

This is a pre-publication version of an article published in *The Eurovision Song Contest as a Cultural Phenomenon: From Concert Halls to the Halls of Academia*, edited by Adam Dubin, Dean Vuletic and Antonio Obregón (London: Routledge, 2022), pp. 188–200.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003188933>

Mari Pajala

The Eurovision Song Contest and European Television History: Continuity, Adaptation, Experimentation

The Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) is a television programme and a media event by definition. Unlike events such as the Olympic Games, the ESC would not exist without television. It was created for this medium when the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), an organization of public service broadcasting organizations, wanted to come up with a programme to symbolize its Eurovision Network for programme exchange in the mid-1950s. In light of this, perhaps relatively little research on the ESC has been done in the framework of media studies. Major anthologies on the ESC, for instance, have been more influenced by performance and popular music studies than by media studies (e.g. Raykoff & Tobin, 2007; Fricker & Gluhovic, 2013). Yet, the ESC has much to offer to media studies and vice versa. In this chapter, I will first discuss the most prominent theme in media studies research on the ESC, namely the contest's functioning as a media event. Then, I will consider how the ESC's history can contribute to our understanding of two aspects of contemporary media events, namely their televisual aesthetics and temporality. I will argue that the exceptional longevity of the ESC as a media event rests on continuity, adaptation as well as experimentation.

### **The ESC as a Media Event**

Media scholars have used the ESC to explore how media events work and to interrogate some of the assumptions in the theory about media events. Media events have been theorized most influentially by Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz (1992) in their book *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History*. Dayan and Katz define media events as broadcasts that break the mundane flow of media content. They are “must-watch”

television that demands attention. In Dayan and Katz's typology, media events are divided into contests, conquests and coronations. The ESC obviously fits the first category, in which events focus on finding out who is the best in a competition that follows a specific set of rules. Dayan and Katz emphasize media events' relationship to power: arranged by public organizations and governments, media events celebrate a society's hegemonic values. Media events connect viewers to the symbolic centre of the society and "celebrate not conflict but reconciliation" (ibid., p. 8).

Arguably, the central hegemonic values celebrated in the ESC have been nationhood and the idea of Europe as consisting of nation states (e.g., Bolin, 2006; Georgiou, 2008). However, as Abby S. Waysdorf (2020, p. 298) argues, within Eurovision fandom, the contest functions rather differently than Dayan and Katz's theory about media events as "top-down" creations suggests. Although the ESC is structured around the notion of nations, "[t]he ideal of Eurovision fandom is not that of opposing nations asserting their superiority, but of marginalized groups coming together to celebrate through music and spectacle," Waysdorf (2020, p. 298) writes, emphasizing the contest's special relevance for LGBTIQ viewers.

Indeed, empirical research with Eurovision fans suggests that the fandom nurtures a cosmopolitan sensibility that departs from the celebration of nationhood in the contest itself. Myria Georgiou (2008) has compared attitudes towards the ESC on the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) online forum and among fans in focus group discussions. On the forum, discussions were "nation-centric" (ibid., p. 145) and made use of national stereotypes, constructing a hierarchic East-West binary that denigrated East European participants. In contrast, the more committed fans in the focus groups showed an "emergent cosmopolitan imagination" which sees "Europe as a meeting point rather than as a conflict point" (ibid., p. 150). For these fans, the attraction of the ESC is in the "cosmopolitan exploration" of performances and languages, enabled by the quality of the ESC as a stand-alone media event outside the habitual flow of popular television programming (ibid., p. 150). Similarly, Maria Kyriakidou et al. (2018) use the ESC to question Dayan and Katz's theory about the "integrative potential" (ibid., p. 604) of media events. Kyriakidou et al. did fieldwork among fans who follow the ESC on site. They argue that the nationalism performed by fans — flag waving, dressing up — is playful, non-antagonistic and ironic by nature. On site, the ESC opens up a kind of

“cosmopolitan space” where “‘openness’ towards cultural difference” is valued (ibid., p. 604). However, as traveling to the ESC requires time and disposable income, the event produces an “elite kind of cosmopolitanism” (ibid., p. 614), where participation relies on class structures. Research on Eurovision fans thus emphasizes how media events’ significance for audiences is not determined by the events’ organization and manifest meanings.

