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# Yugoslav Kitsch Wave with a Hungarian Accent: Newly Composed Folk Music in Vojvodina

**Abstract:** This paper discusses the history of 3+2, a popular pop-folk band from Vojvodina, as a Cold War cultural transfer between Hungary and Yugoslavia. It aims to contextualize their style and emergence in the broader context of the Yugoslavian "newly composed folk music" (*novokomponovana narodna muzika*). The case study focuses on the band's breakthrough in the second half of 1980s and the moral panic they triggered in the Hungarian media, reminiscent of the controversies that took place in Yugoslavia about the newly composed folk music in the 1960s–1970s. However, in the case of late state socialist Hungary, concern was more about the quality of the so-called "wedding rock" (*lakodalmas rock or mulató zene*) than about nationalist tendencies, as it was in the Yugoslav context. The majority of the Kádárist media establishment condemned the phenomenon as a kitsch, cheap form of entertainment, while in the society it was a massive success. This highlights the differences between the Hungarian centralized system of music production and the liberal commercial approach existing in Yugoslavia. The popular music produced by 3+2 and others from the Vojvodina scene filled a market niche in Hungary, which had been neglected by the music establishment. Their style and songs, which were often covers of popular interwar songs, resonated well with the taste of average Hungarians. This is proved also by the fact that around the Hungarian transition in 1989, when the social-economic context became liberalized, homegrown acts of this genre reached a similar success and pushed out the Vojvodina bands from the Hungarian market.

In contemporary Hungary, it is a little-known fact that the bestselling Hungarian record of all time is a pop-folk LP released by Jugoton, a Zagreb-based, Yugoslav record label. This record, by the band 3+2, and the economic success of pop-folk were among the most controversial cultural phenomena in late socialist Hungary. The genre referred to in Hungarian as *mulatós zene* (entertainment music) or *lakodalmas rock* (wedding rock) was not without tradition, but its commercialization started during the liberalization of the Kádár regime. In this regard, Hungary was not alone among the former socialist countries. In the region, many similar genres were born at the end of communism, such as *manele* in Romania, *chalga* in Bulgaria, *muzika popullore* in Albanian, and *turbofolk* in the former

Yugoslav space. What binds these together is their inspiration from the Yugoslav *novokomponovana narodna muzika* (newly composed folk music, NCFM).[1]

Hungarian *mulatós zene* as a popular music genre owes its genesis to the former Yugoslav space. The first bands that reached commercial success were formed by ethnic Hungarians from Vojvodina, the northern province of Serbia. The pop-folk scene in Vojvodina, which is generally referred to as *muskátlizene* (pelargonium music, referring to the popular flower of the local villages), was largely inspired by the successes of the Yugoslav NCFM. Furthermore, its breakthrough owes much to the relaxed policies of the Yugoslav record industry, which was willing to release these recordings.

The legal export and illegal smuggling of Yugoslav NCFM cassettes and LPs quickly created a market for this type of music in Hungary, forcing the Hungarian state record company, Hungaroton, to release similar material. The Vojvodina scene peaked around 1987 when its flagship band 3+2 from Jermenovci played live in the Budapest Sports Hall, at the time one of the largest venues in the country. Later, homegrown acts surpassed the bands from Vojvodina in popularity, and the Yugoslav Wars also contributed to the decline of the scene. Nevertheless, pop-folk remains a lucrative industry to this day in Hungary, and 3+2 keeps touring in the Hungarian language space.

Interestingly, the phenomenon of *mulatós zene* triggered exactly the same intellectual debate and moral panic in the Hungarian media as NCFM earlier had in Yugoslavia. Articles about the Vojvodina scene in the late 1980s fearing the cultural decline of Hungarian society revolved around the aesthetical inferiority, banality, and kitsch of the music. Unlike the history of *turbofolk* and the NFCM, that of Hungarian *mulatós zene* is barely researched in international and national academia. Nevertheless, in recent years the Hungarian media has published several lengthy articles on the history of the phenomenon.[2] Even though these writings mention its origins as being in the former Yugoslavia and tell a detailed history of 3+2, they do not discuss the genre in the context of the Yugoslav music industry and do not compare the genre with that of NCFM.

