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## UNFINISHED MODERNITY: ROCK'N'ROLL SOUNDSCAPE OF CINEMATIC BELGRADE

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### ***Abstract***

*Film music can be considered as a particular narrative form of unfinished modernity in cinematic cityscape. Rock'n'roll (here seen as a group of related trends in popular music since 1950s) has decisively influenced the culture of former Yugoslavia, including the glorification of urban life. Unfinished modernity refers to the 60s and 70s but its echoes can be seen/heard in the years that followed. Namely, Rock'n'roll city soundscape of cinematic Belgrade reaches its peak during the 80s: here demonstrated on selected film music examples, with a focus on the so called 'new wave' (and its extensions).*

### ***Key words***

*film, rock'n'roll, New Wave, (city) soundscape, Belgrade*

In 1980, while talking about modernity as an unfinished project, Jürgen Habermas uncovered certain problems encircling modernity and its extension by looking at postmodern period in the systems of Western European democracies (Habermas 1980: 38-59). It is interesting that Habermas' considerations of this "unfinished project", i.e. what we recognize as "unfinished modernity" can be applied to a significant extent to the specific context of ex-Yugoslav art and exemplified in the film music of the former multinational/multiethnic state.

With the end of the Second World War, there was a radical change in social establishment in Yugoslavia. Art, until then in agreement with the dominant flow of European modern art, became functionally re-routed. It was forced to glorify the achievements of the newly established system and therefore had to be understandable to the widest auditorium. Seeing numerous possibili-

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ties for spreading this new ideology, Yugoslavia provided significant financial resources for the national cinematography. The partisan film genre (i.e. the genre of “partisan war epic”) was dominant, (Kuk 2007: 526); although the topics of socialist development as well as adaptations of literary works also appeared. Post-war Yugoslav cinematography was careful about the quality of film music and the most significant composers of the time recruited to create film music they had to modify their style to new conditions. It was a return to romantic patterns of national tendencies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that were considered to be efficient in raising people’s morale with the goal to achieve successful socialist development. Both popular and avant-garde music of that time were banished because of their subversive potential. Modernity was interrupted. Again, thanks to former Yugoslavia’s specific, and relatively beneficial political position on the border between the two opposed political blocks, its citizens had abundant opportunities to gain insights into Western way of life, as well as into (popular) music listened to by an average consumer of the capitalist society, namely jazz and later rock’n’roll.

The two music genres owed their entrance into the life space (and at the same time, the cinematography) of Yugoslavs for a totally practical reason, conditioned by the fact that post-war Yugoslav policies were directed towards industrialization, while farmers were considered to be regressive elements of society. After the first post-war period it was necessary to accentuate the urban way of life, and one of the ways to do so was by introducing jazz<sup>2</sup>, and then the world-popular urban genre – rock’n’roll. We define rock’n’roll as an eclectic genre of popular music whose sound and accompanying culture intended for the younger generations were created beyond dominant genres of popular music (for adults) in post-war modernism (Šuvaković 2005: 551). We will consider this music category as a group of related musical streams that have dominated popular music since the middle of the last century. In its wider meaning rock’n’roll denotes a whole network of sub-styles (rock, pop rock, underground, acid rock, hippie phenomenon, hard and gothic rock, glam rock, heavy metal, punk, new wave...). The power of rock’n’roll lies in its expression of revolt and hope, presentation of a formula not only appropriate for the individual but for the collective as well, easing of race/class differences; it opened the space for energy liberation of given rhythmic structures where more and more young people, mostly from the working class, could at the same time control violence while expressing rebellious content

2 Another reason for introducing jazz was the fact that it represented the art of Afro-Americans, a repressed class, and this enabled identification with the proletarian class of former Yugoslavia.

(Torg 2002: 5-9). We talk of music that gave an image of revolutionary action, but served as a tool of the authorities to control potential disturbances (Atali 1983: 150-151). Rock'n'roll had the urban look<sup>3</sup>, seen through addressing industrialized society (that is, the cities), as well as in performing ensembles and formal, melodic, harmonic and rhythmic bases of music numbers. The central instrument of this kind of music is the electric guitar. An electric guitar as opposed to acoustic guitar is a constant in the development of rock'n'roll. The conflict between the two symbolizes the confrontation of city and village (Torg 2002: 40). One expected from rock music to be loud, set to high volume levels, which consequently linked it to achievements in the domain of (electronic) technology, industry and thus with the urban, that is, with film, as films are screened at louder volumes.

