

Grammys, Russian-style

Pop's hottest hit Radio City

By **TODD HOLLINGSHEAD**
DAILY NEWS WRITER

Ever heard of Alsu? You should have — she's as big as Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera. How about Philip Kirkorov, Tea for Two or Smash? They're just as big in the pop world — in Russia, that is.

These Russian pop artists are among the top contenders in Russia's version of the Grammys, and they're coming to New York City next month.

On June 11, these four plus other groups — the biggest names in Russian pop music, selected by fans across Russia — will perform at Radio City Music Hall to kick off Russian Heritage Week. The artists were chosen during the Golden Gramophone Awards ceremony last December in the Kremlin Palace.

Headlining the cast is pop sensation Alsu, whose music has become so popular among Russian youth that a single name is all she needs — just like Britney or Beyoncé.

Rina Kirshner, vice president of the Russian American Arts Foundation, is promoting the special Russian Music Awards Gala Concert and says it will be a "huge event" for the Russian population.

She also expects the show, with tickets ranging from \$50 to \$250, to sell out.

"In Russia, there's really only one mainstream flow, and it's pop. R&B, rap and rock are all underground," Kirshner said. "It's not only the young people, too. You have the older generation, those in their 30s and their 40s. People from 10 years old to 80 years old like pop music."

Oksana Arkhipova, head of the international department of the Russian Media Group, said she hopes the performance will become a tradition.

"We're hoping that this will be the first of many more to come," Arkhipova said. "We expect to do it next year and the year after that."

In the meantime, the featured artists are building impressive resumes in and out of Russia.



GOLDEN BOY Pop star Philip Kirkorov is one of superstars of Russian pop who will perform with Golden Gramophone Awards winners at Radio City to kick off Russian Heritage Month. June 11 event should be sellout, organizer says.

Heartthrob Philip Kirkorov has performed all over the world, Kirshner said, and is as big as they get in Russia.

Alsu, who has recorded tracks in Russian and English, recently teamed up with American hip-hop talent Usher in the studio.

Some of the other artists among the 12 have signed major contracts with labels such as Universal.

Arkhipova said she hopes more Russian performers, like Alsu, will record with American performers to better promote their music internationally.

Though the performance will be more of a "small concert version" as Kirshner

calls it, it will also be a leading event for the Russian musical movement.

The Daily News, along with the Russian American Art Foundation, is presenting the concert as part of event-filled Russian Heritage Week.

"We're happy to bring to New York the great talent from Russia," said John Campi, vice president of promotions and community affairs for The News. "It is the premier event, and it is kicking off the week of events."

The Golden Gramophone Awards were created eight years ago by Russian Radio, the largest radio station in the country, covering 950 cities and with 20 million listeners.

Throughout the year, listeners call in with requests to hear a particular group. At the end of the year, Russian Radio tallies the requests, and the most popular performers win the Gramophone awards.

Beginning last year, the Russian Media Group also produced a live weekly TV show, featuring different performers. As with "American Idol," viewers could call in and vote for their favorite performers.

Other winning performers slated to perform in next month's concert include Anastasia Stotskaya, Blestyaschye, Boris Moiseev, Verka Serdyuchka, Guests from the Future, Kristina Orbakayte and Nepara.

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President prevails

BATUMI, Georgia — Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili took charge of the Adzhara region Thursday and secured its valuable port just hours after forcing its breakaway leader, Aslan Abashidze, to flee into exile.

Saakashvili flew into the regional capital of Batumi the morning after opposition rallies and weeks of increasing pressure on Abashidze. The 37-year-old U.S.-trained lawyer strode down palm-lined streets to a chorus of greetings.

"Misha, we love you!" shouted supporters who crowded around him.

Consumer prices go up

MOSCOW — Russian consumer prices rose 1% in April compared to 0.8% in March, as cities boosted ticket prices for trams, subways and buses, and fuel costs increased, the Federal Service for State Statistics said.

On April 1, prices for trams, buses and the underground metro system in Moscow and other cities were raised. A trip on the Moscow metro now costs 10 rubles (35 cents), up from

7, while a ticket on a Moscow tram costs 15 rubles, up from 10 rubles.

Leader assassinated

BISHKEK, Kyrgyzstan — Gunmen shot dead Kyrgyzstan's anti-corruption chief as he drove through the center of the Central Asian state's capital, Bishkek, police said on Thursday.

Colonel Chynybek Aliyev, 43, was killed on Wednesday evening in what his colleagues at the Interior Ministry called a declaration of war on the ministry by criminals.

Aliyev headed a division that investigates corruption and organized crime.

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