

How To Win The Eurovision Song Contest



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◦△◦ Introduction ◦△◦

Each year the greatest programme in the world rolls into another great European city with a sea of sequins, wind machines and key changes. In the last seven years the Eurovision Song Contest has evolved dramatically with increased song quality and has decrease in so-called "political" voting. This should be the perfect opportunity for a Great British resurgence after our last win twenty years ago next year. However the United Kingdom seem to be stuck languishing on the right hand of the scoreboard each May.

I have been a Eurovision fan for nearly fifteen years. I caught my first one back in 2002 when we came joined third with Estonia. The following year I watched, on my eighth birthday, our not so valiant entry take the infamous nil points for the first and lets hope last ever time. I was not deterred from the contest and have become a hardened advocate ever since.

Since then, I have learned much about the contest, and not just the fact of placings and points. For the past five years I have researched the subject of the contest, and become a bit of amateur "eurovisionologist" (my own term). I have done analysis on why songs win and why songs don't. Also I have looked in to the background of the contest to really understand the modern mechanisms of it, from types of viewers to the modern myths of the recent contest.

This new knowledge has led me to understand certain truths about the contest. However not in a religious manner. Although, the way it is going, it could become a religion in the next twenty to thirty years.

The main truth is that there is no set formula of winning Eurovision song. Whilst Eurovision winning songs have certain things in common, they have less in common than you may think. Most do not share similar, singers, staging, genres, or messages. However they all do have one thing in common. Their memorability.

Another great truth is that many myths of the contest are not true. For example political voting never existed, whilst cultural voting did. Artists careers do not automatically get killed by the contest unless artists make it so, and that everyone does not hate the UK... etc.

Looking over the approach of the UK of recent years, has also provided me with the key answer to quench British woes. The BBC needs to be active rather than passive

I understand that the UK has been active in certain ways, but overall it is mostly passive. It tends to be an open casting call for songs, and the BBC sorts through them to either pick a song directly or put them to a public vote.

In order to get the best out of our country, the BBC needs to be so much more active and aggressive in it's approach to the contest. The number of countries we are up against has nearly doubled in the last twelve years, so the competition is that much harder.

This means also fighting for my final truth, the Eurovision Song Contest and the Great British Music industry should not be mutually exclusive.

Below is my approach to the contest, and how I would arrange the process to get an entry, and more. If all parts of this plan were put in place I can see no reason why we would not just win, but become a leading figure of the contest and guide it to the next level of quality, as Sweden has done since 2011.

If you want to fulfil these dreams... read on.

◦△◦ Where have we gone wrong? ◦△◦

Through out this, there will be parts that sound very negative. In order to understand where to improve, the UK needs to understand where it is going wrong. The problems the UK face can be split in to four sections.

- Approach
- Artist Selection
- Song Staging
- Branding and Promotion

All these need to be addressed to some degree if the UK is to move forward, and hopefully up the left side of the scoreboard.

◦△◦ Approach ◦△◦

Whilst this section is brief, I find that it is the most important part as it effects all other sections of the process for finding an entry for the Eurovision Song Contest.

At the moment, it feels from the outside the BBC that the UK is running on an autopilot system from the late nineties to the naughties. After the fiasco of Electro Velvet, it was untenable for the BBC to carry on with an internal selection. However, whilst we were promised the "biggest song search ever", we got the same kind of national selection that had been going on for years, before being on hiatus since 2009.

Like before, we had all the song announced on BBC Radio 2 (I'll get on to that later), then a a national selection in a sort of graveyard slot like the Sunday afternoons in the nineties (I will also get to that). The problem seems that the BBC has lost all passion and energy with Eurovision. It was as if BBC Eurovision was demoralised after a spree of disappointing results.

Every time we look like we're going in the right direction and the BBC is moving forward and showing some new thinking, we seem to go backwards. For example, the BBC used the BBC Introducing platform, which showed a forward thinking approach using our up and coming modern music. While it did not go to plan, it was promising when the BBC announced it was addressing the staging problems. However we got Electro Velvet.

With the inevitable backlash, we were told we were getting the biggest song search ever and received the same mix of, talent show wannabes, amateurs and old pop group members. The greatest problem was the mix of middle of the road, mid tempo songs, that gave me no excitement. They were not going to set the European public alight.

This is the main problem, the BBC seems terrified to innovate and modernise, whilst the contest continues to do that itself. So many winning songs since 2010 have been willing to push the Eurovision boundaries and done so well. Both Lena for Germany in 2010 and Loreen for Sweden 2012, got rid of the over top staging and middle of the road mid tempo pop and both shot to victory. Their modernisation did not get lost on the British public as both entered the UK charts with Loreen getting the third spot with only one play on BBC Radio 1.

Måns Zelmerlöw again went with simple modernity whilst Conchita pushed the limits of tolerance for the LGBT community around Europe, with her fantastic Bond-esque dramatic ballad. They decided to do something new, and pushed preconceived limits. The BBC should be going the same way. Try new ideas, think out side the box and as Gordon Ramsey would say "show some

f***ing passion’.

The majority of this document is given to the idea of trying to get the best music in the contest, and therefore the best “current” names, like we used to sent in the past, past to take part. This may require a full time BBC Eurovision team, but I believe that the UK and BBC must as Eurovision is the “Olympics of Song” and requires full time dedication. Also we need to become more passionate towards the contest and that will inspire the continent to vote for us. But most importantly, the BBC must believe in my cardinal rule of Eurovision... “Nothing is impossible, just find the right way to do.”

◦△◦ Who should represent us? ◦△◦

This is the biggest question to answer, as the song, staging and generally everything else you think of, centres around the person. If the artist does not fit the staging or the song does not work for them, it is blatantly obvious to any one watching at home. Also to make sure we get the best staging, song and performance, we need to get the best artist that we can get.

What have we sent so far?

When we talk about how to move forward with artist choice, we need address where we have gone wrong.

Since the beginning of the talent show age back in the early naughties we have had a sea of talent show drop outs, and ex band members take part in national selections, whilst amateurs participated treating it similarly to a talent show.

Since 2000 we have had at least six artist trying to regain their careers, (Nikki French, Daz Sampson, Scooch, Blue, Englebert Humberdink, and Bonnie Tyler), seven talent show drop outs (Jessica Garlic, James Foxx, Javine, Andy Abraham, Bianca from Electro Velvet and Joe and Josh), and four amateurs. Whilst these are the reason why at the moment the country sees the contest as a career killer, the main reason they have been detrimental to our quest to win the contest, is their irrelevance. As Dr Paul Johnson (Dr Eurovision) commented “... certainly there is some resentment in Europe towards the UK, ... they see perhaps the UK entering novelty acts, or songs that maybe don’t reflect the wider UK charts”².

Why should we send big names?

Katrina Leskanich commented in 2015 about her experience of Eurovision form 1997, “when we got involved with it, and we saw how passionately some countries {take it}, they put forward their very best music. There wasn’t any leverage for being off handish about it. We had to take it very seriously”.