### The first steps of rock'n'roll in Serbian/Yugoslav cinematography

During the late 50s and early 60s, in Belgrade (as well as in other major cities of the former state), the influence of Italian popular song (*canzone*) was dominant in the domain of popular music. This was quite logical, since Italy was the closest and most musical model of the West that Yugoslavs could look up to. Jazz also existed as music enjoyed in Yugoslavia. Thus, the picture of urban life of the former state was represented by two films about Belgrade city(sound)scape: *Subotom uveče* (*Saturday night*, director Vladimir Pogačić, composer Bojan Adamič, 1957), that brought jazz sound explicitly; and *Ljubav i moda* (*Love and Fashion*, director Ljubomir Radičević; composers Darko Kraljić and Bojan Adamič, 1960), with reference to the Italian model, but also slightly influenced by rock'n'roll (Ćirić 2012: 67-69).

Rock'n'roll was relatively late with its arrival on the territory of Serbian/Yugoslav cinematography – it is probably linked to the appearance of the 'black wave' in the 1960s, a turbulent and dynamic period characterized by creativity and experimentation in film. To date, it is not clear who the author of the 'black wave' label was (Tirnanić 2011: 83)<sup>4</sup>. 'Black wave' opened the space

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3 An exception to this were its secondary trends such as country rock; even in the case of folk rock that we see in the work of particular Yugoslav bands, it is about urbanization of countryside tradition by 'dressing up' in rock/urban clothes.

4 Bogdan Tirnanić lists several possibilities: Miko Tripalo, "Tito's favorite among youth officials"; writer and ideological worker Vladimir Jovičić and journalist Nebojša Glišić (Tirnanić 2011: 83-84). David Cook called this movement 'new film' and explained it as closely linked to strivings towards further democratization of Yugoslav society (Kuk 2007: 530).

for banned topics, for criticism of socialist establishment<sup>5</sup>, and that required a new approach to film music. One of the first rock'n'roll representation of Belgrade soundscape can be found in the cinematographic opus of director Živojin Pavlović, in his film *Kad budem mrtav i beo* (*When I am dead and gone*, 1967). Rock'n'roll was only partly exposed in this film (in scenes on the improvised stage in a city suburb, signifying the marginalized status this music had), but it is constantly present in the rebellious nature, renegade behaviour, and rock'n'roll looks of the main character (Johnny Barka).

Full recognition of rock'n'roll, its establishment as dominant in contexts of film music is to be seen a decade later, in the film *Nacionalna klasa* (*National Class*, director Goran Marković, composer Zoran Simjanović, 1979). The film's narrative is entirely linked to the urban environment of the Yugoslav capital. The plot reveals around a city playboy who took the identity of (a fictitious) Formula 1 driver; he participates in car races (of the national class category up to 785 ccm), and goes wild followed by the song of the fast 'pulse', dynamically conceived ("Floyd").

Belgrade was soon under the 'siege' of 'new wave'.

### **Film, rock'n'roll and construction/representation of the urban(ity)**

Linking the film and the city is not new in theoretical thought. In the opinion of Nezar AlSayyad, for example, city and film are entwined and entangled in the last century because the identities of certain places became exclusively connected to their cinematographic representations. That is, film images of certain cities (the powerful ones, such as New York, Paris, Tokyo, Rome and so on), got the iconic status (of prosperity, culture, style...), and for the majority of people in the world, cinematography was the only experience (instead of direct contact) they had with distant cities. AlSayyad, therefore, claims that modern and postmodern understanding of cities cannot be separated from film experience since films are not just descriptions of given societies but they influence the way in which we construct images of the world. The author perceived that such situation brought about a loss of distinction between what is real in everyday life and what we imagine/see as everyday life – film has the power to "influence and shape urban life" (AlSayyad 2006: 5). It is important that AlSayyad notices the importance of joined effect of pictures and

5 Greg DeCuir, for example, sees the 'black wave' as a "Polemical Cinema from 1963 to 1972" as stated in the title of his study (De Cuir 2011).

sound in a film thus creating an experience of a city. Moreover, music can be compared to a multi-dimensional map and therefore joined with a wider cultural context (Chambers 1997: 233-345). How music (in our case rock'n'roll), works in relation to the city and the film, i.e. as a 'multi-dimensional map', can be explained in the following way.

