

‘It’s all the same, only he’s not here’?: popular music and political change in post-Tuđman Croatia  
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Abstract: While Franjo Tuđman was the president of Croatia (1990–99), popular music and other forms of entertainment were heavily structured around the key presidential narratives: Croatia’s political and cultural independence from Yugoslavia, and the idea that Croatia’s war effort had been purely defensive. After Tuđman, the Croatian music industry had to cope with media pluralism and the transnational challenges of the digital era. Patriotic popular music expressed an oppositional narrative of Euroscepticism and resistance to the Hague Tribunal, yet Croatia retained and expanded its position in the transnational post-Yugoslav entertainment framework, undermining a key element of Tuđman’s ideology.

‘It’s all the same, only he’s not here’?: popular music and political change in post-Tuđman Croatia

In September 2002, after another summer of protests against the government extraditing Croatian generals to the Hague Tribunal, the musician Marko Perković Thompson opened his concert at the Poljud stadium in Split by projecting a video which featured himself, the singer Ivan Mikulić and the Slavonian tamburica ensemble Najbolji hrvatski tamburaši.<sup>1</sup> The song, called ‘Sveto tlo hrvatsko’ (‘Holy Croatian soil’), lauded the late Croatian president Franjo Tuđman, who had died in December 1999. The men sang of Tuđman’s achievements and the sudden appearance of critics who had not dared to defy him when he was alive, and Thompson, a veteran of the Homeland War, contributed a verse remembering the days when friend had stood together with friend to defend Croatia. Tuđman, a politician who had seemed to imagine himself the unifier of the Croatian people’s historical divisions (Bellamy 2003, p. 67), had himself become one of the most divisive figures in recent Croatian history. To understand how popular music changed, or whether it changed at all, after the decade when Croatian cultural policy flowed from Tuđman’s narrative of the nation, one must first consider how it was structured during the Tuđman era.

Culture and entertainment were heavily politicised during the Tuđman years through a range of explicit and implicit narratives, from songs which defined the nation in terms of its enemies, history, territory, religion and gender roles to

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<sup>1</sup> The tamburica is a stringed folk instrument from Slavonia. As Zlatni dukati, Najbolji hrvatski tamburaši (‘The best Croatian tamburica-players’) had been at the forefront of its revival in popular music during the 1980s and, especially, the 1990s (Bonifačić 1998).

arguments among music professionals which contested the validity of pop genres depending on how well they implemented the ideological narratives of Croatia's geo-cultural identity. Svanibor Pettan (1998, p. 23) showed how the tension over whether to represent the nation as innocent or forceful during the Homeland War was played out in musical production and Reana Senjković (2002) demonstrated that videos for the vast number of new patriotic pop songs produced during the war generally took their lead from the visual culture defined by Tuđman and his party, Hrvatska demokratska zajednica (HDZ: Croatian Democratic Union). The journalist Darko Hudelist (1995, 1998) argued that a policy of 'spiritual renewal' based on Tuđman's belief that Serbs and Croats belonged to entirely different historical civilisations had led to a state-driven popular music policy which promoted particular musical approaches depending on how closely they matched the presidential narrative which rejected the Balkans and the East. Thus the producers of 'Croatian dance' claimed in frequent media appearances that their adaptations of German and Italian house music were evidence that Croatia belonged to the West, to the world or to Europe (those three goals of presidential discourse) – even though, in Hudelist's analysis, the lyrics and behaviour of the (mainly female) dance singers served only to imitate the 'newly-composed folk music' from Serbia which dance had been supposed to replace (Hudelist 1995). Other contributions to this collection explore the political impact of Tuđman's death and the electoral defeat of HDZ; this contribution asks how far political change affected popular music and the institutional and conceptual structures Tuđman's state had put in place. Did the change have a lasting effect or was it, in the words of the ex-Yugoslav saying, 'all the same, only he's not here'?