For many countries, it is an opportunity to send their biggest stars in an effort to promote their music industry, and win. For example in 2016, Russia sent their biggest super star Sergey Lazarev, whilst the Netherlands, Iceland, Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Ukraine, Ireland, and Italy all sent current well known names, and for some reason San Marino is sending a huge Turkish name. It proves that what Dr Eurovision said is also true “They make a lot of effort, they put in their biggest stars...”. For this reason the rest of Europe expect us to do the same, especially while the UK’s music industry is at a zenith.

However there are many more reasons why the UK should start recruiting our big names. Graham Norton said it best as he commented, “the UK’s kinda hay day in Eurovision, was when we sent our biggest pop stars.” The main reason is obvious when you consider why the majority of our

1 Graham Norton, How To Win Eurovision, BBC Three,

2 60 Years of Eurovision, BBC Four

biggest names are famous. The music they produce is of a very high quality. Although there is more to it than that. Unlike a lot of Eurovision artists and some American artists, ours tend to have authenticity. The majority of Eurovision songs are written for the contest and therefore loses its soul.

A large majority of our musicians like Adele, Sam Smith and Ellie Goulding, write songs to tell their stories and are personal to them. This gives the songs a soul that connects to those listening. If we just ask them to write a three minute song of their own choosing, asking them to tell the stories they want to tell, show the emotions they want to show, and get them to present themselves the way they want to promote themselves, it will give us amazing songs that will connect to the pan-European audience of Eurovision.

Another reason we should consider bigger names is the rabbit in the head lights effect. So many of our artists look out of depth singing on the grandeur that is the Eurovision stage. Our biggest names have probably been in front of audiences bigger than ten thousand, either in festival or arena tours. They know how to overcome their nerves.

Lastly we should consider the age of the audience. The official statistics³ of Eurovision suggest that the viewing public is made up of a high proportion of younger viewers. In 2015 out of the TV viewers between the ages of 15 and 24 watching that night, 44.8% were watching Eurovision. In comparison only 11.1% of the same age group watch those channels at that time on a normal Saturday. To get over 40% audience share in any age group is remarkable, and shows that they should be the main target. We need to ignore the UK specific audience and look at the wider European audience as they are the ones voting. This age group buys the music from our big names and are the most vocal in demanding their participation. As they are such a big chunk of the viewership, we need to pander to them, as that will give us the votes.

Whilst there is so many other reasons why big names should be approached they will be discussed later on. However, getting big names to take part, needs to be explored, and understood.

◦△◦ How to get big artists to take part? ◦△◦

Whilst there is many parts to this, for each prospective artist, the journey to get them to take part is mostly personal to each artist. Each one has personal preconceptions and qualms about the contest, so no blanket solution will be a hundred percent effective. Instead the BBC needs a wide range of ammunition to use in different situations in order to work through any eventuality with any future artist.

Is the contest really a career killer?

This is typically the biggest misgiving that most artists have about being on the Eurovision stage, including Olly Murs who called the contest a "poisoned chalice". Artist would rather not risk their career, for something they see as not giving them any personal gain. However big names must be told why for them this wont be an issue.

One of the main reasons certain artists remain to have a career is if they are musically relevant to the UK charts. For example before 1967 our artists were known but did not have lasting careers because they were not singing songs that were relevant to the modern pop songs of the day. As Paddy O'Connell commented "our entries looked like they come from the decade previously. Great songs... but parlour songs".

It took until 1967 for us to send a culturally relevant singer in the shape of barefooted Sandi Shaw. She had had multiple continental hits before taken up the mantel, and knocked it out of the ball park. She then went on to have a career that continued in to the eighties with work with The Smiths and

³ EBU Press Release: 60th Eurovision Song Contest seen by nearly 200 million viewers, 03/06/2015

Morrisey.

All three artists we sent to the contest in the late sixties were singing songs that belonged in the era, and become number one hits in the UK. Both Bucks Fizz and Brotherhood of Man sent songs that fitted the time and both having ample careers after the contest, with Bucks Fizz having been made for the contest and having no fans before A Song For Europe.

It wasn't just British entries that have been unknowns with contemporary songs that have made an impact. ABBA were completely unheard of outside Sweden and not even that big in their home nation, even with two shots at Melodifestivalen. However their song was so modern and caught the public imagination that their careers were secured for nearly ten years until they took the decision to end it.

If you have a relevant song, that the UK public will buy and support then your career will do well post contest. Especially in a sea of middle of the road songs.

Across Europe modern Eurovision stars still have good careers after they take part. For example Lena has released three albums since winning, had numerous top twenty single and is a much loved judge on the Voice kids in Germany. Loreen is still a sizeable name in Sweden, and has released many singles since her win. However even Måns Zelmerlöw has commented that he is surprised Loreen hasn't made it here in the UK. Her first single after Euphoria, We Got The Power hit the charts in the nineties and nothing has been heard of her since.

The problem is in UK there is a stigma against any artist from the contest, whether their music could do well in the UK or not. Just any connection to Eurovision and the BBC, and other media outlets want nothing to do with them, unless sexy enough to do a nude shoot, yes I'm taking to you Måns.

This means while artists from the contest do well in Europe, we hear nothing from them and therefore the UK thinks that the ESC is a graveyard for talent. The BBC must change that if they want to stop it from being a career killer. (See: Radio 1 vs Radio 2).

Another reason why a lot of artists don't have their careers killed is because they are already well known, and still churning out music at the time. The problem we have at the moment is what I call the "Circle of Irrelevance".

Because of the ESC stigma we can't currently get relevant artists to take part. So we either get amateurs, or talent show acts with not enough experience, or older names that look past their prime. When they get to the contest they either look out of place, or like the proverbial rabbits in the head light and plummet down the right hand side of the scoreboard. When they get back, we turn our backs on them, and then we don't see them releasing a song straight away, or in the papers each week, and we just believe their careers have tanked, causing the stigma to continue, and the circle starts again.

That is why the stigma is so strong now, because in the last fifteen years no one with a career that was worth while has stepped forward. They don't get anywhere. If in the past fifteen years we had sent big artists, with relevant songs that got to number one, would the stigma exist today, I don't think it would.

The only way to get rid of this stigma is to have big names send big songs that will secure their career here in the UK and in Europe, and make sure their career doesn't tank.

Modesty

Just a quick look at the mentality of our biggest names. One problem we have is that our stars tend to be more modest than most. For example Adele has been surprised at the success 25 has obtained even after the heights of 21. She even mentioned on Nick Grimshaw's Radio 1 show that she wondered if people would still remember her after three years away. Our artists are so thankful and surprised at their success they still think it could get knocked down by the next breath of wind. Say Adele did go, she is such a super star her career would not get tarnished by the contest, but she would still think it could because of her modesty. While it is weird to think an artist sees, being

watched by 200 million viewers is detrimental to their careers, their modesty holds them back. They still think their careers are not big enough to handle anything Eurovision throws at them. This needs to be rectified for our biggest names to even get close to the Eurovision stage.

The Thank You Package

This is the biggest element in the BBC's armoury. It will show to potential artists that we are taking the song contest seriously, that they will be personally supported by the BBC and that their career will have a future after the contest.

