

Once Eurovision Song Contest time comes around we all get that feeling. The anticipation of the votes the preparation of the parties, the study.....Well ok, maybe that's just us but there is no doubt that it holds a certain interest for all of us. One thing for sure, whether it's for betting or whether it's just to impress our friends once we have consumed a few vinos, we all want to show a little insider knowledge. So, if you want to impress your friends then this handy guide is just the thing before venturing to a Eurovision party. On the other hand, it may be the ideal conversation starter if you leave in on the coffee table as we can't think of any better way to pass an evening than debating Eurovision entries! Now if you really want to know more than just the songs, then after this little taster you should check out all the in-depth data, analysis and study of the Eurovision Song Contest in Adrian Kavanagh's thumping good book.....'The Eurovision Handbook2014' : <http://www.lulu.com/shop/adrian-kavanagh/the-eurovision-handbook-2014/paperback/product-21571645.html>

The Songs.....

Semi Final One

Armenia

Fallon says: According to this song he says some dreams 'make you cry', they probably do when you fall asleep to this. It's not all bad, after all this is one of the bookies hot favourites, but it is a pretty dreary number where he spends most of his time telling her not to cry and that she is not alone. I reckon the fact he won't leave her alone is why she's crying in the first place. Not even the introduction of a nifty dance drum midway through can raise the excitement levels. It's not setting me alight but it seems i might be the odd one out here.

Kavanagh Says: I'm liking this a bit more than JF is! At present this is the favourite to win this year's contest and I can see why, though it is definitely not a traditional "Eurovision song". This is one of a number of songs this year using a non-traditional song structure! After a number of disappointing entries since Sirusho in 2008, this is easily Armenia's strongest entry since the exquisite *Qele Qele*. Getting to perform first in the first semi-final is not a great position in the running order for a ballad act, but this is a strong enough entry to overcome this. If Aram MP3 can nail the vocal performance at Copenhagen and Armenia gets a decent position in the final running order, then this will be a

contender to win the contest and produce Armenia's first ever *Eurovision Song Contest* win. But I don't see it as the out and out hot favourite that the bookies have it down as.

Latvia

Fallon says: Ooooooooookkaaayyy. This chap has conquered the word, found Atlantis, the lost ark and talked to Unicorns. However he is now faced with man's greatest problem...baking a cake. Yes you heard me. This folksy number has a really annoyingly catching little chorus and may well surprise people. In an effort to solve his cake problems he tries to enlist the help of his Mother in law....and like all 'smarter than you think' mummies I reckon she put a few 'magic' ingredients in the cake before he wrote this.

Kavanagh says: It's been a while since Latvia was at the races in Eurovision – it's all been downhill since those pirates in 2008. This is a rather silly song about Latvia joining the euro and really does not seem to have much chance of making it out of a very strong first semi-final, especially as it will be performed in the unfavourable draw position of second on the night. It looks as if Latvia will be staying in the semi-final for the sixth year in a row.

Estonia

Fallon says: A big dance entry from Estonia this year. Some nifty and fairly bendy dance moves too. The song is however a fairly stereotypical club number. She says she doesn't want another to make her high, she wants wants you to be amazing light. You see what I mean.

Kavanagh says: This is a solid, though not particularly memorable, pop/dance tune. What could make this stand out in Copenhagen is Tanja's performance there, which – if it involves a reprise of her performance at the *Eesti Laul* – would involve some rather intriguing ballet and acrobatic work from her throughout the performance. Estonia won Eurovision the last time it was held in Denmark, a year after Denmark had won in Sweden. This year Eurovision is being held in Denmark, a year after Denmark won it in Sweden. Will the pattern emerge again this year? Probably not.

Sweden

Fallon says: Something a little different from Sweden as they opt for a ballad this year. This girl can certainly sing and the chorus is a tricky tune you wouldn't want to try on the Karaoke after a few pints. This should do well enough and should qualify for final in my book. She does have a certain sexy look too, not typical Eurovision, more like a teacher you used to fancy. It may not live up to the Euphoric heights of previous winners but it cud do well enough.

