The Moscow Times
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Beloved Soviet-Russian TV Host Alexander Maslyakov Dies Aged 82

September 09, 2024



Alexander Maslyakov. **Vladimir Gerdo / TASS**

Alexander Maslyakov, one of the best-known and best-loved television personalities of the Soviet and modern Russian era, died at age 82 on Sunday.

His death was reported by the game show KVN, which Maslyakov hosted from 1964 to 2022. Maslyakov had been diagnosed with cancer earlier this year.

KVN, which stands for "Club of the Fun-Loving and Quick-Witted," went on air in 1961 and is still broadcast today. It was only off-air from 1972 to 1986 when the Soviet authorities found the contestants' sharp-witted answers anti-Soviet. It is the country's long-running comedy game show.

Maslyakov was born in November 1941 in modern-day Yekaterinburg and began his career while still a student as co-host of the show. Over the years, he has headed the KVN production company, was president of the International KVN Union and hosted KVN games and festivals around Russia and the world.

In the show, teams of young people vie in several competitions, some prepared ahead of time — such as the musical program — and some done live where the team members are judged on their quick and witty responses to questions. For most of its history, KVN was among the highest-rated television shows.

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Over the years, many well-known performers, musicians, public and political figures have taken part in the show, including President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine, who was captain of the Kvartal 95 team from Kryvyi Rih between 1998 and 2003.

Russian Presidents Boris Yeltsin, Dmitry Medvedev and Vladimir Putin all attended televised KVN games during their times in office. President Putin expressed condolences to Maslyakov’s family on Monday, describing him as “a man of many-sided talent, one of those enthusiastic and dedicated professionals who personify our television and define its image.”

KVN’s press service said Sunday that Maslyakov will “forever remain a legend for all participants of the KVN movement and millions of viewers.”

“His contribution to the development of domestic entertainment television cannot be overestimated,” it wrote.

He is survived by his wife Svetlana Maslyakova and son Alexander Maslyakov, who hosts an offshoot of KVN and is seen as his father’s successor.

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