

BBC RADIO ULSTER
THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

31st May 2010

Have you recovered from Saturday night yet?

I'm still reeling.

The assault on the senses was relentless.

I'm talking about the Eurovision Song Contest.

It was the annual pinnacle of European art and culture.

25 countries took part in the grand final in Oslo on Saturday night.

120 million people across Europe tuned in to cheer on their favourite Ding a Dang a Boom Boom song.

The population of Europe partied and sang along, while Mssrs Beethoven and Mozart spun in their graves...probably in time to a thudding disco beat.

There were enough wind machines to launch a space shuttle.

And it was more camp than a box set of the complete series of 'Glee'.

Of course, the economic downturn even hit Eurovision this year. Several countries had to pull out because they couldn't afford it. Just think of the knock on effect on sequin factories across the continent.

The competition has been transformed by the breaking down of barriers between Eastern and Western Europe but the inclusion of so many new countries has caused controversy.

Western European countries have complained that the Eastern Europeans only ever vote for their neighbours.

Of course, the truth is, countries have been voting for their neighbours for years.

I understand that some people see Eurovision as spewing out more offensive material over Europe than that big Icelandic volcano.

But I can see something positive about countries voting for their neighbours. You could do a lot worse than love your neighbour.

On Saturday night Bosnia voted for Serbia. Estonia voted for Russia.

And on the same weekend that a ceremony took place to mark the 70th anniversary of the evacuation of Allied troops from Dunkirk, I am reminded of how recently nations across this continent were slaughtering one another in the millions.

On Saturday night hundreds of thousands of young people across Europe united in a simultaneous dance and voters across the continent voted for Germany as the winner.

There has to be some hope for humanity in all of that.

Perhaps in a brutal world, reconciliation and healing really are possible.

Perhaps neighbours with a painful past really can build a more hopeful future together.

To quote the title of the UK entry, that came last on Saturday night, as it probably will never be quoted by anyone else ever again:

'That sounds good to me!'