

## Pro-Putin Song Is Web Hit

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**The**  **Moscow Times**

A schmaltzy music video hailing Prime Minister Vladimir Putin as Russia's savior became a hit on the Russian Internet on Tuesday, with many bloggers and YouTube users poking fun at the song's hyperbolic lyrics.

The pop song, named "V.V.P." after Putin's initials and performed by little-known Tajik singer Tolibzhon Kurbankhanov, follows a familiar pro-Putin narrative: that the Russian leader turned a nation in crisis into a thriving world power over his two terms as president and four years as prime minister.

While Kurbankhanov's paean isn't the first dedicated to Putin, it may be the only one to refer to the prime minister as "heaven-sent" and the "savior of the people," lofty sentiments that generated snickers on the Russian Internet.

"Creativity has reached a new level. ... The lyrics! What lyrics! Listen and enjoy!" opposition blogger Marina Litvinovich wrote.

"I'm speechless," radio-host Yury Pronko wrote.

Opposition leader and anti-corruption whistleblower Alexei Navalny speculated that the song and music video, which features Kurbankhanov against a backdrop of the Kremlin and White House, could have been ordered by Putin's campaign.

A spokeswoman for Putin's presidential campaign said she'd never heard of the song. She suggested that it was the work of independent activists.

Putin is heavily favored to win the March 4 election but is struggling to avoid a potentially embarrassing runoff vote, which will occur if he wins less than 50 percent of the vote in the first round.

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