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Moscow Double Concert Ends in Obscenity Charges

The Leningrad and Noize MC SoundClash was the hot concert this month

By Andrei Muchnik

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Noize MC **Courtesy Red Bull**

The Red Bull SoundClash Nov. 24 double concert made headlines this week when both bands — Leningrad and Noize MC — were fined for swearing on stage.

Red Bull SoundClash capitalizes on the recent trend of rap battles but uses a different format. Rather than two performers battling each other on one stage, SoundClash juxtaposed them at two stages at opposite ends of the stadium. It's not a proper rap battle, but rather an updated version of the perestroika era Muzykalny Ring (Musical Ring) TV program, which famously hosted Billy Joel in 1987.

Leningrad, pop-rock hooligans from St. Petersburg, is considered one of the most popular bands in Russia at the moment. At more than twenty years old, they can still easily sell out a stadium, and all their videos get tens of millions of views on YouTube.

Noize MC is one of the most prolific artists on Russian rap scene, with eight albums under his belt, including a hip-hop opera "Orpheus and Eurydice." Both bands are famous for their lyrics, laced with profanities and, in the case of Noize MC, with some political subtext.

At the stadium, both bands performed some of their best-known hits, and then the SoundClash started in earnest. It consisted of three rounds, first they each did covers of their own songs that were supposed to be drastically different in style; the second — covers of songs of their opponents; and the third — a cover of "Pesnya o Lyubvi" ("Love Song") by another popular rock band Chizh &Co.

In the first round Leningrad performed a cover of one of their most controversial songs, "i_$uss" (Jesus), which angered some Orthodox believers when it came out last summer. At the end of each round the audience voted by making noise, which was recorded and measured by a sophisticated sound system.

At the end of the evening, Leningrad won by a very small margin.

It's hard to understand why this particular performance provoked the authorities, but after the concert police paid visits to the dressing rooms of both artists. Noize MC's frontman Ivan Alexeyev spent several hours at the police station and was fined 500 rubles, while it's still unclear whether Leningrad's leader Sergei Shnurov was fined.

You can watch the whole concert online here.

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