

GLOBAL

Unable to film in Ukraine, Eurovision song contest winners made their intro video in Israel

BY CNAAN LIPSHIZ MAY 16, 2022



Member of the Kalush Orchestra from Ukraine await the results of the Eurovision Song Festival in Turin, Italy, May 14, 2022. (EBU)

(JTA) — This year’s Eurovision Song Contest did not go Israel’s way — but even though the country didn’t make it to the final for the first time in six years, it did have some representation in Turin, Italy, on Saturday.

That’s because Ukraine, which won the competition with Kalush Orchestra’s “Stefania” rap song, filmed its introductory video in Israel.

The intro, known in Eurovision jargon as the “postcard,” features contestants who typically are filmed in a place of their choosing in the

country that hosts that year's contest (normally, the country that won the previous year).

But the war has complicated traveling out of Ukraine, where civilian flights have basically stopped since Russia invaded Feb. 24. And filming in the war-torn country has also become difficult and potentially dangerous.

So Ukraine's Suspilne public broadcaster last month arranged for Kalush Orchestra to travel to Israel and record there their "postcard" video, which was shown in the grand final ahead of the contestants' live performance.

The Ukrainian band in Israel took place at the headquarters of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, in the very room where Chaim Weizmann was sworn in as Israel's first president, according to the Times of Israel.

The final video does not feature Israel in any way. It shows the band members, who were filmed against a green screen, against drone footage of several monuments in Italy.

At a facility in Israel of the Jewish Agency, which helped bring Kalush Orchestra and 23 other contestants for an annual Israeli pre-Eurovision event called "Israel Calling," the Ukrainian band also performed for Jewish refugees from Ukraine. About 50 of the refugees enjoyed a live, unplugged rendition of "Stefania," a rap number featuring traditional Ukrainian instruments and motifs.

"At first we spent all the time rehearsing online, because due to the war it was impossible to come together," the band's founder and lead singer, Oleh Psiuk, told reporters in Jerusalem in April. But then "the permit was granted for us to leave the country and to go back and forth, and this is how we got to Israel," he added.

Ukraine was heavily favored to win this year's competition in part because public voting plays a role in determining the Eurovision victor.

Israel is a Eurovision superpower with four wins so far. But for the first time in six years, the country's entry didn't even make it to the Grand Final, which took place in Turin, Italy on Saturday. "I.M" by Michael Ben David didn't make it past the semifinals.