

ADVERTISEMENT

○ Academy Awards

Oscars 2023 as it happened: Everything Everywhere All at Once cleans up

All the drama from the 95th Academy Awards as The Banshees of Inisherin and An Cailín Ciúin brought the 'green wave' of Irish film to Hollywood's champagne carpet

✕ Expand




In one of the surprises of the night, Jamie Lee Curtis ecstatically collects the award for best actress in a supporting role for Everything Everywhere All at Once. Photograph: Etienne Laurent/EPA



[Laura Slattery](#)

Mon Mar 13 2023 - 04:04



 03:55

Highlights of the night:

- An Irish Goodbye wins best live action short film. Guests at the Dolby Theatre are invited to sing Happy Birthday to its star James Martin in a lovely moment.
- Dubliner Richard Baneham nabs his second Oscar for best achievement in visual effects as part of the team behind Avatar: The Way of Water.
- Ke Huy Quan and Jamie Lee Curtis win the best supporting actor and actress Oscars for Everything Everywhere All at Once. Their awards go down very well in the room, though it means The Banshees of Inisherin stars Barry Keoghan, Brendan Gleeson and Kerry Condon must make do with their nominations.
- All Quiet on the Western Front wins four Oscars, including best international feature film, for which it was competing against An Cailín Ciúin / The Quiet Girl, Ireland's history-making Irish language nominee.
- Brendan Fraser wins best actor for The Whale, edging out Elvis star Austin Butler, as well as Bill Nighy and Ireland's Colin Farrell and Paul Mescal.
- Michelle Yeoh beats Cate Blanchett to best actress for Everything Everywhere All at Once, which takes seven Oscars in total, including best director for Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert and best picture.

03:42



The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, which is very much on LA time, has issued a press release toasting Irish success in two categories, with the Minister describing it as a “historic night”.

“The Oscars ceremony showcased our talent, our language and the beauty of our country as a tourism destination to a global audience, and with the pipeline of exciting projects in production at the moment, there is no reason why we can't be competing every year at the highest level, such is the creative talent within the country at the moment,” said Catherine Martin.

No mention for Jenny the donkey – it's a disgrace.

On a final, slightly tenuous Irish note, here's a picture from earlier of actor and Cocaine Bear director Elizabeth Banks with somebody dressed as the eponymous bear. The film, now on release, was shot in Wicklow, and is an example of the kind of inward investment Screen Ireland is keen to attract.

Who needs an Oscar when you've got a drug-addled bear on a vicious rampage in your film? Something to think about.



Elizabeth Banks and friend during the 95th annual Academy Awards ceremony at the Dolby Theatre. Photograph: Etienne Laurent/EPA

03:33



And the Oscar for best picture goes to... Everything Everywhere All at Once.

Indiana Jones himself, better known as Harrison Ford, confirms an absolute sweep for Everything Everywhere All at Once, as it converts seven of its 11 nominations, including the big one. Yeoh has barely had time to go backstage before she is joining her castmates and the producers of EEAAO for the obligatory hugs and gasps.

“It’s intimidating speaking up here, let me just tell you that,” says Jonathan Wang, who produced the film alongside the Daniels.

It’s the first film in Oscars history to win three acting awards plus best picture. This highly likeable, wonderfully absurd film about married laundromat owners and their sulky daughter – a wild, genre-spanning showcase for Asian-American talent – has well and truly cleaned up.

ADVERTISEMENT

And that’s it, that’s the end of the show.

Incidentally, Everything Everywhere All at Once is currently streaming in Ireland on Amazon Prime Video. You can read Tara Brady’s review [here](#) or you can go to bed like a normal person.



Jonathan Wang speaks after Everything Everywhere All at Once wins the award for best picture. Photograph: Todd Heisler/The New York Times

03:30



And the Oscar for best actress goes to... Michelle Yeoh!

There is a yelp in the Dolby Theatre as Yeoh eclipses Cate Blanchett, who suffered from a bad case of frontrunner fatigue as awards season wore on. Blanchett probably won't mind too much – she has two Oscars already – while this was a first nomination and now first win for the previously overlooked Yeoh.

“Ladies don't let anybody ever tell you you are past your prime,” says Yeoh.

I won't, Michelle.



Michelle Yeoh is enjoying this particular universe as she accepts the award for best actress. Photograph: Todd Heisler/The New York Times

03:24



And the Oscar for best actor goes to... Brendan Fraser for *The Whale*.

“So this is what the multiverse looks like,” he says, thanking director Darren Aronofsky.

“I want to tell you that only whales can swim at the depths of the talent of Hong Chau,” he continues, referring to his co-star, a nominee for best supporting actress tonight.

03:18



The Daniels, aka Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert, take the Oscar for best director for *Everything Everywhere All at Once*.

ADVERTISEMENT

They’re both aged 35 – young, though not as disgustingly young as Damien Chazelle was in 2017 when he won best director for *La La Land*.

Chazelle was 32 years and 38 days when he claimed the directing Oscar, making him the youngest ever to do so, though everybody has forgotten all about this because of *La La Land*’s notorious loss to *Moonlight* in the best picture race shortly after.

03:15



Paul Rogers, in just his second film, wins the Oscar for editing for *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, which right now is winning almost everything everywhere all at once. This was a category in which Irishman Jonathan Redmond was competing for his work on *Elvis*.

Jimmy Kimmel pays homage to the skills of editors.

“Editors can turn 44,000 hours of violent insurrection footage into a respectful sightseeing tour of the Capitol,” he notes. “Their work is underappreciated.”

03:05



John Travolta introduces the In Memoriam segment with watery eyes and emotion etched into his voice as he describes those who have died as “friends who we will always remain hopelessly devoted to”. Attendees “aww” as they realise he is referring to *Grease* co-star Olivia Newton-John.

Other late stars remembered include Kirstie Alley (another Travolta co-star), Robbie Coltrane, Nichelle Nichols, Ray Liotta, Angela Lansbury, Irene Cara, Gina Lollobrigida, James Caan and Raquel Welch. Lenny Kravitz’s musical performance while this “death reel” of tributes rolls is pitched just right.

Flashing up a QR code, the Academy then refers people to its website “for a tribute to many other legends we’ve lost”, which is its way of saying “don’t give us a hard time about the people we left out”.

02:55



Top Gun: Maverick wins the Oscar for best sound, but Lady Gaga can’t claim the best original song gong for *Hold My Hand* from that film, with the prize taken, as expected, by Naatu Naatu from Indian film *RRR*.



Dancers perform Naatu Naatu from *RRR* during the 95th annual Academy Awards ceremony at the Dolby Theatre. Photograph: Etienne Laurent/EPA

02:44



Canadian heroine Sarah Polley wins the best adapted screenplay Oscar for *Women Talking*, based on the novel by Miriam Toews – her compelling, anger-inducing film, which she also directed, is about the abuse of women by men and how they fight back against it.

ADVERTISEMENT



As she notes herself in her acceptance speech, it features an “incredible cast”, including Claire Foy, Rooney Mara and Ireland’s own Jessie Buckley.

Just before Polley’s big moment, the best original screenplay award was claimed by “the Daniels”, aka Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert for *Everything Everywhere All at Once*.

With Martin McDonagh not winning for original screenplay, this might well spell the end to *The Banshees of Inisherin*’s hopes of converting any of its nominations tonight.

02:28




And the Oscar for best achievement in visual effects goes to... *Avatar: The Way of Water*.

“Go raibh míle maith agat,” says Tallaght native and now two-time Oscar winner Richie Baneham, as he collects the award alongside his three colleagues Joe Letteri, Eric Saindon and Daniel Barrett. Alas, they don’t get much time to speak before the orchestra strikes up its deadly “move along now” music.

Jimmy Kimmel says they wanted to tell everybody that the visual effects after-party is in CGI Friday’s.

Minister for Culture Catherine Martin congratulates Baneham and says he is an inspiration to everybody at Ballyfermot College.

Catherine Martin TD  X

@cathmartingreen · [Follow](#)

Richard Baneham's team have won the Oscar for [#AvatarTheWayOfWater](#) !




Delighted for Richard & his entire family

He is a leader in his field, constantly breaking new ground in film-making.

An inspiration to so many Irish young people particularly all [@BCFE_Official](#) [#Oscars](#)

Watch on Twitter

2:28 AM · Mar 13, 2023 i

 120  Reply  Share this Tweet

[Read 3 replies](#)

02:20



All Quiet on the Western Front is having quite the night, taking its fourth Oscar by adding best original score to its best production design, best cinematography and best international feature film wins.



Edward Berger speaks after winning the Oscar for best international feature film for All Quiet on the Western Front. Photograph: Etienne Laurent/EPA

02:12



Another surprise as All Quiet on the Western Front wins the Oscar for production design.

Some Oscars awarded earlier, while I was distracted by my cheeseburger preparation:

- The Whale won for make-up and hairstyling.
- Black Panther: Wakanda Forever won for costume design.
- The Elephant Whispers won best documentary short.
- The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse won best animated short.

The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse is based on a picture book by British artist Charlie Mackesy. Published in 2019, it became a bestseller and went on to provide solace to many readers throughout the pandemic.

02:00





The Jimmy and Jenny Show. Photograph: Etienne Laurent/EPA

And the Oscar for best donkey goes to... Jenny for *The Banshees of Inisherin*.

Jenny, Jimmy Kimmel explains, is also a certified emotional support donkey. She'll be in high demand before the night is out.

01:45



And the Oscar for best international feature goes to... Edward Berger and Germany for *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

This, to be fair, was expected. *An Cailín Ciúin / The Quiet Girl* had some beautiful momentum gathering behind it, but it wasn't enough to overturn the lead for what is only the eighth film in Academy Awards history to be nominated in both the best international feature and best picture categories.

AQOTWF, having already taken the cinematography Oscar tonight, isn't out of the best picture running just yet. Even if it doesn't manage that feat, its success – it won the BAFTA for best film last month – will deeply please Netflix, which adores awards prestige almost as much as I adored the cheeseburger I just made for myself.

01:09



The cinematography Oscar goes to James Friend for *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

"It's not my birthday, but it feels like it is."

He kisses his Oscar in the process of thanking everybody and wisely apologises in advance if he left anybody out.

00:56



And the Oscar for best live action short film goes to... *An Irish Goodbye!*

The first Irish win of the night and writer-directors Tom Berkeley and Ross White and actors Seamus O’Hara and James Martin all go on stage to collect it.

Berkeley then leads the Dolby Theatre A-listers into a rendition of Happy Birthday in honour of Martin, who laps up the attention. How fabulous.



James Martin, star of *An Irish Goodbye*, with Ross White and Tom Berkeley, who won the Oscar for best live action short film. Photograph: Etienne Laurent/EPA

00:55



The Oscar for best documentary feature goes to *Navalny*, as expected. It’s a truly brilliant film about Alexei Navalny, the Russian opposition leader, tracing what happens after he was poisoned with the nerve agent Novichok, how the plot against him was exposed and why he decided to return to Russia, where he was duly imprisoned in January 2021.

“Alexei, I’m dreaming of the day when you will be free and our country will be free. Stay strong, my love,” says his wife Yulia Navalnaya from the Oscars stage.

00:35



And the Oscar for best supporting actress goes to... Jamie Lee Curtis.

The first surprise of the night, as the Everything Everywhere All at Once star wins out over Angela Bassett (and, sadly, Ireland's Kerry Condon).

In a break from tradition, the two supporting awards were presented consecutively, with Ariana DeBose and Troy Kotsur, last year's winners for West Side Story and CODA respectively, jointly dishing them out.

Curtis, famously the daughter of Tony Curtis and Janet Leigh, looks to the ceiling and appears to tell them "I just won an Oscar!"

Her win bodes well for EEAAO's chances in other categories tonight.

Curtis was a vocal champion of the film, in which she plays a mostly villainous (sometimes not) tax inspector. Last May, while celebrating the exceptional US box office takings of the independent, A24-distributed multiverse film, she unleashed a string of triumphant and gloriously undiplomatic social media posts suggesting it "out marvels any Marvel movie they put out there".

