The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Amur's Version of PSY Gains Momentum in Moscow

By Andrei Muchnik

January 16, 2013



It was an event of historic proportions for Moscow's concert scene. Virtually unknown a month ago, Oleg Lyogky from Khabarovsk managed to get quite a crowd at club Sixteen Tons, a rather sizable venue, on a cold December evening.

Oleg Lyogky is a stage name for Sergei Podlednyev, who became an overnight Internet sensation after posting a mini album called "Fish of the Amur River" on the Russian social network VKontakte. Allegedly, he did it to win a bet with a friend.

Vkontakte has recently become a fertile ground for up-and-coming Russian artists. They set up their own pages where fans can listen to new songs and whole albums for free. The artists can also promote themselves though pages open to the public that are devoted to a certain music style or subgenre.

Lyogky's songs range from 30 seconds to three minutes long, and the whole album can be

heard in less than 10 minutes.

This album was later turned into a video filmed by Lyogky's grandmother that attracted more than 45,000 hits on YouTube. Granted this figure does not even compare to the magnitude of "Gangnam Style," performed by the South Korean musician PSY, but it is pretty high for a Russian indie artist.

After leading magazines Afisha and Russian Reporter reviewed the album, Lyogky became the punch line of a popular Internet meme, which features the frontman of the indie pop band Pompeya suggesting that while Pompeya was busy selling its song to a little-known Chilean film, "Oleg" from Khabarovsk was recording his much more popular album.

Online success seems to come before concert tours and record deals these days, and Lyogky is not the first Russian to follow this path. Russians still remember Pyotr Nalich, who with his "Guitar-Jaguar" rhymes went from YouTube to Eurovision in 2010.

It was not a surprise then that there was hardly any space left at Sixteen Tons last month. Lyogky performed "Fish of the Amur River" in its entirety — several times, actually.

An electronic version of "Sinyavka" (Minnow) turned out to be the biggest surprise — a tune one can actually dance to.

Lyogky also played some of his other YouTube hits and covers ranging from Rihanna and Coldplay to an acoustic take on abstract hip-hop band NRKTK's song about Satan, which sounded much better than the original.

Sadly, it seemed that the majority of the audience came to the concert to check out "that funny guy from the YouTube video" rather than appreciate his diverse talents. They kept asking for more and more repeats of the "Fish" album, and Lyogky obliged.

A strong voice combined with memorable tunes is unfortunately a rare combination on the local indie scene. Oleg Lyogky definitely has both, so watch this artist closely.

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