The BBC has a lot of resources at its disposal in order to support artists after they have taken part in the contest. This needs to be utilised in order to make sure our entries' careers are not tarnished. If the BBC can arrange and guarantee work and promotion for our artists and even prospective entries from a national selection, they will know they will have a career after Eurovision.

The BBC could arrange sets at festivals that the organisation show, such as Glastonbury, give them specials to promote new albums like Adele at the BBC, or secure playlisting of a certain number of the follow up singles on BBC Radio 1. They BBC could even do more specific things such as Live Lounge performances, TV appearances on programmes like Strictly Come Dancing, or even doing a Radio 1 symphony like Clean Bandit did in 2014 and other artists have done.

This will give the BBC cheap ways to promote careers as a lot of this the BBC have the resources to do already, but will be very beneficial for our entries.

There should be two tiers of Thank You Packages. There should be a smaller one for artists who take part in the national selection, so no matter where they come their careers will carry on as if they didn't win an award in the Brits. (See: National Selection Part One). Then a bigger one for the winner of the national selection and our entry as the contest will be seen as a bigger risk to careers than a national selection. If done correctly the Thank You Package could guarantee big artist participation at Eurovision.

The myth of political voting

Many well known names, not just from the world of music, such as the very vocal Philip Schofield, has called the contest political and from that called for the UK to withdraw. This idea has persisted since practically the inception of the contest in 1956, but has become a more prevalent idea in the last fifteen years.

This misconception was mainly forced on to the British public by Terry Wogan. As the voice of the contest for over thirty years, his misunderstanding of how it worked became a mainstream belief. Thankfully Graham Norton understands the background motives of the voting process. Whilst Terry Wogan would scream "political voting" if Norway gave Sweden the famous douze points, Norton would remember to mention that everyone else is voting for it and that it was a good song that deserved the points.

There is also no such thing as political voting. As Norton talked about in 2015...

Yes they're voting for their neighbours, but they're also voting for a song that's been played to death on their radio. They probably know the person singing it because they are a star in their country. So it's not as simple as "we always vote for this country", that does go on, but I think normally it's about you vote for songs you're familiar with, because the more you hear any song, the more you like it, until you grow to loath it.⁴

This also adds to cultural factors. Sweden, Norway and Denmark are interlinked culturally, through their history and their intelligible languages. So it is very easy to understand why they enjoy each

⁴ 60 Years of Eurovision (Documentary – BBC 4 - 2015)

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others songs, and hence vote for them.

To understand that it is not political voting we have to look at the Balkan countries. Serbia won in 2007 with twelve points from most or all of their neighbours. However politically, these countries hate Serbia. After the Yugoslav wars of the 1990's, Serbia had become hated after invading their neighbours and committing war crimes during the war. The reason they voted for the song is because it was a Balkan ballad, a genre of song loved in the area, and also the language it was sung in was Serbo-Croat. It is spoken by practically all ex-Yugoslav countries, even if they want to claim them as separate languages in order to increase nationalism, but they are at least intelligible throughout the Balkans. It was not political but entirely cultural.

Another factor that dispelled the political voting myth is that mathematically no country can win solely by their neighbours. If that was true Russia and Germany would be the top two countries as they have biggest numbers of neighbours in Europe.

In 2009, Norway won with a "so far" unbeaten 382 points. In traditional blocks Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Iceland would have given them twelve points, but their total of 48 points would have put Norway about mid to high right-hand side, not a victory. Norway got wide appeal across Europe, with over fifteen douze points, and only an eight from Finland. Maybe they had heard it too much on their radios, and had "grow/n! to loath it".

The main reason it has persisted is because of the rise of the number of eastern countries competing in the contest, and causing the "Old and New effect".

In 2000 the contest had become an old joke. It had been going on for 45 years and was now old fashioned in the eyes of the west. Even though juries had been fully abolished by 1998, songs were still middle of the road.

The eastern countries had entered in a flood and to them the contest was new and something to be celebrated and get behind. For them this was a new way to establish their countries and cultures on the world stage. They tried hard to present their nations on this new platform and had slightly raised the bar.

Whilst eastern countries voted for each other, as they recognised the stars, languages and cultures on show by these new countries discovering themselves culturally, the west started voting for the east more as the quality was marginally higher than the west. This meant the east naturally had the edge.

Look at the contest ten and fifteen years later, and a lot of the new countries had sorted themselves out with bigger economies and established TV stations and are now trying to win the contest. No longer sending cultural songs, but as modern as they can, mainly roping in Swedish writers. The west have now struck back and are also upping their game. Now we have come to the moment where it is an equal split between the two (as it should be). Since 2009, every Top Five has been a good split of eastern and western countries, except 2012.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
1 st	Norway	Germany	Azerbaijan	Sweden	Denmark	Austria	Sweden
2 nd	Iceland	Turkey	Italy	Russia	Azerbaijan	The Netherlands	Russia
3 rd	Turkey	Romania	Sweden	Serbia	Ukraine	Sweden	Italy
4 th	Azerbaijan	Denmark	Ukraine	Azerbaijan	Norway	Armenia	Belgium
5 th	United Kingdom	Azerbaijan	Denmark	Albania	Russia	Hungary	Australia

Seventeen Western Top Fives
 Fifteen Eastern Top Fives
 Two Old Eurovision Eastern Top Five (Turkey)
 One Very Eastern Top Five (Australia)

It needs to be explained to potential acts the real history of political voting and the mechanisms of the new Eurovision landscape. This will help them overcome this deeply ingrained block against many artists taking part. When they realise that friends will help you up the table but a great song will give you win, they will quite likely put a lot of effort into a song. This is because they will understand that a great song will be appreciated by Europe, just look at the UK in 2009.

Other myths of Eurovision

When it comes to Eurovision we love excuses. Besides the idea of political voting and it being a career killer we've come up with so many excuses to discount the contest or explain why we have not got a good result. Yet the majority of them are utter s***. They need to be countered so that artists will understand that the only thing holding us back in us and not Europe, and will compete.

One of the biggest excuses we come out with is that no one votes for us, that's why we should not take part. If this was true then we would get nil-point each year. But also back in 2009, the last time we did well, thirty nations gave us points. Also Ireland always gives us votes, even it is just one point. But 2009 shows that if we do everything right we will indeed get loads of countries voting for us.

Since 2003 and our nil-point was assigned to the the Invasion of Iraq less than two months before, the cry "Europe hates us" has been sounded almost like a battle cry. As an island we do have subconscious tend to get all outsider-ish and become little-Englanders, and see the continent with disdain. However that is also untrue, and most educated people can see that. Hopefully the events of 2009 does dispel that. If Europe did not like us, why would they buy our singles, our films, our books, come here on vacations and admire our Royal Family. It makes no sense to say a whole continent hates us.