She then conceded her chances of ever being cast in a Marvel film were toast.

00:30



The Oscar for best supporting actor goes to... Ke Huy Quan.

A certain generation (mine) will remember him well from his child star days as Short Round in Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom. He retired from acting for many years owing to a dearth of parts but was inspired by the commercial success of Crazy Rich Asians to reignite his love for his craft. He won tonight for his stand-out performance in Everything Everywhere All at Once and is understandably emotional as he says his 84-year-old mother is at home watching.

"Mom, I just won an Oscar."

Now aged 52, he recounts how he spent a year as a child in a refugee camp.

"They say that stories like this only happen in the movies. I cannot believe it is happening to me. This is the American dream!"

00:20



The first award of the night, for best animated feature, goes to Guillermo del Toro's Pinnocchio, as expected.

"Animation is cinema, animation is not a genre, and animation is ready to be taken to the next step. We're all ready for it. Please help us. Keep animation in the conversation," says del Toro.

Sentiments with which Ireland's talented animators will surely agree.

00:11



Jimmy Kimmel's opening monologue acknowledges what I'm just going to keep on calling the "green wave" at this year's Oscars.

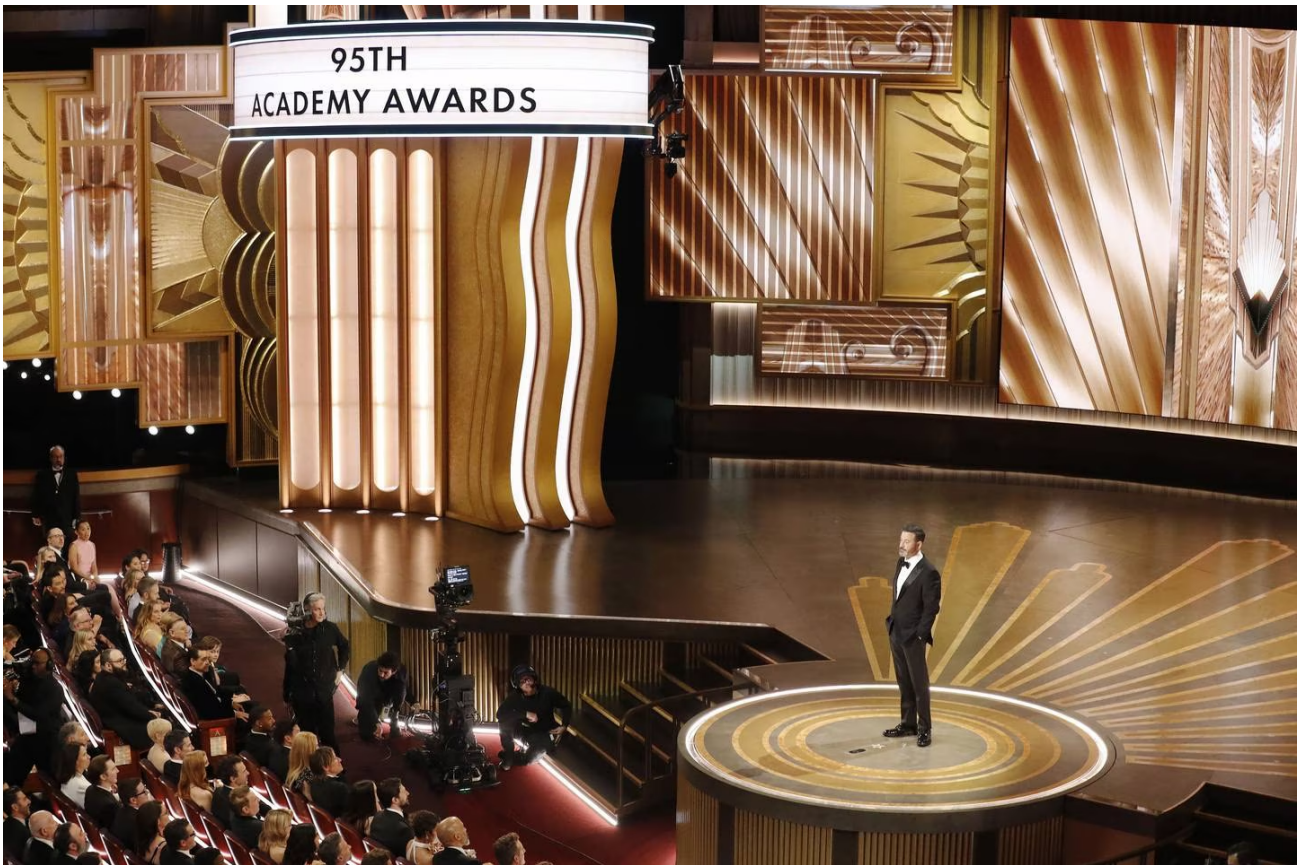
"It was some year for diversity and inclusion. We have nominees from every corner of Dublin," he says.

That's funny.

"Five Irish actors are nominated tonight, which means the odds of another fight on stage just went way up."

Oh.

On a day in which a Saturday Night Live sketch went viral for its painfully unfunny portrayal of the Irish as drunk and incomprehensible, I'd have skipped the "fighting Irish" gag myself, but the Americans do seem to both love and believe in this stereotype, and Colin Farrell does the honours by playfully punching Brendan Gleeson on the shoulder.



Host Jimmy Kimmel during the 95th annual Academy Awards at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood. Photograph: Etienne Laurent/EPA

00:00



It's midnight and host Jimmy Kimmel has just parachuted onto stage. Who will cry? Who will fluff their lines? Who will slip up? Whose speech will be cruelly cut off? Who will punch who? And who will win viewers' hearts along with their gold statuette? We're about to find out.

23:55



Poor old Paul Mescal – wherever he goes, he's just so unpopular...

Asked on the red/champagne carpet how he's feeling, the best actor nominee, recognised for his subtle turn in the haunting Charlotte Wells film *Aftersun*, replies: "Like I'm on a crazy train right now and I haven't really caught my breath."

That actually sounds like a decent synopsis for a film. Meanwhile, it might be time for that breath-catching holiday.



Paul Mescal poses for a selfie with fans at the 95th Annual Academy Awards. Photograph: Valerie Macon/AFP

23:40



An Irish hello: (l-r) the An Irish Goodbye team of Tom Berkeley, James Martin, Seamus O'Hara and Ross White attend the 95th Annual Academy Awards. Photograph: Mike Coppola/Getty Images

Flanked by An Irish Goodbye's writer-director pair of Tom Berkeley and Ross White are the two stars of the short film, James Martin and Seamus O'Hara, who play brothers in the darkly comic story set on a farm. It is James Martin's birthday today – will he get to celebrate it on the Oscars stage?

Meanwhile, Ross White, a Liverpool FC fan, has shared a video of Liverpool manager Jürgen Klopp wishing An Irish Goodbye good luck.

“Congratulations for what you have already achieved,” says obliging talisman Klopp, who brandishes a statuette of Bill Shankly with an inscription reading “he made the people happy” and invites White to come to his office to “touch this once”, if he fancies.

White thanks both Klopp for taking the time and also “his amazing Dad” for pestering the club to make the video happen.

23:30



Best actor nominee Bill Nighy attends the 95th Annual Academy Awards. Photograph: Arturo Holmes/Getty Images

In important hair news, impeccably debonair first-time nominee Bill Nighy, nominated tonight for *Living*, says he is wearing Cool Hair Bairly There by Sam McKnight, which Google tells me is “texture mist”.

The blue ribbon, meanwhile, is in solidarity with refugees and displaced people around the world and is a UN initiative. Nighy tells Sky he has pinned on the ribbon at the request of best actress nominee Cate Blanchett.

23:25



Let’s not gloss over the less than glistening backdrop to the 95th Oscars. The golden age of Hollywood is long over, some audiences haven’t returned to the big screen since the pandemic and the world’s second largest cinema chain (Cineworld) recently filed for US bankruptcy protection.

Great films like Oscar contenders *Tár* and *The Fabelmans* and should-have-been-a-contender *She Said* flopped at the US box office, while Tom Cruise, the highest paid actor of 2022 thanks to his cut of *Top Gun: Maverick*’s takings, is frequently dubbed the “last movie star”.

The accessibility of streaming and the glut of celebrity content on social media makes it harder for Hollywood to maintain its elevated glamour quotient. The mystique factor just isn’t what it was.

So why are the Oscars still so compelling?

Veering from the sublime to the ridiculous, often within the same speech, the Oscars ceremony is typically as fun as it is self-important, as resonant as it is toe-curling, as progressive as it is conservative, as glamorous as it is brutal.

It's the A-lister-stuffed pinnacle of the film calendar, a prime-time (in the US, anyway) celebration of art and creative skills and the climax of a marathon industry awards season powered by tens of millions of marketing dosh. It basks in nostalgia even as it mints future careers.

Seeing nominees glow in their moment of recognition and watching the winners – especially the first-timers – respond to their name being called with a cocktail of pride, relief, euphoria and panic makes an excellent live television spectacle.

Who knows? It may even leave you feeling warm inside.

23:15



Angela Bassett attends the 95th Oscars. Photograph: Arturo Holmes/Getty Images

Speaking of Angela Bassett, here she is resplendent in purple. Bassett is the first actor to be nominated for a Marvel movie, following her turn in *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*, though if she wins it will likely be more a case of voters acknowledging her fine body of work.

“Always, family keep you grounded,” says Bassett, when asked by Sky how she manages to negotiate awards season. Will she be thanking them later?

23:00





Kerry Condon, nominated for best supporting actress, attends the 95th Annual Academy Awards. Photograph: Mike Coppola/Getty Images

Back to the red/champagne carpet, where Irish actor Kerry Condon poses for photographers.

What a night for Condon, who thoroughly deserves the recognition of a best supporting actress nomination for *The Banshees of Inisherin*.

She won the BAFTA last month for the same role, though her destiny tonight might be to graciously applaud Angela Bassett, and enjoy the fact that she is now, finally, a household name in Ireland.

22:45



Fans of Hollywood history will enjoy Donald Clarke's [list of the Oscars' most memorable moments](#). I hadn't seen the William Holden and Barbara Stanwyck clip before and found it very touching, as she clearly did.

In the US, the Academy Awards is broadcast on Disney-owned television network ABC, which seems to devote an inordinate amount of energy to worrying about falling ratings.

The Oscars audience plunged to a record low in 2021, when the pandemic-struck ceremony drew just 10.5 million viewers in the US. It recovered to 16.6 million viewers last year.

Often the choice of best picture nominees, plus the fact that many of the winners appear to be foregone conclusions, is blamed for the slide in ratings, though the more salient explanation is that live television viewership is in inexorable long-term decline more generally and introducing gimmicks to the telecast is unlikely to reverse this.

The good news for ABC is that more of the main awards hang in the balance this year, so the ceremony shouldn't be a complete snoozefest.

The bad news is that this year the Oscars ceremony clashes with HBO's season finale of aforementioned post-apocalypse hit *The Last of Us*.

22:35





Everything Everywhere All at Once stars James Hong and Jamie Lee Curtis arrive. Photograph: Valerie Macon/AFP

Everything Everywhere All at Once actors James Hong and Jamie Lee Curtis both gave brilliant speeches at February's Screen Actors Guild (SAG) awards. Hong, who is 94 and has been in the business for 70 years, remembers well when Asian talent simply wasn't accepted in Hollywood and "yellowface" was a common phenomenon.

"My first movie was with Clark Gable," he said, after the EEAAO stars won the SAG gong for best cast in a motion picture.

"Back in those days, I have to tell you this, the leading roles were played by these guys with their eyes taped up," he said. "And the producer said that Asians were not good enough, and they are not box office. But, look at us now, huh?"

22:15





Quiet arrival: Actor Catherine Clinch (left), with *The Quiet Girl*'s director Colm Bairéad and producer Cleona Ní Chruailaoi at the Dolby Theatre. Photograph: Valerie Macon/AFP

Our first live picture from the red/champagne carpet is of the rightly proud An Cailín Ciúin trio of young star Catherine Clinch and husband-and-wife team director Colm Bairéad and producer Cleona Ní Chruailaoi.