Moreover, the ESC shows how, even in the first decades of television, when programming addressed a family audience, a mainstream entertainment programme could have a distinct significance for marginalized groups. As one of the fans interviewed by Brian Singleton et al. (2007, p. 15) in their study of queer Eurovision fans in Ireland reminisces: “When I was growing up, Eurovision was a gay thing; it was like your private property. Even though your mother watched it, your father watched it, your grandmother watched it, maybe there was like a secret code.” For older gay fans, Eurovision was like an “open secret” among gay viewers (Singleton et al., 2007, p. 16). The existence of these kinds of “secret” interpretative communities highlights the need to look beyond the most obvious meanings of major media events.

Dayan and Katz formulated their theory during the era of analogue broadcasting, and later scholarship has sought to understand how media events function in the contemporary online media environment. As media events spread across different platforms, they have become more complex and also more difficult to control for their organizers (Ytreberg, 2017; Couldry & Hepp, 2018). Indeed, it is increasingly hard to define what the ESC as a media event consists of. For many fans, for instance, the ESC does not consist merely of three nights’ spectacle. Rather, the event begins perhaps when delegations arrive in the host city for rehearsals, which are reported about extensively on fan media as well as on EBU’s official channels. This culmination of the ESC season is preceded by a series of smaller events, as fans follow national finals in different countries. The ESC event is created not only by the host organization and the EBU but also by various other outlets, such as fan sites and performers’ social media channels. As a result, the ESC is a completely different event for casual viewers who follow the final and for fans who follow a stream of constant updates for many weeks or even months. For scholars, the ESC’s expansion as a media event makes it increasingly difficult to define, what the ESC as a research object consist of and which materials to

use to study it. In the following sections, I will discuss two aspects of the ESC — televisual aesthetics and temporality — to highlight characteristics of contemporary media events and place them in the historical continuum of European television history.

### **The ESC and European Television History: Adaptation and Experimentation<sup>1</sup>**

The ESC has been a part of the European television landscape continuously from the 1950s, when television was a new medium, to the present, when television programmes — or “content” — are increasingly accessed on platforms other than broadcast television. As a result, the contest offers a unique opportunity for studying and teaching European television and media history. However, few scholars in media studies have been interested in the ESC’s history. The ESC itself encourages an emphasis on the new: each year brings a new contest, with new controversies and concerns. Media studies as a field also tends to focus on novelty, being more interested in new media than the past. Yet, studying the history of the ESC can also help us to see its present with new eyes by highlighting that that which now seems normal and self-evident was not always so.

In his influential periodization, John Ellis (2000) divides the history of European television into three eras: scarcity, availability and plenty. Television’s social role and relationship to its audience has been figured differently in each of these eras. The ESC was a creation of the *era of scarcity*, when public service broadcasters were the dominant — and in many countries the only — producers of television. Countries typically had one or two television channels and television addressed a large national audience, functioning as a “powerful instrument of social integration” (ibid., p. 45) that provided a kind of “private life” of the nation (ibid., p. 46). In this context, a Saturday night entertainment show like the ESC was almost guaranteed a large audience, and the choice of national entries could provoke intense media debate (see Pajala, 2006). In the course of the 1980s, European television entered the *era of availability*. New commercial channels and satellite and cable television made the media environment more competitive. Television moved to addressing viewers as members of distinct groups instead of as a mass audience (Ellis, 2000). In this environment, the ESC had much more competition than before. A traditional family-friendly song contest seemed old-fashioned in comparison to newer forms of television entertainment, such as music videos. In the *era of plenty*, the amount of available programming has grown and

programmes can be accessed through new technologies. Television viewers are seen as consumers who choose the content they want to watch from diverse sources (Ellis, 2000). As viewers increasingly choose what they watch and when, one could expect an old programme like the ESC to become lost in the competition. In fact, however, the ESC has adapted well to the current environment. Live competitions have become valuable for television companies, as they offer a way of attracting a large simultaneous audience. At the same time, social media has provided new ways of engaging with the ESC. As well as addressing a large undifferentiated audience, the ESC has started to address specific audiences, such as Eurovision fans and LGBTIQ people more explicitly than before.