Kavanagh says: This is one of the pre-contest favourites, but I think it's probably down to this being the Swedish entry more than anything else. For me, this ballad is rather boring and uninvolved and may struggle to grab the public's attention when up against (what I consider to be) more striking ballad-style entries from Armenia, Hungary, Azerbaijan and Montenegro. And don't forget the "curse of last year's hosts" factor, as well as the unfavourable position in the running order. But the juries will go gaga over this and see it safely through to the final...

Iceland

Fallon says: Oh God. No. Just No. This is one of those preachy songs telling us how we all need to learn a lesson and love each other. The problem is it's not even a well done one. 'Whether you are thinner or one who likes your dinner' is about as philosophical as it gets, but hey we all have to wear a smile and get along. The only way I'll be smiling after this is if it is safely rooted to the bottom of the semi final table.

Kavanagh says: Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear. This is poor fare for Iceland; it sounds like one of the weaker songs on a 1960s Monkees album or something from kiddies TV (that even the kiddies find condescending). This may well bring an end to Iceland's consistent run of semi-final qualifications. In fact it should do... Iceland needs to send Yohanna again next year in penance for this outrage...

Albania

Fallon says: Kate Bush meets Katie Perry. If that sounds weird, I know, but as the girl says 'keep calm and think twice'. It's not an altogether bad song, in fact it has some very nice parts, but it loses

its way as it tries to mash a few too many things together. The guy with the really dated guitar solo definitely needs to go, he reminds me too much of Kavanagh playing Air guitar.

Kavanagh says: I think this even predates Kate Bush JF! This song is very much akin to the sort of lullaby-like tunes performed by 1970s folk groups and this may struggle to stand out in what is looking like the stronger of the two semi-finals.

Russia

Fallon says: So who reckons sending two blonde siblings to the Eurovision is a good idea? Russia answer to Jedward may be easier on the male eye, but sadly the song isn't much easier on the ears. A big reputation they may have but thats about it for me. It starts out promising enough before descending into generic pop fuzz that will leave you all starting to chat about other stuff half way through.

Kavanagh says: Now now JF, these girls are Eurovision royalty in Russia. The Tolmachevy sisters produced Russia's first ever win at a Eurovision contest in 2006, when they won the *Junior Eurovision Song Contest* with *Vesenniy Jazz* by a very large margin over the second placed act from Belarus. After Serbia's Nevena Božović, who took part in last year's contest as a member of Moje 3, they become the second ever *Junior Eurovision* act to graduate to the main show. This was written by a fairly large writing team, involving writers from Greece and Malta as well as Russia, and the lyricisation is a bit uneven in places, but I think that gives this a bit of charm. Could they put it up to Johnny Logan and win two contests on the bounce? Hmm. I do like this, but I don't think it's a winner and the annexation of Crimea could make it hard for them to get a decent result this year. In a strong semi-final such as this and with this position in the running order, it's not totally impossible that Russia could miss out on the final for the first time this year.

Azerbaijan

Fallon says: Well you can expect flowing silks and wind machines when Azerbaijan hit the stage surely? You can also usually expect a decent enough song. This is another of the big ballads in the competition. It has a slight bluesy undertone, mixed with some slight ethnicity. Unfortunately it lacks a little bit of power or a truly catchy line but none the less it should do well.

Kavanagh says: For the fifth year in a row Azerbaijan is sending a ballad-style entry to the Eurovision Song Contest. Whether this does as well as the previous entries remains to be seen. I think Dilara Kazimova is a very good artist and the song is very good as well – it's probably one of the best in the contest – but it is a rather challenging one that may not have immediate appeal for many of the public voters or the more conventional elements amongst the jury vote. Then again, no Turkey at Eurovision this year again, so maybe some extra “transfer votes” for Azerbaijan as in 2011 and 2013!