If you look closely at this photograph, you can see Carrie Crowley living her best life.

22:10



Who will definitely be in the auditorium – or alternating between their seat and the bar – this year?

Catherine Martin: In a universe parallel to this one, Catherine Martin isn't an Irish government minister but an Australian four-time Oscar winner with a fair chance of adding to her collection. She is everyone everywhere all at once.

Alternatively, the two Catherine Martins are different people who exist in the same universe, but merely have the same name. This Catherine Martin is nominated for best picture, best production design and best costume design for *Elvis*, directed by her husband Baz Luhrmann.

Jessica Chastain, Troy Kotsur and Ariana DeBose: Last year's winners of the best actress, best supporting actor and best supporting actress gongs will return this year, envelopes in hand.

Hugh Grant: I highlight this mainly because I have a theory that Hugh Grant enlivens every awards ceremony he is persuaded to participate in. Don't let me down, Hugh.

Other notable awards presenters tonight include Grant's *Four Weddings* co-star Andie MacDowell, Samuel L Jackson, Harrison Ford, Cocaine Bear director Elizabeth Banks, Florence Pugh, Sigourney Weaver, Halle Berry, red carpet delight Andrew Garfield, Salma Hayek Pinault, Nicole Kidman, Zoe Saldana and Paul Dano, who is there in the traditional capacity as the talented yet unnominated star of a nominated film (in his case, Steven Spielberg's *The Fabelmans*).

Pedro Pascal: The Last of Us actor is best known for his struggle to survive a dystopian world ravaged by infection. He is therefore the most relatable person in Hollywood right now.

22:00



Who won't be at this year's Oscars?

Will Smith: Last year's best actor winner (for King Richard) won't be present at the 95th Academy Awards on account of what happened at the 94th Academy Awards.

By hitting comedian Chris Rock live on stage, Smith self-sabotaged what should have been his night of glory and got himself banned from the Oscars for 10 years – all a bit sad, to be honest.

Volodymyr Zelenskiy: Variety has reported that the comic actor turned Ukrainian president had his bid to appear via videolink rejected by the Academy for the second year in a row.

Ukraine is still bound to be referenced during the ceremony, if only because one of the nominees for best documentary feature, A House Made of Splinters, is about the impact of war and neglect on children in a Ukrainian care home, while Navalny, about the imprisoned Russian opposition leader, is the favourite in this category.

Catherine Martin: The Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, who is in Los Angeles as part of a trade mission with Screen Ireland, will instead be at an Oscars viewing party at the Irish consulate, which is almost as glamorous... probably.



Chris Rock reacts as Will Smith hits him on stage at last year's Oscars. Photograph: Robyn Beck/AFP

21:45



“Seven million people on that island and all of them are nominated,” producer/director JJ Abrams declared at last week's Oscar Wilde awards. Well, he's not far off.

The one near-certain Irish winner is Richard Baneham, or Richie, who is nominated alongside his Avatar: The Way of Water colleagues for best visual effects. This would be a second Oscar for the animator, who also collected one for the first Avatar film in 2010.

Tom Berkeley and Ross White's An Irish Goodbye, which was shown on RTÉ One last night, also has an extremely good chance in the best live action short category – Donald Clarke [spoke to the duo](#) about its

success.

The Government will have trouble claiming credit for either Oscar, however: Baneham departed for LA in the 1990s soon after graduating from Ballyfermot College, while *An Irish Goodbye* was funded by Northern Ireland Screen.

A surprise win for Colm Bairéad's *An Cailín Ciúin* (*The Quiet Girl*) in best international feature – where it is up against best picture nominee *All Quiet on the Western Front* – is the result that would have policymakers dancing in the cinema aisles.

That's because it was fully funded in the State through the Cine4 scheme, an initiative of TG4, Screen Ireland and the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, with help from the Section 481 tax credit, too.

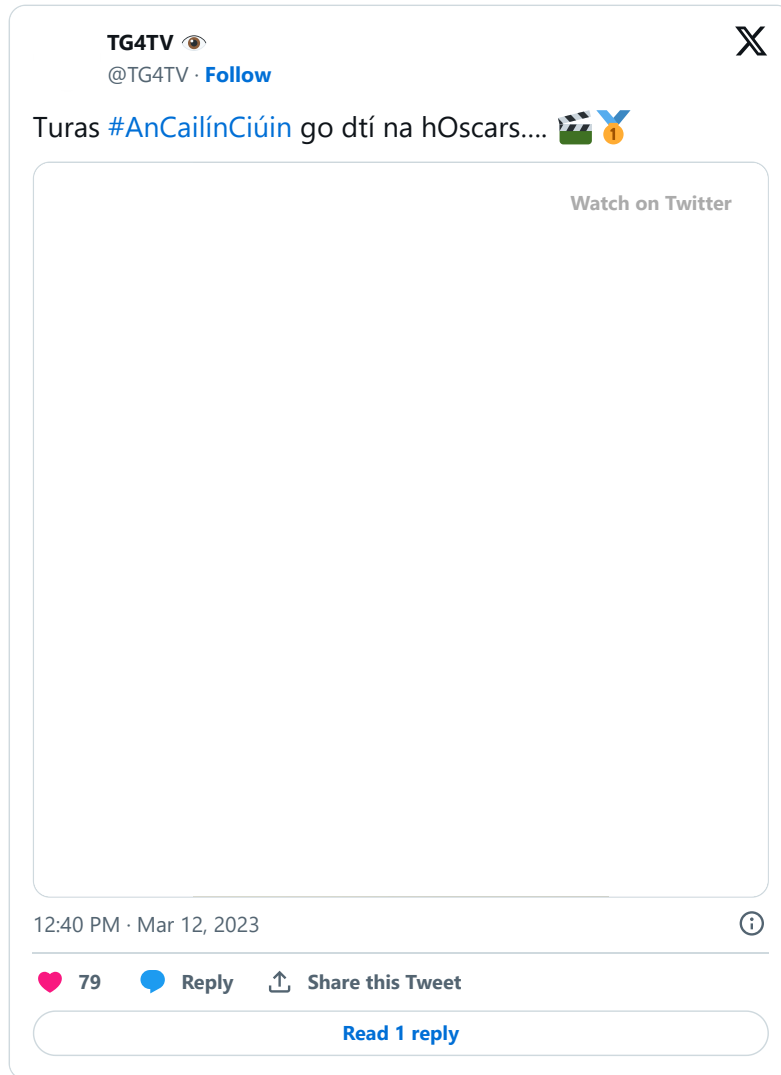
In my column from June 2022 on [Cine4, An Cailín Ciúin and TG4's open Oscar ambitions](#), I wrote that it was “nice to think that sooner rather than later, Cine4 will have Government ministers issuing ecstatic press releases congratulating Irish language filmmakers for representing Ireland on this particular world stage”.

That turned out to be sooner, not later. Here, Donald Clarke [assesses the film's chances of pulling off the upset](#).

Whatever happens, *An Cailín Ciúin* has been both a critical smash hit and a commercial one. Incredibly, despite being released last May, it is still in Ireland's top 10 weekly box office chart.

An undermentioned aspect of its marketing success is its title. The film is an adaptation of Claire Keegan's novella *Foster*, but the filmmakers didn't opt for a direct translation, nor did they stick with their original choice, *Fanacht* (meaning “stay”). The title *An Cailín Ciúin* / *The Quiet Girl* not only centres the unreal performance of its star Catherine Clinch – making her role eponymous – it has the advantage of working in both languages and riffing on an Ireland-set film well known to older generations of Americans, *The Quiet Man*.

Even if it can't usurp *All Quiet on the Western Front* from its Oscar destination, this video posted on Twitter earlier today by TG4 shows just how much critical acclaim *An Cailín Ciúin* has garnered.



21:25



The first big controversy of the ceremony itself is that the traditional red carpet has been jettisoned in favour of what organisers are calling a “champagne carpet”.

Hmm. We all know how everybody absolutely loves change for change’s sake.

“It’s a remnant, we got it for a very good price downtown,” joked Oscars host Jimmy Kimmel as it was unveiled. “I think the decision to go with a champagne carpet rather than a red carpet shows how confident we are that no blood will be shed.”

I have read a serious explanation for why they have done this, but I’m not sure I understand it – something about sandy beaches in golden hour.

Technically, of course, it’s only a champagne carpet in the Champagne region of France – everywhere else, it’s sparkling beige.

Red/champagne carpet dressing is a big business in its own right, so will Irish designers be getting in on the act this year? In her [Oscars fashion preview](#), Corina Gaffey explores the question of who will be wearing who.

In the meantime, I’m with this guy.



A one-person protest took place before the champagne carpet as preparations were getting underway. Photograph: Stefani Reynolds/AFP

21:05



Over the next hour or so, I'll be previewing a night expected to yield a mantelpiece full of Oscars for *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, the most inventive science fiction comedy ever set in a tax office. It's the mid-life crisis multiverse film with talking rocks and – in keeping with the edible finger theme of a certain other best picture contender – hands made of hot dogs.

From about 10pm, via the magic of the news wires, I'll be eyeing the limos as they spill their starry occupants onto the "red" carpet – more on its redness, or lack of it, later – because while winning is nice, striking fabulous poses is even more important.

Then the Oscars ceremony itself, or what the Americans love to call the "telecast", will begin at midnight Irish time. This is an hour earlier than usual because the US moved to daylight savings time today, temporarily shortening the time delay between the west coast and Ireland to just seven hours.

The other good news is that Sky, the rights-holders here, hasn't made the ceremony exclusive to Sky Cinema customers as it has in the past. It will also broadcast the show on the channels Sky Showcase, Sky Arts and Sky News, with Now entertainment members able to access it via Sky Showcase.

Apologies for deploying the "M" word, but if sleep beats Oscar every time, RTÉ2's highlights show is on Monday at 9.30pm – by which point all of Hollywood will be in full comedown mode.



Everything Everywhere All at Once starring Michelle Yeoh (centre), Stephanie Hsu and Ke Huy Quan. All three are nominated tonight. Photograph: A24 Films.

21:00



Hello, and welcome to The Irish Times live blog for the 95th Academy Awards, aka Oscars night, and a special one for Ireland with a record haul of 14 nominations.

These include an incredible quarter of all the acting nominations, nine nods for The Banshees of Inisherin and the first ever Irish-language hopeful in the best international feature category. The green wave is here and in well-deserved shouting distance of those coveted gold statuettes. Go n-éirí libh!

True, the bookmakers' odds suggest getting Irish hands on multiple Oscars could be a challenge tonight, but it's worth remembering that just having a ticket to the Dolby Theatre is already an amazing achievement, and surviving all the way to the after-parties should count as victory in its own right.

So, defrost your finger food – preferably not the Banshees kind – and catch up on the backstory to this year's shindig, starting with Donald Clarke's rundown of [who should win and who will win](#) at the most Irish Oscars ever.