The highlighted rhythmic component of rock'n'roll is an expression of the urban/industrial, and also of almost obsessive violence that stands as 'the soul' of this music. All sections come into the rhythmic game and become a kind of heartbeats or throbbing of factories. The number of decibels (coming from either the music or machines) often reaches or exceeds sensitivity threshold of our auditory apparatus. Sound amplification requires a lot of space, like the one in movie theatres. Noise is one of the components of the city and industrial environment. This music lived not only in the entertainment domain, it became an urban ideology. Just as film, rock'n'roll began to be used as means of expressing oneself, which could not always fit into the needs of the market (Frit 1987: 2014), and got the subversive tone.

### **Connection between the rock'n'roll cinematic soundscape of Belgrade with Habermas' concept of modernity**

Modernism is defined as a "macroshape or megaculture of organization and development of culture and art from the end of the 18th century until the end of the 1960s" (Šuvaković 2005: 380). Modernism was also determined by the modernity project, meaning that it was constituted as a culture preoccupied by revolutionary or evolutionary separation from tradition and progressive development (Šuvaković 2005: 380). Such an attitude can be found in the works of Jürgen Habermas who pointed out that the term modernity rearticulated the consciousness of an era that referred to the past in order to determine and understand itself as a result of transition from the old towards the new (Habermas 1997: 39).

In that sense, the period right after the Second World War in Yugoslavia can in a way be observed through the prism of modernity because communist dictatorship insisted on the cult of the 'new', 'advanced' and 'prosperous', which is in accordance with the concept as defined by Habermas. In the same period though, art in the ex-state spoke of the return towards (artistic) practices abandoned long ago, referring to the politically appropriate 'socialist realism', suitable for imitating left-orientated ideology. In the following dec-

ades, it is obvious, however, that with the decline of the 'socialist realism' and the rise of bureaucratic, technocratic and humanistic middle class, moderate form of modernism was created.

Such 'moderate modernism' (with its ideologically neutral, expressively-figurative and decorative art), turned out to be insufficiently expressive to continue the practice of Yugoslav modernity (interrupted in 1940s). With the absence of strong avant-garde movement within artistic music scene, certain rock'n'roll directions took over the role of the avant-garde and started to function as means of critique, even undermining given (urban) systems. Rock'n'roll owed such strength to the fact that the authorities considered this genre as less 'refined' in relation to artistic music, less capable of subverting the system, and as such easier to control.

Belgrade rock'n'roll music scene was not just following the leading British or American scenes; at times it was offering authentic sound, and exciting ideas. It had what Habermas called decadence that recognized its own self directly in the barbarian, wild and primitive (Habermas 1997: 40-41); it showed anarchistic intentions directed at the historic continuum, it caused subversive forces of aesthetic consciousness that rebelled against traditional norm-setting, and a consciousness blindly fascinated by fear generated by its profane acts, but at the same time withdrawn from trivialization that came as a result of that profanity (Habermas 1997: 41). Rock'n'roll was the way in which Belgrade fought against stalemate in urban flows of life and art. Such a mutiny entered into film as well.

*Dečko koji obećava* (*The Promising Lad*, Miloš Miša Radivojević, 1981) was closely tied to the arrival of the 'new wave'. Here we come across a phenomenon recognized by Aleksandar Žikić as a research of specific Belgrade rock'n'roll spirit manifestations and even more specific ways of its materialization (Žikić 1999). It reaches its climax in the 1980s through the achievements and extensions of the 'new wave'<sup>6</sup> and becomes the vehicle of avant-garde tendencies and an authentic project of unfinished modernity – as seen in the film *Davitelj protiv davitelja/Strangler vs strangler*, Slobodan Šijan, 1984 – and whose end coincides with the disintegration of Yugoslavia, that is, with films *Kako je propao rokenrol* (*The Fall of Rock'n'Roll*, Zoran Pezo, Goran Gajić, Vladimir

6 'New wave' lived for a relatively short period of time; but musicians that made its core didn't cease to be active – they regrouped and continued to function as authentic state critique until the beginning of war in Yugoslavia and its disintegration.