It is quite remarkable that the ESC has survived through fundamental changes in the European media landscape, and a programme developed for the nascent medium of television in the 1950s is arguably thriving in the multiplatform media environment of the 2020s. Several factors have contributed to the contest's longevity. The EBU as an institution has provided a stable grounding, and the member companies have been motivated to uphold the ESC as the most visible product of the organization. The ESC has maintained its relevance in the changing geopolitical landscape of Europe, and received a boost with the arrival of new participating broadcasters from the formerly Eastern Bloc countries eager to introduce themselves to an international audience. Also, the ESC has been able to create enthusiasm and commitment, which is reflected in the careers of some former Eurovision fans who have gone on to work in the production and develop the contest (such as Christer Björkman and Sietse Bakker). Moreover, the ESC works as entertainment: the basic format of the final — live performances followed by voting and the repeat performance of the winning song — has remained the same for decades. For the ESC as a television programme and media event, however, adaptation and experimentation have been essential to its survival.

As José Patricio Pérez-Rufí and Águeda María Valverde Mestre (2020, p. 28) argue, experimentation characterizes the ESC as a television production. One of the aims of the EBU is to support public service broadcasting companies in keeping up with technological development (EBU, n.d.). Accordingly, the ESC has served as a stage for introducing the possibilities of new technologies. When the contest was created, a live international television broadcast was a novelty. Later on, the ESC was used, for instance, to develop the use of televoting in a large-scale, international context (Anon.,

2013, p. 102). The fact that the responsibility for organizing the ESC moves to a different broadcaster every year has contributed to the contest's development: people who have participated in the production have noted how each organizer attempts to outdo last year's programme (Anon., 2013, p. 103; Skey et al. 2016, p. 3388). While the ESC has often been branded as old-fashioned in terms of popular music, as a television production the contest has been forward-looking.

Although the basic format of the ESC final has remained recognizable for decades, the production has been continuously adapted to the changing media environment. This shows, for instance, in the contest's approach to television aesthetics. Like much early television entertainment, the ESC built on the tradition of stage entertainment (see Williams, 1990, pp. 64–66). The programme was basically a concert filmed by a few cameras and transmitted via television. As a live, international broadcast, the ESC showcased the novel possibilities offered by television, which enabled people in different countries to watch the same show at the same time. However, in other ways the ESC did not necessarily fulfil the contemporary criteria for good television. As a filmed stage show, the ESC did not seem to make sufficient use of the specific capacities of television. For instance, Nordic broadcasters discussed the ESC in the meetings of their Nordvision network in a very critical tone in the 1960s. Television professionals felt that the programme should be improved, but as the contest promoted the Eurovision Network, withdrawing entirely from the contest did not seem like an option either.<sup>2</sup>

The BBC's production of the 1963 ESC was an attempt to create a more televisual programme. Unlike the previous editions, the contest was not filmed in a concert hall but in television studios, with the host, orchestra, and performers placed in one studio and the audience and scoreboard in another. The studio location enabled the producers to use more varied stage props. In addition, new rules allowed the participating television companies to send a maximum of three assistants, such as instrumentalists or dancers, to accompany their singers. Relatively few countries, however, took advantage of this option. Instead, many performances relied on the power of the close-up shot to create a sense of intimacy, which was seen as a key characteristic of television as the medium that was able to bring performers to the audience's living rooms (Miettunen, 1966). As the most extreme example of this, Nana Mouskouri's part in "À force de prier"

(By Persistently Praying) was filmed in a single close-up shot, with the singer looking directly at the camera. Director Yvonne Littlewood has reminisced that the use of close-ups was partly motivated by technical concerns, to keep microphones out of the frame (EuroSong News, 2003). At the same time, close-ups were seen as a form of expression that suited the small screen and differentiated televisual expression from the radio and cinema (Miettunen, 1966). Nevertheless, the 1963 experiment was a one-off and the following contests were again filmed in great halls in front of an audience.