Therefore, first this paper seeks to place the birth of Hungarian pop-folk as a commercial genre in the context of the self-managing record industry of Yugoslavia and traces its

1 Rory Archer, "Assessing Turbofolk Controversies: Popular Music between the Nation and the Balkans," *Southeastern Europe* 36, no. 2 (2012): 190-191.

2 Szabolcs Wekerle, "Mint a nokedli" [Like dumplings], *Magyar Nemzet*, February 14, 2015 and Endre Dömötör, "Amikor magyar zene hódított Jugoszláviában: muskátlizene, avagy a lakodalmas rock felemelkedése és titkos csodái" [When Hungarian music conquered Yugoslavia: pelargonium music, or the rise and secret wonders of wedding rock], *24.Hu*, April 11, 2021, https://24.hu/kultura/2021/04/11/muskatlizene-lakodalmas-rock-jugoszlavia-vajdasag-mulatos-tortenete/.

genealogy back to the similar NCFM. Later, it discusses the birth of the *muskátlizene* scene and outlines the intellectual debates present in the Hungarian media.

## Newly Composed Folk Music: Business and Trouble in the Yugoslav Music Industry

### *Non-Aligned and Self-Managed: the Liberalization of the Yugoslav Music Industry*

Similarly to many other phenomena, the origins of the Yugoslav music industry's relative freedom can be traced back to the Tito–Stalin split in 1948. As Dean Vuletic puts it, "Yugoslav popular music culture (...) was not only rooted in international trends but was also shaped by the domestic and foreign policies"[3] pursued by the leadership of the country. After the split, Yugoslavia abandoned Soviet cultural policies and opened the country to Western influences. This primarily served the purpose of distinguishing the country from the more doctrinaire Eastern Bloc. Furthermore, during the 1950s Yugoslav leadership started to see appropriating Western popular culture as a possible means for building a common, supranational Yugoslav identity. From the mid-1950s, the party sought to develop a homegrown music culture.[4] At the end of the decade, the foundations of the Yugoslav popular music industry had been laid, and the radio and television stations, record companies, and festivals that would shape popular music during the 1960s were in operation.[5]

The institutionalization of the Yugoslav record industry was inextricably linked to the economic growth of the country and the party's goal to increase living standards. The five-year plan, which had begun in 1957, incentivized the production of consumer goods such as television and radio. The economic conditions facilitated the investment in the production of a domestic popular music. Television and radio networks were extended to every republic, and common popular music programs were developed that sought to counterbalance Western and local influence in order to promote a pan-Yugoslav identity.[6] Also, the 1960s marked the proliferation of music festivals into every republic. This process started with the Opatija Festival in 1958, which, in addition to promoting popular music

3 Dean Vuletic, "Generation Number One: Politics and Popular Music in Yugoslavia in the 1950s," *Nationalities Papers* 36, no. 5 (November 2008): 861.
4 Ibid, 862–862.
5 Ibid, 873.
6 Dean Vuletic, "The Making of a Yugoslav Popular Music Industry," *Popular Music History* 6, no. 3 (November 12, 2012): 271–272.

in Yugoslavia, was also a symbol of Yugoslavia's openness to the West and its belonging to the Adriatic cultural space. Later, festivals were held also in other coastal towns, such as Rijeka and Split, and for the 1960s the Adriatic became the center of the Yugoslav music industry.[7] Furthermore, the Yugoslav authorities invested in record companies. For example, in the second half of the 1950s, the Zagreb-based Jugoton expanded with the help of financial credit from the city, and between 1956 and 1961, the record company increased its production eight times over, while its profits increased sixteen-fold. Also, other companies were founded, including PGP-RTB in Belgrade and Helidon in Ljubjana.[8]

### *Socialist Morals and Yugoslav Identity: The Troublesome Success of Newly Composed Folk Music*

The development and commercial success of the Yugoslav newly composed folk music was due to many factors. Some of these are special to the Yugoslav context (i.e., the market-driven record industry of the country), but others, such as the sociodemographic of its audience, can be found in the broader region. This latter factor can explain why this kind of folk music could easily proliferate into Hungary and other neighboring countries. Also, the highly similar debates taking place in Hungary suggest that the genre was a symptom of social changes taking place in East Central Europe under the socialist regimes.