Slavica, 1989) and *Mi nismo anđeli* (*We Are Not Angels*, Srđan Dragojević, 1992).

The birth of the 'new wave' in Belgrade happened in coordination with the appearance of this kind of music on the British scene, during the end of the 1970s. Young Belgrade musicians realized "that apart from pure imitation of punk hits something else should happen" (Dušan Kojić Kojica, in: *Rockomotiva*, Robna kuća/Novi talas). In its original aspect, 'new wave' brought 'new breath', giving popular music back the enthusiasm "it had forgotten a bit by becoming mainstream" (Torg 2002: 29). The Belgrade version of 'new wave' also had a strong social critique effect. The birth of this genre coincided with the death of the political and state leader, Tito, that is, with the first wavering of politicians among 'styles' they could join, and who actually prepared the break-up of the state. Artists of the Yugoslav 'new wave' claimed they came 'from the cellar'. 'The cellar' was a metaphor: it showed that these musicians came from the margin of social events, and not from the poorest strata (or districts, as it was the case in Western Europe)<sup>7</sup>. Rock critic Petar Janjatović stated that there existed a "strike three" (Janjatović 1998: 275), which constituted Belgrade 'new wave' – Šarlo akrobata/Charles The Acrobat<sup>8</sup>, Električni orgazam/Electrical Orgasm<sup>9</sup> and Idoli/The Idols<sup>10</sup> – but the band Šarlo Akrobata were considered to be the pioneers (its members were Milan Mladenović, Ivan Vdović VD and Dusan Kojić Kojica) Their creative work functioned as an experimental sum of various influences: hard and art rock, jazz, (post)punk. Their first appearance on stage was in April 1980 as an opening act for band Pankrti from Slovenia, in Students' Cultural Center (SKC), (Janjatović 1998: 275)<sup>11</sup>.

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7 Socialism as a social establishment denied the existence of social classes.

8 The origin of the name Šarlo Akrobata is interesting for our concept of the 'new wave' movement as the carrier of unfinished modernity: it is the Serbian version of the name Charlie Chaplin, taken from the time of Kingdom of Yugoslavia, that is, a period of modern art that was interrupted by the communist overturn, and young Belgrade artists were the ones who tried to revive/continue this period.

9 Style models of the band Electrical Orgasm were the Sex Pistols (with a hidden influence of the Doors); they were the authors of the first solo album in Belgrade's alternative scene.

10 Idoli – their work will be remembered for introducing esotericism and church chanting into popular music/rock'n'roll on the territory of Yugoslavia; it is the album *Defence and the last days* (*Odbrana i poslednji dani*), which was named after a short story by Borislav Pekić, one of Belgrade's first dissidents.

11 Their first recordings appeared on the album *Paket aranžman* (*Package Arrangement*, 1981) together with recordings of Idoli and Električni orgazam.