The 1963 production points to an alternative development for the ESC as studio entertainment. Why did the studio version of the ESC not take off? Perhaps the sense of a live occasion, created by having the singers perform in front of an audience, was seen as more important than the more televisual aesthetic and the greater variety enabled by a studio setting. The ESC was, however, continuously adapted in more subtle ways. Technological developments and rule changes brought more visual variety to the performances: the BBC produced the first colour ESC in 1968, at a time when colour broadcasts were generally at an experimental stage in Europe. The use of more cameras brought varied camera angles and hand-held microphones enabled singers to move on stage. New rules allowed artists to use backing tracks and bring instrumentalists and dancers on stage. Whereas until the early 1970s the ESC focused on solo singers, by the early 1980s groups and choreography were prominent. Postcard films, first introduced in 1970, brought visual variety to the programme. Yet, the ESC remained largely what it had been from the start: televised stage entertainment.

As television entered the era of availability, the ESC faced more competition from commercial television. At the same time, Music Television and the rise of the music video changed the audiovisual aesthetics of popular music. The ESC needed to adapt in this new environment. The 1990 ESC in Zagreb exemplifies these developments. Although the contest was filmed in a concert hall, the televised performances were not as tied to the realist space of the concert hall as before. The stage was low, allowing cameras to move to and from the stage and circle among the performers. Numerous camera angles and moving cameras allowed television viewers to see the performers from angles that were not available for the audience on site. Two large video walls provided a second, simultaneous view of the performers. Although a live orchestra was still used, backing tracks were increasingly important, as became clear when the Spanish

performance had to be restarted due to a problem with the backing track. In these ways the contest departed from the “realist” space of the contest hall to produce audiovisual performances that fit contemporary understandings of televisuality, making use of the possibilities of up-to date technology. The 1990 contest was an impressive production: the BBC’s long-time commentator Terry Wogan admired the “spectacular” hall and video walls, saying: “It’s been a very, very fine contest, very well staged.”

Wogan’s comments on the staging of the 1990 ESC admire its spectacular quality. Due to its relatively small screen, television has not been associated with spectacle to the same extent as cinema. However, as Helen Wheatley (2016) argues, television has always attempted to create spectacular moments and programmes which are “designed to be stared at . . . contemplated and scrutinized” (ibid., p. 1). Spectacular productions can be found from all eras of television, but “spectacular television” has become an especially prominent aesthetic category in the 2000s, with the possibilities offered by digital production technology, larger television screens and greater image quality (Wheatley 2016). The ESC is well suited for producing spectacular television: EBU cooperation brings greater resources for producing the shows than most national broadcasters could afford alone. Production teams are eager to impress with their ability to create a technically slick show and introduce novel possibilities for visualizing the acts. Moreover, entries compete to stand out from each other, and national delegations may spend significant sums on hiring a team of professionals to design their performance as well as on costumes, props, pyrotechnics, and special effects.

Spectacle is not new to the ESC — in the early decades of the contest, the large scale and expense of the international contest made it spectacular in itself. Nowadays, however, the scale of the technological apparatus — lighting, led walls, augmented reality technology — is enormous. While ESC producers created a distinct visual look for each performance already in the shows in the 1960s, today it is possible to create a whole different world to suit the story of a song, as in the case of the 2019 Australian performance, in which singer Kate Miller-Heidke and her backing dancers seemed to float in space. Accordingly, the ESC has become a platform for showcasing the skills not just of singers and songwriters, but also of stage directors (Robertson, 2021). In-demand directors, such as Fokas Evangelinos and Sacha Jean Baptiste, have been returning to the contest year after year and have each created several spectacular, innovative and

successful performances. Thus, while the ESC maintains its original form as stage entertainment, it also incorporates the spectacular aesthetics of contemporary television.