The newly composed folk music had been present in the Yugoslav music scene basically since its early institutionalization in the 1960s. It is commonly held that the first NCFM song had already been published in 1964 by Lepa Lukic ("Od izvora dva putica" [Two paths leading from the water spring]). It was at this time that the pop music notions of a "hit" and "star" appeared in folk music. On the one hand, already in the early 1960s, radio stations started recording folk songs, which came to be called *izvorna muzika* (music from the source). In this process, folks song played by local musicians were arranged for recording sessions, which introduced the practice of composition.[9] On the other hand, the chorus-verse structure of NCFM was inextricably linked to the influx of Western entertainment music and the appearance of the Yugoslav *zabavna muzika* (entertainment music), both of which influenced the pop-folk scene.[10]

7 Ibid, 279–280.
8 Ibid, 277.
9 Ljerka Vidić Rasmussen, "From Source to Commodity: Newly-Composed Folk Music of Yugoslavia," *Popular Music* 14, no. 2 (1995): 243.
10 Ibid, 245.

Later during the 1970s, NCFM being a popular genre was embraced by recording companies whose workings were driven by free-market logic. Jugoton, PGP-RTB, and Diskoton decided to publish the highly successful NCFM primarily seeking profits. According to Rasmussen, in the 1980s pop-folk constituted a 58% market share in Yugoslavia, which allowed these companies to finance less successful genres.[11] An important feature of the NCFM scene was its regionality. The stars of the industry were overwhelmingly created from below, their success predominantly started from local venues, the *kafanas* (cafes), and local record companies and radio stations were the ones that discovered new talents. This, as we will see, can explain the emergence of the Hungarian scene in Vojvodina. Furthermore, as Rasmussen contends, regionalism should be credited for the most controversial aspect of NCFM: its oriental tunes, which started dominating the genre in the 1980s. This stylistic trait, inherited from the Ottoman rule, was brought into mainstream by Bosnia, Macedonian, and south-Serbian musicians, most notably the band Južni Vetar.[12]

The market-driven Yugoslav music industry allowed NCFM to develop into a lucrative industry. Record companies simply accommodated the popular demand coming from a large social group. The stylistic components of the NCFM resonated well with the demographic of its audience, a social group produced by the postwar modernization. Musically, NCFM was a combination of new and old, rural and urban, Eastern and Western.[13] This in-betweenness was also true for its core audience, which was considered to be "a cross-section of rural/urban transitional majority reflecting the scale of its social mobility: urbanized villagers and the working class as well as city dwellers and bureaucratic class."[14] The positive reception of NCFM among these people can be explained by the fact that the genre successfully "mediated between the sets of cultural imagery of different 'inner selves.'"[15]

The success of the pop-folk stirred serious debates, and the authorities were concerned about the phenomenon. Rory Archer, in assessing the debates about *turbofolk*, the genre that succeeded NCFM in the 1990s, identifies three major groups of criticism. These critiques already existed of pop-folk in socialist Yugoslavia. The major concerns were that the genre is aesthetically poor, symbolizing a failure to adapt to urban values, and the oriental tune as an inferior influence was perceived as a vulgarization of folk music.[16]

11 Ibid, 246.
12 Ibid, 248.
13 Iva Nenic, "'Folk' Behaving Badly: Newly Composed Folk Music as Popular Culture," in *Sweet Sixties: Specters and Spirits of a Parallel Avant-Garde*, ed. Georg Schöllhammer and Ruben Arevshatyan (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013): 440.
14 Rasmussen, "From Source," 242.
15 Nenic, "'Folk,'" 446.
16 Archer, "Assessing," 191.

