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EUROVISION 2022: WHAT IT'S REALLY LIKE TO ATTEND THE EVENT

BEHIND THE SCENE OF THE CAMPEST NIGHT IN MUSIC

G DAVID ROSKIN
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This weekend we've had a national triumph, we may not have taken the crown, but we got the best thing we could have hoped for- more than nil points. Being a Brit who enjoys Eurovision is synonymous with enjoying humiliation, on a continental (and Australian and Israeli) scale. But this year flipped the script entirely on its head, giving us a sense of national pride that most millennials haven't felt since the release date of Avengers: Endgame benefitting the UK before the rest of the world. The last proper moment of pride before that is definitely up for debate.

Sam Ryder gave us our highest charting entry in over twenty years, and I was there to drink it all in as it happened, kind of. Behind the scenes of Eurovision is a different beast to what it seems like on television, and we're peeking behind the curtain.

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The final is recorded three times

When entering the gauntlet for tickets to attend Eurovision (assuming you somehow secured a hotel for cheap that you're able to cancel for free upon failing to get tickets, or will be spending a scary amount on accommodation if you secure the bag), there are a ton of options - semi-finals, jury semi-finals, the actual actual final, jury final, family final. It's *a lot*. I attended the jury final, filmed on Friday night. It went down exactly as the main show did, but with a fake Måneskin in attendance and completely randomised voting that used seat fillers instead of actual acts.

Getting in is a hellscape in its own right

Ticket secured, made it to Turin, this year's host city, with no covid related hiccups, but one last thing.

Check all the requirements.

Maybe we missed it, or maybe it wasn't clear for those living in a country that lets us all just walk to the march of our own covid comfort drum. We rocked up with masks that didn't meet Eurovision requirements and alongside many others, had to run to a local supermarket for masks, which inevitably sold out. Cash was needed to buy a mask from a tout, and once making it through an outdoor checkpoint, everyone took their masks off anyway. Still, five euros is a small amount to get into Eurovision. The list of prohibited items for both the Eurovision Village (more on that later) and the venue seemed to be incomplete yet comprehensive. No 'rigid rods' allowed, no metal water bottles, no bottle caps in the Village and no umbrellas. Queues can build up, and whilst they sometimes moved fast, getting into the Eurovision Village for the final can be near impossible. It's a long show too, so if you have to leave to go pee in a portaloos in the dark, you're never finding your mates again. Dehydration is an unexpected ally.

The host city comes to life

Thousands of Europop lovers descending on a city from around the world inevitably will change the vibe. Turin was just full of joy and love non-stop, as cheesy as it sounds. Eurovision brings a ray of hope, especially for the British who, as aforementioned, are used to feeling a new degree of shame.

The Eurovision Song Contest gives reign to venues and clubs (EuroClubs) for afterparties featuring previous contestants, we were lucky enough to bump into Moldova's 2010 and 2017 submission, Sunstroke Project (of the sax man meme fame), whilst looking for a cheap Aperol Spritz, before they headed off for an afterparty.

And this is all missing the best part, the Eurovision Village pops up in the city, in Turin that was in Parco De Valentino, the city's oldest park. What to expect from the Village? Tons of sponsorship, including Philadelphia cream cheese and Lavazza coffee, as well as surprise performances from icons amongst icons, including 2014 winner Conchita Wurst(!).

The park is known for its viewings, I attended the second semi-final showing and it truly was a show of national pride, unity, and collective love for Ireland's Brooke Scullion who

was absolutely robbed of a place in the final.



It's a joy beyond belief

As Sam Ryder, our new patron saint, said on Saturday night: "Every single other artist involved this year absolutely smashed it. Everyone was a credit to themselves and a credit to what Eurovision is all about: unity, peace, love, togetherness, inclusivity, and expression. Thank you just for having us."

I've never been in an environment that felt so inclusive, nor one just filled with unbridled joy, with people living their authentic lives, and a huge amount of mutual love, respect, and a willingness to cling to the fun. People bearing Spanish flags came over to share a moment that our countries may win this year after abysmal results last year, those with Union Jacks cheered as we passed in the street, and of course, the crowd continually roared for Kalush Orchestra, Ukraine's entry who would be crowned winners the following evening.

Attempts to archive this video failed.



Eurovision started as a way to bring Europe together after absolute decimation, now we're 65 years on and it still stands strong, just a bit weirder, a bit more rock, and a whole lot queerer. Anytime an article like this comes out, the journalist will inevitably reference the divided times we're in, how the gaps and problems we face feel infinite

and that it feels, for lack of a better term - unprecedented. It's cliché, but it's sadly a feeling we know all too well.

Eurovision isn't just a music contest, it's a reprise from the world, a celebration of the arts and what brings joy, an excuse to get your mates together and try to drink every time the UK gets a point, a game that may have to be retired if you want to survive the night now.

It gives those of us who find ourselves in a European (or Israeli or Australian) diaspora a way to connect to the homelands and languages we may never have the chance to know the way our ancestors did. We cheer along, knowing that whilst our familial path brought us to a place we identify with culturally, we're alongside others us across the world supporting a creative, talented representative for us all. Borders are broken by people washing their hands surrounded by Catholic priests.

Eurovision is a place for risks, a place for statements and forever a place for positive progression, inclusivity, pushing the boundaries in front of 200 million people, and of course, a place for Europop, ballads and wolves that need bananas to come together.

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