[Oscars](#)
 [Academy Awards](#)
 [Martin McDonagh](#)
 [Brendan Gleeson](#)
 [Colin Farrell](#)
 [Barry Keoghan](#)
 [Paul Mescal](#)
 [Catherine Clinch](#)
[Kerry Condon](#)
[Colm Bairéad](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

IN THIS SECTION



Paul Simon says he is 'beginning to' accept his hearing loss



Venice film festival: Irish-produced Poor Things wins top Golden Lion award



Pablo Larraín on his Pinochet film: 'It's a vampire movie. It's also a farce. It deals with horrific, horrific people'



A Life on the Farm: A warm-hearted celebration of an oddity for the ages



My Big Fat Greek Wedding 3: The mounting Hellenic horrors include a flabby story, damp jokes and an occasional goat



MOST READ >



'When I see another eejit using a Centra bag as carry-on, I wonder how so many of us managed to emigrate'



An Post pensioners to receive increases after Government approvals received



School denies discrimination by rewarding pupils in Communion choir with ice-cream



Varadkar and Heaton-Harris clash over Irish unity comments and progress on restoring Stormont



French police investigating alleged rape of Irish rugby fan in Bordeaux



LATEST STORIES >

Billy Vunipola to return to England backrow for their second World Cup match against Japan



Stable manager awarded €57,500 after employment law 'egregiously breached' in his dismissal



Libya: 10,000 people missing after flooding, says Red Cross



MSD opens expanded Irish medicine plants after €1bn investment



Israel's supreme court hears challenge to judicial restrictions



Era of runaway increases in Ireland's corporation tax receipts is over, McGrath says



Aaron Rodgers leaves Jets debut with injury, coach fears Achilles damage



Ukraine war: Kyiv likely to start peace talks only when resources run out, says Putin



ADVERTISEMENT



© 2023 The Irish Times DAC

Subscribe

- Why Subscribe?
- Subscription Bundles
- Subscriber Rewards
- Subscription Help Centre
- Home Delivery
- Gift Subscriptions

Support

- Contact Us
- Help Centre
- My Account

About Us

- Advertise
- Contact Us
- The Irish Times Trust
- Careers

Irish Times Products & Services

- ePaper
- Crosswords & puzzles
- Newspaper Archive
- Newsletters
- Article Index

Discount Codes

Download the app



OUR PARTNERS: MyHome.ie • Top 1000 • The Gloss • Recruit Ireland • Irish Times Training

[Terms & Conditions](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Cookie Information](#) | [Cookie Settings](#) | [Community Standards](#) | [Copyright](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

○ Eurovision

Eurovision 2023 semi-final as it happened: Ireland's Wild Youth knocked out

Ireland has not qualified since 2018. Liverpool will not be the place where we turn around our recent fortunes in the contest

✕ Expand



Ireland's Conor O'Donohoe of the band Wild Youth performs the song We Are One during the first semi-final of Eurovision 2023. Photograph: Paul Ellis/AFP



Laura Slattery

Tue May 9 2023 - 23:55



23:55



The qualifiers' press conference is still ongoing, but we've all got work in the morning, so let's wrap up this live blog from the Eurovision Semi-Final of Death, a name that proved accurate as far as Ireland's prospects were concerned.

Please congratulate me for making it through so many hours of madness without once using the Eurovision trigger word "staging" – well, apart from just right there, obviously.

I'm off to buy a cape – and possibly a tiara?

Thank you and goodnight.



Fans wave the Irish flag as Wild Youth perform in the Liverpool Arena. The band did not qualify for Saturday's Grand Final. Photograph: Adam Vaughan/EPA

23:36



Moldova's Pasha Parfeni says 2023 is pretty similar to his experience of competing at Eurovision in 2012. "Even Loreen is back," he observes.

The lone person from Moldova present at the press conference has no questions for Moldova.

Sweden's Loreen says the happiness of the people around her persuaded her to return for another contest. "This is nice energy, I go this way," is how she describes her thought process. "And so I went."

Then a journalist who isn't messing around queries an occasion – not tonight – when her vocals weren't "pitch perfect, for once", to which she laughs heartily but is clearly unimpressed. "Pitch perfect... what the f***."

Is Sweden ready to equal Ireland's record? "For me, those thoughts, like, winning, losing, back and forth, they disturb creativity," says Loreen, in something of a politician's answer.

23:28



Ed Power has reviewed the show [here](#): Eurovision knows how to throw a party without us, he says. Insert your own weeping face emoji.

ADVERTISEMENT

Meanwhile, the qualifiers' press conference has finally begun in a haze of whooping.

Norway's Alessandra is asked about what it felt like to be left last to be announced as a qualifier. "Me, my dancers and my team wanted to faint," she says, not holding back.

Croatia's nominated Let 3 spokesman tackles a heavier topic. "There is no winner in the wars, everybody is a victim, so please stop f***ing wars," he pleads. By contrast, there are no losers in Eurovision, he adds – a more contentious statement, perhaps.

Serbia's Luke Black, whose song title translates as "I just want to sleep", still hasn't got any sleep. He says he was inspired to write his Eurovision entry by his inner anxiety.

23:15



Philly McMahon, co-director of ThisIsPopBaby, is already looking to the future. No more Swedish co-writers is his verdict.



Not found

The work for 2024 begins! We have rich and raucous musical history and culture in this country. Let's showcase and celebrate it. No more Swedish co-writers. Give us the best this island has to offer. We can turn our fortunes around - the island is dripping in talent. <https://t.co/ijwdxx00Fz>

– Philly McMahon (@McMahonPhilly) [May 9, 2023](#)

23:02



Photographers in the Liverpool Arena have captured the moments – deflating, I'm sure – after Ireland fell at the semi-final stage once more.



Ireland's head of delegation Michael Kealy appears rueful beside his delegation colleagues as Wild Youth frontman Conor O'Donohoe digests the disappointment of not qualifying. Photograph: Peter Byrne/PA Wire

22:50



Some numerical facts about this year's Eurovision Song Contest, courtesy of the BBC. Including the rehearsals, there are nine live shows at Liverpool Arena in total, and they involve 600 rigging points, 140 tons of steel ground support structure and 1km of "additional steel truss work" being added to the arena.

Now I don't know what any of that means, but it sounds impressive.

The event features eight miles of cabling for lighting, sound, video and special effects, with more than 2,000 specialist lighting fixtures, 2,000 metres of secure fencing, 165,000 channels of lighting control across three operators, 23,700 individual light sources, 2,500 automated colour-changing robotic lights, 150 microphones and 1,200 audio streams.

There's also 100 wigs and hairpieces, 1,000 litres of hairspray, more than 3,000 make-up brushes, 5,000 hairpins and 150 metres of costume rails involved in this extravaganza.

So, a little grander in scale than Millstreet is I think what the BBC is saying here.

22:38



The Eurovision-covering media has now gathered for the qualifiers' press conference... but there's no sign of the qualifiers arriving for it just yet.

While I wait to see if the stream of this event yields any nuggets, other than journalists shuffling about in the dark, here's a picture of Marty Whelan in happier times meeting fellow moustache wearers Let 3, who were qualifiers tonight for Croatia.



22:12



Commiserations to Wild Youth.

They genuinely seemed to embrace the spirit of Eurovision and their performance was solid, but the song just didn't connect enough with voters – there's bound to be more of a post-mortem later, though they were surely unlucky to be drawn in what is undoubtedly the tougher of the two semi-finals.

Here is Mark Paul's [report from Liverpool](#).

Good luck to whoever is selected to represent Ireland in 2024, by which stage it will be six years since Ireland made it through the semi-final phase of the contest to the flag-waving, weekend glory of the Grand Final.

Hard luck also to Malta, Latvia, Azerbaijan and the Netherlands. Eurovision has no mercy on those with niche appeal.



The Eurovision trophy, on display before the announcement of tonight's semi-final results, is not destined for Irish hands this year. Photograph: Paul Ellis/AFP

22:07



And the qualifiers, in no particular order, are...

Croatia!

Moldova!

Switzerland!

Finland!

Czechia!

Israel!

Portugal!

Sweden!

Serbia!

Norway!

That means, sadly, that Ireland is out. "Foiled," says an emotional Marty Whelan, who was holding out hope to the end against his own better judgment.

22:00



In the first dress rehearsal for this semi-final all the entrants were assembled on stage, huddled in groups like X Factor contestants, as they waited to hear their fate.

But after trying out this new system, the production team decided to revert back to the reveal sequence used in recent years, with artists learning whether they will progress to the Grand Final from the comfort of the green room's semi-circular sofas, surrounded by their delegations – the correct decision, I think, as it's more atmospheric.

The moment of truth is now nigh. Who has survived to sing another day and who will be checking out the sights of Liverpool to distract themselves until their flight home?

21:53



Alesha Dixon learns some dance moves from Israel's Noa Kirel, Finland's Käärijä and Malta's The Busker, then Sanina shows Waddingham how to be a "rock goddess" – it would be no bother to her, in fairness.

Dixon then chats with three of the "Big Five". France's La Zarra likes "British icon" Mr Bean, while Germany's Lord of the Lost aka Chris Harms is a fan of – shock horror – Disney mugs. So, so, so scandalous, as Mis-Teeq used to say.

Italy's Marco Mengoni, who was the Italian entry in 2013 and is a former Italian winner of The X Factor, is invited to touch on the subject of being a Eurovision returnee. He notes that he was 10 years younger then. Weren't we all, Marco?

The good news is we are very nearly at the point of all the votes being counted and verified. And not in the Elon Musk meaning of the word "verified".

21:44



The vote has now... closed!

Alesha Dixon chats to Ukrainian commentator Timur Miroshnychenko and there's a clip of him commentating from a bunker last May as Kalush Orchestra sealed victory.

Dustin the Turkey, of Irelande Douze Pointe (sic) notoriety, makes his long-awaited Eurovision return, engaging in some Dustin-esque banter with Hannah Waddingham.

"I just want to wish everyone good luck tonight," says Dustin. "Just have fun, and be yourself, even if it means ruffling a few feathers!"

Wise and generous words from a turkey.

21:37



Irish Times London Correspondent Mark Paul, a huge fan of Liverpool FC*, is watching from the media centre close to Liverpool Arena (which is also known as M&S Bank Arena for people who like their naming rights to be respected).

He writes: "A bout of nationalistic fervour broke out in the media centre attached to the venue during Portugal's performance, with journalists on their feet and cheering throughout. The media centre has, as Eamon Dunphy might say, no shortage of 'fans with typewriters'. The atmosphere is fun, however, with the assembled hacks from all over Europe clearly enjoying the event as much as the crowd in the arena."

Mark met Marty Whelan for, I believe, the first time this morning. What could possibly top that? Nothing.

*Not true.

21:33



On a lighter note, here comes the skilfully strutting Rita Ora with a medley of her songs. I'd like to put it on record that I'm against medleys both in principle and in practice. But I am partial to the wistfulness of Ora's hit *Anywhere*, which briefly surfaces, and she eventually makes it to her big finish: a taster of *Praising You*, her new "reworking" of the Fatboy Slim hit *Praise You*.

Praise be.



British singer Rita Ora and friends perform during the interval of the first semi-final. Photograph: Paul Ellis/AFP