Even though NCFM remained tolerated throughout socialist Yugoslavia, official voices constantly condemned the aesthetics of the genre, highlighting that "not all music genres were (…) acceptable, even if they treated the symbols of the Yugoslav society 'in the correct manner.'"[17] The main problem was the cultural inclusivity of the genre, which embraced the values of urbanized villagers. Specifically, the music lacked the "social educational aspect" and instead exclusively sought entertainment. This commercial nature was associated with capitalism and market-economy, therefore a negative influence on the people.[18] The genre was perceived simply as inappropriate: "[w]hile by the 1970s all other music genres had introduced revolutionary themes, the NCFM performers were not allowed to honor Tito, the party or Yugoslavia with their songs."[19]

## *Muskátlizene*: The Great Rock and Roll Swindle of Vojvodina

### *Newly Composed Folk Music Goes Hungarian*

In the contemporary press, *muskátlizene* went under different names. One was *Bugyi-rock*, after the Bugyi brothers, the founders of 3+2. In Hungarian, the word *bugyi* also refers to women's underwear; therefore the term also aimed to refer the soft erotic connotations of the genre's lyrics. Furthermore, the godfather of the whole scene, Károly Kovács, a local radio DJ and producer, also came up with a term: *sógorizmus*. This term is a combination of the Hungarian words for "brother in law" (*sógor*) and "-ism" (*-izmus*), referring to another popular band of the scene, *Sógorok* (Brothers in Law). This other expression also grasps quite well the essence of this music: its fraternal, rural ambiance, and the atmospheres of village gatherings.[20]

The phenomenon was not without its roots, and NCFM was already being played in cafes, bars, and village balls both in Vojvodina and Hungary. However, the Bugyi brothers and Kovács found an important niche market and tapped into a serious demand. This is shown by the fact that to this day the first album of 3+2, *Halvány őszi rózsa* (Pale Autumn

17 Ana Hofman, "Folk Music as a Folk Enemy: Music Censorship in Socialist Yugoslavia," in *Popular Music in Eastern Europe: Breaking the Cold War Paradigm*, ed. Ewa Mazierska (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), 136.

18 Ibid, 138–140.

19 Ibid, 139.

20 Ferenc Kontra, "Meddig virágzik a muskátli?" [How long does the Pelargonium blossom?] *Új Symposion* 23., no. 11–12. (1987): 32–33.

Rose), released in 1986, is the bestselling Hungarian-language record, with 1.5 million copies sold.[21] The songs that they covered and the style they adopted came from the tradition of *magyar nóta* (interwar popular music), *csárdás* (folk dance), and operetta. These were genres that remained popular throughout the postwar period both locally in Vojvodina and in Hungary. Nevertheless, these styles were mostly neglected by the music industry and the cultural establishment, being perceived as a form of cheap and low-quality entertainment. The innovation of the *muskátlizene* was that the records made the music more accessible to its audience. They could listen to it in their homes, while until then they could only do so rarely and at village gatherings.[22]

The career of the Bugyi brothers started in Jermenovci, a small village in Southern Banat. Their story fits well into the regionalism of NCFM. The band originally started playing in the mid-1970s in the brothers' father's pub, like the typical *kafana* bands of the Yugoslav pop-folk. Originally, the three brothers played beat and rock music inspired by the American band The Shadows.[23] Later, two other members joined the band, and the name of the group became 3+2, referring to the three brothers plus the two added members. Following local demand, the band broadened its repertoire by incorporating locally popular genres, such as *csárdás* and *magyar nóta*, and started performing regularly at weddings. In the early 1980s, after moving to Temerin, a larger town in Backa, they became a popular wedding band in the region. Their breakthrough came in 1985 when they finally managed to record their music at Radio Temerin after being rejected for quality reasons by Radio Novi Sad. These songs became instant hits at region's local radio stations.[24] However, the major labels, including Jugoton, PGP-RTB, and Jugodisk, initially did not see the band as a lucrative business. Eventually, Jugoton's local A&R employee, after conducting market research, realized that the band would be worthwhile to release. Allegedly, locals were constantly enquiring in record shops for their LP. In 1986, the band's first album, *Halvány őszi rózsa* (Pale Autumn Rose), came out with 15,000 copies and was sold out in two days, and over the next year Jugoton sold 330,000 copies.[25]

