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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian in Spaceman Suit Wins Air Guitar World Championship (Video)

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Winner of the 2015 Air Guitar World Championships, Kereel "Your Daddy" Blumenkrants of Russia performs in Oulu, Finland, Aug. 28.

Russia's Kereel "Your Daddy" Blumenkrants turned and twisted and slid on his knees on an open-air stage in northern Finland on Friday, wowing spectators and convincing judges to name him World Air Guitar Champion 2015.

But it was a close call.

In the final round of 10 performers, Blumenkrants was tied with three-time U.S. national champion Matt "Airistotle" Burns from Staten Island, New York. Even a single throw of paper, rock and scissors between them ended in a draw, forcing a final showdown.

"Our Daddy" won with a wild but controlled thrashing-arm performance in a shiny spaceman rocker's suit that he augmented in the last part of the show by wearing woolen gloves with flashing fingertips. The contestants mainly performed to medleys.

“It was the gloves that clinched it,” 2002 world champion Zac Munro from London said. “But both those guys were amazing. They knew the music note-for-note.”

What started off as a joke 20 years ago has grown into an annual fest of crazy pretend guitar players that draws people the world over to the city of Oulu, a high-tech hub surrounded by forests on the Baltic Sea.

In 1996 there were eight competitors with one foreign champion, from neighboring Sweden. This year, a record 30 so-called “dark horses” from a dozen countries took part in the 20th Air Guitar World Championships, hoping to qualify for Friday’s final.

Nine got through after an all-night semifinal Thursday at a sweaty, dark, clubhouse to join seven national champions who automatically went straight into the final with reigning world champion, Japan’s Nanami “Seven Seas” Nagura, last year’s winner at the age of 18.

On Friday she finished fourth after slipping on the wet stage, which was mopped up between the one-minute performances as a relentless rain continued through the night.

The offbeat competition drew some exotic performances, including from Dutch champion Sita “Guilty Director” van Sante, who shook and twisted in a corset with suspenders and stockings. Also on hand was Canada’s national title holder, Jason “Thrust” McNeely, wearing a tie and kilt and nothing much else. He ended his show by cracking open a can of beer on his head, gulping it down and throwing the can into the cheering crowd while still pretending to play guitar.

Former champion Aline Westphal from Germany, one of the evening’s judges, said she would be looking for precision and, of course, that inexplicable “airness” quality. “You just feel it when airness is there,” she said.

There were four competitors from the United States — the “powerhouse of air” — which holds dozens of air guitar competitions every year that have provided a living for some, including the official “Air Host” of the world championships, Dan Crane, who lives in Los Angeles.

Watch 'Your Daddy's' winning performance here:

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