

Putin Doesn't Want You to Hear This: Nogu Svelo!'s Defiant New Single

By [Andrei Muchnik](#)

February 25, 2025



Courtesy photo

On the eve of the third anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the band Nogu Svelo! released their new single and video ["Formy Zhizni" \(Lifeforms\)](#).

In their press release, the band claims it's something "Putin doesn't want you to listen to." The song is described as "a defiant rock anthem that confronts war, propaganda, and the transformation of society under oppression."

With lyrics like:

*"Quickly wipe where you left footprints,
Air out where you left a stench.
But everything else — just details,
Because the main thing is — you won.
But those are just details —*

You won against yourselves”

— the song also eerily echoes the tone of the current peace negotiations between the U.S. and Russia.

Nogu Svelo! is best remembered for their early 1990s hit “Haru Mamburu,” written in a made-up language. The Moscow Times spoke to Nogu Svelo!’s frontman and founder, Maxim Pokrovsky, about the new single and life in immigration.

Andrei Muchnik: Let’s talk about your new single, ‘Formy Zhizni.’ It’s timed to the third anniversary of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Why did you decide to release the single on that day?

Maxim Pokrovsky: Basically, with our album ‘Amputatsiya’ (Amputation) released in 2024, we were done with the theme of Russian-language anti-war songs — not forever, since all the songs were written in the heat of emotion — but we already felt that this chapter in our life was closed and we needed to move on.

As for the song ‘Formy Zhizni,’ it was, of course, born out of emotion. At first, I wrote lyrics that didn’t have much in common with the final version. The musical part came to me when I was on a plane. I took out my laptop and started messing around, since it was a long flight.

Of course, I didn’t write this song specifically for February 24. But when we realized that February 24 was approaching and the song was in progress, we understood it made sense to release both the song and the video on that date. In the last two months or so before the release, I was working on it quite deliberately.

Embed:

AM: This isn’t the first track you’ve released on the anniversary of the start of the full-scale war, right?

MP: The second. The first track we released on the first anniversary of the war, it’s called [‘Ukraina. God voyny’ \(Ukraine. A Year of War\)](#). We performed this song in one of the Christian churches in Brooklyn, accompanied by an organ — a kind of organ and brass version of the song. That’s also where we first introduced Ukrainian lyrics, because I sang the chorus at the end of the song in Ukrainian.

AM: Do you think you’re more of just a musician now, or more of a musician-activist? Or is it the same thing?

MP: I’ve always considered myself — and hopefully have been — an absolutely apolitical person. The work we do as a band and the general human, civic position we express can’t really be called political activity in the sense that I’m not trying to be a politician.

But the thing is, in difficult periods of history, a musician has to be both. Well, not that they have to, but it wouldn’t hurt for a musician to be both, because their voice is heard, and known. A song is a powerful tool that can affect the human psyche, the kind and sensitive strings of the human soul. At least, that’s what we try to do.

AM: Have you been living in the U.S. for a long time?

MP: Nine years.

AM: Why did you decide to move?

MP: Because many years ago, around the early 2000s, we began a long process that my wife Tanya and I call a cultural evacuation.

It was an escape from the cultural environment that started to take shape — and eventually solidified — in Russia, particularly in the music scene, which was my professional sphere. That environment became unbearable for me. And vice-versa, we were becoming more and more alien to that environment.

AM: But do you still stay in touch with the Russian musicians who emigrated after Russia's invasion of Ukraine?

MP: Of course. My point about the unfavorable environment doesn't mean complete isolation from people whose work I respect and admire. Naturally, staying in touch with such people is possible and necessary. It's important for all of us because we stick together and support each other. That support means a lot.

AM: Are you trying to integrate into the American music industry now that you're in the U.S.?

MP: We're trying to integrate into the global music industry because we're now a completely international band. It's more accurate to say we're not so much an American band as a New York one since New York is such a multicultural city. Right now, we're working on a ton of material in English.

'Formy Zhizni' is our first project with TMT Records. We plan to collaborate with them specifically on our English-language material. We've got at least a full album ahead and have already filmed three music videos.

It's not about abandoning the Russian language as an end in itself. What's important is finding ways to exist in the environment where we're now physically present.

AM: How is Nogu Svelo! today different from the 'Haru Mamburu' era?

MP: I'll start by saying there are things that haven't changed. We're still the same completely bats***-crazy Nogu Svelo!. Our stupid jokes, the way we act — it all still comes through. If that part was gone, we wouldn't be Nogu Svelo! anymore.

But there's value in expressing your civic stance, your human position, especially as time moves forward. That's what has changed in Nogu Svelo! — the band has had to find its own way to live through these times and respond to the current events. We've learned something about life, and we've written a lot of serious, uncompromising songs. That's what sets Nogu Svelo! apart today. I'd even dare to call it progress.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/02/25/putin-doesnt-want-you-to-hear-this-nogu-svelos-defiant>

-new-single-a88146