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21 Wekerle, "Mint."

22 Zoltán Csorba. "Lakodalom az egész világ, 11. rész" [The whole world is a wedding, part 11.], *Magyar Szó*, December 21, 1987.

23 Zoltán Csorba. "Lakodalom az egész világ, 1. rész" [The whole world is a wedding, part 1.], *Magyar Szó*, December 11, 1987.

24 Zoltán Csorba. "Lakodalom az egész világ, 7. rész" [The whole world is a wedding, part 7.], *Magyar Szó*, December 17, 1987.

25 Zoltán Csorba. "Lakodalom az egész világ, 8. rész" [The whole world is a wedding, part 8.], *Magyar Szó*, December 18, 1987.

The songs, which were covers and partially their own compositions, immediately stirred a debate in the local press about the quality of the music, especially the song "Kombiné" (Lingerie) with its soft erotic lyrics.[26] Soon, the band became extremely popular in Hungary, and for a period the band's LP was a favorite smuggled product at the Yugoslav–Hungarian border. The Bugyi brothers at the peak of their success in 1987 played a mega concert in the Budapest Sports Hall, which at the time was one of the largest venues in Hungary. The event was sold out, even though it had received little to no promotion due to the fact that Hungarian authorities initially tried prevent the event's occurrence. According to the contemporary press, having a sold out concert in the Budapest Sports Hall was such a success that even Tina Turner and James Brown could not reach who played live in those years in Budapest.[27]

Besides the Bugyi brothers, another legendary figure of the scene was the above-mentioned Károly Kovács. The local DJ, seeing the success of 3+2, started producing similar bands, such as Sógorok (Brothers in Law), Szivárvány (Rainbow), II. Félidő (Second Half), Édes Csók (Sweet Kiss), and Sanyi és a cicák (Alex and the Cats), and as a local Malcolm McLaren he orchestrated the whole scene. Soon, Kovács became the interlocutor with the Hungarian authorities, organizing tours and making record deals. However, as a show businessman, he did not take himself seriously, and faithful to a true "rock and roll swindle," he created a whole mock ideology around the scene. This is most apparent in the archive materials of his TV show *Zenebona*, which aired on Television Novi Sad. The new year's eve show, featuring the whole *muskátlizene* scene, looks rather like a contemporary art performance with its ironic prizes and funny band introductions.[28]

The Vojvodina pop-folk scene peaked after a couple of years and went into a slow decline. This was due to the oversaturation of the market, the problems of the Yugoslav Wars, and importantly the fact that homegrown pop-folk acts started appearing in Hungary. In an interview from 1995, Zoltán Bugyi, the front man of 3+2, complained to the local paper that record publishing was no longer profitable, because of the large-scale illegal trade of the band's cassettes on the black market.[29] However, it seems that the end of the 1980s did not mean the end of the genre's popularity. Another article from 2008 in the same paper

26 Zoltán Csorba. "Lakodalom az egész világ, 9. rész" [The whole world is a wedding, part 9.], *Magyar Szó*, December 20, 1987.

27 Zoltán Csorba. "Lakodalom az egész világ, 15. rész" [The whole world is a wedding, part 1.], *Magyar Szó*, December 25, 1987.

28 Károly Kovács, "Vajdasági Mulatos Zene – BUÉK 87" [Vojvodina entertainment music – Happy New Year 87], *Television Novi Sad*, December 31, 1987, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2QYKk21b_E&t=1744s.