### *The Promising Lad*

In the same year their music enters the movie *Dečko koji obećava*. One of already existing song can be heard in the film, “Niko kao ja” (“Nobody like me”). Koja appears both as the composer and the one of the highlighted characters in the film, an extravagant young man called Pete, who lives through his favourite characters from popular cartoons/comics, while VD appears in a relatively wayside role (member of the band Dobri dečaci/Good Boys). The film brought together most significant musicians of the Yugoslav rock'n'roll/‘new wave’ scene: the numbers we hear in diegetic and non-diegetic status are “Jedina”/ “The only one” (Idoli/The Idols), “Neka te ne brine”/“Don't you be worried” (Prljavo kazalište/Dirty Theater, Zagreb), /“Bolje da nosim kratku kosu”/“I'd better wear my hair short” (Pekinska patka/The Beijing Duck, Novi Sad), “Moje su nebo vezali žicom”/“My sky was tied with wire”, Električni orgazam; “Perspektiva”/“The Perspective”, Paraf, Rijeka; “Iggy Pop”, Azra (Zagreb). The main character of a symbolic name – Slobodan Milošević – joins the musicians of the ‘new wave’ (after getting hit in the head). His name is pure coincidence, at that time the notorious Serbian politician was not even on the horizon, (the author's intention was that the central character should have the most usual first and last name). Slobodan Milošević is a student of psychiatry, a decent person (actually, old-fashioned – for him sex in a car equals a matter “for movies”), he is the son of ‘respectable’ parents (his father is a high ranking Army official), he lives in the very centre of town in a pre-war, spacious flat, and he is in a serious emotional relationship. He listens to the music his parents had listened to when they were young (Aznavour, Visotzky, Okujava), he speaks using the vocabulary of his father. He is not satisfied but he doesn't know what it is that he is missing. Rock'n'roll doesn't exist in his life until he meets Clavice, a Swiss girl, whose appearance brings the aroma of the West, unknown sexual pleasures and sounds he had never listened to before (rock'n'roll). Slobodan tries to play this new music on his guitar, but the chords only come together after his girlfriend Maša hits him on the head by a board after finding out about his adultery. The blow brings ‘rebirth’ to Slobodan and he begins living in accordance with his name (Slobodan – the free one). Rock'n'roll gives him the power to see life that he didn't know existed, to consume the city he lives in in a completely new way (nightclubs, parties where he meets the bearers of the ‘new wave’ movement in Belgrade, a motorcycle instead of a car, promiscuity that includes having sex with his girlfriend's mother<sup>12</sup>, open confrontation with his parents and

12 There is a clear association to the character of Mrs Robinson from the film *The Graduate*.

law/the police). However, Belgrade police is not as tough as since they, too, fell under urban/rock'n'roll influence: "It's better for you to watch films, otherwise you'll remain a Balkan boy", an officer tells him when he is arrested after an offence.

Slobodan also fights against urbicide, and 'new folk' music (that is, 'narodnjaci'), intensively present in popular music, folklore deviations that started fighting for supremacy against pop and rock music in the 1970s, in order to become equal with urban music genres in the 1980s (Jansen 2005: 126). He does it in a very intensive way: with his fists (fistfight in the dorm, in which Slobodan lived after he decided to quit his 'red-bourgeois' habits in life), but also by joining a band in alternative Belgrade music circles called Dobri dečaci, whose encounters with their audience (as in other films to be analysed in this text subsequently) happen in SKC. From their joint work come out the songs: "Slobodan" ("Free"), "Balada o čvrstim grudima" ("The Ballad About Firm Breasts") and "Depresija" ("Depression")<sup>13</sup>, that stirred (and not only in this film) the life of the capital, because they asked questions about the existential gorge in which members of the young generation found themselves in the last decade of peace in the former state. It was a specific outcry for help that their parents, institutions and authorities saw as a revolt that had to be smothered. This outcry has a 'decadent' (or avant-garde or modernist or urban) sound that was not appropriate for conformism of the 'red' middle class that surrounded Slobodan. And as 'new wave' lived shortly, Slobodan soon receives another blow to the head (downtown, in an accident on his motorbike), from which he again becomes 'normal' and 'socially acceptable', while his companion Pete pays for his musical/political views with his life. In return, 'populists' (both 'new folk' singers in music and 'populists' who will lead the country into a civil war) will succeed in devastating citysoundscape of Belgrade in the decades to follow, turning both its music and topography into a dirty and nebulous synthesis of modern technology and freaky folklorisms. Therefore "Depresija", the last number of the band Dobri dečaci, just as the name of the hero (Slobodan Milošević), has the verses of almost prophetic character, "You live in Belgrade and have no idea what is coming..."

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13 The author of this songs is Dušan Kojić Koja.

## *Strangler vs Strangler*

*Davitelj protiv davitelja* is defined as a „horror comedy“<sup>14</sup>. Here there are no conflicts between generations or the rural and the urban, but there is a confrontation of classical and rock'n'roll music, again in downtown Belgrade.