Ukraine

Fallon says: A country that is normally among my favourites. Not this year. This entry is more like a cheap Michael Jackson tribute. She asks can we hear her go tick tock? Now call me weird but if I heard a girl going tick tock I would be getting out of there quick. Then she wants you to kiss her till she drops, because that is just what you want on a date, few drinks, a kiss and then she's in a heap at your feet. lovely. Taxi for Ukraine!

Kavanagh says: Expect loads of bells and whistles with this performance when it hits the Copenhagen stage on semi-final night. Ukraine has yet to fail to qualify for a Eurovision final and this pretty solid pop entry from Mariya Yaremchuk should see this vein of form continue. Whether it is strong enough to break into the Top Ten on Final night remains to be seen however. This was the first song to be selected for this year's contest (back in December 2013!) and has been majorly overhauled since then – while the new version of the song is more polished, it does seem to lack some of the punch that the earlier version, which won the national final, had. Mind you, it has also lost some of the more bizarre lyrics associated with the first version of this...

Belgium

Fallon says: A big man with a big voice but he hits the delicate notes so well too. This chap can sing. Now, the problem is every wife in Ireland is going to be throwing their eyes up to heaven. He has only one he can count on, one guiding light; she's all he has.... 'So here I am again....Mother'. Yes that's right it's a song for the Mother. I can hear all the wives now saying that such overprotective, pampering mothers doing everything for their sons is the reason they have to train them in all over

again when they marry them. That said there will be a lot of the Mammies saying 'Isn't he a lovely boy now?'

Kavanagh says: It's not my cup of tea but this operatic entry is likely to stand out in the first semi-final and many believe that this is a very likely qualifier, even though this is a very competitive semi. The suspicion, given Belgium's poor voting record in recent contests, is that this may yet need strong support from the voting juries in order to make the final. Unless it becomes the Mammies' favourite, just like Dina Garipova last year, as JF suggests...

Moldova

Fallon says: Well I hope you like ballads because it's another attempt at a power one. It tries to move up a gear at the chorus but it doesn't really succeed. I'm not entirely sure what she's singing about... it's in English but every time I try to listen I get bored and nod off. There's a warrior bloke in the background for the ladies, not that that will help much. If this is her 'wild soul' I dread to think what her 'tame soul' might be like. The last time anything like this was called wild it was a bingo night in Ballyragget.

Kavanagh says: Leave bingo night in Ballyragget alone JF! But yes, this is a ballad, but with a bit of an edge. There is the danger that it may be overshadowed by similar, more high profile ballad entries in the first semi-final, from Sweden, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Hungary, and also may suffer from an unsatisfactory position in the running order. On Moldova's past form, this is likely to just about to edge into the final, but to finish in the bottom half of the table at this.

San Marino

Fallon says: Aaaaaaaaand it's yet another ballad. This is another song that gets a tad preachy about how we all need to love and stuff but it is at least a bit catchier than some of the others. To be honest, it's called 'Maybe' and seems to revolve around that word, the rest of it doesn't make a whole lot of sense but there's an idea lurking in there somewhere. If it gets points from Ireland then it's probably Kavanagh voting. Will it qualify? Maybe.

Kavanagh says: This is Valentina Monetta's third year in a row to attempt to qualify from a Eurovision semi-final for San Marino. *Maybe* is not that dissimilar to her 2013 entry, *Crisalide*. In a semi-final that seems much stronger than the opposition she faced in last year's semi-final (remember *Kedvesem* got out of this!) the odds seem to be against this being third time lucky for her. But I am looking forward already to her 2014 entry....

Portugal

Fallon says: At last you might get a chance to do some foot tapping at least. The backing singers look like they are on a treadmill, we might not know what she is saying but there's a beat and it's not half bad. It could stand out in a ballad heavy semi-final. Let's face it, this song is not going to rock anyone's world but if Portugal had any friends besides Spain, then it might qualify. I'd not mind seeing it do a 'Kedvesem' just to annoy Kavanagh.