29 "A fekete piac árnyékában" [In the shadow of the black market], *Magyar Szó*, January 24, 1995.

discusses the large-scale outrage that ensued when Radio Novi Sad took its *muskátlizene* show off air.[30] Even though the genre and 3+2 became less lucrative, they remained popular well into the 21st century, and the band until recently was actively touring in the Hungarian language space and also in the Hungarian diaspora all over the world. However, the story of the bestselling Hungarian record is definitely little known in Hungary today.

### *Intellectual Debates: Cultural Decline, Trash Wave, Revolt of the Peasants*

Today, the *muskátlizene* scene rather seems to be a goofy phenomenon of the late socialist era and a media hack orchestrated by Kovács, who saw a lucrative business opportunity. Also, it is worthwhile to mention that the scene was not without its hidden gems. As pop journalist Endre Dömötör highlights, some of the bands were experimenting with new wave or ska, which resulted in songs that align with popular tastes today.[31] At that time, however, such music caused a large scale outrage and moral upheaval in the local and the Hungarian press. At its peak, the Hungarian public debated the phenomenon in lengthy articles, fearing a cultural decline. The shock of the intellectual class present in these articles highlights many aspects of social change that took place in late socialist era.

One of the leading figures of this intellectual attack was János Sebők, a well-known pop journalist of the Kádár regime and the editor-in-chief of *Ifjúsági Magazin* (Youth Magazine), an official publication of the Communist Youth Association (KISZ). In 1987, he wrote about the ailments and a "trash wave" of *muskátlizene,* a harmful cultural phenomenon. According to Sebők, the popularity of this genre and "the decline of the general taste [were] the result of the liberalized market conditions"[32] of the late Kádár era. He placed *muskátlizene* among the general pop culture trends of the 1980s, which included horror, pornography, and Rambo movies, but he also mentioned Modern Talking, a German band popular at that time in Hungary. Sebők found the official cultural policies unprepared to protect the Hungarian society from the influx of these inferior cultural products. However, it seems that he did not understood the phenomenon, because at one point he wrote about an alienated youth that is not interested in high culture.[33] The Hungarian youth might not

30 Márta Varjú. "Az éjszakai mulató végnapjai" [The last days of the night club] *Magyar Szó*, October 2, 2008.

31 Dömötör, "Amikor."

32 János Sebők, "A BUGYI(-kórság), s ami alatta van" [The Bugyi-syndrome and what lies beneath it], *Ifjúsági Magazin*, June 1, 1987, 30.

33 Ibid, 31.

have been interested in high culture, but also it was clearly not the core audience of the genre.

It is no coincidence that Károly Kovács wrote a lengthy and witty response to Sebők. In this piece, which can be read as a mock manifesto of the scene, Kovács clearly makes fun of the angry pop journalist. It is hard not to notice the irony when Kovács makes certain claims, such as that *muskátlizene* scene was "the greatest peasant revolt since György Dózsa," the 16th century jacquerie, or that *sógorizmus* is what binds together the Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin.[34] Kovács, however, knew well who his audience was, and he was defending them. As he wrote, "sógorizmus is not the product of the cultural elite. The bands 3+2, Sógorok, Szivárvány, and similar others want to satisfy the taste of ordinary people, those who do not drive a Mercedes, but Trabants, those who do not live in big cities, but somewhere on the Great Plain (*Alföld*), those who are not familiar with the notion of 'trash wave.'"[35]