Of course, the phrase 'It's all the same, only he's not here' – 'Sve je isto, samo njega nema' in the languages now known as Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian and

Montenegrin – is usually associated with Tito, not Tuđman. Indeed, it provided the Serbian composer–lyricist Dragan Brajović and the Skopje-born, Belgrade-based singer Tijana Todevska-Dapčević with the hook for a satirical pop single in 2005 which mocked the stereotypes and insecurities of each post-Yugoslav country (the song’s Croats were chiefly famous for marrying themselves off to Europe while listening to ‘narodnjaci’ – pop-folk songs – ‘as if we’re Turks’).<sup>2</sup> Introducing the slogan into a paper on contemporary Croatia serves as a reminder that, even before Croatia’s independence, Croatian musicians and music executives had already been working in a context where the state aimed to implicate them in communicating its own narratives. The concept of the ethno-nation as the constitutive people of Tuđman’s Croatia was not so different in form from the construction of the ‘working class’ which was to have constituted Tito’s Yugoslavia, even though the content of Croatian nationalism rejected outright the Titoist idea that ethnicity should be subordinate to the common endeavour of socialism. For a historian, the study of contemporary Croatian culture therefore includes (at least) two layers of continuity and change: not just the extent to which conditions changed after Tuđman but also whether the Tuđman era itself was so great a period of change as, on the surface, it appeared.

A third layer of change is introduced when one considers the transformation of the transnational music market since 1999/2000. To analysts of Croatia, the dates primarily signify the post-Tuđman period; to global record labels, they stand for what the ‘majors’ and recording industry trade associations represent as the most sustained crisis in their history thanks to the expansion of broadband technology, internet piracy and the consequent decline in music sales. In 2009, the International Federation of the

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<sup>2</sup> See Mikić 2006.

Phonographic Industry (IFPI) estimated that, despite the new revenue streams its members had devised to cope with digital music, 95 per cent of music downloads worldwide still avoided any form of payment to the rights holders.<sup>3</sup> The position of popular music in entertainment broadcasting was also transformed after 2000 with the transnational take-up of reality/talent formats: popular music programming either competed for space with reality shows or combined with them to produce talent contests such as the *Idol* franchise (usually characterised by a homogenised, ballad-driven pop style in whatever country it took place<sup>4</sup>) and celebrity competitions in ballroom dancing and figure skating. These pressures on music sales and promotion affected the industry in Croatia as they did elsewhere. A post-conflict paradigm was necessary, but not sufficient, to understand the state of Croatian popular music ten years after Tuđman's death.

### **Structural changes in Croatian popular music since Tuđman**

At the start of the 2000s, the major revenue streams and promotional opportunities for the Croatian music industry were sales, terrestrial television, radio and live performance. Of these, the aspect most directly affected by political change was

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<sup>3</sup> IFPI, 'Digital Music Report 2009: New Business Models for a Changing Environment' (2009), available at: <http://www.ifpi.org/content/library/DMR2009.pdf>, accessed 3 June 2009.

<sup>4</sup> The Serbian record label Grand Productions, which specialises in pop-folk, bucked the trend somewhat when it sponsored its own talent show, *Zvezde Granda (Stars of Grand)*, on TV Pink – arguably, part of the same discourse of Serbian musical and cultural exceptionalism which surrounds the annual Guća brass-band festival.

television, thanks to the broadcasting reforms introduced by the centre-left government of Ivica Račan, who became prime minister in January 2000. Tuđman's Croatia had had only one broadcaster with a national concession, the state-owned Hrvatska televizija (HTV: Croatian television). HTV in the 1990s had operated three national channels whose programming included several chart-type shows, music video slots (to fill gaps in the schedule), Friday- and Sunday-night variety shows and an annual calendar of pop festivals.<sup>5</sup> The head of HTV's entertainment department, Ksenija Urličić, was keen to describe herself as a Tuđman loyalist; in 1998 she was among six HTV editors elected to HDZ's central committee at Tuđman's recommendation (Lukić 1998). The project to develop new popular music featuring a Slavonian stringed folk instrument, the tamburica, was also carried out on HTV through a lavish weekly show, *Lijepom našom* ([Around] Our beautiful [homeland]), which was broadcast from towns in every Croatian county each series (later it also visited the diaspora) and brought in entertainment stars to sing with tamburica groups.<sup>6</sup> Music broadcasting in the Tuđman era was also dogged by allegations of

