

Oslo Eurovision 2010

Sunday, 30 May 2010

Eurovision 2010.

I could not believe how the Eurovision event had expanded since I last attended in 2007 in Helsinki, let alone the change since it was last in Oslo in 1996.

It is now a massive two week experience with attendance the size of a small country.

When I came to Norway with Gina G, representing the United Kingdom whose effort I was helming, it was in the small Spectrum arena next to the Radisson Hotel; seating 7000 and it seemed a huge and spectacular couple of days of organising.

The new Telenor stadium holds 70,000 and is mainly used for football finals.

There are literally thousands of delegates, performers, TV crews, journalists and fans congregating. And many of them know far more than I do about the history of Eurovision; I always wear my laminate passes, going back to 1995, and people come up to me and discuss minute details of past contestants in years gone by. Anorak takes on a whole new meaning.

Oslo itself is quite incredibly expensive. The taxi in from the new airport (the Eurovision Arena is where the old airport, at which I arrived 14 years ago, was sited) cost Â£120.

A coffee is Â£8, if you're lucky and pick a cheap venue.

I was fortunate. Because all the hotels in town were full, I managed to get an online special room in a very cheap but clean, adequate and Broadbanded Airport hotel. My friends thought I was mad, with the cost of taxis, but I got a tiny, delightful Hire Car at Â£20 a day and the room being only Â£40 a night (and far nicer than many of the luxury ones in the town centre) I existed on Â£60 each 24 hours, spending most of the day and evening in the show Arena or at the Radisson in the bar, restaurant and coffee areas.

The enormous tented Press Centre has an earthquake feeling about it as the floor is made of carpeted sheets of wood which shake and wobble as the members of the Fourth Estate march by; typing this on my laptop is like being in Pompeii - but the facilities and efficiency are incredible.

Since the 1995 show I've made many friends amongst the Eurovision fans. Pete Fenner has become quite a mover and shaker in the Icelandic camp and he, I and several friends (often including the legendary Billboard Fred Bronson) go for a traditional dinner.

Fred wasn't there this year but four of us toasted him over a fine Thai meal (see Photos).

And Glen, who with Anthony is a Tipsheet regular poster, was running the EBU coverage again this year (see Photos too).

One of the delights is experiencing the mix of languages, cultures, fashions and attitudes; making new acquaintances; sampling the local cuisines and delights; chatting to people you would never normally meet and, I've said it before, encountering so many media reporters and cameramen who normally only see each other at tragedies and international incidents and are delighted to be present at something so silly, frothy, positive and amusing.

Because it is surely the only genuinely global multi media event.

It is now massively slick and spectacular too; I think of it as a blueprint for the best of the Awards shows; far more amusing and entertaining than the Oscars or Brits. There is kitsch and camp mingling with talent and frivolity.

Where else would you find a song of such appalling banality as that written by the creator of the Smurfs performed in a circus showground rubbing shoulders with a slick Swedish gem from the producers who brought you Beyonce and Rhianna?

No wonder every town in the world has hundreds of Eurovision parties in front of their TV sets. Yet our top executives haven't learned at all.

I missed both last year in Moscow and the year before in Serbia but I had a delightful time in Oslo.
If I was still a BBC person I would build so many shows around Eurovision - from the deeply cultural and intelligent to the gloriously frivolous.

The BBC commentators at the semi finals were ghastly, incidentally.

But I thought the actual show looked terrific and the winner deserved it - quite a pretty if mentally challenged girl doing a Lily/Kate copy that reminded me of that Alesha track about a boy with hygiene problems.

And the UK? Last again.
Bring back JK, I say - as did everyone in Oslo who I spoke to.