“If only they were treated with more kindness when they are alive”, Vladimir Mayakovsky wrote about the poets. But there was no kindness: there was only lack of understanding by the officials and the ban on everything: publishing of poems, performances on TV, disk releasing. But Vladimir Vysotsky performed everywhere where it was possible: at the stadiums, in the village clubs, in the taiga in front of geologists and loggers. He gave several concerts a day, not knowing where he would sing the next day: in the theatre in Moscow or in front of the seamen in Severomorsk.

Vladimir Vysotsky (1938 – 1980) was a highly educated man which was desirable for theatre actors of his time. In 1971 the director of Taganka Theatre, Yuri Lyubimov. He was one of the first to realize what outstanding talent this actor had. Lyubimov gave him the leading parts in the plays “The Fallen and the Alive” and “Hamlet”. By this time Vysotsky had been suffering from alcoholism. Many of his songs from the period deal – either directly or metaphorically – with alcoholism and insanity.
Next year, Vysotsky's got the role in (and wrote some songs for) film "The Sannikov Land". Then was scratched—for the reason of his face "being too scandalously recognisable" as a state official had put it. One of the songs written for the film, a doom-laden epic allegory called *Fastidious Horses* or *Capricious Horses* (rus. Кони привередливые), gained life of its own and became one of the singer's signature tunes.

The song “**Fastidious Horses**” where Vladimir Vysotsky sang about his irrepressible thirst for life and his passing away to the other world is unique. There was a trinity of poetry, music and performing art in it. Even after his death, no one could perform his songs better than Vladimir Vysotsky himself.
Due to his popularity Vysotsky himself did not suffer personal persecution, besides not being allowed to perform officially for most of his life. With few exceptions, he wasn't allowed to publish his recordings with "Melodiya", which held a monopoly on the Soviet music industry. Instead, his recordings had to be distributed via bootleg channels and magnetic tape, resulting in his immense popularity. Cosmonauts even took his music on cassette into orbit.

Vladimir Vysotsky

The “Fastidious Horses” appears to be based on his personal feeling of going over the edge, several years prior to his death. Vysotsky was extremely temperamental, fiery and unstable. He was an alcoholic and probably also a drug user. This led to his early death at age of 42.
Vladimir Vysotsky's Fastidious Horses

Written by blueslover
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Vysotsky and his wife Marina Vlady

In years to come, Vysotsky's flower-adorned grave became a site of pilgrimage for several generations of his fans, the youngest of whom were born after his death. Shortly after Vysotsky's death, many Russian bards started writing songs and poems about his life and death. The best known are Yuri Vizbor's "Letter to Vysotsky" (1982) and Bulat Okudzhava's "About Volodya Vysotsky" (1980). In Poland, where Vysotsky is very popular, Jacek Kaczmarski based some of his songs on those of Vysotsky and dedicated to his memory the song "Epitafium dla Włodzimierza Wysockiego" (Epitaph for Vladimir Vysotsky).

Vysotsky's flower-adorned grave

Every year on Vysotsky's birthday, festivals are held throughout Russia and in many communities throughout the world, especially in Europe. Vysotsky's impact in Russia is often compared to that of Bob Dylan in America, or Brassens and Brel in France.
Along the cliff, by the abyss, where the edge is rather narrow,
With the whip I lash my horses, striking harder, - death defying, -
There's no air for me to breathe, - I drink the wind, the fog I swallow
I can sense, with tragic passion, that I am dying, - that I am dying!
Slow it down, horses, calm your eagerness!
Do not listen to the old tight thong!
But the horses that I've got are fastidious -
I didn't live out my life, I won't finish my song!
I'll allow them to drink, and this verse I will sing,
Just a little bit longer I will stay on the brink!

Like a flake, a brutal twister will then sweep me off the palm,
They will drag me on the sled, through the morning, in a welter,
Slow your gallop, oh my horses, - make it peaceful and calm!
And extend, somewhat, my journey to the last and final shelter!
Slow it down, horses, calm your eagerness!
Do not listen to the old tight thong!
But the horses that I've got are fastidious -
I didn't live out my life, so let me finish this song!
I'll allow them to drink, and this verse I will sing
For a moment I'll stay on the brink...

We came in time – there's no lateness to God's palace.
Why are voices of angels overflowing with hate?
Or perhaps it is the bell, which is weeping from the malice,
Or I'm pleading to the horses to slow down and to wait?
Slow it down, horses, calm your eagerness!
Do not listen to the old tight thong!
But the horses that I've got are fastidious -
I didn't live out my life, so let me finish this song!
I'll allow them to drink, and this verse I will sing
For a moment I'll stay on the brink...

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