Kavanagh says: This looks like being an unsuccessful return to the contest for Portugal, after missing out on last year's contest. This is a rather weak and forgettable dance track, which – despite a relatively good position in the running order at the first semi-final – would appear to be unlikely to make it to this year's Final.

Netherlands

Fallon says: If I heard Alison Krauss singing this I wouldn't be surprised. This has a gentle bluegrass feel and is a real contender for my money. It deserves to get out of the semi final. Despite the long long odds the bookies are giving this it is a real favourite of mine and could do well. The Dutch might actually be on to something here...

Kavanagh says: The Dutch are reprising their approach from 2013 of sending a highly regarded and experienced act to the contest. This country-style entry looks to be strong enough to make it to the Final and to get a respectable showing in that (and it deserves to), although nothing can be taken as certain given the Netherlands' poor record in the contest over the past ten years and especially as they're also in the more competitive of the semi-finals. Their excellent position in the running order in the first semi-final will help though...

Montenegro

Fallon says: Well they can usually depend on a few votes from the neighbours but this song isn't the worst. It sounds like it has a lot of potential but I fear it will fall victim to the language barrier as other countries miss the full effect of the words. The violins make a nice addition and it certainly sounds like he means it, probably a bet to qualify at least.

Kavanagh says: Alas no neighbours this year for Montenegro JF. After returning to the contest in 2012, Montenegro offered some rather unconventional fare in the last two years. But this year, they're offering the type of Balkan ballad that has brought countries like Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia much Eurovision success in the past two decades. And this is a very good song. However Montenegro has no Former Yugoslav countries in this semi-final to rely on for votes. Against that, in performing in second-last position in the first semi-final, Montenegro do enjoy a favourable position in the running order for the first time in their Eurovision history. I want this to get through, but I'm not sure if it will...

Hungary

Fallon says: After the rather brilliant '*Kedvesem*' last year I was looking forward to this. 3 minutes on Eurovision isn't really a great platform to make a serious point but this song attempts it. It is about domestic violence and for that deserves a hat tip. Whether anyone is going to really grasp its full message is another thing. As a song it's not bad, chorus is decent, and it probably should make it through.

Kavanagh says: Having finished in the Top 10 last year with (in my opinion) the rather risible *Kedvesem*, Hungary must be in line for a very good result this year with this very strong ballad. The dark theme of domestic abuse makes this stand out from most previous Eurovision entries. Performing last on the night in the first semi-final should see this ease into the final, where it must be viewed as a strong contender for the Top 5 and possibly the ultimate victory.

Semi Final Two

Malta

Fallon says: If you were thinking of joining the song contest late. Don't. This song is a little cracker and bound to get your foot tapping right from the start. It's called 'coming home' and if you pass a car on the N4 leaving Dublin playing it some warm summers evening...that's probably me.

Kavanagh says: Er... I didn't particularly care for Malta's entry last year and that finished in the Top 10! This year, with a lot of strong entries in the Maltese national selection and after the big win at Junior Eurovision, I thought Malta could be serious contenders at Copenhagen, but this is the entry they selected (mainly due to jury votes at the contest – the public went for a song called *Hynoptica* which I loved but suspect JF would have hated). I am decidedly underwhelmed by this, though will give them credit for having improved on this since the Maltese final. This may do well enough with the juries to make it through to the final (although it won't be helped by having to perform first on the night in the second semi-final) but nothing better than a low placing in the final beckons for this, me'thinks. Then again, I said the same thing about *Tomorrow* last year...

Israel

Fallon says: Well there's no let up in tempo as Israel hit us with a big dance tune and boy can this no doubting the dance potential of this song. I'm not sure if the mixed languages work but that said, it's certainly capable of doing well.

Kavanagh says: This starts very strongly but it does seem to get somewhat frenetic as it builds into the final verses (or maybe it's Mei's ad eyes in the video that makes me think that...) It still is the strongest entry from Israel in the last few years, however, and should be a strong contender to make it out of this semi-final, despite an unfavourable position in the running order...