'New wave' had already come to an end at the time this film was made, but it's reflexions can be heard/seen in the appearance of one of promoters of this movement, Srđan Šaper (once member of Idoli, that made up the core of Belgrade 'new wave'): he is one of the two composers of this film and one of the two main characters (Spiridon Kopicl). The doublefaced nature of Kopicl – he is an exemplary citizen and a (potential) killer at the same time – is mirrored through his double musical existence<sup>15</sup>. He is a rocker, a leader of the band Simboli (Symbols)<sup>16</sup> to whose music exalted youths scream at the Pivara<sup>17</sup> (Brewery) in the bohemian quarter of Skadarlija; in the end, however, Kopicl is transformed into a composer of classical music whose opus can be listened to in a representative Belgrade venue. At first sight, a provocative clash of two music styles (or distant genres) is in front of us: Šaper took care of rock'n'roll sound (song “Beogradski davitelj”/“Belgrade strangler”), and composer Vuk Kulenović was given the task of providing 'classical' background score<sup>18</sup>. This musical 'conflict' is just an appearance, since in Kulenović's works intended for concert scene, he subverted traditional models by introducing elements of popular styles<sup>19</sup>. His music for this film brings rich (rock'n'roll) rhythms, repetition, simple music lines, orchestral clusters that remind of electrical instruments' distortions. It is also the music that represents Belgrade's city-soundscape and continues the interrupted/unfinished modernity.

14 There is a series of mysterious murders/strangulations of women, that the police inspector Strahinjić fails to solve; events are given in black humour city atmosphere. It will turn out that the killer is telepathically connected to the rock musician (and – later – the composer) Kopicl.

15 Double musical existence is also suitable for realization of the Belgrade strangler. It is Pera Mitić, an aged bachelor, in an Oedipal relationship with his mother, a strangler but also a harmless fan of whipped cream pie and seller of carnations. In a way, this film is a dedication to Hitchcock's *Psycho*.

16 One of the members of the band Simboli is Dušan Kojić Koga.

17 It was also one of the points of avant-garde art in Belgrade.

18 Kulenović conceived his score with a direct reference to the music of Bernard Herrmann for *Psycho*.

19 His most famous and most performed work is *Boogie piano concerto*. Opus of Vuk Kulenović was considered to be postmodern as well.

## *The Fall of Rock'n'Roll*

The omnibus film *Kako je propao rokenrol* was created at the end of the '80s and not long before the beginning of the civil war in Yugoslavia. Rock'n'roll was in a serious crisis, and so was the citysoundscape of Belgrade, that had become vulgar, dirty, and violent. A threat that the (unfinished) modernity would be interrupted again was hovering over the Yugoslav capital. All that came as a consequence of the fact that the society had lowered its criteria, was becoming more aggressive and preparing itself for the war. In order to consider various aspects of problems rock'n'roll was facing, this film was divided into three independent (musical) stories whose thematic link were musical intro/interludes of the "rock'n'roll superhero" Zeleni zub/Green tooth (performed by Dušan Kojić Koja), "unique example in Yugoslav cinematography, but also wider" (Džodan 2013). As in the film *Dečko koji obećava*, comics have a significant role in visual depicting of Belgrade cityscape. Mandrake the Magician is in the game, reflected in Green tooth, a mysterious urban rock'n'roll warrior, who saves the last uncontaminated fragments of the metropole from primitive aggression. The comic together with the music consigned to three authors (each of whom was the frontman of his own 'new wave' band, less than a decade before: Vlada Divljan/Idoli – who wrote the music for the story "Do izvora dva putića" ("Two roads to the spring")); Srdjan Gojković Gile/Električni orgazam for the segment "Nije sve u ljubavi" ("All is not in love") and Koja for "Ne šalji mi pismo" ("Do not send me a letter") defend the city from primitivism.

The first story ("Two roads to the spring", director Zoran Pezo) speaks of a discord between the 'two roads' – a father who is a folk singer, and a son who is a rocker – and they make a musical bet, the son claims that he would sell more LPs than his father. The son takes on the identity of a mysterious Disco Ninja, so that his father cannot recognize him. The son wins, of course, however, he must pay a price – a style trade-off to the dominant musical direction 'new folk music'. This pseudofolk genre became so powerful in the meantime that its promoters don't hesitate to make comments such as: "How is the plundering of the people going? Never better!" That is why Disco Ninja (actually the composer Divljan) is forced to use irregular means and join idioms of 'new folk music' to his rock'n'roll music in order to make it irresistible for all categories of listeners. After losing the bet, the father has to comply and do what he had promised: a public dip (i.e. washing off the impurity he had been infected with during his hanging around with 'folk' musicians) in the Terazije fountain, one of the most significant symbols of Belgrade cityscape.

