuum of pressure and oof I hope he gets to come back and do it all again when he's older.)

The verdict: Rehearsals are just rehearsals, but I don't think this is making it to the finals night.

Best National Final reject: n/a

POLAND

Blanka

Solo

bejba!



Who they are: An influencer who seems to have accidentally become a pop star

What it's about: Having fun by oneself - and no, not like that

The song: It's generic summer pop. Breezy, fun, and designed to play as background noise in Ibiza.

Fun fact to sound like an expert: The Polish NF was full of drama. Blanka had connections to some of the judges, and her win was tainted by allegations of vote trading. Many Polish Eurofans are still mad.

Jokes that have already been made: Oh my god so many jokes (and ones to keep making): Bejba/krezja; the way Poland gets value for money from its After Effects account; and yes, her butt and the way she strategically deploys it.

The verdict: I've given up trying to hate this song. It's artificial and tacky and I love every second of it.

Best National Final reject: Ahlena's Booty, a song about butts that was performed with the lowest energy possible. Instant Eurovision classic.

Who they are: Slovenia's most popular rock band

What it's about: Seizing the day, but in Slovenian

The song: It's cute and fun and bouncy, but what really matters are the bedroom eyes these boys are fluttering at the audience. Their first performance of this song featured an audience full of teen girls screaming. (That's not a dig - teen girls have excellent trendsetting taste)

Fun fact to sound like an expert:

Joker Out just recorded the duet 'New Wave' with Elvis Costello

Jokes that have already been

made: These boys are the ones making all the jokes. They've spent the Eurovision season dropping charming videos and memes and generally making everyone in Europe fall in love with them

The verdict: It doesn't matter that the song is in Slovenian; the charms of Joker Out transcend mere languages

Best National Final reject: n/a

SLOVENIA

Joker Out

Carpe Diem

boyband!



Who they are: A Junior Eurovision winner making her debut in the big show

What it's about: Things that are known!

The song: The lyrics here are a prime example of Eurovision English, so it's better just to experience it as vibes. And these are great, swirly, melodic, enchanting vibes!

Fun fact to sound like an expert: Iru earned a ticket to Eurovision by winning the Voice Georgia, when she performed the song Euphoria by a little known artist named Loreen.

Jokes that have already been made: Everybody's made the Yoda jokes about the sentence structure, and I bet someone is going to whip out a Donald Rumsfeld. "Thing is known. Thing is unknown. Thing is known unknown." Also: washing on the line and toilet paper.

The verdict: There's something about the musical structure of this song which makes me happy. Just let the sounds wash over you.

Best National Final reject: n/a

GEORGIA

Iru
Echo

pure vibes!



SAN MARINO

Piqued Jacks
Like An Animal

he who
smelt it
dealt it!



Who they are: An Italian band who came out on top of the hundred-plus entries into the San Marino national final. And yes, that is the rough equivalent of one entry per 30 residents

What it's about: Seduction on the dance floor, but in a 1990s exploitative way, like this song would play over the credits of a Joe Eszterhas film. Last year, San Marino sent a song called "Stripper" and it was less sleazy than this!

The song: Basic bar band rock.

Fun fact to sound like an expert: The names of the band members are - E-King, Holy Hargot, littleladle and Magic-O. No, I am not making this up.

Jokes that have already been made: Most people have just expressed whatever the emoji for being skeeved out is. Being smelt like an animal is apparently a very specific kink that is less common than this band thinks!

The verdict: Aural equivalent of a New Jersey strip club

Best National Final reject: The Finnish opera singer Angel Dell's "Hard to Be an Angel", which contained the best delivery of the lyric THE DEVIL.

AUSTRIA

Teya and Selena

Who The Hell is Edgar?

brilliance!



Who they are: A duo that met at songwriting camp and decided to team up for Eurovision

What it's about: Yes, it's ostensibly about Edgar Allan Poe, but it's really about the difficulties of making a living from music, especially when streaming services pay so poorly - 0.003 cents per stream.

The song: It's so catchy! The vocals are on point, the Poe chorus is an earworm, and the little electric frizzles do something to my brain

Fun fact to sound like an expert: The song is about Edgar Allan Poe because he was the first American to try and make a living solely from writing, and struggled just as Teya and Salena are struggling today

Jokes that have already been made: We've heard all the puns on Poe's name, thanks.

The verdict: This is my favourite song in this year's contest and I hope it's a surprise winner.

Best National Final reject: n/a

Who they are: A veteran of the Voice of Albania and her entire family (well, one brother had to stay off stage because of the six-person rule, but he's tagged along to Liverpool)

What it's about: The importance of family

The song: Like most Albanian entries, it is over the top, with big voices, lots of angst, and a weird hard rock edge in parts. I adore it - there's so much drama here!

