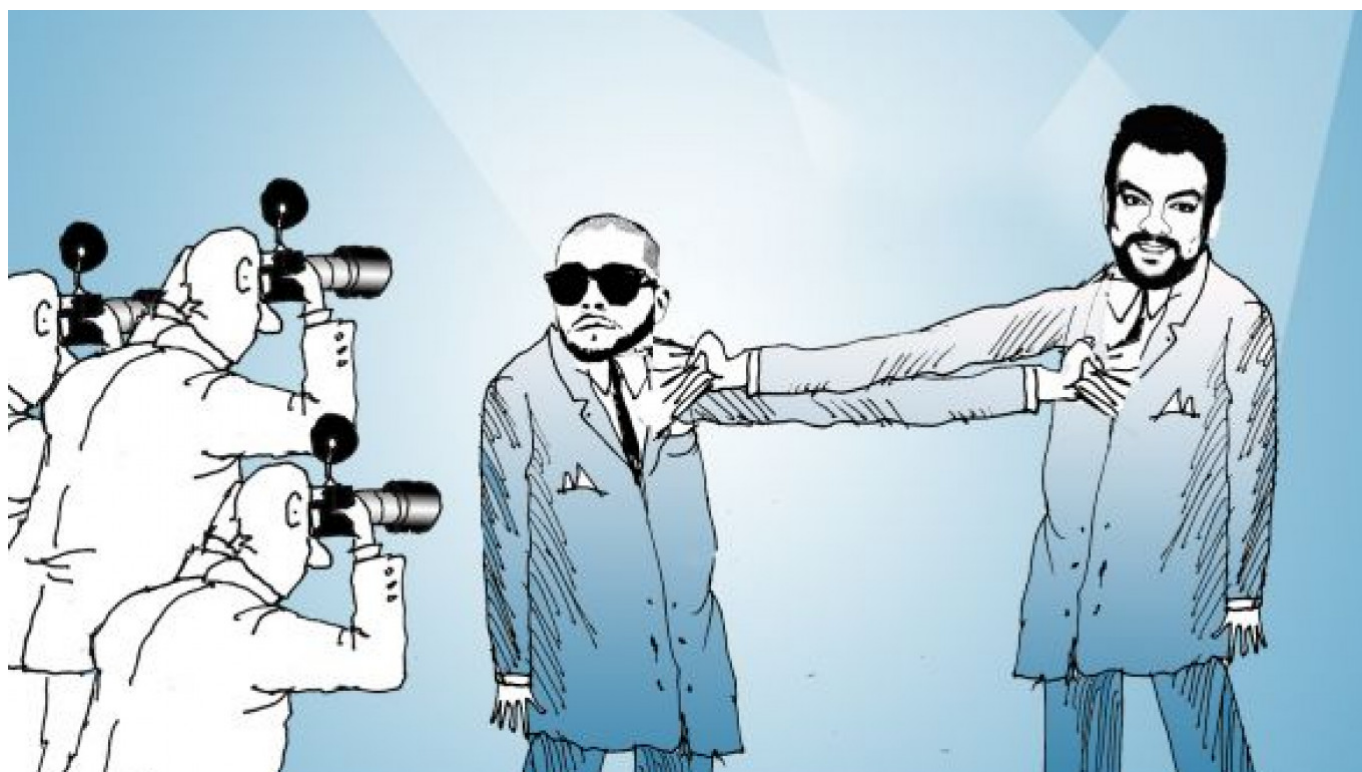


## In the Spotlight

By [Anna Malpas](#)

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This week, pop star Filipp Kirkorov and Putin-loving rapper Timati had a mild disagreement on Twitter over who won gongs at an award ceremony, which swiftly deteriorated into a slanging match over who is gay and brought up bad blood over bad debts.

Timati, whose spelling is not his strong point, started with an apparently inoffensive message saying he didn't agree with the judges at Muz-TV's ill-starred awards bash last week — who knew anyone cared about those blatantly ridiculous prizes from Russia's second music channel?

But Kirkorov immediately upbraided him with a message in the familiar "ty" form, saying: "You think you're the most honest one? I didn't ask questions last year." That charmingly referred to Timati sweeping the board last year at Muz-TV. "There is such a thing as professional etiquette. OK! Try and remember it."

Then Timati got back to him with an X-rated message, with his eloquence unable to be contained in 140 symbols. It's fairly unquotable, but he questioned Kirkorov's own professional etiquette given his run-in with a journalist whom he called a "c---" and a

shocking scene when Kirkorov attacked a minion at a rehearsal. Interestingly, he wrote that Kirkorov called "my bosses" to get off the hook for that offense. I'm not sure who Timati's bosses are, but he was a prominent supporter during Vladimir Putin's election campaign and they even exchanged awkward hand gestures.

To cap it off nicely, Timati ended with a homophobic insult, using the slang term petukh, or cockerel. "I'm not from your cockerel hoop, remember that!" he wrote. Kirkorov was married to pop diva Alla Pugachyova but rumors have always swirled about his sexual orientation. He recently had a baby daughter through a U.S. surrogate mother.

Kicking Kirkorov when he was down, pop producer Iosif Prigozhin unexpectedly joined the Twitter battle, saying that Kirkorov's assistant hadn't paid back a debt in seven years. He also added to Kirkorov that he had "a very interesting document signed personally by you. And so I suggest you don't touch me, and your assistant pays back the debt." Truly the language of mafia dons, and I sometimes wonder if Russia's pop elite realizes that other people can read their tweets. Fair enough, Timati enhances his street cred, if he has any, with four-letter words, but Prigozhin markets his family image with his wife and protege Valeria.

The spat even made it onto Channel One's late-night comedy show, Evening Urgant, which seems to be getting funnier. Ivan Urgant announced that: "From now on, June 5 will enter history as the beginning of the great standoff between two poles of Russian pop music: Filipp Kirkorov and Timati." He then read out their messages, deliberately paraphrasing them in a softened-up Channel One style.

He also made fun of another Russian pop legend, ex-opera star Nikolai Baskov, whose new video is a ludicrous cross of Spartacus and Gladiator, with Baskov wielding a sword in a skirt as he discovers his wife's infidelity. Urgant did a sketch where he was allegedly dancing to the video in his dressing room in his boxer shorts and then couldn't find the off-switch on the television when caught in the act.

Meanwhile, Ksenia Sobchak, It Girl and reality show host turned opposition activist, did a "Legally Blonde" style exposé of the recently reshuffled ex-

agriculture minister, Yelena Skrynnik, and her very expensive handbag. Sobchak revealed on Twitter that the bag was a crocodile-skin Hermes Birkin bag that costs "20,000 euros."

Grilled over whether the bag could be a cheap Tverskaya underpass knockoff, she answered with the wisdom of experience: "It's not a fake. It's a real Birkin. If I know anything, it's that. My whole youth was just one big Birkin bag."

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