21:25

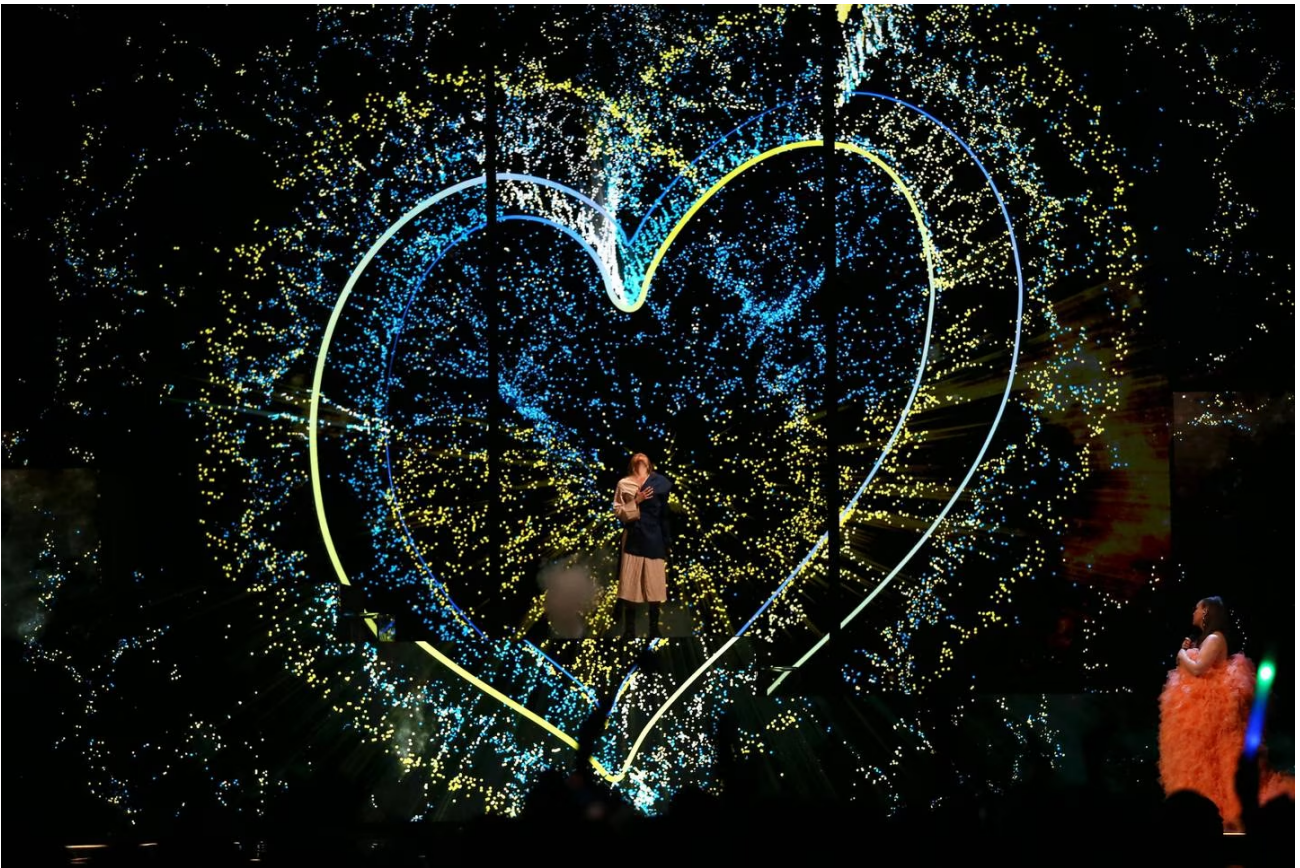


It's time for the first interval act, with Liverpool's Rebecca Ferguson and Ukraine's Alyosha here to perform a slowed down arrangement of *Ordinary World* by Duran Duran.

The song – a beautiful latter-day hit for the band, released in the UK in early 1993 – was originally written by lead singer Simon Le Bon about his grief for his childhood friend David Miles.

After the chilling addition of war siren sound effects, Alyosha takes over from Rebecca Ferguson, singing a second verse in Ukrainian, while heartbreaking text messages evoking the invasion and bombing of Ukraine float up the screen backdrop.

The BBC has done a stunning job with the lighting and visual effects tonight, and this work – which I couldn't see properly while watching the rehearsal stream on a tiny screen last night – is a poignant highlight, with the Eurovision heart symbol thumping away in blue and yellow.



Ukrainian singer Alyosha (left) and British singer Rebecca Ferguson perform during the interval as viewers at home vote. Photograph: Adam Vaughan/EPA

21:20



And that's it, all 15 countries have performed. Only 10 can survive... Alesha Dixon, Julia Sanina and Hannah Waddingham give it the big "3, 2, 1" countdown to the voting of opening. Sorry, no, that should be the opening of voting.

As Marty Whelan says on the RTÉ commentary, it's "the people's vote" tonight. Use yours wisely.



Eurovision 2023 hosts (left to right) Alesha Dixon, Julia Sanina and Hannah Waddingham on stage at Liverpool Arena. Photograph: Peter Byrne/PA

21:16



And finally, it's Finland, represented by the much-umlauted rapper Käärijä and his song Cha Cha Cha.

Well, I say song, it's more of a medley of genres – rap, metal, dance – that somehow all hangs together just enough to make it the bookies' second favourite for the contest.

Sample lyric: "Cha cha cha, ch-cha cha chaaa."

Käärijä, performing atop a wooden crate, is wearing a luminous green puffy bolero with a studded collar, while his dancers are all clad in the hottest of hot pink, but appear to be tied to the crate in a weird and wonderful Eurovision maypole. He does some Pac-Man manoeuvres, then he and his dancers temporarily form a human caterpillar.

Cha Cha Cha is about shrugging off the drudgery of work. Some day, I guess.

The recently late Strictly Come Dancing judge Len Goodman once told viewers that what he wanted to see from a cha cha cha was "rhythm, rhythm, rhythm", to which Bruce Forsyth replied "why, why, why".

It's a thought I've had more than once this evening.



It's Eurovision, okay: Käärijä of Finland performs with dancers during a rehearsal for tonight's semi-final. Photograph: Adam Vaughan/EPA

21:12



It's the penultimate song tonight, but alas it's Netherlands, here to depress us with Burning Daylight by Mia Nicolai and Dion Cooper.

Sample lyric: "I don't find any joy anymore / From the same old cycle."

With a song co-written by former Eurovision winner Duncan Laurence, the Dutch have shown up with some of the most downbeat lyrics possible here.

Dion is making more eye contact with the camera than I can theoretically handle. Mia only has eyes for Dion. They've got the dry ice out, and possibly some kind of pact going on. This is the only duet in this year's contest.

“Goodbye old life,” they sing at each other in the outro. This bit is apparently meant to be uplifting.

Next!



Mia Nicolai & Dion Cooper of the Netherlands perform Burning Daylight during rehearsals. Photograph: Adam Vaughan/EPA

21:08



Czechia's entry is Vesna with My Sister's Crown.

Sample lyric: “We are not your dolls, we are not your dolls.”

Well, if you have to say it...

Vesna are six ladies – the maximum number of performers allowed under Eurovision rules – dressed in soft pink jumpsuits and sporting extremely long plaits to facilitate some mildly freaky “hairography”.

They're dancing like puppets on a string to a soundtrack of squiggly noises and beats that are hard to get a handle on, but in a good way.

Some viewers may have had enough of crowns for one week, and it's a little too limited melodically to be a frontrunner, but on balance I like this one.



Czechia's Vesna rehearse their 'hairgraphy' ahead of tonight's semi-final. Photograph: Adam Vaughan/EPA

21:03



Azerbaijan has made its way to Liverpool with TuralTuranX and their song Tell Me More.

Sample lyric: “Ah, I don’t know where you are / Or what you’re up to / I kinda miss you girl right now / You know, the old days and stuff?”

TuralTuranX are two guitar-toting, curly-haired lads who have opted for a late 1960s look, with lime green and purple trouser suits accentuated by patterned shirts.

Tell Me More opens with a voicemail, a popular mode of communication in ye olden times.

Respect to TuralTuranX for squeezing a proper middle eight into this song, but overall it is one of the gentler, more sluggish numbers in this year’s Eurovision and, as such, likely to be overlooked.



TuralTuranX of Azerbaijan perform during a rehearsal for the 67th annual Eurovision Song Contest at Liverpool Arena. Photograph: Adam Vaughan/EPA

20:57



Time for the bookmakers' favourite for the whole contest as 2012 winner – and therefore Eurovision royalty – Loreen returns to the arena for Sweden with the song Tattoo.

Sample lyric: “No, I don’t care about the pain / I’ll walk through fire and through rain / Just to get closer to you / You’re stuck on me like a tattoo.”

Sounds painful. Tattoo is a slighter effort than Euphoria, Loreen’s winning track in 2012, but it comes from the same essential family of song.

Loreen starts her performance writhing about in a light box. Although it has a nice fluttery hook in the chorus, I am slightly underwhelmed by this, which I don’t admit lightly given Loreen has the longest nails in Europe and looks like she isn’t afraid to use them.



Loreen of Sweden, possessor of big voice and even bigger nails, performs during a rehearsal for tonight's semi-final. Photograph: Adam Vaughan/EPA

20:52



Moldova's entry is Pasha Parfeni and the song Soarele si Luna (The Sun and the Moon).

Sample lyric (translated): "I promised my bride / A wedding under a starry sky."

Parfeni, who romped home in Moldova's national contest, also represented his country in the 2012 contest held in Azerbaijan (he came 11th), so he knows what Eurovision is about: weird robes and even weirder, antler-style headgear.

The call-and-response section near the end is nice and chanty, but I'm not entirely convinced by this one, and the dry ice isn't going to change my mind.



Pasha Parfeni does his thing for Moldova in a rehearsal for tonight's Eurovision semi-final in Liverpool. Photograph: Adam Vaughan/EPA

20:49



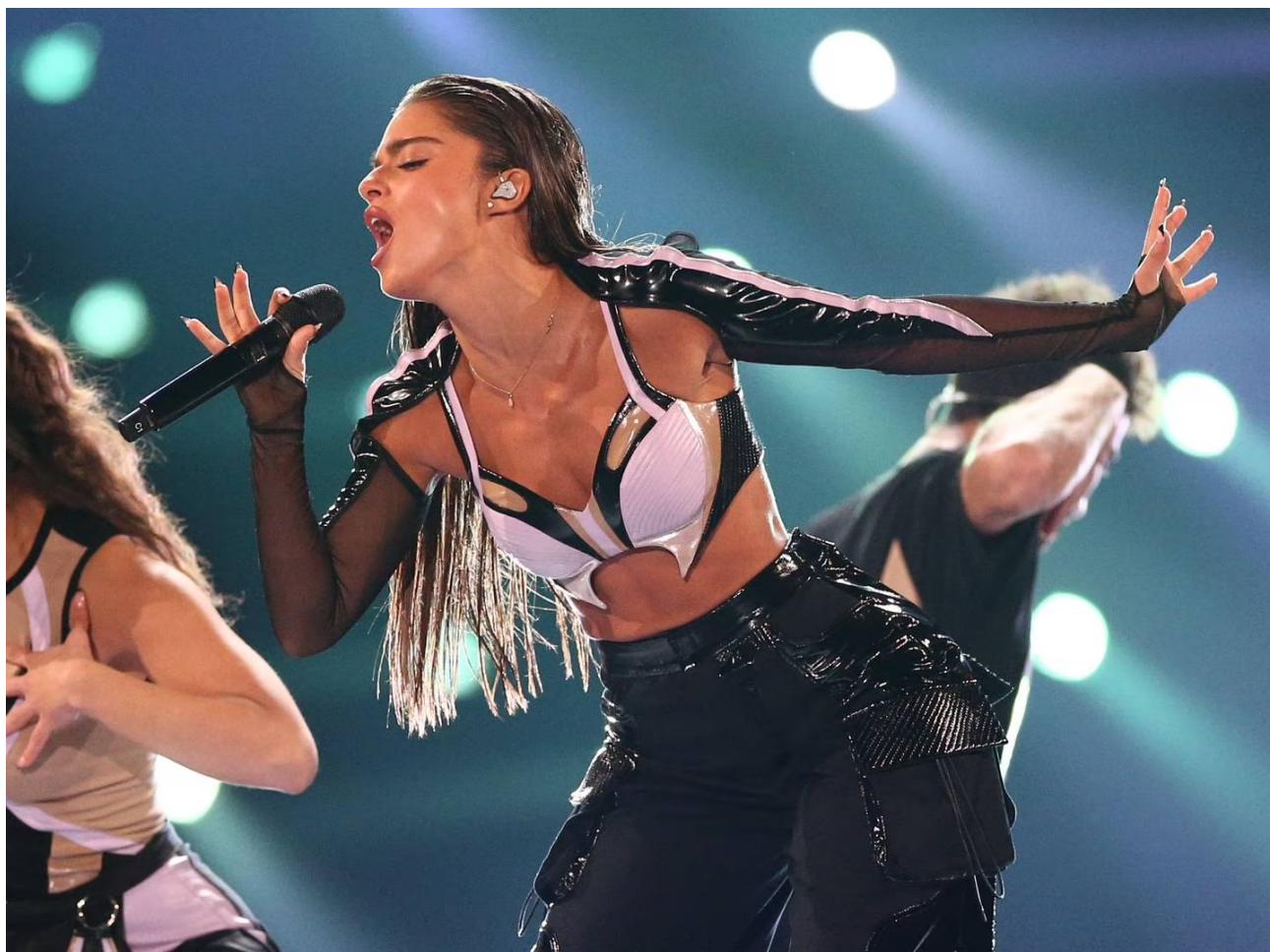
Next up is Israeli star Noa Kirel singing Unicorn. One of her signature dance moves is also called “the unicorn”.