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<sup>5</sup> The festivals, entertainment events which were hosted in touristically or politically significant towns and which often ran for several evenings, were extremely characteristic of the 1990s pop industry; they had also been a Yugoslav practice and endured in the successor states, although after the break-up of Yugoslavia each new state's pop festivals showcased performers from that particular state. Some became more transnational after 2000, particularly the Montenegrin festivals in Budva and Herceg Novi.

<sup>6</sup> In later series, the programme's celebration of traditional culture's relevance in the contemporary world also included a display of folk costumes. *Lijepom našom* was not developed solely within the entertainment department but by one of its presenters,

corruption and favouritism. Television airplay figures released by Hrvatska glazbena unija (HGU: Croatian Musicians' Union) in 1999 during a dispute with HTV appeared to show that vocalists managed by two or three well-connected composers dominated HTV's music programming, at the expense of other union members (Cigoj 1999).

Musicians who had not benefited from HTV's programming policy anticipated that political change would bring broadcasting reform and a more equitable deal for access to the revenue stream. Reform itself was not long in coming, as Račan's government attempted to introduce a public broadcasting model and dismantle the informal networks which had increasingly come to characterise Tuđman's rule. The government first proposed that civil society groups should name a 'programming council' to appoint the top broadcasting officials, then that the government and opposition should cooperate in naming the council members. Both proposals aimed to avoid the 1990s situation where the broadcasting structure could be dominated by adherents of a particular party; in any case, a number of staff with HDZ connections (including Urličić) had already retired soon after the change of government in 2000. However, musicians' groups soon felt marginalised by the new entertainment editors who significantly altered programming policy (slashing the number of televised festivals and music shows) and justified their decisions by using a discourse of modernisation. HTV's monopoly on national television broadcasting also came to an end – fulfilling a long-standing demand of the Organization for Security and Co-

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Branko Uvodić, and the political marketing expert and former fashion designer Rikard Gumzej, who was working as a special adviser to Ivica Mudrinić, the head of Hrvatska radio-televizija (HRT: Croatian Radio-Television, the parent organisation of HTV) (Cigoj 1997).

Operation in Europe (OSCE) – when two new private concessions were launched in November 2000 (Nova TV) and April 2004 (RTL Hrvatska).

Increased competition among terrestrial television channels satisfied international institutions but turned out not to have provided musicians with significantly greater opportunities. All broadcasters, especially RTL (which was operated by the German media group of the same name and ultimately owned by the Bertelsmann conglomerate), concentrated instead on reality and celebrity formats, in keeping with their counterparts across Europe. Popular music provided the raw material for the three different sets of talent-show series in the mid-2000s, but few contestants made the transition to a long-term recording career; several established female singers found work as talk-show hosts, and pop stars in general were in demand as contestants when HTV acquired the *Strictly Come Dancing* and *Just the Two of Us* (celebrity duets) franchises. Musicians had more reasons for optimism at first sight in the expansion of multi-channel broadcasting on satellite and cable and the eventual prospect of digital terrestrial television, which would make several dozen channels available to the majority of viewers.

