

Russian Radio's Love of Golden Oldies

By [The Moscow Times](#)

January 10, 2012

The  Moscow Times

Music is, it seems, the point of disconnect for many cultures.

Once upon a time, I lived in London. My musical frame of reference has been shaped by radio stations playing indie, R&B, rhythm-driven, pop, rock, jazz, acid jazz, Brit-pop, metal, alternative, punk, dance, and electronic heaven. But "you never know what you've got 'till it's gone," as countless cheesy tunes tell us.

Now I live in Moscow, and lord do I see what I had in London. You see, as I freely admit, my Russian is not great, and consequently, my musical options when I switch on the car radio are somewhat limited. It's not that I don't enjoy listening to Russian music, you understand. It's just that I don't want to hear it all the time. My tolerance levels for gravel-voiced men singing either to acoustic guitars or to a background of heavy rock in a language I can't understand so well tend to wane after a while, and so my radio stations of choice here tend to be those that play more international music. The international music that tends to be played here? Well, it's mostly unadulterated cheese.

Golden oldies from the last three decades eddy around me in the car as I nose my way through rush-hour traffic. I've heard more 1980s "classics" since living here than I heard in the previous 20 years. Mike Oldfield, anyone? Or a spot of Aha? Perhaps, just to shake it up a little, some 1990s Duran Duran? Admittedly, the DJs are not prejudiced against any given nationalities in their love of all types of musical cheese. You can start your journey listening to some classic English cheddar, followed by ripe Camembert, then a tasty piece of Dutch Gouda, and round it off with a nice piece of plastic Kraft from the US — all within the space of around 10 minutes, if the radio presenter is in a hurry, which, it seems, they often are. Listen to a song all the way to the end? What kind of foreign craziness is that?

All this musical cheese fondue does have a point, however. And I'm not talking about the wonderful aptness of being driven through a snow storm along Leningradsky Prospekt by a mad taxi driver to a backing track of Boney-M singing "Ra-Ra-Rasputin" — though that has to go down as one of my all-time classic Moscow moments. No, the point — for me, at least — is that it's almost impossible to get road rage while singing along to "Take On Me" or swooning to Sade's "Your Love is King", no matter how close to your wing mirror the dolt of a driver on your right gets as he edges into your lane on the way to work.

1980s and 90s music: Prozac for the masses. You heard it here first.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/01/10/russian-radios-love-of-golden-oldies-a34762>