Some reasons are not just used to make excuses for our bad results, but also for claims that we should withdraw. One of the biggest ones is that we will never win again so there is no point to us taking part. Well that is not true. It took over seventy years to have a male winner at Wimbledon. England's last win at the World Cup was the year before our first ever Eurovision win. Yet the English football team and British Tennis did not withdraw from those contest. The point is, it is not about winning (well partially). This is weird in a document about how to win the contest. However the main way to win is not to try and win Eurovision. We should just show off our best and be proud, not send things to win. Then we wont get disappointed about the result and people wont use this excuse for us to withdraw. Also when we send entries to win, the BBC gets the wrong end of the stick.

Overall there is so many excuses, they are impossible to list. But they are more a sign of a bigger systemic problem. We have an automatic pessimistic outlook on the contest. That is a problem if we want anyone to compete for us, as they wont feel they have the nation's support as a small but vocal part of the public automatically go to the worst case scenario. Once we get this sorted and we have faith in the contest, artists will feel more support from the nation, and be more confident to take part.

National Selection Part One (Why artists should prefer it.)

John Kennedy O'Connor commented "It's virtually guaranteed that stars (even forgotten stars from decades earlier) would never agree to compete against each other".⁵ Whilst he is a Eurovision expert, I believe that if you play it right, create a suitable national final, and discuss to the artists the positives of a national selection compared to an internal selection, the artists will do it.

Firstly prospective stars should understand why it is better for them to take part in a national selection rather than an internal selection. Say for example we convinced Ellie Goulding to

⁵ Let Me Be The One: Looking At The National Finals, John Kennedy O'Connor, 24th January 2014

compete for the UK, while she may get a lot of support from her fans, if god forbid anything were to happen, all of it will be directed towards her. If she competed against Florence + The Machine, Adele, Sam Smith, Clean Bandit, Years and Years, James Bay, and so on, it will look as if the music industry is coming together. So if any thing happens she will get the support of her fellow national selection artists and the larger music industry. This means with the Thank You Package, and the music industry supporting them, their career carries on.

Secondly the National Selection should be moved away from being a competition to find our entry, but become a national celebration of British music. If you say to an artist we are doing a music festival, showing new music to celebrate the greatness of British music, bigger names are more likely to do that than a national selection. This will also mean that no matter where an artist comes in the national selection, they will still carry on as normal, as it will be like loosing a Brit award, as a low placing will become a non-issue. Also, this will give a supportive environment to the national selection rather than an unhealthy dog eat dog mentality, and that supportive nature will carry on to Eurovision itself.

By showing the supportive elements of a national festival, rather than the precarious position artists could be in though a national competition or internal selection, artist will get accustomed to doing it.

Comic Relief

During its sixty year history, Eurovision has shown the best in humanity. Whether it is Fazler risking their lives to escape Bosnia to represent it in 1993, to Nicole singing to Israeli troops in the middle of its war with Lebanon after her victory. From it's origin to keep peace between nations through song, to Conchita showing how tolerant the normal people of Europe were for the LGBT community. This is the perfect opportunity the UK do carry on this by joining forces with Comic Relief to do amazing work here in the UK and in the world's poorest nations.

National selections tend to fall around late February to mid March, just in time for the HoD meeting, and song deadline. This is also the exact time that Comic / Sport Relief kicks into gear. This is the perfect opportunity to do something great for both Comic Relief and Eurovision.

It would be an amazing turn of events if we could turn our national festival of British music in to a charity concert to raise thousands, if not millions for the charity. For example ticket sales, telephone votes and a festival album could help raise a lot of money for the charity. Why not even have our entry be the official comic relief single.

This would help to raise even more money from international sales and promote the charity outside the UK. This would all be for the good.

In terms of trying to get big names to take part, I am not the only one to think about incorporating charity, some journalists have mentioned it too. The reason it is a good idea is because it will make Eurovision seem a respectable career choice as you doing something worthy of credit, i.e. raising hundreds of thousands of pounds for an amazing charity. Having the official Comic Relief single is seen as an honour and hopefully will slowly give representing the nation at Eurovision will be the same.

Artistic Freedom

This seems to be the least discussed reason why artists don't want to take part in the contest. However there has been interviews with the Hurts that show that the BBC tries to control a lot about their acts and in some cases turns said band away from ever taking part in a British entry.

The problem with that is the reason our biggest names have got to where they because most management allows their clients to do what they want. Unlike in the eighties and nineties with the over-manufactured pop, artists now have much more freedom to express themselves. In order

for the BBC to entice big names to take part, the BBC must also allow more freedom to their acts.

This should not be just about the song, but also about staging and performances. These artists know how to present themselves, and put themselves across successfully. These people are experts at it and therefore must be treated as such. They should have the freedom to stage things how they want, song songs they want, and work with the choreographers and other member of their own team.

One this will give our entry a more authentic feel. It will also allow artists to explore more, and not feel restricted. The rules the EBU put in place are not restrictive in themselves, but BBC should not try to manipulate songs and artists because they supposedly know best. This will turn artists away, but allowing them to be the artists they way they want to, will show the BBC understands them and make them more agreeable to exploring their art in front of 200 million viewers.

One to One Meetings

This is the most pivotal moment of the whole plan. If it is not done correctly the artists will not be convinced to take part and everything collapses. This is the time you use everything you have collected, with the Thank You Package, the charitable effort, assurances of artistic freedom, the proof dispelling Eurovision myths, and the re-branding effort (see: Branding and Promotion).

It should be a discussion lead by the artist in trying to overcome every problem they have to take part in Eurovision. They have to feel that the BBC is going to support them throughout the journey and afterwards, so the risks in taking part are distinguished or at least diminished.

Also the meetings should be friendly, non-corporate, and personalised in order to make artists feel less pressured and more comfortable. You could bake vegan biscuits for Ellie Goulding, slip in some Russian words to Clean Bandit, or take Adele to a cocktail bar and let her be Miranda from Sex in the City. This should be an enjoyable experience, and preferably with younger and more fashionable members of the team as it will make them feel as if the BBC is understanding them.

One big rule do not mention Eurovision until the meeting itself and you have got a rapport with them.

◦△◦ How to do staging? ◦△◦

The UK has had a long track record of staging songs badly. Whilst the BBC seem to be taking this more seriously, after what happened with Molly, the BBC seem to be focusing more on that than the actual songs, in the Eurovision SONG contest. The use of staging is to enhance a song, not for choosing a song, yes Electro Velvet.

What have we done wrong so far?

The UK has three tracks when it comes to staging, elegant and simple, detracting from the song, or over the top and clichéd.

The elegant and simple approach has been hit and miss under Arlene Philips. For Jade it worked as she had a beautiful song that has uplifted by an elegant stage that looked expensive, with great camera angles that made it intimate and grand at the same time. However in 2012 Arlene Philips' staging was boring, simplistic and clichéd. It kept the song dowdy and did not enhance it.

In 2011 the problem was the staging detracted from the song as it was too dark. The video for I Can was very uplifting and bright. The song itself was uplifting and bright. The staging was dystopian and dark, with dark navy suits, and black and green LED screens. It gave the performance a darker edge than it needed. Eric Saade's song had an edge so the edgier staging worked in his favour, but our song didn't have that edge, so the staging did not fit it.