### **The ESC and Mediated Temporality: Continuity and Change**

With its long history, the ESC allows us to consider both continuity and change in the way television organizes temporality. As Paddy Scannell (1996, p. 152) argues, “[b]roadcasting, whose medium is time, articulates our sense of time.” In his phenomenological study of radio and television, Scannell describes how broadcasting created an annual calendar of events. As a major media event in television’s era of scarcity, the ESC was one of the elements of this calendar. The annual cycle of the ESC has remained recognizable for decades, although the ESC now takes place later in the spring than it used to (until the early 1980s, the ESC was held in March or April). The contest’s importance in structuring time for its fans can be seen in the meme where months of the year are listed as “January, February, March, April, Eurovision, June...” Liveness has been central to the way the ESC organizes time. When television was a new medium, liveness was seen as a key quality that separated it from the older audiovisual medium, cinema. Unlike the cinema, television could bring events to the audience’s living rooms as they happened. A great part of the attraction of the ESC has been the feeling that you are watching a live event as it happens together with a large number of people in different countries — even if the experience is quite different in the majority of European countries where the contest takes place in prime time, in countries like Azerbaijan where it starts late at night or in Australia, where fans wake up to watch the ESC early on Sunday morning. The continuing attraction of liveness has been referenced in slogans such as “Share the moment” (ESC 2010) and “#JoinUs” (ESC 2014).

While the ESC continues to be a live event with a regular place in the annual calendar of media events, in other respects the programme reflects changes in mediated temporality. The development of the ESC underlines how time is no longer a scarce resource on television, as it was in the first decades of television when countries had few television channels and limited broadcasting time. In the current multi-platform television environment, the duration of ESC broadcasts has grown greatly. For instance, the 1980 ESC final lasted about two hours and seventeen minutes. In comparison, the

2021 final lasted almost four hours (not to mention the fact that it was preceded by two semifinals of about two hours each). The difference is caused partly by the number of participants — there were nineteen entries in the final in 1980 and twenty-six in 2021. However, a greater difference is made by the expansion of the interval acts and the voting.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the Finnish national final of 1975 lasted an hour, including nine entries, a vote by regional juries and the repeat performance of the winning entry. The tone of the programme was brisk and efficient if compared to the 2021 national final *Uuden Musiikin Kilpailu* (UMK, Contest for New Music), which featured seven entries and lasted 105 minutes. In television's era of scarcity, even major events had to be relatively concise whereas now, the sense of an event seems to require a greater duration and more "extra" content in the form of interval acts.

While the duration of the ESC has expanded, the contest simultaneously highlights the importance of short-form content for contemporary television. Television entertainment is now more and more about creating "moments" that can be circulated on various platforms and incorporated with different content. Victoria Jay, the Head of Multiplatform Commissioning for Drama, Comedy and Entertainment at the BBC, describes the double value of moments for television:

But television is to be celebrated and feels special because it is transient, it comes and goes, and we create a lot of hype about it being transient. All our marketing effort is about that. But simultaneously and independently, we are also saying there is an archival value to that transience . . .

. . .

We create those moments, that's what the BBC does, moments. But now those moments are no longer just gone (Evans, 2011, pp. 116, 119).

Jay argues that, while transience is central to television, television is now equally invested in creating moments that can be archived and circulated. The ESC, with its focus on three-minute songs and visual spectacle, is well-suited for creating these kinds of moments, as Jay further describes:

*Eurovision* this year blew the minds of the Television Audience Insight team ... this year it was an aggressive short-form strategy and it got 8.6 million views of

the short-form around the event. . . These moments are absolutely what people continue to want to share and talk about. It's about sweating those assets, getting those moments out immediately to fuel social currency. In the entertainment space, where there's such talkability around the shows, it's absolutely essential to get short-form out immediately and for it to be the best moment. (Evans 2011, pp. 117–118).

The contemporary ESC is thus not only a long live show, but also consists of clips that are archived and circulated. Clips of individual entries' performances are released immediately on the contest's official YouTube channel along with a wealth of other short-form material, such as rehearsal snippets and interviews.