Sample lyric: “Hey, do you want to check my DNA?”

Unicorns, of course, famously don't exist, so possessing the power of a unicorn seems a dubious thing to brag about – unless, this is an ode to the Israeli tech industry through the medium of pop.

Either way, it's a safe bet to qualify tonight.

Eurovision cliché alert: a snippet of mad laughter in the middle of the song for no reason.



Noa Kirel of Israel performs her song Unicorn during a rehearsal for tonight's semi-final. Photograph: Adam Vaughan/EPA

20:45



We have now mercifully crossed the halfway point courtesy of Switzerland, represented tonight by Remo Forrer and the song Watergun.

Sample lyric: "I don't wanna be a soldier, soldier / I don't wanna have to play with real blood / 'Cos we ain't playin' now / Can't turn and run / No waterguns / Just body bags that we've become."

I originally misread the title as Waterfun, which would have been a whole other song.

Forrer has one of the strongest voices tonight and is executing his anti-war power ballad about powerless in the face of geopolitical conflict with real emotion – and some interpretative dance, obviously.

Still, it's Switzerland. I'm neutral on this one.



Remo Forrer of Switzerland performs his anti-war song during the dress rehearsal for tonight's Eurovision semi-final. Photograph: Adam Vaughan/EPA

20:40



Time for Croatia to play the Eurovision eccentricity card with Mama SC! by Let 3, a band with an, ahem, colourful past.

Sample lyric (translated): “Mama, I’m going to war / That little psychopath / War, war / Evil little psychopath.”

This is about war, Armageddon and tractors, not necessarily in that order, and is apparently an anti-Putin song. For what it’s worth, I do think that if Putin was locked in a bunker and forced to listen to Mama SC! on a loop, he wouldn’t enjoy the experience, so on that basis, all power to Let 3.

The video backdrop makes it look like there’s a hundred people in Let 3, though only the band members are stripping down to their Y-fronts. It will shock you to learn they have a history of taking their clothes off. Be grateful they’ve kept their undies on is what I’m saying.

Good night, Croatia, and good luck.



Croatia's Let 3 rehearse ahead of tonight's semi-final. Photograph: Adam Vaughan/EPA

20:36



Time for Ireland to shine – literally, at least, courtesy of the spangly gold theme of the production design – with Wild Youth's We Are One.

Sample lyric: "We might be different / we might be unique / You might be a leader / I might be a freak."

This has grown on me a little – I like the shouty lead-in to the chorus – and yet it does have the unmistakable hint of a mobile telephone advertisement soundtrack from 2007. The "we are one" sentiment is a touch hackneyed for Eurovision now.

Conor O'Donohoe descends the stairs and bounces about between his bandmates as the song builds to a climax that makes good use of the spark fountains lining the stage runway.

So is it going to be the final? Or is it going to go down in flames?



Wild Youth rehearse their performance of We Are One ahead the semi-final. Photograph: Adam Vaughan/EPA

20:30



After an outbreak of MC-ing from Dixon – “still got it,” is Rylan’s verdict on the BBC’s commentary – and a brief exchange between Waddingham and Bucks Fizz, we’re on to the fifth song tonight. It’s Portugal with Ai Coração (Oh Heart) by Mimicat.

Sample lyric (translated): “The doctor says there’s nothing to be done / ‘Lost cause’, I saw him writing.”

It’s red feathers a go-go here with Mimicat and her four backing dancers dressed in pillar-box red. The clue’s in her name: there’s a feline quality to this performance of a song about the unpleasant physical symptoms of heartache (can confirm).

Mimicat, aka Marisa Mena, co-wrote this song and she’s pouring her heart into telling us how her chest is burning, her mouth is dry and she’s dizzy. There’s a toe-tapping traditional bit that soon builds into full-speed Portuguese cabaret.

This is one of my favourites tonight, which sadly does not bode well for its chances.



Mimicat of Portugal rehearses her performance of a song about heartache. Photograph: Adam Vaughan/EPA

20:25



Latvia is represented by the indie rock band Sudden Lights and their song Ajia.

Sample lyric: “Used to think we live in a world so beautiful / You see, I think I don’t believe in this stuff anymore.”

Sudden Lights know their way around a song, judging from this one, which is apparently meant to be a lullaby – seems more like a dark night of the soul.

They’re the Latvian Death Cab for Cutie, which is fine by me, but the Eurovision televoting public might demand a little more dynamism.



Latvia's Sudden Lights rehearse ahead of tonight's semi-final. Photograph: Anthony Devlin/Getty Images

20:22



Serbia's entry is Luke Black with Samo Mi Se Spava, a title that translates as "I just want to sleep".

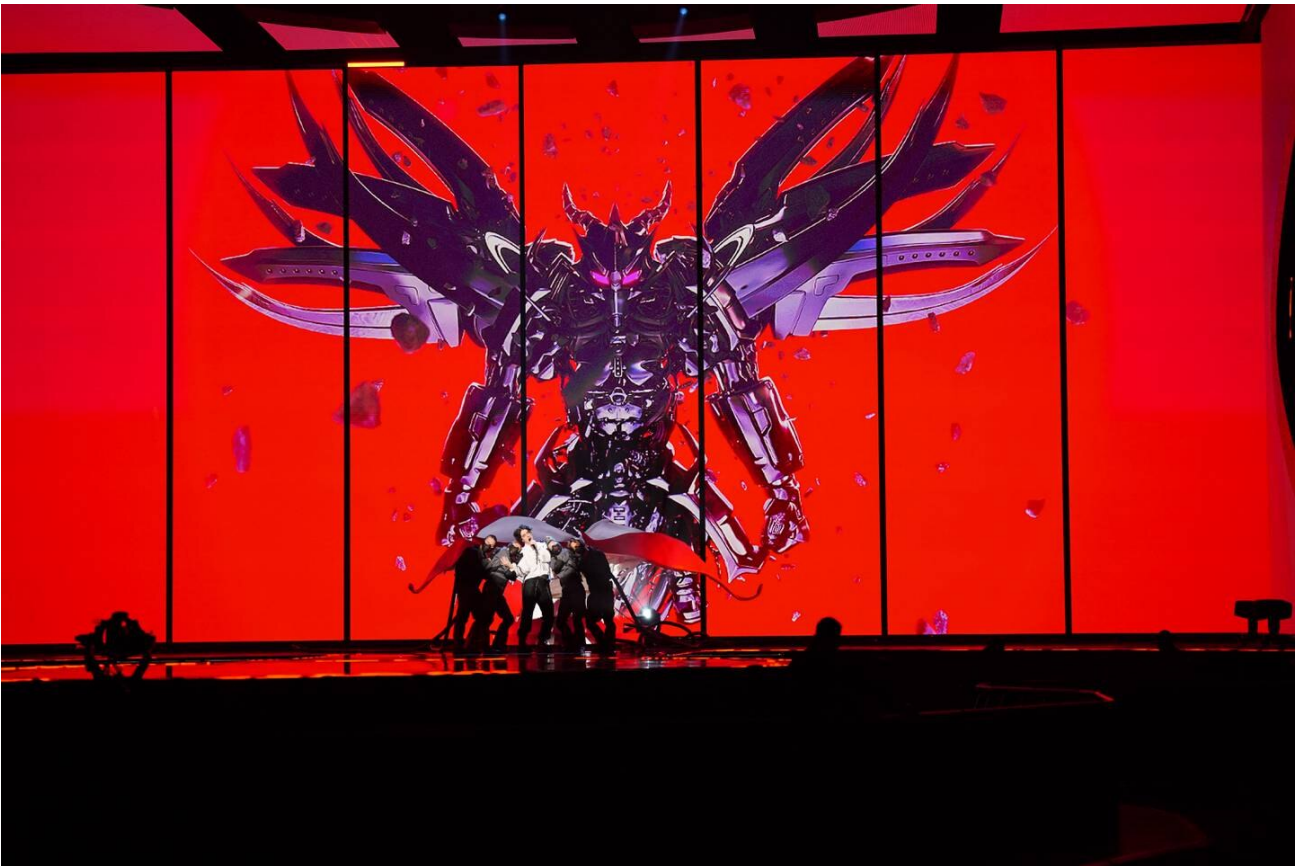
Ah, but the night is young, Luke, the night is young.

Sample lyric: "Baby, watch the world on fire / It is all a game to me / I don't wanna choose my fighter / Who's taking control of me?"

This has married 1980s arcade video game vibes to a quasi-gothic Hollywood dystopia aesthetic – his backing dancers are shuffling about like android dogs.

So, will it be game over for Serbia or will it be progressing to the next level? And will Luke finally get some kip?

Answers on a Eurovision postcard.



Luke Black, representing Serbia, performs at the Eurovision semi-final dress rehearsal. Photograph: Peter Byrne/PA Wire

20:18



Malta is next with Dance (Our Own Party) by The Busker.

Sample lyric: “I feel better / In my sweater.”

Fair play to three-piece The Busker, who have remembered how intrinsic clothing is to the history of Eurovision, from Bucks Fizz’s removable skirts in 1981 to the pink bucket hat worn last year by Oleh Psyuk, lead singer of Ukraine’s Kalush Orchestra.

The good news for The Busker’s frontman Dav Jr and his two bandmates is that they each have not one, but two sweaters to model for us tonight.

Malta often shows up with a decent bop, and The Busker do indeed want us to dance. This jaunty, saxophone-assisted effort is a little naff for me, though I find it mildly endearing too, if only because I also feel better in my sweater.



Malta's The Busker rehearse their clothing-themed number ahead of tonight's Eurovision semi-final. Photograph: Adam Vaughan/EPA

20:13



First up tonight is Norway's Alessandra and her song Queen of Kings.

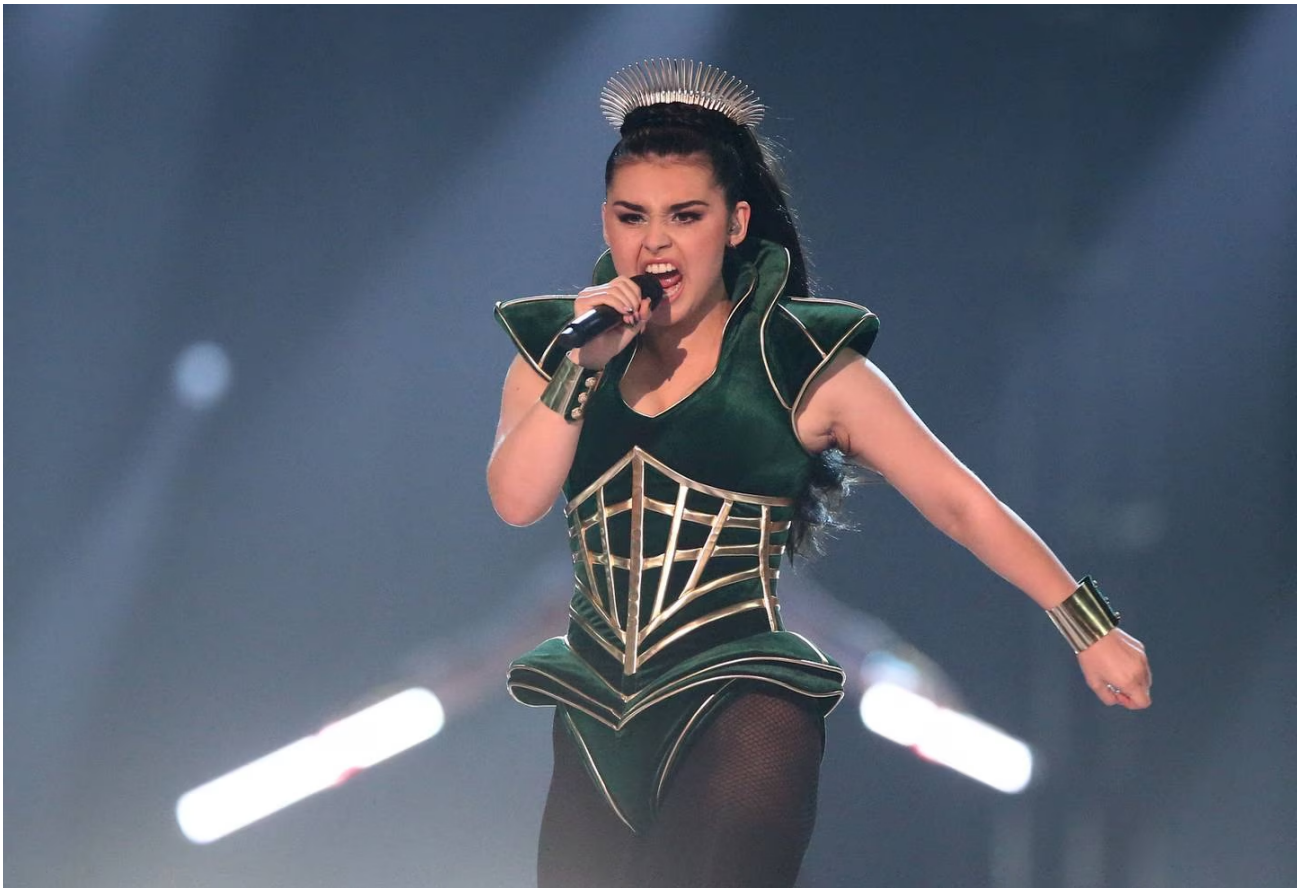
Sample lyric: "She, queen of the kings / Broken her cage, threw out the keys / She will be the warrior of North and Southern seas."

