



Call for Papers

Popular Music in Eastern Europe Conference

2-3 June, 2016

IEAS, Department of British Studies

University of Debrecen, Hungary

Popular and especially rock music in Eastern Europe during state socialism was identified both as a damaging western influence incompatible with socialist ethics and a component of youth culture which, if properly controlled, the regime could use as a safety valve to discharge social tension. State-sponsored bands rose all around the region accommodating carefully selected elements of global pop and rock craze spreading the spirit of rebellion and liberalism among the youth. While the consumption of officially approved popular music gave people the false illusion of liberty, hippy and punk subcultures – identified as competition and a challenge to legitimate youth organizations of the era – were suppressed and criminalized through administrative methods, by censoring lyrics, restrictions on clothing, sabotaging concerts and making public appearance impossible. The authorized and the countercultural spirit of rebellion polarized both artists and audiences but not without allowing for a variety of crossover genres to appear between commercially viable light entertainment and underground music circulated secretly. Although the relevant literature, including Timothy W. Ryback's *Rock Around the Bloc: A History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, Artemy Troitsky's *Back in the USSR: The True Story of Rock in Russia*, *Rocking the State: Rock Music and Politics in Eastern Europe and Russia* edited by Sabrina Petra Ramet, and *Youth and Rock in the Soviet Bloc: Youth Cultures, Music, and the State in Russia and Eastern Europe* edited by William Jay Risch, suggests that Soviet Block countries show remarkable similarities in regard to the emergence, expansion and/or sanctioning of popular music, the organizers of the conference believe that local variations of this narrative also need to be addressed.

The fall of communism – another important point of convergence and a shared experience in Eastern Europe – affected the music industry downright. Economic and cultural factors allowed the new global genres of rap, hip-hop, grunge, garage, various forms of metal, etc. to cross borders owing to commercial television, thematic channels, new distribution networks and the internet. As Ewa Mazierska argued in *Relocating Popular Music* (edited with Georgina Gregory), the spatial turn in the research of popular music foregrounded the close relationship between acoustic textures and local/national identity. This link certainly holds grounds in the case of Eastern European popular music genres such as the turbo-folk in Serbia, the chalga in Bulgaria, and the manele in Romania. At the same time, westernization is the most important factor in post-communist decades, not only apparent in the adaptation of Anglo-American packaging and marketing models but also in the choice of local

musicians to integrate global soundscapes in their music and rely on standardized visual clichés in their music videos. From mechanical imitation through hybridization to playful mimicry there are various forms of influences and contacts, all of which pose questions beyond the realm of aesthetics and urge us to study popular music as discursive phenomenon and transnational imagination.

We invite papers that discuss all aspects of popular music in Eastern Europe (**excluding Russia**), especially pop-rock during the period of state socialism and postcommunism, including its political dimensions, relationship with music produced in the West and visual representations in music video, documentary and fiction films, advertisements and computer games.

Organizers invite proposals exploring popular music in Eastern Europe with reference but not limited to the following topics:

- music genres
- music as counterculture before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall
- popular music, cultural politics and ideology
- the role of music journalists
- internationalization of popular music
- popular music in the digital age
- formation and transformation of national canons of popular music
- audiences and reception
- historical trajectories and artistic tendencies in music videos
- popular music in genre and arthouse cinema, including biopics
- archiving of music
- music and memory, counter-memory and oral history

Deadline for abstracts (max 200 words): 1 February 2016.

Please send abstracts to Zsolt Gyori, Gyorgy Kalmar or Ewa Mazierska
popmusic_ee_conf_2016@yahoo.co.uk
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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Registration fee (payable upon arrival):

- €10 for postgraduate/doctoral students
- €25 for researchers in Eastern Europe
- €40 for researchers in Western Europe

Conference site:

You will find additional information on keynote speakers, conference program, travel and accommodation at this site below.

<https://www.facebook.com/Popular-Music-in-Eastern-Europe-756919497769474/>

Conference Organisers

Dr. Zsolt Gyori, University of Debrecen

Dr. Habil. Gyorgy Kalmar, University of Debrecen

Prof. Ewa Mazierska, University of Central Lancashire