Beyond the general polemics about the aesthetics, there were attempts to understand the phenomenon. The Novi Sad-based Hungarian art review *Új Symposion* dedicated a whole issue to discussing the *muskátlizene* scene at its peak in 1987. In the issue, besides interviews with Károly Kovács and the Bugyi brothers, local intellectuals published essays about the social aspects of the music. One author connected the emergence of the genre to the atomization of society, that is the destruction of traditional communities by the modernization of Yugoslav socialism. According to the author, in this disoriented, alienated era the *muskátlizene* could provide a commercial substitute for the communal feelings.[36] These thoughts are clearly in line with the perceived in-between social status of the Yugoslav NCFM's core audience. János Sebők published an edited version of his earlier article, and this time he concluded that the economic problems of socialist Hungary created the demand. As he wrote, people are forced to work more and have less time and money to spend on entertainment. In this regard, the cassettes of 3+2 and Sógorok can work as a substitute.[37] Another local author, Rókus Kalapis, saw the craze of *muskátlizene* as a symptom of the time, that of the democratization of Hungary and the Eastern Bloc.[38] From these accounts, interestingly one folk music collector was the most tolerant with the phenomenon.

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34 Károly Kovács, "Sógor, koma, muskátli" [Brother-in-law, buddy, pelargonium], *Ifjúsági Magazin,* September 1, 1987, 30.

35 Ibid, 31.

36 János Vajda, "Elfogulatlan írás a muskátlizenéről" [Unbiased writing on pelargonium music], *Új Symposion* 23, no. 11–12. (1987): 40–41.

37 János Sebők, "Hungarian Blues, avagy romlásról való ének" [Hungarian Blues, or a song about decay], *Új Symposion* 23, no. 11–12. (1987): 34–35.

38 Rókus Kalapis, "Ecc-pecc, kimehetsz, avagy néhány keresetlen szó a Bugyi-rockról" [Eeny, meeny, miney, mo, or some unsought words about Bugyi-rock], *Új Symposion* 23, no. 11–12. (1987): 48.

As Ernő Király contended in his interview, in these polemics nobody highlighted exactly what the problem is with the music: "honestly I do not see any problem in that young people modified the sound with drum machines and synthesizers. (…) Furthermore, if we look at older folk music we can find plenty of erotic songs."[39]

These debates about the aesthetic inferiority of *mulatós zene*, the Hungarian version of pop-folk, continued well into the 1990s, when the Vojvodina scene had already been surpassed by local performers. One decade later, in 1998 Lagzi Lajcsi, the most popular performer of the era, started his primetime television show on a major Hungarian television channel. A media critic, Péter György, declared the end of socialism.[40] While Kovács called the breakthrough of *mulatós zene* as a jacquerie, György in a similar vein saw it as a backlash against the marginalizing cultural policies of the Kádár regime. Some art was excluded from the state television as politically dubious, while other forms of entertainment associated with the lower classes were simply neglected by the editors. While socialism once promised the economic and cultural modernization of the country, in the 1980s, the economic modernization gave way to declining living standards and cultural modernization meant cultural marginalization. As György wrote, "[the editors] knew György Konrád (a famous dissident writer) and Tamás Szentjóby (an avantgarde artist), but they did not like them; however [as I see] they did not think anything about the Bugyi brothers."[41]

## Conclusions

In East Central Europe following 1989, pop-folk became part of the mainstream and a lucrative industry creating millionaire stars. Its early story in socialist Yugoslavia tells a multi-layered history. One part it is an interesting phenomenon of how global processes, that is the spread of Western popular music, shaped and was appropriated by local communities. Furthermore, it is an interesting transfer history of how the concept of Yugoslav newly composed folk music traveled across the region. Last but not least, the intellectual debates around the genre illustrate the questions of cultural and political liberalization taking place in late socialist regimes. Altogether, it is a fascinating story of how social groups deal with modernization and in-betweenness through culture and popular music.

39 Zoltán Máriás, "Terc-kvint- kvart változatok, Interjú Király Ernő vajdasági nép-zenekutatóval és zeneszerzővel" [Third, quint, quart versions, Interview with Ernő Király, Vojvodina folk musicologist and composer], *Új Symposion* 23, no. 11–12. (1987): 36–37.

40 Péter György, "Dáridó – avagy a szocializmus vége" [Dáridó, or the end of socialism], *Élet és Irodalom*, May 8, 1998.

41 György, "Dáridó."