The current media environment has also created new value for old archived ESCs, which for decades were only available for people with access to television companies' internal archives or fan networks in which video copies circulated. Now, YouTube houses an endless supply of old Eurovision shows and clips, uploaded in the first instance by fans and more recently also by the EBU, which is curating a kind of official version of ESC history. Eurovision archives gained new significance during the covid-19 pandemic, as Abby S. Waysdorf describes. After the 2020 ESC was cancelled, the fan project "Eurovision Again" offered a way of maintaining connection with the contest and other fans. On Saturday evenings, fans would watch an old ESC edition, tweet about it using the #EurovisionAgain hashtag and vote for their favourites. While #EurovisionAgain was a fan initiative, the EBU joined in, streaming old contests on its official YouTube account. As Waysdorf argues, "Eurovision Again" paradoxically turned archival material into a live event through the experience of shared viewing (Waysdorf, 2020). The appeal of "Eurovision Again" extended beyond the cancellation of ESC 2020, and the project returned in the summer of 2021.

To sum up, the ESC illustrates the variety of ways event television is experienced. First, the ESC is a part of the flow of television. In his foundational book *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, Raymond Williams (1990, p. 95) identified flow as the "central television experience". Television programming consists of a planned flow of programmes and other elements — commercials, announcements — between programmes (ibid., pp. 86–118), and many people continue to watch the ESC as part of

the flow of television, perhaps tuning in for only part of the program. Second, the ESC is a live media event that many viewers experience as celebratory viewing that breaks the mundane flow of television. Third, in the contemporary media environment, the ESC is also experienced in the form of moments that circulate on various platforms and can be reframed and relived. Fourth, as archived ESC broadcasts have become available, old shows can also be watched as stand-alone works removed from their original broadcasting context. Thus, the ESC exemplifies how old and new forms of televisual temporality coexist in the contemporary media environment.

### **The Value of Media Studies for ESC Research**

In this chapter I have explored how the ESC can contribute to our understanding of the development of contemporary media events in the context of European television history. I have highlighted both continuity and change in the ESC as television entertainment and pointed to the importance of adaptation and experimentation for maintaining the relevance of the ESC. By way of conclusion, I want to discuss some areas in which I think media studies could make more of a contribution to ESC studies as a field. Media studies looks at media as an assemblage encompassing technology and production, content and form, distribution and reception. Media studies research on the ESC has so far perhaps been most interested in audiences and reception (e.g., Kazakov & Hutchings, 2019; Miazhevich, 2017; Sandvoss, 2008). Less research has been done, for example, on the audiovisual aesthetics of the ESC, with the exception of José Patricio Pérez-Rufí and Águeda María Valverde Mestre's (2020) recent study about music video aesthetics in the contemporary ESC. Scholars from different fields have studied the articulation of nationality, gender and sexuality in Eurovision performances, analysing elements such as lyrics, costumes, choreography and gestures. However, less attention has been paid to the way these elements are mediated: how camera work and editing create dramaturgy, how close-ups are used for emphasis, and how the creation of Eurovision performances has changed with the development of technology and aesthetics. Yet, considering these kinds of questions would help to deepen even the analysis of the cultural meanings of ESC performances.

Another area in which media studies could make more of a contribution to ESC research is production. Within media studies, interest in production studies has grown over the

past decade. Indrek Ibrus et al. (2019) exemplify this trend in their study of how the Estonian public service broadcaster Eesti Rahvusringhääling (Estonian Public Broadcasting) has developed the Estonian national final *Eesti Laul* (The Estonian Song) into a large-scale, cross-media event by entering into a partnership with private companies such as the Saku Suurhalli arena and the media company Eesti Meedia (Estonian Media). Earlier, several articles have addressed issues relating to the production of the ESC itself, such as the objectives of national broadcasters and other stakeholders (e.g. Bolin, 2006; Jordan, 2015; Skey et al., 2016). Yet, a more extensive study of the production of the ESC is missing. The ESC offers valuable material for studying the production culture of large, transnational media events. Moreover, at a time when the transnational production of television fiction is a major trend in European television industry, the ESC provides an example of the long tradition of transnational collaboration in public service television (see Pajala, 2021).