In 2005, the Autor company, which held the majority stake in Croatia Records, was able to launch the Croatian Music Channel (CMC) to compete with satellite and cable music channels from ‘all countries of Europe, and so also from those [countries] from the region of former Yugoslavia’.<sup>7</sup> CMC solely promoted music from Croatian record labels, although as a satellite/cable channel it was only available to a minority of the population. Moreover, the cross-border reach of multi-channel television – not to mention the availability of many music videos and clips on YouTube from 2005

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<sup>7</sup> CMC, ‘O nama’, available at: <http://www.cmc.com.hr/index.php?page=onama>, accessed 3 June 2009.



onwards – had more disruptive implications for the national cultural sphere. With European satellite broadcasting in its infancy, Richard Collins (1990, p. ix) had warned in 1990 of ‘its potential to rupture national communication sovereignty’ as television spilled over borders. In the ex-Yugoslav context, Collins’s warning was certainly made manifest. Any subscriber in 2007 to the basic package of Adriatic Kabel, one of Croatia’s two largest cable operators at the time, could receive CMC but also the Serbian channel BKTV, which broadcast copious amounts of pop-folk – a major competitor to (and in Tuđmanist discourse an adversary of) Croatian pop. The premium package added TV Pink, the Serbian channel more associated with pop-folk than any other.<sup>8</sup> Musicians frequently expressed frustration at the lack of airplay they

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<sup>8</sup> Adriatic Kabel subsequently amalgamated with its rival DCM to form B.net, Croatia’s dominant cable operator at the time of writing. In June 2009, B.net’s packages included channels from all the ex-Yugoslav states except Kosovo under the rubric of ‘regional channels’ (OBN and TV Pink BH from Bosnia-Herzegovina plus Slovenija 2 and Kanal A from Slovenia in the basic package of channels; TVCG from Montenegro and RTS from Serbia, plus FTV from Bosnia, in the extended package). In Zagreb, its standard music channels were MTV Adria (the ex-Yugoslav MTV franchise), CMC, VH1 (a US pop channel), with an extra music package adding more MTV channels, Viva (German pop) and DM Sat. This last, B.net’s own website stated, provided ‘a varied mix of musical genres with an emphasis on turbofolk and ‘zabavna’ [pop] music’ ([http://www.bnet.hr/cro/televizija/dm\\_sat](http://www.bnet.hr/cro/televizija/dm_sat)). Subscribers to B.net’s extended package also had access to Balkanika Music TV, which broadcast videos from all the ex-Yugoslav states (although had no separate entry for Kosovo), Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania and Turkey. B.net, ‘Ponuda programa’, [http://www.bnet.hr/cro/televizija/ponuda\\_programa/\(region\)/zg](http://www.bnet.hr/cro/televizija/ponuda_programa/(region)/zg), accessed 3 June 2009.

received on the major Croatian terrestrial channels: in 2006, for instance, some 50 musicians from Split accused the media of ‘the systematic destruction of Croatian music’.<sup>9</sup> Television was neither the secure revenue stream nor the protectionist bastion it had been under Tuđman.

A pluralised recording industry structure paralleled the state of post-Tuđman broadcasting, although the music industry had hardly been a political priority. The 1990s recording industry had been dominated by Croatia Records (CR; the post-Yugoslav incarnation of Zagreb’s largest record label, formerly known as Jugoton) with a small role for Orfej, the discographic department of the state broadcaster. Four independent record labels (Aquarius, Dallas, Dancing Bear and Menart) had acquired CR’s licence agreements with the global majors in the mid-1990s and invested the proceeds in developing their domestic rosters until they could offer the largest Croatian acts more attractive terms. The fifth new label, Hit Records, was founded in 2003 and belonged to the same entrepreneur, Juraj Hrvačić, whose national radio station, Narodni radio (Popular/People’s/National Radio), was the only national all-music station with a fully ‘domestic’ playlist.<sup>10</sup> ‘Domestic’, in practice, meant Croatian, although musicians from another ex-Yugoslav state who had a direct Croatian record deal were reckoned as ‘domestic’ for airplay purposes.