The Norwegian-Italian Alessandra – wearing warrior-style green velvet with gold piping – is singing a belter of an ode to female empowerment, which she co-wrote. It's fiery, poppy and highly catchy in familiar yet effective Eurovision style. Hey!

Queen of Kings has a tinge of Florence and the Machine, if that machine was transported from a Viking encampment to Eurovision via the Italian club scene.

People of a certain age will remember that Norway used to be the "nul points" country – it achieved this Eurovision fate on four occasions – but it has shaken off that reputation in recent decades and claimed the Grand Prix as recently as 2009, courtesy of one of my all-time favourite Eurovision winners: Alexander Rybak's Fairytale.

Last year's Norwegian entry was titled Give That Wolf a Banana, which qualified and came tenth. This one is better. A lot better.



Alessandra of Norway performs during a rehearsal for the 67th annual Eurovision Song Contest. Photograph: Adam Vaughan/EPA

20:08



The EBU's glorious theme signals the start of proceedings, with the show itself opening, as these shows tend to do, with a spot of interpretative dance.

Two young children unite to express themselves to Phil Oakey and Giorgio Moroder's 1984 hit Together in Electric Dreams, then walk through dry ice to where Julia Sanina awaits with a full troupe of backing dancers. Sanina's outfit – a zippy, shiny black dress with arm-length sleeves – has a flame motif on its skirt hem to match the stage's flame machine, which goes wild. She owns the stage with the assurance of someone who needs no votes tonight.

Alesha Dixon enters wearing a red one-shouldered top in the shape of a massive bow and a full taffeta-esque pink skirt, while Hannah Waddingham is dressed in a purple, pink, orange and yellow-hued number with a cape. She calls the trio "your honorary Liver birds", Dixon thanks last year's hosts Turin and Sanina, after a blunt mention of the war, says "beautiful Liverpool" has welcomed Ukrainians with open arms.

Waddingham does a little French, then jokes that "some of us Brits do bother to learn another language". Yes, well done, Hannah.

Note: If you only want to watch Ireland, they're up sixth.

19:55



As the show is about to begin, here's a quick note on our trio of hosts for tonight and Thursday's semi-final.

They are former Mis-Teeq and solo pop star Alesha Dixon, who you may also know as a Strictly Come Dancing champion and a Strictly/Britain's Got Talent judge; the supremely tall Emmy-winning actor, Ted Lasso star and musical theatre performer Hannah Waddingham; and aforementioned Ukrainian singer-songwriter Julia Sanina, frontwoman of rock band The Hardkiss.

All three ladies have big voices – huge – while the MC-ing Dixon also possesses one of the largest laughs in Britain.



But can they do the Late Late? Eurovision hosts Hannah Waddingham, Julia Sanina and Alesha Dixon. Photograph: James Stack/BBC

For the Grand Final, Graham Norton, who will also do the BBC's television commentary on Saturday night, will join Dixon, Waddingham and Sanina on stage. He'll be handling the scoring alongside Waddingham, with Mel Giedroyc picking up the TV commentary in his absence.

Viewers love to slag off the hosts of Eurovision every year, but watching an online stream of the rehearsals on Monday has reiterated for me that it's hard work being a television presenter. There's lots of hanging about while producers get the technical side of things right.

These three have good chemistry and Dixon, in particular, appears to be fazed by nothing.

19:50



Eurovision songs are not permitted to exceed three minutes in duration, a rule that was introduced in 1958, the third year of the contest, because Italy had warbled on for five minutes and nine seconds in 1957.

Sub-three minutes used to be a pretty standard length for pop songs due to first the technical restrictions of early record formats and later radio station conventions. But average lengths steadily increased, rising above the four-minute mark by the 1990s. "Radio edits" became a thing.

More recently, thanks to the perma-temptation of the skip button, the trend has reversed and songs are becoming shorter on average again. Still, an actual three-minute rule means songwriters have to crack on with it – no dallying about for ages on the verse.

Excellent songs that won't detain listeners for more than three minutes: Wannabe by Spice Girls, Dancing in the Street by Martha & the Vandellas, As It Was by Harry Styles, Will You Love Me Tomorrow by The Shirelles, Song 2 by Blur, Fell In Love With a Girl by The White Stripes, For No One by The Beatles...

19:45



Guitars, drums, a little bit of sax... you'll see many musical instruments on stage tonight, but they are, in effect, props. No live instrumentation is allowed.

It used be the case that the host broadcaster was obliged to provide an orchestra and every instrument on the backing track had to appear on stage. In 1996, this meant that Gina G's Ooh Aah... Just A Little Bit – the UK entry that pioneered what soon became Eurovision's default dance pop genre – had to be performed with two Apple Macs on stage, one beside each synthesizer.

In 1997, the rules changed so that live instrumentation became optional. But in 1999, Israel chose not to provide an orchestra at all, ushering in the era of pre-recorded music at Eurovision. No, not everybody was happy about this.

Since 2021, the backing vocals can also be pre-recorded. Only the lead vocal has to be live. But, hey, this is an era in which artificial intelligence (AI) tools can and do create clones of human vocals. That makes Eurovision a bastion of raw musical integrity by comparison.

19:40



Liverpudlian pop singer Sonia will be one of said “Eurovision legends” performing at the interval on Saturday. Indeed, this is the 30th anniversary of one of the greatest moments in Eurovision history: when Niamh Kavanagh's belter of a ballad In Your Eyes eclipsed Sonia's Better The Devil You Know in a nail-biting scoring climax.

The Jimmy Walsh-composed In Your Eyes is, of course, the best of Ireland's seven wins. Sorry, Johnny. Hold Me Now is a close second, to be fair.

The victory not only came down to the final jury to read out its results – Malta – but the announcement of its top marks, as Ireland was ahead of the UK by less than 12 points.

Suspense inside the Millstreet venue rose as the Maltese spokesman read out its jury scores, mentioning neither Ireland nor the UK, with the home audience's murmurs rising to a crescendo ahead of the fate-deciding douze points. Was Ireland going to win for a second year in a row?

Happily, Malta gave its 12 points to Ireland and a delirious Kavanagh. This was 1993, right in the middle of our never-equalled three-in-a-row streak. Pat Kenny has only just recovered.



Eurovision winner Niamh Kavanagh kissing her trophy after winning the song contest in Millstreet, Co Cork, in 1993. Photograph: Frank Miller

19:30



Practical considerations – a suitably sized arena, (just about) enough hotel accommodation – will have swung Eurovision for Liverpool.

But that the city has a compelling musical history also gives the UK a good story to tell when trying to drum up tourism revenue on the back of Eurovision exposure.

So after Sam Ryder's interval performance on Saturday night, there will be an act called the Liverpool Songbook, billed as "a celebration of the host city's incredible contribution to the world of pop music", with various "Eurovision legends" on hand to "put their own spin on some classic hits".

We can but hope for Yellow Submarine.



The Beatles statues at Pier Head in Liverpool dressed in traditional Ukrainian clothing ahead of Eurovision. Photograph: BBC Studios

19:15



The last time Eurovision was held in a country other than the one that had won the previous year was in 1980, when the Netherlands agreed to host instead of Israel, which had won two years in a row and declined to host for a second successive year.

So it was in The Hague where Johnny Logan chalked up what was then only Ireland's second victory with the Shay Healy-penned song *What's Another Year* – a sentiment that the Israeli broadcaster evidently did not share.



Johnny Logan performs at Eurovision in The Hague in 1980, when he won with What's Another Year. Photograph: Viktor Dammann/RDB/ullstein bild via Getty Images

19:05



A month after Ukraine's victory, the EBU entered talks with the BBC to host this year's competition on the basis that the UK, after years of Eurovision disaster, had come second thanks to Sam Ryder and his song Space Man.

The UK and the BBC stepping in on behalf of Ukraine was a sensitive matter, not least because both Ukrainian culture minister Oleksandr Tkachenko and the Ukrainian broadcaster UA: PBC had expressed hope that they would be able to host.

That sadly wasn't going to be feasible, so the UK was confirmed as hosts in July, with Liverpool selected from a shortlist of cities in October.

After so long in the Eurovision wilderness – the UK last hosted in 1998, following its victory at the 1997 contest in Dublin – the BBC is obviously wildly excited about showing off its live event capabilities.

But it also has to be mindful that it is hosting "in consultation with" UA: PBC and that the chance to be hosts has only fallen its way because of the terrible situation in Ukraine.

So expect a strong Ukrainian flavour throughout proceedings, from the blue-and-yellow hue of Eurovision's heart logo to Ukrainian co-host Julia Sanina's central role to the inclusion of Ukrainian singer Alyosha, one of tonight's interval acts. There'll be some chat with veteran Ukrainian commentator Timur Miroshnychenko, too.

On Saturday night, the Grand Final will open with 2022 winners Kalush Orchestra and a performance titled Voices of New Generation, while the flag parade of finalists will be soundtracked by "some iconic past Ukrainian Eurovision contestants" weaved with "British classics".



Ukraine's Julia Sanina (centre) with her Eurovision co-hosts Alesha Dixon (left) and Hannah Waddingham (right) during a rehearsal for tonight's semi-final. Photograph: Adam Vaughan/EPA

18:55



Last year was not Ukraine's first Eurovision triumph. It is, in fact, the only country to have won three times in the 21st century, with its other victories coming in 2004, when Ruslana won it with Wild Dances, and 2016, when Jamala won it with 1944.

So while Russia's war on Ukraine undoubtedly led to the 2022 result, it has a strong record overall since making its debut in 2003 – the first year the UK got nul points – and is the only country to have an enviable 100 per cent qualifying rate from the semi-finals.

Russia was kicked out of Eurovision 2022 after the EBU "consulted" with its membership, including Ukraine's UA: PBC, which had no truck with the initial EBU statement that the competition was "a non-political cultural event". The EBU swiftly concluded that Russia's participation would "bring the competition into disrepute" and it remains suspended this year.

Russia-Ukraine tensions had previously spilled onto the Eurovision stage back in 2016, when Jamala beat pre-contest favourites Russia with a song that documented the deportation of Crimean Tatars under Joself Stalin and was widely interpreted as criticism of Russia's 2014 annexation of Ukraine.

Russia's aggression in Europe continues to cast a shadow over the event – indeed, it is noticeable how many of the songs in this year's contest are about war and conflict.

It is not inconceivable that Ukraine will win again. Their entry, Heart of Steel by pop duo Tvorchi, was chosen in December during a live broadcast from a Kyiv bomb shelter.