Finally, the field of ESC studies could perhaps benefit from media studies in considering its relationship to various research materials. The recent decades, as research on the ESC has developed, have witnessed a huge change in the availability and cultural status of Eurovision shows. To use a personal example, when I started doing research on Eurovision in the early 2000s, it was hard to access old ESC broadcasts. At the time, Finland, like many other countries, did not have a public television archive. The Finnish Broadcasting Company's (Yleisradio, YLE) programme archives were primarily meant for internal use, but I was able to gain access to them as a member of a research project on media history. I remember the first time I visited YLE to watch videos of 1970s Finnish national selections. The programmes looked alien and fascinating to me: the hosts addressed viewers in a tone that seemed formal and serious, not what I would have expected from an entertainment programme at all. Was this what television entertainment was like in the 1970s? What I experienced was a kind of a shock at the difference between past television and television as I knew it. Television scholar Charlotte Brunsdon (2004, p. 126) has described this experience of watching archived television as an encounter with the "*unheimlich* quality to pace and tone and relationships in these programmes which throws in to relief what we now take for granted". Now, of course, the availability of old ESCs has been transformed and the 1970s Finnish national finals can be viewed on YLE's public online archive. As Brunsdon (2009, p. 29) notes, for scholars this transformation "affects more than the availability of

the study text". It is a different task to describe to readers media that they have not seen than media that is available to them (ibid.). As old ESC shows circulate on television, DVD and YouTube, they gain new contexts and meanings. The experience of watching an old ESC programme on YouTube, for instance, is very different from watching it on television — the image ratio may be altered, the YouTube algorithm surrounds the video with recommendations of other content, comments and commercials provide new framings for the video, the viewer can easily stop and skip the video... The specific qualities of different media therefore shape how Eurovision scholars interact with their research material. Being mindful of these qualities can help us to sharpen our analyses of the ESC as a cultural phenomenon.

## Literature

Anon. (2013) 'The Eurovision Song Contest Is a Battlefield': Panel Discussion with Eurovision Song Contest Producers. In K. Fricker & M. Gluhovic (Eds.), *Performing the 'new' Europe: Identities, feelings, and politics in the Eurovision Song Contest* (pp. 94–107). Palgrave Macmillan.

Bolin, G. (2006). Visions of Europe: Cultural technologies of nation states. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 9:2, 189–206.

Brunsdon, C. (2004). Taste and time on television. *Screen*, 45:2, 115–129.

Brunsdon, C. (2009). Television criticism and the transformation of the archive. *Television & New Media*, 10:1, 28–30.

Couldry, N., & Hepp, A. (2018). The continuing lure of the mediated centre in times of deep mediatization: *Media events* and its enduring legacy. *Media, Culture & Society*, 40:1, 114–117.

Dayan, D., & Katz, E. (1992). *Media events: The live broadcasting of history*. Harvard University Press.

Ellis, J. (2000). *Seeing things: Television in the age of uncertainty*. I. B. Tauris.

EBU. (n.d.). *Your Guide to EBU Services*.

[https://www.ebu.ch/files/live/sites/ebu/files/Publications/EBU-Members-brochure\\_EN.pdf](https://www.ebu.ch/files/live/sites/ebu/files/Publications/EBU-Members-brochure_EN.pdf)

EuroSong News. (2003). Interview Yvonne Littlewood. *EuroSong News*, 83, 13–17.

Evans, E. J. (2011). The evolving media ecosystem: An interview with Victoria Jaye, BBC. In P. Grainge (Ed.), *Ephemera media: Transitory screen culture from television to YouTube* (pp. 105–121). British Film Institute.

Fricker, K., & Gluhovic, M. (Eds.). (2013). *Performing the 'new' Europe: Identities, feelings, and politics in the Eurovision Song Contest*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Georgiou, M. (2008). “In the end, Germany will always resort to hot pants”: Watching Europe singing, constructing the stereotype. *Popular Communication*, 6:3, 141–154.

Jordan, P. (2015). From Ruslana to Gaitana: Performing “Ukrainianness” in the Eurovision Song Contest. *Contemporary Southeastern Europe*, 2:1, 110–135.

<http://www.contemporarysee.org/en/jordan>

Kazakov, V., & Hutchings, S. (2019). Challenging the ‘information war’ paradigm: Russophones and Russophobes in online Eurovision communities”. In M. Wijermars & K. Lehtisaari (Eds.), *Freedom of expression in Russia’s new mediasphere* (pp. 137–158). Routledge.

