

Art Pops: Russian Stars Dream of Foreign Awards

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When it comes to awards, artists' wishes are fairly predictable. Which of them doesn't dream of the Oscars' golden statuette, Eurovision's silver microphone or, at the very least, Nickelodeon's orange blimp? This week, Russian artists showed that their dreams are just like everybody else's and that sometimes they're not even that far from snatching the top prize.

The winner of the Russian version of the popular singing contest "The Voice," Dina Garipova, presented her Eurovision entry on Channel One this week. The subtle call for world peace "What If" was written by Swedish composers and a Russian guitarist and has already received much publicity — not all of it good. The musically savvy blogger Sergei Nepryakhin accused the collaborating trio of plagiarizing the melody from a Polish song and the chorus from "Carried Away" by the British pop band Hear'say.

Garipova's mentor, Alexander Gradsky, jumped to her defense, saying in an interview with RIA-Novosti that people just want to discredit a strong contender, and he reminded them that there are only 12 notes in the world. He might have stopped there, but instead Gradsky went on to criticize Adele's recent performance of "Skyfall" at the Oscars ceremony and said Adele might soon be called "the English Garipova" as opposed to Garipova now being called "the Russian Adele."

All social talk of the week focused on the 85th Academy Awards, and although there were no Russian nominees, locals could still take credit for a little slice of Hollywood's most glamorous night. Jacqueline Durran won the Oscar for best costume for her work in the British adaptation of "Anna Karenina," beating out "Les Miserables," "Lincoln" and two movies about Cinderella. The film had been nominated in three other categories but lost.

Uzbekistan-born Stalik Khankishiyev won a top prize at the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards in Paris this week. His cookbook "Bazaar, Kazan and Dastarkhan" triumphed in the regional cuisine category at the fair, which included representatives from 170 other countries. Leaving nothing to chance, the food guru wooed the crowds at the fair by holding a master class in cooking four types of pilaf, and he treated all guests to eastern confections.

Perhaps inspired by this success, pop singer Anna Semenovich announced that she plans to release her own cookbook as well. Semenovich now co-hosts the cooking show "Baryshnya i Kulinar" with professional chef Mikhail Plotnikov and seduces men in intimate advertising campaigns.

There was good news this week for Russian celebrities who have the valuable teenage nod of approval. The Nickelodeon Kids' Choice Awards, which will take place in Los Angeles on March 23, for the first time included a local award category. Teenage idols Nuysha, Yolka, Dima Bilan and Ivan Dorn are the first to be nominated as best Russian artist, though not all seem that elated by this. After hearing of his nomination, Dorn sarcastically remarked "Dear kids! Look closely at all the award nominees and understand that I need the victory least of all."

On Friday, hockey player Yevgeny Malkin was named the most successful Russian athlete, according to a ranking by R-Sport. The Pittsburgh Penguins forward was in the top three along with Olympic judo champion Arsen Galstyan and diver Ilya Zakharov. The ranking was based on expert votes, the number of mentions in the print media and the number of Internet searches for the athlete's name. R-Sport will present a similar ranking for female athletes on March 8.

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