The second story (“All is not in love”, director Vladimir Slavica), with its first frames, a ‘horror’ party and a shifted hard rock sound, points at ‘decadence’ not only of this music genre but also of the urban image of Belgrade. Reflections of ‘new wave’ sound tired, disinterested: rock’n’roll has practically been recognized by the institutions, there is nothing to rebel against, and therefore the main characters of this story are mostly bored. Flats of young rockers are decorated in pop art style. They accede to theatricalizing urban modes of life and characteristic sounds slip occasionally into the rock’n’roll environment; a melody known from the ‘golden age’ of Hollywood has received a deformed meaning (it became a ‘Brechtian’ song sung completely out of tune); the sound of water flushing in a toilet initiates a scream that we recognize as Tarzan’s (i.e. Johnnie Weissmuller’s). The end of the system where life was carefree and safe is at sight – first we are witnesses of a dustbin explosion, and then the neighbour’s rifle, which will all be set ablaze into a huge civil war on the Yugoslav territory just two years later. However, apart from its weakening, rock’n’roll, together with the Belgrade cityscape, remains the carrier of good ‘vibrations’.

The third story (“Do not send me a letter”, director Goran Gajić), was inspired by a comedy of Kosta Trifković (“Love Letter”), an (urban) love story, from the past (19th century, the beginning of modern urbanity in Serbia). Here, too, there is a clash between ‘new folk’ music: happy fathers celebrate the births of their children with brass orchestra in front of maternity hospital (to be precise, they celebrate the births of their sons; the birth of a daughter wouldn’t be considered a reason strong enough for such a loud celebration). The third story strikes a final blow because the mentioned new fathers are the pioneers and leaders of cult rock’n’roll bands in Serbia/Belgrade<sup>20</sup>. Violence is even more pronounced. Apart from utter tension of rock’n’roll sound, we witness a physical conflict between partners (though humorously arranged). Rock’n’roll is still capable of improving the mood of the main characters (Đuro and Eva; a Bosnian guy and a girl from Belgrade), even of solving a very serious discord (caused by doubting paternity).

Downtown Belgrade is the common denominator for these three film/musical stories; SKC is also a metaphor and the last ‘oasis’ of rock’n’roll and all urban tendencies that would have their epilogue in *We are not angels*.

20 Bora Đorđević, Dragi Jelić and Vlada Janković-Jet ‘turned’ into consumers of ‘new folk’ music.

## *We Are Not Angels*

*Mi nismo anđeli* is a teenage comedy with the plot revolving around a young girl who gets pregnant and who, with her friend's help (and the help of rock'n'roll) charms her 'prince' (he, on the other hand, is a famous city play-boy, who turns into a devoted father and husband after several months of 'persuasion'). The film consists of "an array of quotations" (Dakovic 2007: 181), even includes musicals elements – "oneiric scenes are made as music videos" (Daković 2007: 181). This film is also situated in downtown Belgrade (now class differences between citizens are visible, mirrored in a fancy party in the garden of somebody's villa with a swimming pool). Its sounds are equally rock'n'roll and 'new folk' music – although the latter genre is represented in an extremely pejorative way, in a desperate attempt of the director to save the city from total urbicide (we can hear two songs, "Hajde da se drogiramo"/"Let's do drugs" and "Ne pitaj me"/"Don't ask me", written and performed by Hali-Gali Halid aka Goran Bare<sup>21</sup>).

