

# Russian Pop Idols Write to Putin to Protest Patriotic Star Incubator Proposal

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July 28, 2015



Vladimir Putin

A host of Russian pop stars and producers have come out against a reported proposal to create a patriotic superstar incubator, the Kommersant newspaper reported Tuesday.

Singers ranging from mature lady pleasers Stas Mikhailov and Grigory Leps to pop king Filipp Kirkorov and rapper Timati have written to President Vladimir Putin to ask him to intervene in a deal to sell a majority share in the giant Russian Media Group (RMG) holding to state-run concert organizer Goskontsert.

The deal, which the stars described as “dubious,” aims to set up a media holding consisting of five radio stations and a music TV channel that would promote homegrown artists with pro-Kremlin views, the Vedomosti newspaper reported Monday.

The proposed holding would support the government's ideological goals by promoting

patriotic artists and would work in collaboration with Russia's major music television channels, serving as an "incubator for homegrown superstars," Vedomosti reported.

The stars called on Putin not to allow the sale of RMG to Goskontsert, Kommersant reported, citing a copy of the letter sent to Putin, whose signatories also included Eurovision veteran Dima Bilan, larger-than-life sculptor Zurab Tsereteli, pro-Kremlin crooner Iosif Kobzon and international opera superstar Anna Netrebko.

They said they feared a change of management at RMG, saying it could have “negative consequences for the development of the music industry as a whole,” and that it would become impossible “for most figures in the music industry” to cooperate with the holding's radio stations and TV channels, Kommersant reported.

“We are already perfectly well trained: We live in our country, support our president and everything that happens in our country,” Kirkorov was cited as telling Kommersant.

“I don't understand — why turn a commercial station into a state one? It already performs all the tasks related to ideology,” prominent producer Iosif Prigozhin was cited as saying to the paper.

Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that the president could not make decisions over commercial deals and advised the letter's authors to appeal to the owners of RMG, Kommersant reported.

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Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/07/28/russian-pop-idols-write-to-putin-to-protest-patriotic-star-incubator-proposal-a48586>