Fun fact to sound like an expert: The entire family are musicians - and you can catch them playing and singing Eurovision hits together on the Eurovision YouTube channel.

Jokes that have already been made:

Keeping Up with the Kelmendis! (This week, Sidorela steals the show with her vocals. Will Albina get jealous? Albana talks to both her daughters to smooth it over.)

The verdict: Can the Kelmendis adopt me?

Best National Final reject: I had COVID during Festival I Kenges, so slept through it.

ALBANIA

Albina & Family Kelmendi

Duje

literal mother!



Who they are: A returning entrant from 2014

What it's about: Needing people even though you're versed in therapy speak; Čiūto tūto

The song: It is a beautiful ballad with a hooky earworm of Čiūto tūto.

Fun fact to sound like an expert: Čiūto tūto is an untranslatable Lithuanian phrase that Monika borrowed from Lithuanian folklore

Jokes that have already been made:

Čiūto Prosciutto

The verdict: The song will be beautifully performed and Čiūto tūto. Personally, this song bothers me, as I feel manipulated by its choices, which seem engineered to elicit an emotional reaction in me. Monika imported a gospel choir from London to appear on her track. It's the John Lewis Christmas advert of Eurovision entries

Best National Final reject: The wholly original So Low by queer synth cowgirl Ruta Mur. Her album is one of my discoveries of the Eurovision season.

LITHUANIA

Monika Linkyete
Stay

Čiūto tūto!



AUSTRALIA

Voyager
Promise

my personal
catnip!



Who they are: A progressive metal band from Western Australia

What it's about: Reassurance, trying new things, some other stuff that I don't know because this BANGS SO HARD

The song: Like the best part of a sugar high with none of the nasty comedown

Fun fact to sound like an expert: Lead singer Danny Estrin is an immigration lawyer

Jokes that have already been

made: I mean, people were making jokes about everyone being so old and dorky and then the live shows hit and people realised, 'Wait, this is GOOD!'

The verdict: The first time I saw the video for this song, I liked it. Then the keytars hit and I loved it. Voyager are embracing the camp and fun side of Eurovision and this song is in my Top 5.

Best National Final reject: n/a

FINALS NIGHT + BIG FIVE

The Eurovision Final will air on Saturday, May 13. The evening will consist of 26 acts. Twenty of them will be the top finishers from the semifinals. Five countries - France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK - get a free pass to the final because they contribute the most financially to the contest. And the winner of last year's contest - Ukraine - gets an automatic slot in the final.

In addition to the acts, there will be entertainment from:

- Last year's winners, Kalush Orchestra
- A panoply of Ukrainian Eurovision luminaries, including Go_A, Jamala, Tina Karol, and Verka Seduchka, who will perform during the opening flag parade
- Sam Ryder and his new single
- Former Eurovision artists - including Israel's Netta, Iceland's Dadi Freyr, Italy's Mahmood, Sweden's Cornelia Jacobs and Liverpool's own Sonia, the UK representative in 1993
- A surprise guest that is widely rumoured to be Sir Paul McCartney, although I'd love it more if it was Ringo Starr performing with Pinguini Tattici Nucleari (google that if you don't know what I'm talking about.)

The UK **can** vote here, and once again, I expect you to max out your coins for Austria and Belgium (fingers crossed they make it into the final.) And unlike the semifinals, there will be a professional jury judging the acts, so we need every single public vote possible to even out their decisions. Yes, there is a backstory there, but it's long and complicated, so just trust me when I say that juries have caused some eyebrow-raising controversy this Eurovision season.

We will not have a running order until the semifinals are complete, so it's too early to predict when you should take your pee breaks.

But here is the guide to the Big Five and Ukraine, so you'll know what to expect when Saturday night rolls around.

FRANCE

La Zarra

Evidemment

ooh la la!



Who they are: OOH LA LA MON CHER!

What it's about: Living up to the expectations of the nation of France

The song: Chanson with a beat behind it

Fun fact to sound like an expert: La Zarra is actually French-Canadian!

Jokes that have already been made: The staging for this looks bonkers - usually France will throw in images of the Eiffel Tower, but this year, they've actually made La Zarra the Eiffel Tower! In sequins!

The verdict: I love La Zarra because she is, in essence, a performance artist. Her whole persona is a performance of what are the ideals in femininity, and her song is a musing on whether the career she's worked so hard to build - the sacrifices she's made - are enough for an entire country. Of course, most people will just love the song, because La Zarra wrings every last drop of drama out of the letter "r".

