# Eurovision stage crew’s Formula 1 precision and digital innovation power seamless live transitions



In a whirlwind of effort and precision, the behind-the-scenes crew of the Eurovision Song Contest harness their skills to create a spectacle that captivates millions. With just thirty-five seconds available for stage changes, each member of the crew plays a vital role in orchestrating seamless transitions—a feat likened to a high-paced Formula 1 pit stop. Richard van Rouwendaal, a Dutch stage manager, describes this intense process, stating, "Each person in the crew can only do one thing," as they rush to reposition lights, props, and artists.

Preparations begin long before the curtain rises, with the stage crew rehearsing their intricate routines weeks in advance. Contestants provide detailed staging plans, while local students audition as stand-ins to help the crew perfect their choreography. Van Rouwendaal oversees a team comprising around thirty individuals, and he likens the operation to a game of Tetris, where every piece must be positioned perfectly to fit into a small space. This meticulous attention to detail extends beyond mere logistics; the performance must be visually flawless, right down to the height and angle of each microphone stand.

The emphasis on precision is crucial, especially when unexpected alterations arise. In past contests, stage designs have posed unique challenges. For example, during the 2022 event, heavy props had to be manoeuvred up a steep ramp, contributing to an exhausting setup process. In 2023, the introduction of new backstage facilities has improved the efficiency of this often overlooked element of the competition.

Props are integral to the Eurovision experience, evolving since the contest’s inception in 1956. With a rich history of extravagant stage elements—from Germany's telephone prop to Romania's cannon—this year’s offerings include a giant chandelier and a whimsical food blender. Effective management of props is paramount, as Damaris Reist, deputy head of production, notes, emphasising the circular flow of items used on-stage. The presence of secret pathways for transporting props in and out of sight ensures that the audience remains captivated without story interruptions.

To further streamline operations, this year introduced a digital spikemark system managed via iPad, which illuminated precise markings on the LED stage for quick reference during transitions. Sleek and efficient, this system replaces traditional tape marks, significantly enhancing the workflow for the crew. As well, comprehensive programming efforts set up before the performances allowed for intricate lighting arrangements adaptable to 37 different delegation requests. Tim Routledge, the lighting designer, articulated the extent of collaboration involved, noting that adjustments and opportunities for flexibility are essential for a successful production.

As the show unfolds, the stakes are high; the crew's role often looks like magic in action. A seamless guitar appearance during Sam Ryder's performance in 2022 demonstrated the meticulous choreography behind the scenes. Any minor glitches can lead to rapid problem-solving, and contingencies allow for quick fixes during live broadcasts. If a situation arises, such as an equipment malfunction, the control room can swiftly switch to pre-recorded footage, a safety net that safeguards the show's integrity.

With vast logistical hurdles and artistic aspirations, the Eurovision Song Contest embodies not just talent on stage, but the collective commitment of a hard-working crew operating behind the scenes. Their collaborative efforts, disciplined rehearsal routines, and innovative technological integrations result in a seamless, captivating experience that entertains a global audience, showcasing the enduring appeal and complexity of this spectacular event.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1-3: [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c1e679vn6yqo)
2. Paragraph 4: [[2]](https://www.svgeurope.org/blog/headlines/live-from-liverpool-disguise-debuts-digital-spikemark-to-speed-eurovision-song-contest-stage-workflow/), [[4]](https://maltadaily.mt/the-40-second-prop-stage-change-between-eurovision-songs/)
3. Paragraph 5: [[3]](https://www.lightzoomlumiere.fr/photos/eurovision-2023-backstage-eclairage-mur-video-scene/), [[5]](https://www.stageone.co.uk/case-study/eurovision-song-contest-2023/)
4. Paragraph 6: [[6]](https://www.avinteractive.com/news/production/disguise-marks-the-spot-on-stage-for-eurovision-contestants-30-05-2023/), [[7]](https://www.livedesignonline.com/news/tim-routledge-lighting-eurovision-2023)
5. Paragraph 7: [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c1e679vn6yqo)

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## Bibliography

* <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c1e679vn6yqo> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.svgeurope.org/blog/headlines/live-from-liverpool-disguise-debuts-digital-spikemark-to-speed-eurovision-song-contest-stage-workflow/> - This article discusses how disguise introduced a digital spikemark system at the Eurovision Song Contest in Liverpool to streamline stage changes. The system illuminated precise markings on the LED stage for set, instrumentation, and artist transitions, eliminating the need for tape marks. Managed via an iPad, the system displayed 1,250 marks throughout the show, enabling rapid scene transitions and enhancing backstage efficiency. The collaboration between disguise, QED Productions, and the programming team resulted in a robust system that significantly improved the floor management team's workflow.
* <https://www.lightzoomlumiere.fr/photos/eurovision-2023-backstage-eclairage-mur-video-scene/> - This article provides insights into the lighting and stage design of Eurovision 2023. Tim Routledge, the lighting designer, and Julio Himede, the set designer, collaborated to create a visually stunning stage. They incorporated 190 Robe Tetra X lights behind video doors to provide a rotating lighting wall, and added Robe Painte and Q8 strobes to enhance depth. The design also featured 22 lift columns on the lighting bridge to raise and lower Robe Spiders around the stage's edge, and Clay Paky Sharpy lights on four large fixed arms framing the entire show.
* <https://maltadaily.mt/the-40-second-prop-stage-change-between-eurovision-songs/> - This article highlights the rapid prop stage changes between Eurovision performances. A TikTok video showcases the crew's efficiency in dismantling and setting up props within 40 seconds, a process not visible to the audience. The crew, consisting of 30 members, rehearsed this procedure three to four times before the actual event. The article emphasizes the organized chaos backstage, where 29 props, including one measuring 8 meters by 6 meters, were managed to ensure seamless transitions between acts.
* <https://www.stageone.co.uk/case-study/eurovision-song-contest-2023/> - This case study details Stage One's contribution to the Eurovision Song Contest 2023. They provided a sturdy framework for the staging using standard decking units and special infill rostra, finished with a high gloss to shine under studio lights. A concealed trough was integrated into the staging to accommodate lighting, sound, speakers, and cables around the set's perimeter. Additionally, three large oval lighting boxes were suspended from the ceiling, incorporating lighting and LED features to enhance the visual impact of the show.
* <https://www.avinteractive.com/news/production/disguise-marks-the-spot-on-stage-for-eurovision-contestants-30-05-2023/> - This article discusses how disguise's digital spikemark system was implemented at Eurovision 2023 to streamline stage changes. The system illuminated precise markings on the LED stage for set, instrumentation, and artist transitions, eliminating the need for tape marks. Managed via an iPad, the system displayed 1,250 marks throughout the show, enabling rapid scene transitions and enhancing backstage efficiency. The collaboration between disguise, QED Productions, and the programming team resulted in a robust system that significantly improved the floor management team's workflow.
* <https://www.livedesignonline.com/news/tim-routledge-lighting-eurovision-2023> - This article features an interview with Tim Routledge, the lighting designer for Eurovision 2023. Routledge discusses the challenges of incorporating lighting changes based on notes from 37 delegations, with over two thousand notes exchanged. The team worked through these notes in three days before the performers arrived in the UK. To manage the extensive programming, a 24-hour programming service was set up, with shifts to prevent burnout. Routledge emphasizes the importance of collaboration and adaptability in delivering a successful show.