As the dedication to 70s, we encounter rearranged (rock'n'roll) songs – "Ne brini, mama"/"Don't worry, mom" by Bulldozer/Buldožer and "Čekala sam, čekala"/"I waited, and waited" by Goran Bregović – performed by Devil and Angel. Apart from the aforementioned numbers, rock'n'roll has returned to its beginnings, rockabilly sound. For this film, composer Aleksandar Eraković, leader of then popular band Vampiri/The Vampires (band members even have supporting roles in the movie), wrote songs that we meet both in diegetic and non-diegetic status: "Be-be", "Zaljubljena tinejdžerka" ("A Teenager in Love"), "Subota uveče" ("Saturday Night"), "Poljubac vampira" ("Vampire's Kiss") and "Krvavi mesec" ("Bloody Moon"). It is interesting that Mozart's *Magic Flute* (*Zauberflöte*), which additionally strengthens the urban status of protagonists of this film story, appears as the 'extra-score' in the film. The director (also screenwriter) intentionally refuses to notice that not far from Belgrade's citysoundscape there is a war going on, rock'n'roll sound is his way of putting himself into a safe environment from which even the horrifying events look like a game.<sup>22</sup>

21 Founder and member of the rock band Majke.

22 Father of Ljubica, one of main characters, is a soldier. He appears in full wartime gear to say goodbye to his daughter, "Ljubica, *my son*, daddy's going to war", to what she replies "You're playing again, daddy!"

Rock'n'roll in films that we spoke about explicitly show that the (Habermas') concept of unfinished modernity exists as an important notion in the case of cinematographic citysoundscape of Belgrade. Every time when it seemed to be near fulfilment, modernity was interrupted again, and its rebellion against stalemate was anesthetized by either an acceptance by the institutions or by a new war. However, this music, like the film systems it exists within, functions as a specific (urban) fantasy space, a place of memories and a topography of affects. Rock'n'roll as a representation of the urban and its time development can play the role of a "contemporary memory palace", such that it extends ephemeral memory processes (Uricchio 2008: 103-104). Rock'n roll as a soundscape of cinematic Belgrade asks us to revise crossings and discontinuities of time and space of a metropolis and to consider the reflection of experience of a (modernist) city onto films, but also the influence of films on our experience/vision/listening of a city.

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## NEDOVRŠENI MODERNIZAM: ROKENROL CITYSOUNDSCAPE KINEMATOGRAFSKOG BEOGRADA

### Apstrakt

*U ovom istraživanju zastupamo stav da filmska muzika može biti razmatrana kao partikularna narativna forma nedovršene modernosti u kontekstu filmskog citysoundscape-a. Rokenrol (u smislu grupe srodnih pravaca u popularnoj muzici od sredine prošlog veka) ima bitan uticaj na izvesne segmente kulture bivše Jugoslavije, što uključuje glorifikaciju urbanog načina življenja (kao progresivnog u odnosu na ruralni koncept organizovanja svakodnevice). Iako termin nedovršena modernost referira na šezdesete i sedamdesete godine prošlog veka, njegovi odjeci mogu se čuti/videti i u vremenu koje sledi: rokenrol soundscape kinematografskog Beograda, štaviše, doseže vrhunac tokom osamdesetih (i samim početkom devedesetih) kroz filmove „Dečko koji obećava”, „Davitelj protiv davitelja”, „Kako je propao rokenrol”, „Mi nimo anđeli”. Rokenrol u filmskim ostvarenjima o kojima smo govorili nedvosmisleno svedoči da (Habermasov) koncept nedovršene modernosti stoji kao važan pojam u slučaju kinematografskog citysoundscape-a Beograda. Jer, svaki put kada se činilo da je na putu da bude zaokružena, modernost je doživljavala novi prekid, a njena pobuna protiv ustajalog bivala bi anestetizirana, bilo prihvatanjem od strane institucija, bilo novim ratom. Opet, ova muzika, kao i filmski sistemi u okviru kojih bivstvuje, funkcionise kao svojevrsan (urbani) prostor mašte, mesto sećanja i topografija afekata. Rokenrol kao vremenski utemeljena reprezentacija urbanog ima ulogu specijalizovanja efemernih procesa memorije. Kinematografski soundscape Beograda traži od nas da preispitamo preseke i diskontinuitete vremena i prostora jedne metropole i da razmotrimo odražavanje iskustva (modernog) grada na film, ali i uticaj filma na naše doživljavanje grada.*

### Cljučne reči

*film, rokenrol, novi talas, (gradski) soundscape, Beograd*