Norway

Fallon says: Timing can be everything and Norway getting drawn with a ballad right here is just perfect. This is a really nice song and keeps up the tradition of Norway being a long way from 'nul points' in recent years. There may indeed be a 'silent storm' with this song and it could be one to watch.

Kavanagh says: Norway do not do mid table rankings – they either do very well or very badly at Eurovision. This will do very well. It's not my favourite song by any means, but I could see this winning. This ballad is one of the favourites to win the contest. In a rather ballad-light second semi-final, it should easily qualify. Whether this very low-key entry can attract enough of the televoters' attention to push for victory in the final, especially in the face of showier ballad entries from Armenia, Spain and Hungary, but it is likely to score strongly amongst the voting juries and it is likely to be there or thereabouts at the very least...

Georgia

Fallon says: Well just when you thought things were going well. This is like some spin off of yodelling at the start and doesn't get any better. Apparently they are leaving their distant star and will be back on earth in 3 minutes. Quite frankly I don't think these guys will ever be back on Earth. If they are approaching we should move the planet.

Kavanagh says: Seriously what is this? Sometimes an ethnic/folk act can work at Eurovision and sometimes it doesn't and this seems likely to fall into the latter category. It's a confused mess in my opinion and I cannot see how this can have a hope in hell of getting out of this semi-final. I'll probably be proved wrong... But that said, I'm not happy with Georgia. Bottom of the class this year in my opinion. For your punishment, write out "We should have selected Sofia Nizharadze instead" one thousand times...

Poland

Fallon says: Well this song is all about how Slavic girls are the best in the world. They are the smartest, sexiest and all round greatest apparently. In fact it tells us blokes that we have to try them

before it's too late (why? are they endangered? should we do a TV appeal?). It's an upbeat tune which will be highly popular with any Slavic girls. The problem may be that other girls don't take as well to its assumptions. Still, 'Shake what your mama gave ya'

Kavanagh says: A rather unusual entry marks Poland's return after a two-year break from the contest and this parody may require a strong vote from the public to have a chance of making it through to the final. The parody entries that have made the biggest impact at Eurovision have usually been backed up by a strong live performance at the contest (as with Ukraine in 2007 and Greece in 2013) and this ultimately is what Poland needs in order to make it out of the second semi-final. I fear the juries could kill this stone dead, having a taste now for blood after massacring Montenegro's hopes last year...

Austria

Fallon says: Lovely hair, lovely eyes, nice lips, nice dress....I'm just not quite so sure about the beard. Not quite doing it for me. All that apart, the song is a power ballad but it never really gets beyond second gear. Just not quite memorable enough...apart from the singer that is.

Kavanagh says: There are certain Bond-theme tune and Shirley Bassey style sweeps to this pretty good ballad and Conchita Wurst is likely to be one of the most focused upon acts at this year's contest. It's by no means certain, however, that this high profile will transfer into a semi-final qualification, although the song itself has enough quality to warrant such a result.

Lithuania

Fallon says: Speeding things up again this girl wants attention. It's a familiar story to most blokes. She lists all your best lines that you used in the pub, but she is not going to fall for them. She wants attention and a little care. How is she going to get this? She wants you down-de-de-down-down on your knees. Yep sounds like your average night in Coppers if you ask me. All in all it's a fairly average song too.

Kavanagh says: This song needs a bit of work to put Lithuania in the mix to get out of the semi-final, but it may well stand out as it is quite different to the other entries in this semi. It is not helped

much by some very dodgy lyrics (but then again has poor lyrics ever really nobbled a Eurovision entry?), but a strong vocal performance on the night from Viliija may be the decider here. Most people might have this down as a non-qualifier (and I'd be edging that way), but every year Lithuania are written off and nearly every year they manage to get out of the semis...