Best National Final reject: n/a

Who they are: A legit metal band taking a break from opening for Iron Maiden to do this

What it's about: Blood, glitter, sweet, bitter, it doesn't really matter - the song is just fun

The song: It's metal, which is going to turn a lot of people off, but singer Chris Harms has a way of alternating between screams and a haunting deep croon. He's been covering other Eurovision songs and making them all sound like apocalyptic cabaret numbers.

Fun fact to sound like an expert: It is the Year of the Daddies, and Chris Harms is so old he started this band to perform the songs he had uploaded to MySpace. (Google it)

Jokes that have already been made:

People are going to be talking about that giant chicken ruff collar

The verdict: It's decadent fun; it's Hot Topic all grown up; it's camp and goth rolled into one

Best National Final reject: Look, I would have loved anyone from Germany as long as Ikke Huftgold did not win

GERMANY

Lord of the Lost
Blood and Glitter

actually
cinnamon rolls!



Who they are: Italy's 2013 Eurovision entrant, back for another round

What it's about: Two lives which - gasp - turn out to be about the two sides existing in one man

The song: It's a ballad performed by a man with a beautiful voice. Shame that it has a plinky piano hook which is like being jabbed in the ear with an unwelcome ringtone.

Fun fact to sound like an expert: Marco's favourite band is the Beatles, and he's not just saying that because Eurovision is in Liverpool.

Jokes that have already been made: No matter what Eurofans think of Marco's song, everyone loves Marco's arms. I don't think the man owns a single shirt with sleeves. (That's a jacket on the right, by the way.)

The verdict: It's basic, but done well.

Best National Final reject: Oh, do not get me started on this year's Sanremo festival. There were some real winners this year, my favourite being rapper Madame's Il Bene Nel Mare.

ITALY

Marco Mengoni

Due Vite

hates sleeves!



SPAIN

Blanca Paloma

EA EA

Ya ea ya ea ea



Who they are: A traditional flamenco singer whose voice simply does not quit

What it's about: It was inspired by her grandmother, and is about the love of family (despite the witchy vibes which make it seem like a coven summoning. Darn it!)

The song: It's folklore overlaid with a gentle beat, but it succeeds because of Blanca's voice

Fun fact to sound like an expert: Blanca is also a costume designer, which is evident by the amazing structural outfits she has worn to Eurovision events this season

Jokes that have already been made:

Blanca has a reputation for showing up and singing EA EA everywhere, and has been edited into multiple clips doing just that

The verdict: It's undeniably a piece of art, but it can also feel a bit distant, like you're watching this performance as homework

Best National Final reject: I loved the video game aesthetics of Megara's Arcadia

UKRAINE

Tvorchi

Heart of Steel

cooler than you!



Who they are: A cool minimalist electro duo

What it's about: I mean, a little bit about the war, but a lot of the lyrics are more generally about being resilient

The song: This was picked very early in the season, and I think many people have forgotten how good this modern and minimalist song is. My favourite moment comes when the organ riffs suddenly swell - an unexpectedly gothic touch.

Fun fact to sound like an expert: Andrii and Jeffrey met when studying pharmacology.

Jokes that have already been made: The world outside Eurovision means that Tvorchi don't get jokes made about them. I wish that weren't the case.

The verdict: It's cool and classy and I really need people to consider it as a great song in its own right, not just a Ukrainian song

Best National Final reject: 'Dovbush' by Fiinka, an ode to a man with a magnificent moustache.

UNITED KINGDOM

Who they are: The girl who appeared in Mika's Grace Kelly video, now all grown up

What it's about: Oh, it's a delightfully vicious kiss off of a break-up banger

The song: A fun pop number with a spoken word bit that is making British accent lovers weak in the knees

Fun fact to sound like an expert: Mae had a Top 40 hit in 2021 with the song Better Days, with Neiked and Polo G. (Google them. I don't have time to explain.)

Jokes that have already been made: Lots of plays on Mae's name. (It's gotta be Mae, etc)

The verdict: Will it win? No. Does that matter? No. The UK has brought an effortlessly airy pop confection, instead of something ponderous upon which they are staking their national pride. The UK is treating Eurovision like a party again!

Best National Final reject: n/a

Mae Muller
I Wrote a Song

such fun!



THANK YOU

There are a lot of people who help make this zine possible.

The first is The Person I Live With, who does the Photoshop work and proofreading, but more importantly, laughs at all of my stupid jokes. Don't blame them for my stylistic content changes (yes I left Romania's NF out for a reason, and I know that quote marks appear on some song titles and not others. I'm running out of time here, okay!)

The second is everyone at the EBU, who puts enough content online to make doing a fan publication easy.

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And finally, thank you for reading what I'm putting out into the world. Let me know if you love it or hate it at **dudepoints.fun** or **@dudepoints** on Twitter.

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