The opposite was the problem with Molly. Who ever did the staging of Molly took one part her persona and extrapolated it in to a mess of different conflicting elements. It felt that the staging director, without talking to her just jumped on the boho/hipster style of Molly. They assumed that hipsters like different cultures so added Indian henna tattoos with African feathered dresses and Chinese lanterns. All topped off with a spark curtain as it won the year before. It had no coherent message or theme as it was over done with hipster clichés, so left the stage with no atmosphere, and the song fell flat on its face.

Now that we know our mistakes lets move forward.

Staging Tips

I'm not going to give too many tips as I believe artists should have more say than production staff (see: Artist Involvement). However here are a few things to consider when staging a song.

- Song Size
 - A song has a certain size to it. Many commentators say that certain artists can't fill a big stage. Songs have the same problem, so staging must reflect that. The underproduction of Children of the Universe made it more suited to the small stage in the preview, but not on the large one in Copenhagen. Use props and camera angles to shrink the stage and make it more intimate. Other songs need wide angles and grand stages to give them power and energy like Azerbaijan in 2011. So work out the size of the song and address it.
- Stage Problems
 - This one is not a UK only problem. Some stages have certain features that require consideration to get around, such as the projection screen in 2013, the height in 2011 and 2014 or the obscured LED screens in 2006. The song that did this the best was Euphoria. Whilst the staging was already created for Melodifestivalen, it inadvertently got rid of the worst aspect of the Azerbaijani stage. The haphazard asymmetric LED screens. They weren't helpful to good staging. By getting rid of them she was no longer restricted by their shape in order to create her staging.
- Camera Angles
 - This ties in with the song size, but also in terms of the energy of the song. For example every one is trying to work out why Spain did so badly in 2015 with a very reasonable song. No one has spotted the problem with the camera angles. Especially in the second half, the majority of the camera shots were static front shots, whether they were close ups or wide shots. This decreased the power of the song. It was a charging sounding song without movement, so it caused it to stand still.
- Considering the Wrong Audience
 - One of my biggest bug bares of Eurovision staging is addressing the audience. Firstly the audience in the arena are not voting, and even if they are able, it will only marginally effect the voting of the host nation. The other reason is that it detaches the artist from the viewing public, as they are concerned with a different audience. This is why duets don't tend to do well either as they focus on each other rather than the viewing public and juries. Azerbaijan 2011 and The Netherlands 2014 both showed that you can focus on the duet and the audience, something that must be balanced.

They are just some basic tips to elevate any staging. These aren't meant to restrict staging planning, but help improve the execution of prior ideas. Use it as a checklist when working out how to achieve the staging you want.

Artistic Involvement.

Staging needs to be thought of as a live three minute music video, not as a stage show. The reason for this is as I mentioned before the people in the arena are not the ones voting. The International Juries and the public voters are the ones watching the broadcast and ergo should be the ones given the best show. So having a visually exciting three minutes through camera angles, lighting effects and live special effects will have a greater affect. However don't use it as an excuse to go over the top.

Most artists have huge say in their music videos, and understand themselves well enough as an artist to know how to present themselves visually. This gives them the right to have the greatest say in how to be staged, and should at least have the starting ideas.

Many of these artist have either come up with the ideas for their videos, or even directed them. For example Jack Patterson of Clean Bandit has studied at the world's oldest and most celebrated film school, the Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography in Moscow and with fellow member Grace Chatto have created their own film company called "*clean film*", to create music videos for themselves and others. This background would be fantastically helpful if Clean Bandit decided to take part as they would easily create a masterpiece of staging.

By using the artists ideas and the producers to make them reality, the staging for our entries would improve exponentially.

◦△◦ Branding and Promotion ◦△◦

In order for the UK to have a lasting impact at the contest, the country and the music industry must get behind it and see it as a modern music contest, like it is on the continent. This must be done by re-branding the contest and giving it the right promotion. The BBC are the brand ambassadors of Eurovision in the UK and cannot expect the EBU to update the contest for them. As well as using big names helping show the musical relevance of the contest, there is many more things the BBC must consider to change the public and industry view of the contest.

The Eurovision Brand in the UK

Besides the myths of the contest, the main issue in the UK is that the contest is seen as an anachronistic camp affair, with no musical quality. This is aided by our rose tinted look of the past, and past successes in the contest. As a nation we prefer to look back than forward.

This causes us to only think of the bad music quality of the past. As we haven't done well in recent years, we tend not to look on to the most recent songs with as much love. For example during the recap of the Greatest Hits during You Decide, all the songs were of older entries, such as Johnny Logan, and Brotherhood of Man, and none of the newer winners, such as Loreen or Emellie de Forest. We need to celebrate songs from all eras of the contest instead of just the past. It is ironic after the video explaining the change of modern Eurovision.

The National Selection Part Two (How it will help the image)

Guy Freeman said it on Radio 2 when he commented "*we've done spin off shows and it's not attracted huge numbers*". So the answer is not to do a spin off. The best way to re-brand Eurovision is to have a national selection that has no branding to Eurovision itself. Bellow is a proposed name and logo to a National Selection.

