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Tushino Fest Sees Stuntmen Compete

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Vita the clown picking up speed in his motorized bathtub during the explosive Prometheus International Festival of Stunt Art at Tushino on Saturday. **Yeugenia Kleiner**

A two-wheeled, motorized bathtub accelerates along Moscow's Tushino airfield. Two handlebars protrude from its exterior, tinfoil covers the gasoline-fueled engine. A fire extinguisher and a mess of wires are hidden inside of the tub.

Riding the contraption is Vala the clown, who smokes a cigarette as he drives, balancing himself precariously on the wobbly vessel as he revs up the audience at the start of Saturday's International Festival of Stunt Art.

The festival, in its 14th year, brought stuntmen from all over the world to show off their skills — some of which involve being blown up, set on fire, and hurled from heights.

Technically the day was also part of a contest between Russian stuntmen and a world team — the Russian team won — but essentially it was about the spectacle.

At one point, a crew member could be seen tying up explosives for a stunt. As he checked the wiring, he yelled to a figure in a red shirt, "Vita, who's going to pour the kerosene over you?"

A man, possibly Vita, would later emerge from a car that had somersaulted. He was covered in flames that leaped 10 meters high. Despite this predicament, the stuntman joked with the crowd for a few seconds before the flames were put out.

"They rarely do such stunts abroad as we do here," boasted Oleg Yefimov, the captain of the Russian team, to Russian television. "Maybe they are scared. They use computer graphics more but we do it in the flesh."

The stunts came thick and fast throughout the day, involving dozens of cars and motorcycles that would somersault or get blown up as well as attempts at somewhat obscure Guinness World Records, which only stuntmen are ever likely to attempt.

If the stuntmen were not crashing the cars, they were driving them on two wheels at an acute angle while emergency services workers looked on smiling.

One of the organizers was especially proud when one of his stuntmen jumped from a height of 70 meters without a parachute. The crowd nervously watched as he fell onto what looked like a six-story bouncy castle. Luckily, he didn't bounce off.

At the end of the show, which ended without any injuries to stuntmen, fans were allowed onto the main arena, scattered with scorched Ladas and other vehicle carcasses. The scent of sulfuric acid permeated the stands.

"Computer graphics aren't going to stop these jobs. Stuntmen will still get further, faster and higher," said one of the organizers of the festival, Isaac Korov.

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