Finland

Fallon says: Keeping with all the up tempo numbers Finland give us another fast tune. This one is a good effort. The lyrics could have done with a bit more work but all that said it's a strong tune and with a little luck could do well. Should get plenty of Northern European support. This voting bloc (which includes Ireland and the UK remember), is probably the strongest there is and once you have a good tune you should do ok.

Kavanagh says: This pop-rock entry is one of the stronger entries in this semi-final. All things being equal, it should qualify from this semi-final and go on to produce Finland's best result at Eurovision since Lordi in 2006, although similar styles entries from Switzerland have failed to make the final in recent years.

Ireland

Fallon says: Given the draw it's not ideal for Ireland to come in with another high tempo song at this point. That said, it can compete well with many of the other tunes in the contest. It may lack that something special to make it really stand out but it certainly deserves to qualify. Biggest threat will be that it gets bunched in with the other big dance tunes and passed over. It may have a better shot in the final if it gets there but it's going to take a good stage show to give it that something extra. Let's just hope they don't throw in Irish dancers yet again for the craic. The song is one of our better entries of recent times. That said its no 'Rock n Roll kids' from the glory days of '94. Still it does give us hope and deserves lots of support.

Kavanagh says: I agree with JF on the bunching up of the up-tempo entries here – that's not good and I wouldn't mind only that there was NO draw this year – the TV producers were given the power to decide the running order and in theory they should be avoiding something like this. As it stands, it's a pretty awful position in the running order. As to the song, I have liked some of our recent

Eurovision entries, but I LOVE this year's entry. Our best entry since Niamh Kavanagh in 1993 in my opinion. It's a cracking tune, sung well by Kasey Smith, that is just crying out for a great staging to get us out of this semi and then the final and who knows there? There's not that many strong up-tempo acts this year and this could stand out against the contest favourites, which nearly all tend to be ballads. If we get through to the final and get a good position in the running order (say 17th???) and Romania gets a poor one, then...

Belarus

Fallon says: Well ladies here is your eye candy. Although he clearly likes himself he is trying to avoid his girlfriend apparently. If he is your cup of tea then it would seem the worst thing you can do is call him your 'cheesecake'. I'm not sure I've ever had a girl call me that and if she did I don't know if it would be a compliment or an insult. Anyway, he is looking up 'all the maps' to escape. To be honest mate if you need google maps to find the door of your house, you may be best staying inside.

Kavanagh says: Just like Valentina Monetta's *The Facebook Song* had to become *The Social Networking Song* back in 2012, contest rules have forced Teo to change his "Google maps" line to "all the maps". This Robin Thicke-pastiche would seem to be a borderline case in terms of whether it qualifies from the semi-final; it would be an unlikely qualifier in other years (especially as there's not that many Former Soviet states voting in this) but the competition in the second semi-final is not exceptionally strong this year. The corniness of this song could yet allow it to stand out in what is a rather over-earnest field at this year's contest. Then again, it could be blown away by the act that's just on before it...

FYR Macedonia

Fallon says: A club thumping number. It may be a bit dated but it could still work. The lyrics are far from inspirational but this one is about the beat. Can it stand out? Probably not, unless you drive an old Honda civic or a Subaru and want that bass drum beating out to make you look cool. Personally, I have a horse outside thank you.

Kavanagh says: This is a solid enough up-tempo effort and would have been an almost guaranteed qualifier during the Balkan countries' Eurovision heyday in the 2004-2007 period. With so many

Balkan states not competing this year, it becomes harder for Macedonia to get out of this semi, but don't rule this song out by any means.

Switzerland

Fallon says: A chap hasn't liked whistling this much since Roger Whittaker. The beat is fast and it's in the folksy trend that seems so hot right now but it's the kind of song you will either like or not. Despite having some decent attributes I still can't really figure out that he's on about. It has its catchy parts but overall.....it's a bit weird. Apart from what should be an epic you tube clip of what Kavanagh looks like while this is playing, this is no winner.