6 May have ceased trading

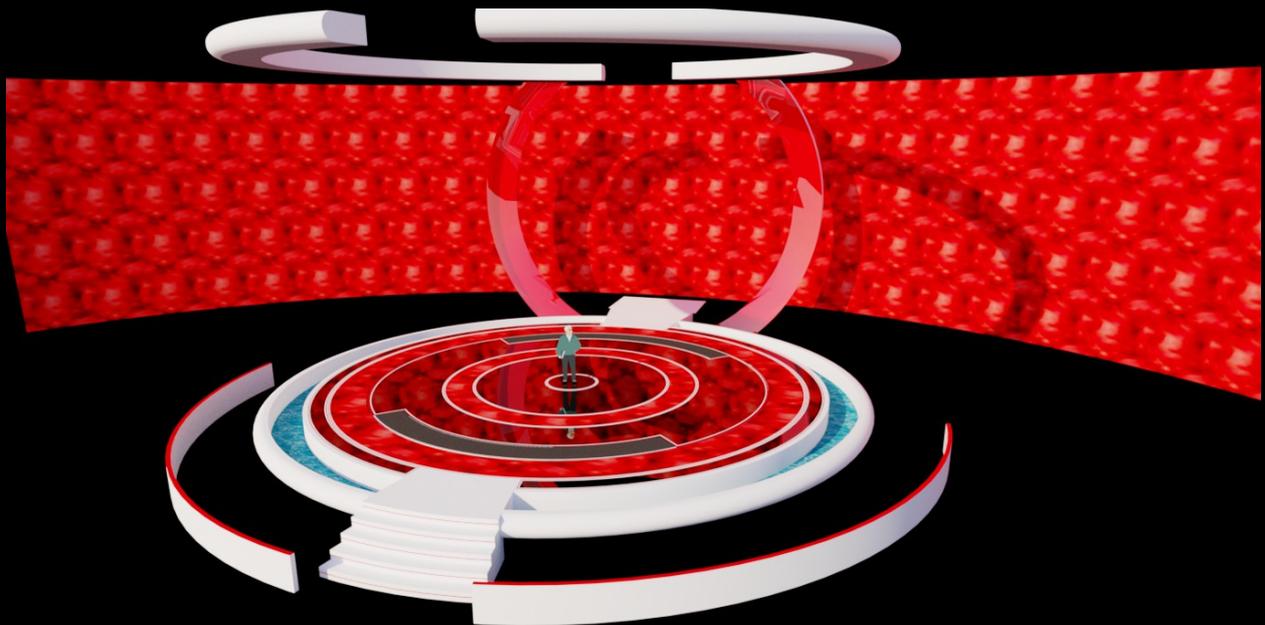


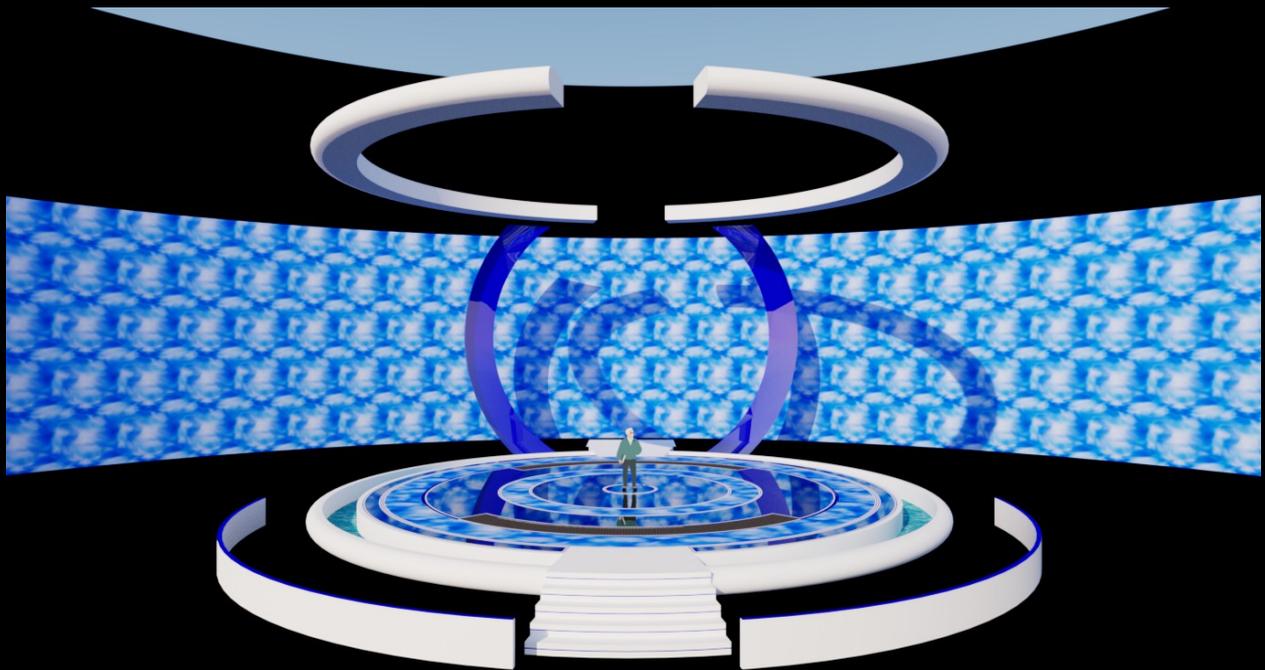
As it may have been noticed, this document has also been branded in the same way.

The reason you should create a national selection that is separate to Eurovision, is so that it can become it's own beast. Look at Melodifestivalen in Sweden, it has grown organically to become the biggest show in Sweden, bigger than Eurovision itself. The reason is because it developed it's own brand and own atmosphere. This meant no matter what happened to Sweden in the contest, either in the bad pre-2011 or the good results post-2011, the viewing public still watch the next year.

This also helps re-brand the contest itself, as if the contest can piggy back on the success of the national selection. By having a serious and credible national selection that doesn't follow the camp public view of Eurovision, then people are going to take the national selection seriously, and therefore take our entries seriously, then in turn take the contest seriously.

Another thing is that the production value must be much higher than Eurovision: You Decide. The small stage, unimaginative staging and rehashed graphics from Eurovision: Greatest Hits, made it less of an enjoyable to watch. If you want more people to watch it you need to give a better experience. For example have a bigger and better stage, my example is thus...





By getting big names and a big budget it will be a sure fire ratings success, so you can invest in a better brand and better show, and will reflect in the public view of Eurovision itself, as we are making an effort in a national selection, it shows that Eurovision should be taken seriously as well. So if the BBC takes it seriously, so will the public and the best way to do it is through the national selection.

BBC Radio 1 vs. BBC Radio 2

Radio 2 has been a long term friend of the contest, however that has become a disadvantage to the contest. Not that I think that the contest should be wrenched out of Ken Bruce's hands. I think both Radio 1 and Radio 2 should be involved in the contest.

I don't think that Radio 1 should be broadcasting it like it did from 1968-73, as the the age range that the station is for would not listen to it to the radio anyway, but watch it on the TV, or online. Also having two radio broadcasters is too much.

The main problem is that being on Radio 2, artists and the general public see the contest as a bit anachronistic. No modern artist is demanding their songs get playlisted on Radio 2. Last year Madonna was complaining how she wasn't playlisted on Radio 1. In terms of the new contest, Radio 1 should be the ones working towards the future. While Radio 2 should carry on celebrating our past. We need to use both, Radio 1 to update the contest, and Radio 2 for the older fans of the contest.

Radio 1 needs to also help in promoting music from the contest and from Europe in general. One of my biggest bug bares is the anglophilic approach to music in the UK. It's okay that they are foreign as long as we only find out in interviews as long as the songs are in English. I was listening to Swedish radio last year, and after some songs in English and Swedish, a song in Spanish came on. I was so angry that on the continent that quality songs are played across Europe no matter the language. Yet here, any song not in English is disregarded.

I think this would benefit the contest in the UK, if European music was seen as having equal weight to us here in the UK. I'm not advocating half foreign, and half UK songs on Radio 1, just sprinkle them about every so often, or have an hour show at 9pm every week promoting music across Europe. European music is fantastic, and so many artists from all over Europe produces music to the quality worthy of the UK, in English and other languages. But they just never cross the channel, and if they

do, it's for a small concert of small fans and never with any media back up.

This is another why reason the contest is seen as a career killer, as we never hear of the artists from other countries after the contest. In the past ABBA and Celine Dion were celebrated around Europe, but now artist are lost and forgotten. Not all ESC participants should be played on the radio, but a few do like Loreen and Lena, who both are huge in their native lands, and producing fantastic music, but whilst they could easily get top ten singles here, the ESC stigma holds them back.

Måns Zelmerlöw has actually commented on the fact that he is surprised that Loreen hasn't done better here, and I agree. Her first single after Euphoria, We Got The Power, was an amazing track, but only charted at 90 something. With the stigma and no press behind there is no way at the moment that Eurovision acts will break the UK. Eric Saade (Sweden 2011) said his biggest dream is to break the UK, but at the moment it is a pipe dream.

