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Inthe Spotlight

By Anna Malpas

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This week, rock musician Sergei Shnurov, whose band Leningrad was once banned in Moscow for its lyrics littered with swearwords, took on a very different role — playing a dad in a sitcom.

The show on CTC called "Baby" (Detka) stars Shnurov as a washed-up rock musician living in Moscow who finds himself responsible for his rebellious teenage daughter, after her mother decides to swan off to Goa, India.

Like his character, Shnurov in real life also has a teenage daughter, although his bands Leningrad and Ruble have had plenty of success.

Leningrad even offended former Moscow Mayor Yury Luzhkov so much with its foul-mouthed lyrics that he initiated a ban on the band from playing in Moscow, although this is ancient history now.

Shnurov plays up his own hard-living rocker image for this role. His character is thrilled to be booked for a long-awaited gig, only for it to turn out to be a glum office disco. He performs

an actual Leningrad song called "Our People Love All Kinds of Rubbish," which goes down like a lead balloon, while his 15-year-old daughter saves the day by running on stage and performing an upbeat number with colorful foam strips bouncing in her hair.

"Since I'm not a master of transformation, I mainly just play myself," Shnurov frankly told Komsomolskaya Pravda.

He has done television before, including a travel series on NTV, and his scruffy laid-back image works well on screen. He also played a rock musician in "Election Day," a film about 1990s vote manipulation, where he sang a song with the lyrics "Elections, elections, all the candidates are ..." with a rhyming obscenity in Russian.

His co-star in the sitcom, Valentina Lukashchuk, previously starred in "School," a far more hard-hitting teenage drama that made waves when it came out on Channel One in 2010, directed by Valeria Gai Germanika.

The director's latest work, a series called "A Short Course in Happy Living" is mysteriously taking a very long time to reach the schedules.

The schoolchildren in "Baby" are far more straitlaced. One girl shudders when Shnurov stops her in the corridor, looking for his daughter. "If you're trying to sell drugs, I'll call the guards," she threatens.

"Baby" looks to be a fairly conventional show. Shnurov's cuddly character learns life lessons and even falls for his daughter's attractive PE teacher. She lectures him on how he is failing his daughter while he gazes in admiration at her low-cut tank top. "Nice top," he concludes as she blushes.

Meanwhile, a heartthrob to a younger generation, British actor Daniel Radcliffe, who played Harry Potter, appeared on Channel One's "ProjectorParisHilton" show on Saturday to promote his new film "The Woman in Black," to screams of joy in the audience.

Prompted by host Ivan Urgant, he gamely tried to explain the rules of cricket, looking as baffled as foreign celebrities usually do on the show, where the translation struggles to keep up with the jokes.

"This is a rare case when television is showing something more interesting on [Moscow government-owned] TV Center," Sergei Svetlakov joked.

The hosts usually end with a sing-along and as his party piece, Radcliffe sang song "Elements" by Tom Lehrer.

"If you want to know the meaning of the song that Daniel Radcliffe just sang, analyze a sample of the water from Moscow River," said Urgant, the pianist.

The presenters also gave Radcliffe what they promised was the Russian equivalent of a magic wand — one of the striped batons used by traffic policemen.

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