Kavanagh says: If you're on a train and someone starts whistling and psychotic murderous desires start pounding in your chest (oh, just me then...er) then this will amount to THREE MINUTES OF HELL for you. This has the same cheery feel-good tone that last year's entry from Malta had. But with (worse still) those bloody added whistles. I did not like Malta this year. I think I may grow to despise this with a passion... And that probably means that this will also go on to finish in the Top Ten as Malta did last year! Why does the world hate me so much?

Greece

Fallon says: Anyone hoping for a nice ballad by now...no chance. It's Greece. As sure as night follows day the Greeks like their club tunes. With a tad of rap and a good dose of generic dance beats this passes 3 minutes happily enough. Like a lot of dance tunes it talks a lot about how the music makes you feel and how it makes him want to 'rise up' in this case. It will probably qualify easily enough, but halfway through the only rise up I will be doing is to get the Vino for a top up of the glasses.

Kavanagh says: The starts well with a rather macabre intro seguing into a rap verse, but it then quickly turns into a forgettable dance tune, notable only for the multiple "rise up" references. Greece usually does well at the contest and this will probably do well enough amongst the televoters, though it may struggle with jury voters. Greece's recent history suggests that a Top Ten finish is a strong possibility, but this does not deserve to be anyway close to being in contention for the overall prize, in my opinion.

Slovenia

Fallon says: After an interesting opening on the flute this song tends to drift downhill. She is going to teach you how to breathe and how to live or so she says. Problem is that it once again fades into the background of a lot of the songs in this semi-final. A respectable song but certainly not a memorable one.

Kavanagh says: I usually like the Slovenian entries, even though they nearly always fail to get out of the semis. Continuing a trend of strong entries from Slovenia in a number of recent contests, this is a good entry and likely to stand out from the rest of the competition in this semi-final. But with no Croatia, Serbia or Bosnia this year, could Slovenia's lack of "friends" in the voting countries at this semi-final work against it?

Romania

Fallon says: Yet another high paced romp. This song has some potential though, it's far from perfect and hits some dodgy high notes but it's far from the worst song here. It has a few segments that work quite well though there may be a bit much going on at times Still it will finish strongly and probably deserves to get through.

Kavanagh says: This duo produced one of Romania's best ever results at Eurovision in 2010 and return to the contest again this year with this pop entry. This song does not seem to be strong as their 2010 entry, but in a contest that is light on strong conventional pop acts they should comfortably qualify out of their semi-final and will likely figure in the Top Ten come Final night. In a rather open contest this year, a strong performance in Copenhagen could push them into contention for an even better result and this could be serious dark horse to actually win the contest especially if it gets a good position in the Final running order.

Automatic Finalists

Denmark

Fallon says: The holders might be suspected of not really wanting to host it again. This is like a return to the late '70s disco and not in a good way. The song is about Cliché's and to be honest it's far too much like one. It's one to shake your head at while you admire their winning entry from last year.

Kavanagh says: Denmark are yet again figuring strongly in the bookmaker odds on potential contest winners, though I can't see why this Bruno Mars-pastiche can expect to come close to emulating Emmelie de Forest's showing last year. But it does have a very good position in the running order for the final (performing 23rd on the night) and it is not that dissimilar to Italy's 2011 entry, which went on to finish in second place in that year's final. Not my cup of tea, but then again Denmark did finish second the last year they hosted the contest – a year after winning in Sweden and performing...in 23rd position on the night! Spooky coincidence or not?

Germany

Fallon says: Think of walking into a bar some night to find Yazz doing an impression of Mary Coughlan. That's about the height of it. Sometimes a mood can just sweep Eurovision that surprises you, this one could be such a taste but I just can't see it. Even Angela Merkel may accept that it's not just quite right for Germany this year.

Kavanagh says: This was a surprising selection for Germany and this quirky folky entry is likely to be one of the marmite entries at this year's contest – people will either love it or hate it with a passion. This really could go anyway at the Final – a Top Ten finish or a bottom of the table placing. The latter scenario would seem to be the more likely outcome, unless a good position in the running order helps it. I do like the accordion though...

