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# Why a Russian Rap Battle Has More Than 10 Mln YouTube Views

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Rap artists Oxxxymiron and Slava KPSS **Screenshot Youtube Versusbattleru**

The skyrocketing popularity of Russian rap battles could have Pushkin rolling in his grave. Or maybe he's smiling at how the tradition of masterfully manipulating the Russian language is alive and well — albeit in a slightly different form.

Rap veterans Oxxxymiron and Slava KPSS met in a long awaited battle in St. Petersburg on Aug. 6. A video of the competition uploaded to YouTube on Monday morning garnered more than 10 million views within 24 hours.

Despite his blistering track record, the previously undefeated Oxxxymiron lost out to Slava KPSS' merciless retorts. In the end, the judges voted 5-0 in favor of the Khabarovsk native.

The battles adhere to the same principles as their original American counterparts, in which the two participants outwit and out-insult each other in rhyme. Each battle consists of three rounds and a panel of five judges decides the victor.

On his Instagram account, Russia's most exalted rap battle star Oxxxymiron explained that his "lyrical digressions" were to blame.

Miron "Oxxxymiron" Fyodorov was born in St. Petersburg, spent his childhood in Germany and later studied medieval English literature at Oxford University. His lyrics protest against authority and society's moral deprivation.

In the Aug. 6 battle, the lyricists melded allusions to classical Russian poetry and pop culture with biting social commentary. Their rhymes were peppered with contemporary slang and Russianized-English.

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Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny was among those impressed by the battle, referring to it in a Facebook post as "postmodern poetry."

"I got a lot of pleasure from the thought that Russian culture is alive and flourishing," Navalny said. "This is one-hundred times more cultural than the comedy and songs on state-funded channels."

In a Twitter post, exiled Putin critic Mikhail Khodorkovsky also referred to the battle as "poetry."

The highest watched rap battle, which has reached over 38 million views, took place between Oxxxymiron and Johnyboy in April 2015.

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