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# Ujian the whistling orang-utan releases his own CD

Roger Boyes in Berlin

With only days to go before the Eurovision Song Contest, Germany has found the ideal candidate: a whistling orang-utan.

Sadly, entries are closed for Saturday's competition in Moscow but the long-haired, 14-year-old ape is still tipped for stardom. His CD, *Ich Bin Ujian* ("I Am Ujian"), is due out next month and today he was preparing for the big time by picking lice out of his fur in front of spectators who had gathered at his cage in Heidelberg Zoo.

Ujian has a large lower lip which he learnt to purse when the keeper was slow to dish up his daily supply of fruit and vegetables. Having apparently heard humans whistle, Ujian let out a long irritated piping sound to speed up the serving of his dinner.

The whistling became a habit, and a star was born. "I heard him first when I was visiting the zoo with my son," Christian Wolf, a music producer, said. Mr Wolf decided to record the ape. Together with the head ape-house keeper, Bernd Kowalsky, he found that Ujian could generate an wide range of whistling sounds — usually before feeding time.

The sounds were recorded and now form the backdrop of the song put together by Tobi — the human singer Tobias Kaemmerer — and the Ape-Band. The proceeds of the CD will go towards building a bigger ape and monkey cage at the zoo.

"Been a long time since I've hung out in Sumatra," croons Tobi.

"I'm in Heidelberg now, give an audience every day/ I've got my butler — and my barber/ If you want more — just go whistle!"

Ujian certainly has a sense of melody, whistling almost as well as the wartime ukelele-playing singer George Formby ("I blew a little blast on my whistle") or the various country and western balladeers who whistle mournfully about their dead dogs.

The Heidelberg ape seems to have taken a banana leaf out of the cartoon version of *The Jungle Book*, in which the character King Louie ("I'm the king of the swingers") sets the standard for all singing orangutans.

Orang-utans are unusually intelligent and, unlike Germany's last celebrity animal, the polar bear Knut — who now spends most of his time in a post-prandial siesta — are constantly observing human visitors. Many learn to mimic the laughter of children, suggesting that they have a musical ear.

An Australian conservationist baffled at how an orang-utan managed to beat a high-security system and escape from its compound in Adelaide Zoo, said at the weekend: "They have the mental age of human five-year-olds, so they'll sit there and work through a problem."

Ujian appears to be a Renaissance orang-utan, and his paintings are going on auction this week — something to fall back on if the musical career does not work out.

The lyrics of the song are somewhat corny — "Come back to my pad, baby" sings Tobi on behalf of the



(Ronald Wittek/EPA)

Ujian has a large lower lip which he learnt to purse when the keeper was slow to bring him food

orang-utan — but not bad for a human, and the whistling is probably superior to many of the Eurovision entries this year.

But then Ujian has an evolutionary advantage: he has the intelligence of a five-year-old, a sense of rhythm and does not walk on his knuckles.

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