

★★★★ "The make-up of the panel was inspired - it was a perfect combination of talent and wit" says Musical Theatre Musings

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West End Eurovision 2019

It is one of the big nights in the year for theatre lovers and performers alike....no not the Oliviers but West End Eurovision! The concept is simple, several West End shows compete against each other by performing Eurovision 'hits' from past years. This year we saw newcomers Only Fools and Horses take on established shows such as Wicked and Phantom of The Opera with a huge variety of performances.

Along with the shows performances (more on that later) there was a celebrity judging panel ready to give their opinion on each performance. The panel was made up of West End legend Bonnie Langford, dance royalty Wayne Sleep, TV presenter Tim Vincent and Love Island and 9-5 star Amber Davies. The make-up of the panel was inspired meaning it was a perfect combination of talent and wit, including a very sporting Amber who was often at the butt of the jokes despite coming across as very likeable and genuinely thrilled to be there.



The West End Eurovision cast from Phantom of the Opera

West End Eurovision's answer to Graham Norton was Richard Gauntlett. He got the tone spot on – plenty of irreverent and in jokes about the current crop of West End shows, a well struck amount of banter with the judging panel and lots of support for those performing. He tied the whole show together brilliantly.

There were also 2 guest performances. One from Michael Rice who is this years entrant for the UK and the second from Dana Internatinal who mimed her way through both numbers but provided hilarious commentary on Eurovision itself.

Turning to the performances themselves I can sum it up as follows:

Only Fools and Horses – performing 'Dancing Lasha Tumbai.' (Ukraine – 2nd place – 2007) This was an utterly bonkers performance but kicked the show off with a bang, getting everyone in the mood for camp Eurovision fun. I particularly liked the performance from Gary Brown, one of the shows dressers.

Everybody's Talking About Jamie – performing 'Toy.' (Israel – 1st place – 2017) This cast knew how to play to their strengths. With a Little Mix vibe going on as 3 female cast members took lead vocals, Layton Williams high kicked and dropped into splits at every opportunity going.....which I adore!

Aladdin – performing 'Monster' (Finland – 25th – 2018) This cast possibly won the award for the most flesh on display....and if you've got it.....! The choreography for me in this was one of the high points and I also have to confess to loving their VT. Each cast is given the opportunity to show an introductory video and whilst Jamie won the award I loved their acknowledgement to Mary Poppins and Zizi Strallens appearance in the video.

Mamma Mia! performing 'Je Ne Sais Quoi' (Iceland -19th place – 2010) Mamma Mia injected some humour into proceedings with some (intentional) wobby lifts although humor didn't seem to translate to votes with Only Fools and Horses in 7th and Mamma Mia! in 5th.

Follies performing 'L'oiseau et L'enfant.' (France – 1st – 1977) Follies stuck to doing what Follies does best – putting on a show that oozed class. Sung entirely in French Joanna Riding, Lindsay Atherton, Janie Dee and Sarah-Marie Maxwell donned their best showgirl costume and showed everyone just how to own a stage!

The Phantom of the Opera performing 'Grande Amore.' (Italy – 3rd place – 2015) This performance showed what can be achieved vocally when you have a cast of singers that sing Phantom of the Opera 8 times a week. A masterclass in vocal technique topped off by not 1 but 2 reveals throughout the number. The reveals earned them the award for 'Outstanding Gorgeousness and the standing ovation demonstrated why they were both the judges and the audiences choice for overall winner of the evening,

Wicked performs 'Wild Dances.' (Ukraine – 1st – 2004) This was the show that really set the bar choreography wise – with gravity defying throws and original and energetic choreography this was a memorable performance. It placed 3rd overall but won best Creative awarded by the celebrity judging panel.

With Phantom, Follies and Wicked taking the top 3 spots I loved how they were all so different.....just like the West End itself.

The show itself was in aid of Make A Difference Trust which supports those living with HIV and AIDS. To make a donation or find out more about the show visit their [website](#).