This is not just a problem for Europe but also for us. As I said about it being a career killer, as we don't hear of the winners and other foreign entries after the contest, people assume that even on the continent it is a career killer, when it is not. Therefore they don't want to take part. But also it will make European music more appreciated, and through that make Eurovision more appreciated.

BBC Four

Just a quick rant about BBC Four. BBC Four leave Eurovision alone. If you want to update the Eurovision brand BBC Four should be no where near the contest. It may be the home of music, but of old music. The contest is about new music. It's like the problem with the radio. BBC Four is mainly known for documentaries, Top of The Pops 2, old episodes of Top of the Pops and programmes about music from at least twenty five years ago with clips from the Old Grey Whistle Test and again old clips from Top of the Pops. Whilst BBC Four is trying to update it self with programmes about Daft Punk, you can't try and update two things together, they need to be updated separately or they will drag each other down.

I understand that the semi-finals had to move after the wrong (in my opinion) moving of BBC Three online, but BBC Two would have been a much better choice and could have helped increase the audience for the semi-finals as well. BBC Four is not where it should be.

Advertising

I don't want to teach a grandmother to suck eggs, as I'm not an advertising expert, but here's what I would do to advertise the national selection and the contest itself.

Overall the build up in Eurovision should start at the depths of Eurovision depression in November and build up to the National Selection in January or February and to the contest itself in May.

To start with in November I would do few second clips of the GBMF logo with no words. In December I would start with an add that looks like someone is trying to break through the signal with the logo and knocking on the screen asking if the UK can hear him, and then breaking out within a few seconds.

On Christmas Day after the biggest show of the day, I would show the full advert. The man trying to get through to the UK, a trendy young man, walks down the street. With some uplifting and rousing song playing in the background, like Coldplay's Sky Full of Stars or Sigma's Changing feat Paloma Faith. He will start by talking about how we need to move away from the past, forget about blaming it and moving on with celebrating our music. He then goes on to talk about doing something amazing and hoping to raise millions for Comic Relief. While he talks he is slowly joined by a crowd which grows and grows. Next he talks about how you can get involved with the show including tickets and social media. At the end he announces a "call to arms" for the UK to come together to join the "Eurovision Revolution" and then ends with him boarding a London bus with the crowd as it drives off the camera pans up and shows the London skyline with the logo and show

time on.

When it comes to Eurovision more must be done. I don't really know what to do but the adverts for the past three years have been abysmal. 2013 and 2014, were so camp, old fashioned and cheap looking. The cardboard cut out party effect was not effective for me. The clip show of the previous contest for 2015 showed no money had been spent.

I might do dancing flash mobs around the UK dancing to big modern Eurovision bangers like Golden Boy by Nadev Guedj, My Number One by Helena Paparizou, Tonight Again by Guy Sebastian, and Heroes by Måns Zelmerlöw, ending with the tag line,

*"The UK Is Ready...
Europe Are You?"*

It may sound a bit corny or cheesy, but I came up with that on the top my head. Just because it is a international event that has been going for 60 years doesn't mean that people are going to watch it. You have to show them it is an event. If you want more viewers and the BBC management to see Eurovision as a banker and put more faith in the show, the advertising campaign must improve. I wouldn't be surprised that the advertising was one of the reasons why the viewing figures for 2015 were down, as well as Electro Velvet.

Pre-contest Promotion

After the national selection, the UK should not rest on their laurels. In 2015 Spain sent one of their biggest names, Edurne, with a great song, but failed in one key aspect. She didn't leave the country until going to Vienna. This is why she didn't do very well. No pre-contest publicity. Back in 2009 when Jade Ewan came fifth she travelled all over Europe doing hundreds of interviews and dozens of TV appearances. Edurne didn't even go to either Eurovision in Concert in Amsterdam or London's Eurovision Party.

We need to get out there and promote our song. Especially with a big name. Hire a tour bus, drive round Europe for two months (obviously around the acts previous commitments), and promote the hell out of the song. Magazine article, radio interviews, TV appearances. Go everywhere you can. After Jade Ewan toured she came fifth. It helps. Mainly focus on countries that don't give us many points. There is no point going to Ireland, Malta or Spain as they are some of our biggest voters in recent years.

If you have a big name, it will be bigger news if they go to small countries like the Balkans and the Baltics. This will give the tour more impact and more mental staying power for the song and hopefully give us more points.

Everyone in Europe must know the song by the end of April.

Another thing I would do is while touring around Europe do outside concerts with a pop up stage around European cities. We could invite local ESC and non-ESC stars to open the shows, then our entry can sing some of their songs and end with the Eurovision entry. We then can ask for some donations for Comic Relief as they leave. A big star doing free-ish concerts around Europe would add to the media attention. The more positive media attention we garner the more votes we will receive at the final.

◦△◦ BBC and the Eurovision Song Contest ◦△◦

Viewership Benefits of taking Eurovision seriously

Typically the Grand Final does well in terms of viewers, however when ever we seem to be taking seriously ratings for the final and national selections tend to increase. This means we need to make

How To Win The Eurovision Song Contest

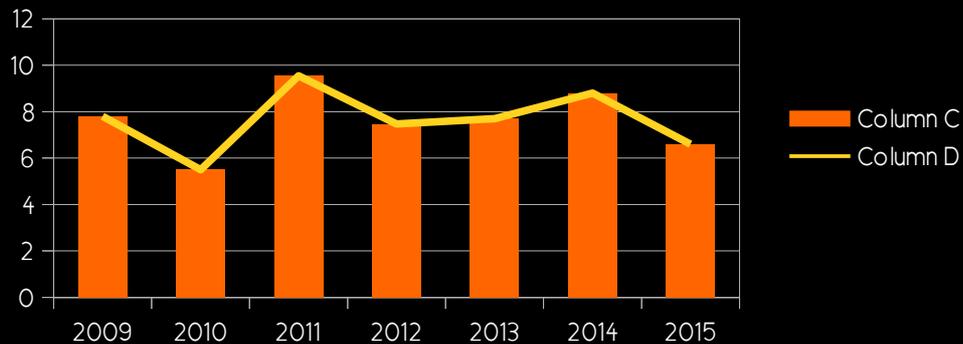
an effort as it means we will get more viewers.

In 2009 the national selection had an estimated 6 million viewers. The reason was because it involved Andrew Lloyd Webber. After four hit series where he searched for Maria, Nancy, Dorothy, and Joseph, Webber was seen as a serious and credible approach to the contest and therefore people got behind the selection and got reasonable viewing figures.

The following years was the exact opposite. Whilst the Head of Eurovision at the time wanted the "Build on the success of Moscow", they sent a massive sign that they weren't when Pete Waterman was chosen to write the song. By 2010 he was seen as out of date, while Webber was still seen as current following his talent shows. This drastically cut the viewers to around 2 million for the night. If the UK actually tries at Eurovision, the national selection viewer figures go up. So if for example the BBC did do the Great British Music Festival approach and have a massive night of brand new music from big names, whilst raising hundreds of thousands for Comic Relief and celebrating British music, the BBC would have a ratings winner. If I do say so myself. But the Eurovision fans, and the fans from all those artists would bolster the number of viewers.