Ukraine's Eurovision 2023 entry Heart of Steel by Tvorchi. Photograph: Chloe Hashemi/EBU

18:45



While Saturday's Grand Final will combine a jury vote and a public televote as usual, the two semi-finals will be public voting only this year, in a change to proceedings.

This is because the EBU's independent voting partner detected "irregular voting patterns" last year in the jury votes of six countries taking part in one of the semi-finals: Azerbaijan, Georgia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania and San Marino.

Another change this year is that there is a "rest of world" public vote for non-participating countries watching the broadcast, with these votes collectively forming the equivalent of a single country. This is "in recognition of the global reach of the event", according to the EBU.

Viewers from non-participating countries can only vote "via a secure online platform using a credit card from their country", with all of this overseen by the EBU's voting partner – a German company called Digame – and overseen by its independent voting observer, accountancy giant EY.

Reminder: you cannot vote for your own country. Well, you can if you live in another one.

Irish diaspora: we may need your help.

18:35



Tonight's batch of 10 qualifiers from 15 countries will be joined in the final by 10 qualifiers from the 16 countries set to perform in Semi-Final 2 on Thursday night. Ukraine plus the "Big Five" Eurovision funders of Germany, the UK, France, Spain and Italy will then bring Saturday's song tally up to 26.

Later tonight, we'll be treated to tasters of France (La Zarra with the classy cabaret song *Évidemment*), Germany (Lord of the Lost with tedious shout-fest *Blood and Glitter*) and Italy (leather-trousered Marco Mengoni with heartfelt ballad *Due Vite*).

My favourites, for what it's worth, are France, Norway, which is first up tonight, and (from the second semi-final) Poland's summery Solo by Blanka (though the bookies suggest this breezy ditty is doomed).

I'm also partial to the Austrian song, which is about being haunted by Edgar Allen Poe, and I only want good things for Portugal's Mimicat, who we will see tonight.



Austria's Teya & Salena rehearse Who the Hell is Edgar? ahead of their Thursday semi-final. Photograph: Claire Louise Bennett/EBU

18:25



Let's just get this one out of the way. Since the semi-finals were introduced in 2004, we have failed to qualify 10 times and got through six times – but only twice in the past decade. And on two of the occasions we did qualify, we came last in the final. Not ideal.

Our best result since the year 2000 came courtesy of Jedward, who came eighth in 2011 with Lipstick. Our last qualification for the grand final was in 2018, when Ryan O'Shaughnessy's performance of the song Together got us through in Lisbon.



Ireland's Ryan O'Shaughnessy performing Together in Lisbon in 2018: he was the last Irish entrant to qualify for the Eurovision Grand Final.
Photograph: Andres Poveda

RTÉ's long-term “head of delegation” Michael Kealy is all too aware of the qualification hurdle. He's told the Irish Independent's reporter in Liverpool that it is “a tough semi-final”, but he is “confident we could maybe qualify for Saturday”.

So that's a confident maybe.

Wild Youth's Conor O'Donohoe, meanwhile, had this to say at an official Eurovision meet-and-greet: “We always want to achieve the best that we can... For us, it's about delivering a performance that we can all look back on and be happy, make our families proud, make everyone who works for us proud and make our country proud.”

18:15



The Eurovision Song Contest is organised annually by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), which these days is led from its Geneva headquarters by its Irish director general, former RTÉ boss Noel Curran.

The EBU is an alliance of public service media organisations that draws its members from what's known as the European Broadcasting Area, which doesn't totally align with what we think of as “Europe” – hence the participation of Israel, for example. It also has associate members around the world, including in Australia, which made its Eurovision debut eight years ago.

While the EBU was founded in 1950, Eurovision began six years later and was based on an Italian song contest held in Sanremo. Only seven countries participated in the inaugural 1956 contest and each country had two songs. The event was held in Lugano, Switzerland, and was won by the hosts and its entrant Lys Assia, who sang both Swiss songs on the night – one in German, one in French – and won with her second one (in French), Refrain.



The late Swiss singer Lys Assia (and her dog Alijah) pictured in 2012. The first ever winner of Eurovision, she died in 2018. Photograph: The Image Gate/Getty Images)

As well as its showpiece Eurovision Song Contest event, the EBU operates programming exchanges across the arts, news and sport. But perhaps the best thing about the organisation is its theme, the prelude to Charpentier's Te Deum. You know [the one...](#)

18:05



Speaking of Swedes with Eurovision history, the bookies' favourite this year is Loreen, who won the contest for Sweden back in 2012 with her club banger Euphoria, and is one of several returnees this year.

Sweden's first Eurovision triumph was in 1974, when Abba bounded onto the set to sing Waterloo, shaking things up with their energy, their harmonies and their actual tunes. Sweden has now racked up six victories, the most recent of which was in 2015 – ever since then, it has been threatening to draw level with Ireland's record seven wins.

Clearly, they must be stopped.

But how is the question?



Sweden's Abba performing Waterloo at Eurovision 1974, held in Brighton. Photograph: Olle Lindeborg/Scanpix Sweden/AFP via Getty Images

18:00



Ireland is represented in this year's contest by Dublin four-piece band Wild Youth and their anthem to unity *We Are One*, the song that triumphed in RTÉ's *The Late Late Show Eurosong* special back in February.

Wild Youth – who are Conor O'Donohoe, David Whelan, Ed Porter and Callum McAdam – have been on the go for about seven years now, but luckily remain some way off having to change their name to Wild Mid-Life.

The band have been a support act for Westlife, Niall Horan, Kodaline, The Script and others, so they have a decent level of experience performing in large venues – something that has perhaps been missing from some Irish Eurovision contestants in recent decades.



Ireland's Wild Youth pose on Eurovision's 'turquoise carpet' in Liverpool on Sunday. Photograph: Adam Vaughan/EPA

Irish Times London Correspondent Mark Paul, who is our Liverpool Correspondent this week, spoke to the band plus RTÉ commentator Marty Whelan this morning, and you can read his preview piece [here](#).

The band has fully succumbed to the Eurovision experience, with frontman Conor O'Donohoe decked out tonight in a very fetching gold jumpsuit that I can't help coveting (with a few adjustments, obviously).

I'll say more about We Are One later, but just to note for now that the song was composed by O'Donohoe and Porter from the band alongside Swedish songwriter Jörgen Elofsson.

Elofsson has co-writing song credits on Will Young's Pop Idol song Evergreen, Kelly Clarkson's Pop Idol song A Moment Like This, Britney Spears's second single Sometimes, Fool Again by Westlife, the sublime It's the Way You Make Me Feel by Steps and many more. He has also worked with Eurovision/Abba royalty Agnetha Fältskog.

In 2017, he co-wrote Ireland's Eurovision entry Dying to Try, sung by Brendan Murray. It didn't qualify. I'd say that's an omen, but I don't believe in omens.

17:55



You can listen to all 37 entries in this year's contest via this [official Spotify playlist](#). Yes, it has made Sweden the first track for a reason.

With most songs safely up-tempo and nothing dragging on longer than the maximum Eurovision duration of three minutes, this playlist is quite useful for exercise purposes – even if that exercise only extends to hurriedly pressing skip when Germany comes on.

Alternatively, you can hear me breathlessly, but accurately, clarify that I'm a Eurovision fan not a superfan on our In The News podcast [here](#).

Intrigued by Eurovision but would prefer not to listen to any of the actual songs, thank you very much? Read Ed Power's rundown of the "[cauldron of controversy](#)," that is the song contest, including the year that RTÉ sent neither an entrant nor a broadcasting team because its workers were on strike.

17:45



Good evening, and welcome to The Irish Times live blog for the Eurovision Song Contest Semi-Final 1, as it's officially known, or the Semi-Final of Death, as Eurovision fans are fondly calling it.

This is our first taster of the kitsch, brash and effusive splendour of Eurovision 2023. A word of warning from someone (me) who has watched the dress rehearsal: by the end of the evening, you will want to buy a cape.

As the show gets underway at 8pm live from Liverpool Arena, I'll be soberly assessing 15 of the 37 contenders for this year's Grand Prix, as Ireland vies to be one of 10 countries to make it through tonight's semi to Saturday's Grand Final.

Along the way, I'll be recapping the background to the 2023 event – hosted by the UK on behalf of last year's winners Ukraine – and retracing the sparkly contest's path to becoming the fabulous, absurd and eclectic pan-European theatre that audiences know and love today.

Then, after we find out who has and hasn't progressed from tonight's all-televote affair, I'll bring euphoric updates from the post-event qualifiers' press conference and mop up the sequin-strewn aftermath as best I can.

I am also hoping to include some updates from my colleague Mark Paul, who is in Liverpool for The Irish Times tonight, but I'm not 100 per cent certain he made it out of this afternoon's rehearsal alive: his last communication to me was "here come the Moldovan horn people".

Music makes the people come together, as Eurovision 2019's interval act – a little-known American singer called Madonna – once claimed.

So, whether you're readying yourself for a night of eye-rolling, an evening of painstakingly filling out homemade scoresheets or both, please hold me now, rise like a phoenix and prepare for all kinds of everything from the extraordinary world of Eurovision.



Love is Blue: The set for Eurovision 2023 in the Liverpool Arena. Photograph: Nick Robinson/BBC

Eurovision Song Contest Wild Youth BBC RTÉ

IN THIS SECTION



Paul Simon says he is 'beginning to' accept his hearing loss



'We had always supposed the Irish were our natural enemies. We rejoiced at the discovery of our mistake'



Christine and the Queens in Dublin: A charismatic and theatrical performance in a liberating show



Sinéad O'Connor's warning about online pile-ons was prophetic in more ways than one



Tosca review: Thrills and chills in Northern Ireland Opera's stirring new production

MOST READ >



'When I see another eejit using a Centra bag as carry-on, I wonder how so many of us managed to emigrate'



An Post pensioners to receive increases after Government approvals received



School denies discrimination by rewarding pupils in Communion choir with ice-cream



Varadkar and Heaton-Harris clash over Irish unity comments and progress on restoring Stormont



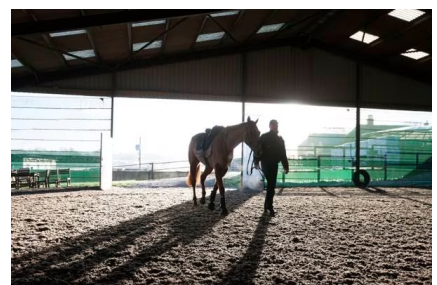
French police investigating alleged rape of Irish rugby fan in Bordeaux

LATEST STORIES >

Billy Vunipola to return to England backrow for their second World Cup match against Japan



Stable manager awarded €57,500 after employment law 'egregiously breached' in his dismissal



Libya: 10,000 people missing after flooding, says Red Cross



MSD opens expanded Irish medicine plants after €1bn investment



Israel's supreme court hears challenge to judicial restrictions



Era of runaway increases in Ireland's corporation tax receipts is over, McGrath says



Aaron Rodgers leaves Jets debut with injury, coach fears Achilles damage



Ukraine war: Kyiv likely to start peace talks only when resources run out, says Putin





Subscribe

- [Why Subscribe?](#)
- [Subscription Bundles](#)
- [Subscriber Rewards](#)
- [Subscription Help Centre](#)
- [Home Delivery](#)
- [Gift Subscriptions](#)

Support

- [Contact Us](#)
- [Help Centre](#)
- [My Account](#)

About Us

- [Advertise](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [The Irish Times Trust](#)
- [Careers](#)

Irish Times Products & Services

- [ePaper](#)
- [Crosswords & puzzles](#)
- [Newspaper Archive](#)
- [Newsletters](#)
- [Article Index](#)
- [Discount Codes](#)

Download the app



OUR PARTNERS: [MyHome.ie](#) • [Top 1000](#) • [The Gloss](#) • [Recruit Ireland](#) • [Irish Times Training](#)

[Terms & Conditions](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Cookie Information](#) | [Cookie Settings](#) | [Community Standards](#) | [Copyright](#)