



MEMORIES: Mary Mason



SO CLOSE: Dear Jon and Julie Staines



FAN OF JON: Cheryl Baker and Bucks Fizz



SUCCESS: The Brotherhood of Man



# Going for a song

By Hilary Porter

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As the battle heats up for this year's Eurovision Song Contest, it appears that Britain may finally have a song worthy of challenging for the top honours.

Javine's Touch My Fire claimed the UK entry spot, beating tabloid glamour girl Jordan's effort in the process.

This year's awards ceremony, which is held in Kiev on Saturday, could present Britain's best opportunity to scoop the award since we last won it in 1997 with Katrina & The Waves.

Javine is probably most famous from her spell in Popstars: The Rivals, in which she narrowly missed out on a place in the winning group Girls Aloud, who went on to become regular chart-placers.

As Javine prepares to wage war against her costume and competitors from 24 countries, the Echo looks back at the significant role that local talent has played in the contest's history.

The Bournemouth and Poole area has had a long association with the contest.

This year's event, the 50th, is bound to bring memories flooding back for all concerned.



**BID FOR GLORY:** This year's Eurovision star, Javine

Local singer and vocal coach Mary Mason was pipped at the post from representing the UK in the Song for Europe in 1977 with What Do You Say To Love winning top marks from all the voting UK cities, only to be let down by a last-place position from more local judges at Southampton. Lynsey De Paul and Mike Moran won by just two points.

But on the night of the Song for Europe, the real heartache was finding the outside broadcast cameramen had gone on strike so it could not be televised and could only be heard by listeners to Radio 2.

Mary, who still lives at Throop, was devastated.

"It was dreadful, everyone was in

tears," she told the Echo. "I was more angry than anything; others were throwing theatrical wobblers."

Today Mary is a singing teacher and runs a retail business too.

Bournemouth rock band Dear Jon also came within a whisker of Eurovision success. But they too were runners-up, losing out to rap band Love City Groove.

It had looked promising for Dear Jon. Cheryl Baker, who, with Bucks Fizz, won the Eurovision Song Contest in 1981 with Making Your Mind Up, said of the all-girl band: "It's a tremendous song and the band is so professional. The song is so powerful and Julie (Staines) has a fantastic voice."

But despite Julie Staines admitting to having all the messages from her good luck bouquets stuffed in her pockets and leaving the stage in tears of jubilation saying "the angels were with us tonight" the band left defeated but triumphant.

The ultimate local Eurovision success went to Nicky Stevens, band member with The Brotherhood of Man. The group won The Eurovision Song Contest with Save Your Kisses For Me, which went on to become the biggest-selling record in the world in 1976.

It was number one in 36 countries, including six weeks here.

More recently Nicky has worked as a hostess at an upmarket hair salon and relaxation centre in Poole.

● Additional reporting: Lewis Roberts

More Eurovision news in Saturday's Magazine, with the Daily Echo