This wouldn't just happen to the national selection, but also to the numbers of viewers for the contest itself. Look at the graphs below.

Grand Final Viewership in Millions 2009-2015



These are viewing figures of the contest. You can see with both Josh Debovie and Electro Velvet, the viewing figures went down considerably. Both of these acts were not generally approved by the British Public, and therefore they decided not to bother watching the contest. The next graph shows that it works in both ways.

Viewership Change from 2009-2015 in millions



As you can see in 2009 the viewers went up by 0.7 million viewers from the year before. As mentioned before the involvement of Andrew Lloyd Webber helped raise the viewers, but the rise was probably stunted by this being the first year without Terry Wogan.

In 2010 the viewers went down by 2.3 million viewers from the year before. As mentioned the use of Pete Waterman and the very dated song meant that less people cared about where we would position and thus didn't watch the contest.

In 2011, the exact opposite happened. With a somewhat big name with, as Brix Smith commented, a song that was "eurovisiontastic" and being forth in the odds the UK, except Philip Schofield (his comments were very harsh), were really behind the entry and the viewers where the highest they had been in nearly a decade and haven't been as high since, with a change of +4 million to 9.54 million viewers on average.

Both 2012 and 2013 didn't really capture the public imagination like Blue did, with credible artists but with slightly okay songs, the viewers went down by about 2 million and stayed at around 7.5 million mark for the following year.

In 2014 Molly did great work rallying the UK. Here modern song energised the country and with good pre publicity and being consistently being in the top 5 in odds and polls, Molly looked set to do very well. Therefore the audience went up to around 8.8 million.

I went on about Electro Velvet too much, but let's just say the viewing figures went down by 2.2 million to 6.6 million.

It shows no matter where we eventually end up in the contest, signs that the BBC are taking it seriously, and we have a good chance to finish well, causes the viewers to go up and the UK getting behind the contest. So if we can convince big names to take part the number of viewers may pass the 10 million mark for the first this millennium.

It just shows that if the BBC management get behind the Eurovision Department and help it achieve it's aims. Then it would be advantageous to the BBC in terms of not just getting the support of the general public, but also fans of the contest will stop saying the UK are not taking seriously.

Financial Benefits to winning Eurovision

There is a section of the Eurovision community who believe the BBC does not want to win the Eurovision Song Contest, as they believe the BBC don't think they have the funds to host it, if they do win. I want to quash this by putting the cost of the contest in to context with other BBC programming and the wider funding of the BBC.

Let's compare it to another prime time show, which is now on ITV, The Voice. The reason I am comparing these two, is because they are both big talent shows for singing on prime time Saturday Night, and both have been attacked for being a waste of money and time.

The first series of The Voice cost £22 million to produce, it has halved since then however. If the BBC wanted to make a big show of Eurovision, like may ESC fans expect them to, let's estimate that the BBC would spend about the same amount as Russia. Russia was renowned for spending a lot on the contest with an estimated budget of €30 million. However in late January in 2016 that equated to £22.7 million.

In comparison to The Voice, that is only an estimated increase of £700,000. However when you take in to account the "Total Contribution" of the participating countries which was 6.12 million CHF (estimated £4 million) for the 2015 contest. This takes the cost down for the contest to around £18.7 million.

Another factor is ticket sales and merchandise. In 2013 SVT made a profit out of the contest from ticket sales and merchandise. Petre Meade lied when in the Swedish Smorgasbord, she sang "By winning the contest, you get to host a show you can't afford". Whilst SVT did spend about half what Russia and a third of what Azerbaijan had spent on the contest (if you exclude the extra €100

million on the Crystal Hall), they did cover all their costs. But the BBC doesn't make programmes to make a cover costs, so if we can atleast cover some of the ESC hosting costs, that is a bonus.

The Voice doesn't have an opportunity for merchandising like Eurovision does. Also as it is already a bought in format from the Netherlands, it cannot be sold it to other nations like Strictly Come Dancing. Not to mention as it is a programme that many countries have, you can't sell it to international channels, like a lot of dramas, such as Doctor Who or Call the Midwife. Whist the BBC can't do that for Eurovision either, the point is that the BBC made The Voice knowing it would not recoup any of its budget, with Eurovision you can.

Ticket sales will be a massive funding avenue, especially if a bigger arena was used like the O2 in London or Manchester Arena or one of our two covered stadiums like Düsseldorf with either the Millennium stadium in Cardiff or Wembley. As there is nine attended shows, a dress rehearsal, a jury show and the live show for each part of the contest that could amount to thousands or even millions of pounds for the show. For example if the average ticket price across all nine shows was £50 the O2 (with a 20,000 audience) would give the BBC an estimated £9 million in ticket revenue. That shoots up to £31.5 million at the Millennium stadium with 70,000 spectators, and to £40.5 million at Wembley with 90,000 spectators. I understand that these are generous estimates, and it must be taken into account that it is harder to sell the tickets to dress rehearsals than to the live show, but it shows that even at a mid size arena a significant part of the cost from the contest can be recouped from ticket sales alone. Sweden still recouped its cost with an arena smaller than the SSE Hydro in Glasgow with Malmö Arena only holding about 11,000 people. However many people felt that the smaller arena did make the show feel less celebratory, and made it harder for all ESC fans to get tickets as their were much less than usual.

For all those people who say the BBC cannot afford it, the BBC is still one of the most financially secure broadcasters in Europe, even if a the moment it is getting squeezed. It gets over £5 billion yearly, and and half of which is used on the television arm. However if the BBC plays it's hand properly it could cover the entire cost through ticketing and merchandise, and if not the rest left would be small enough to cope with, especially by an organisation that has a budget of billions pounds.

◦△◦ Conclusion ◦△◦

The point of this almost dissertation is hopefully to give a much more rounded understanding of the contest. Not just give you what most documentaries and talking head shows provide, but dig a bit deeper providing you with theories and approaches that many in the Eurovision community are discussing, but are not getting out to the wider media.

While some concepts such as "The Old, New effect", and the "The Career Killer Paradox Circle", are my own interpretation of parts of the contest. Hopefully I've provided you with enough proof and information to show the validity of all things mentioned here.

The BBC need to take heed of this. Many countries have changed their approach to the contest, as it has evolved. Yet the BBC has stayed in the late nineties.

I understand a lot of this sounds like BBC bashing. However I am one of the BBC's biggest advocates. I watch mainly BBC programming. I want to work for the organisation one day and I'm even working on a letter to the Prime Minister about his approach to the BBC. Many parts of the organisation is amazing, including BBC Music, but BBC Eurovision gets overlooked way too much.

That is why this is not just about getting the best of British music to take part, but also get those in higher management onside. It is sort of a half secret that the BBC do not really want to host the contest. And that anything that has the Eurovision brand except the final tanks. So that is why the whole approach is about getting the upper management to believe in the contest and allow investment in the project.

How To Win The Eurovision Song Contest

Lets hope that one day the UK will win the Eurovision Song Contest, and great a second great era of British domination of the contest will begin. And one day we may see one of these.