United Kingdom

Fallon says: This girl has an unusual and quite sexy voice. The song isn't typical Eurovision either so all of that might add up to a surprise. That said it's another 'power to the people...we are children of the universe' song. In other words it's telling us all of some kind of new world if we all follow the band. I'm not quite sure the song gets beyond its simplistic chorus; if there's a real message in there it's hard to dig it out. I just can't see the whole continent falling in behind it right now. The UK out on a limb? Never.....

Kavanagh says: This is more like it from the United Kingdom – this is their best entry by far in a number of years (since Jessica Garlick in 2002 in my opinion). It's not perfect by any means – the chorus could do with a stronger hook, though I find that the verses are very compelling. It's a good song from a very good singer-songwriter. If Ms. Smitten-Downes (great name) gets the performance right on final night (and I think she will), then this potentially will be amongst the relatively small group of entries that can entertain some hopes of winning the contest. The way this contest is shaping up, this could be well worth an each way bet if it gets a decent position in the Final running order.

France

Fallon says: A slightly gimmicky and humorous entry from the French. To be fair you might find your head bopping from side to side as those French lyrics blend seamlessly together. That can be a very good sign for a song. Then they start singing about a Moustache, ruining the illusion of what those lovely French words might have been saying. Somehow it's hard to believe we will all be bopping around singing 'I wanna Moustache'...well we probably will but remember no matter how good your Eurovision party, never vote while you are drunk.

Kavanagh says: This is probably the silliest song in this year's contest – well no actually that is Iceland's "entry", though Latvia and Belarus runs that one pretty close. Back to Moustache. This is quite catchy, in fairness, and it might stand out in the Final, given the over-earnest offerings on fare this year. If this comes after a number of good, but rather depressing, ballad entries, it might do a lot better than might be thought... Though if this does well with the public voters, I suspect the juries will still kill its prospects stone dead and leave it spiralling down towards the bottom of the table...

Spain

Fallon says: Spain lack friends to vote for them. That's a real shame and if there's any justice it should change this year. This is a really good song, a ballad that brings plenty of elements together. It should be perfectly suited to Eurovision and a good draw on the night of the final could boost its chances. It's long odds at the bookies but, given what I think is a poor contest overall, this may be the year for an outsider.

Kavanagh says: Ruth Lorenzo would probably be the best known artist at this year's Eurovision for Irish and UK audiences from her participation on *The X-Factor* in 2008. So expect Spain to do quite well with the Irish and UK voters this time around. Ruth's strong ballad is on a par with Pastora Soler's entry from 2012 and this has the potential to pull out a similar Top 10 result for Spain at this year's contest, though it might not be helped by the likely ballad traffic jam in this year's final. Hopefully not, as I really like this (though I much prefer the Spanish parts of the song) and hope it does well. (Bloody hell, I'm agreeing too much with JF this year. Where's *Kedvesem* and saccharine sweet happy-clappy Maltese singers when you need them?)

Italy

Fallon says: A girlie David Bowie sent from the future. At least that's what it looks like. I have no idea what this girl is saying or singing about but as far as dance tunes go this is one of the strongest in the competition. It should do well in this contest. Definitely one to watch.

Kavanagh says: Unlike the previous three years, this year's entry from Italy has not come directly from the San Remo festival and it actually was one of the first to be selected for this year's Eurovision. The crisp rock edge also marks a major change of pace on the three previous Italian entries. In a year dominated by strong, but also rather downbeat, ballads, this is probably a good thing in terms of allowing this entry to stand out from the crowd. There's no reason why Italy won't yet again be in the Top 10 again this year (unless the juries don't like rock), but somehow I can't see this vying for overall victory.

Copyright 2014 Adrian Kavanagh & Johnny Fallon. All rights reserved. No part of the material may be reproduced without the express permission of the copyright owners.