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Russian Pop-Rock Star Visits Soldiers in Occupied Ukraine, Deletes Past Anti-War Posts

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Roman Bilyk seen performing for Russian troops in eastern Ukraine. **WarGonzo / Telegram**

The frontman of a popular Russian rock band that had previously condemned the war in Ukraine has made a surprise visit to occupied eastern Ukraine to meet with Russian troops, as shown in a video published Monday by pro-war military bloggers.

Roman Bilyk, whose stage name is Roma Zver, is the lead singer of the hit group Zveri.

Following Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, the band called for an end to the hostilities on its Facebook page, while Bilyk personally spoke out against the war on Instagram. Both posts have since been deleted.

Video shared on Monday by the pro-war Telegram channel WarGonzo shows Bilyk, wearing a helmet and flak jacket, observing Russian artillery fire, after which the video cuts to the musician playing his guitar for a military unit stationed in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk region.

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WarGonzo's author Semyon Pegov touted Bilyk's performance as "real rock'n'roll" and hinted that the soldiers are willing to forgive the singer for his past anti-war statements.

A number of prominent Russian cultural figures who publically oppose Moscow's invasion of Ukraine have faced backlash, including show cancellations.

Zveri's scheduled performance at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) in June was abruptly canceled after an official's complaint over Bilyk's anti-war remarks.

Born in Russia to a Ukrainian father, Bilyk grew up in Mariupol, which was captured by Russian forces last May following a devastating siege that left the city in ruins.

Bilyk is at least the second Russian singer to recant his anti-war beliefs over the past year, according to exiled Russian blogger Michael Nacke.

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