Kyriakidou, M., Skey, M., Uldam, J., & McCurdy, P. (2018). Media events and cosmopolitan fandom: “Playful nationalism” in the Eurovision Song Contest. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 21:6, 603–618.

Miazhevich, G. (2017). Paradoxes of new media: Digital discourses on Eurovision 2014, media flows and post-Soviet nation building. *New Media & Society*, 19:2, 199–216.

Miettunen, H. (1966). *Radio- ja TV-opin perusteet*. Weilin + Göös.

Pajala, M. (2006) *Erot järjestykseen! Eurovision laulukilpailu, kansallisuus ja televisiohistoria*. Nykykulttuuri.

Pajala, M. (2007). Epätelevisionomaista speaktaakkeliteleviointia? Eurovision laulukilpailu 1960-luvun suomalaisessa televisioympäristössä. In J. Wiio (Ed.), *Television viisi vuosikymmentä: Suomalainen televisio ja sen ohjelmat 1950-luvulta digiaikaan* (pp. 292–308). Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Pajala, M. (2021). Laulukilpailusta show-kilpailuksi? Televisiospektaakkelin ylirajaistuva tuotanto Eurovision laulukilpailussa. *Lähikuva*, 34:1, 9–32.

Pérez-Rufi, J. P., & Valverde Mestre, Á. M. (2020). The spatial-temporal fragmentation of live television video clips: Analysis of the television production of the Eurovision Song Contest. *Communication & Society*, 33:2, 17–31.

Raykoff, I., & Tobin, R. D. (Eds.). (2007). *A song for Europe: Popular music and politics in the Eurovision Song Contest*. Ashgate.

Robertson, B. (2021, March 11). Melodifestivalen, angry songwriters, and directors in the spotlight. *ESCInsight*. <https://escinsight.com/2021/03/06/melodifestivalen-angry-songwriters-directors-spotlight/>

Sandvoss, C. (2008). On the couch with Europe: The Eurovision Song Contest, the European Broadcast Union and belonging on the old continent. *Popular Communication* 6:3, 190–207.

Scannell, P. (1996). *Radio, television and modern life: A phenomenological approach*. Blackwell.

Singleton, B., Fricker, K., & Moreo, E. (2007). Performing the queer network: Fans and families at the Eurovision Song Contest. *SQS*, 2, 12–24.

Skey, M., Kyriakidou, M., McCurdy, P., & Uldam, J. (2016). Staging and engaging media events: A study of the 2014 Eurovision Song Contest. *International Journal of Communication Studies*, 10, 3381–3399.

Waysdorf, A. S. (2020). This is our night: Eurovision again and liveness through archives. In P. D. Keidl, L. Melamed, V. Hediger & A. Somaini (Eds.), *Pandemic media: Preliminary notes toward an inventory* (pp. 295–302). Meson Press.

Wheatley, H. (2016). *Spectacular television: Exploring televisual pleasure*. I. B. Tauris.

Williams, R. (1990). *Television: Technology and cultural form* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Ytreberg, E. (2017). Towards a Historical Understanding of the Media Event. *Media, Culture & Society*, 39:3, 309–324.

---

<sup>1</sup> Some material in this section is based on previous publications in Finnish in Pajala, 2007 and Pajala, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Central Archives for Finnish Business Records (ELKA), YLE collection, folder 3397:2359: "Referat av Nordvisionsmötet i Helsingfors 29/2-2/3 1964". Denmark's television did eventually leave the contest for the period from 1967 to 1977.

<sup>3</sup> In 1980, the intermission between the last entry and the voting lasted about eight minutes and was filled by a single performance by a steel pan band; the voting took a little over half an hour. In 2021, the break between the last competing entry and the start of the voting had extended to about fifty-three minutes and the voting lasted close to an hour. The longer interval is explained partly by the need to make time for the public televote, including showing several recaps of the songs and verifying the votes. However, the break between the songs and the voting was shorter when televoting was first introduced.