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A Picnic With a Bit of Politics

By The Moscow Times

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Zemfira performing on the stage of Afisha Picnic

Afisha Picnic, arguably the best and definitely the oldest music festival in Moscow, was held on Saturday. On the surface it was business as usual: two stages, big names in Western and Russian pop and rock music, a gigantic food market, art installations and street theater performances.

But there was one change from the norm: both headliners were Russian language artists — Ivan Dorn and Zemfira. And one of the artists is from Ukraine and the other made a highly publicized gesture at a concert in Tbilisi earlier this month, when she took a Ukrainian national flag from the audience and waved it.

At the entrance to the park a small group of protesters held up banners reading, "Zemfira, you should choose the right flags," "Zemfira, when are you giving a concert in Donetsk?" and even "Zemfira, where's your soul?"

Except for an activist with a Donetsk republic flag who allegedly tried to get on stage,

the concerts went without incident. But Ivan Dorn sang a couple of songs in Ukrainian, and his hit song "Mishka Vinoven" (teddy bear is guilty) about infidelity took on a new meaning Saturday night. While a video sequence of an angry bear played he sang, "Teddy bear is guilty, time to run away, teddy bear is guilty, he is a criminal now."

Afisha's decision to headline Zemfira and Dorn was a bold move. Next year at festival time we'll see if has consequences.

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