Besides a radio station and a record company, Hrvačić’s promotional network also included local television (e.g. the Z1 channel in Zagreb) and the Hrvatski radijski

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<sup>9</sup> *Jutarnji list*, 3 February 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Other national stations contained blocks of music programming; Zlatko Turkalj, an editor–presenter at Hrvatski radio (Croatian Radio), was particularly well-known for his support of ‘domestic’ music. Hrvačić also owned another national station which played foreign (English-language) music, Otvoreni radio (Open Radio).

festival (HRF: Croatian Radio Festival), the only annual pop festival to have flourished and grown since the cutbacks in HTV's support for them.<sup>11</sup> Although it was in private hands, this was perhaps the nearest equivalent to the entertainment promotion complex the state had enjoyed during the 1990s – and it received similar criticism for imposing a narrow-minded musical section on the population. Besides this national station, the Croatian radio offering remained extremely localised, so that access to a wider choice of music depended on the stations available in a particular area. In the Slavonian town of Vinkovci (renowned for punching above its weight on the Croatian music scene), staff at the radio station VFM expressed a strong commitment to an 'urban' worldview and set themselves high programming criteria; outside its transmitter's 50 km radius, the rest of Slavonia had no such resource.

The most newsworthy angle on internet music was the easy online availability of music which celebrated the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) – a Nazi satellite state during the Second World War – its leader Ante Pavelić and his movement and army, the Ustaše (see Senjković and Dukić 2005); beyond this headline-friendly topic, however, the new medium posed long-term challenges to the music industry as a whole. The Croatian recording industry was slow to adapt to the digital marketplace, although Menart signed deals with web music shops including eMusic, iTunes and Amazon which enabled its recordings to be purchased in many territories outside Croatia. Aquarius eventually founded its own web shop (cedeterija.hr) which sold full albums in MP3 format from its own artists and some other Croatian labels; however, individual Croatian songs could often be purchased more easily from a Serbian website (where they appeared as releases by City Records, which held the Croatia

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<sup>11</sup> HRF had first been broadcast on a network of local channels and then moved to Nova TV, so did not depend on HTV.

Records licence for Serbia) than from anywhere in Croatia.<sup>12</sup> Digital rights management (DRM) presented a partial solution for Croatia Records, which employed EMI's Copy Control technology on many of its most important releases for several years: the software included extra data tracks to prevent users ripping the audio tracks as digital files but ultimately failed to prevent the songs appearing online, perhaps from systems which had bypassed the DRM or perhaps from ripped licence releases which did not use the technology. An alternative response to the sales crisis was the 'kiosk model' for physical record sales where consumers could buy particular CDs with a daily newspaper at a heavy discount.<sup>13</sup> For listeners themselves (who might, or more likely might not, be 'consuming' and purchasing online), the internet offered access to popular music which did not easily fit the programming policies of the traditional Croatian media – whether one-hit dance wonders from one's childhood, new or old music from elsewhere in former Yugoslavia, Ustaša songs edited into a video montage of footage from Croatia's wars, or the musical glue of numerous taste cultures which did not find expression in (and indeed rejected) mainstream entertainment.

### **Patriotic popular music, the ICTY and Euroscepticism**

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.yu4you.com/trazi.php?terms=City+records&lang=sr>, accessed 3 June 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Marta Bozina, Kosjenka Dumančić and Blaženka Knežević (2006), 'The Impact of Internet on IPR: A Case Study of Music Industry in Croatia', Dynamics of Institutions and Markets in Europe, Working Paper 16, available at: [http://www.dime-eu.org/files/active/0/IPR-%20WORKING-PAPER-16\\_Bozina-et-al.pdf](http://www.dime-eu.org/files/active/0/IPR-%20WORKING-PAPER-16_Bozina-et-al.pdf), accessed 3 June 2009.

The most visible interface of popular music and politics after Tuđman was the production of patriotic popular music which emphasised the experiences of veterans from the Homeland War (the universal Croatian name for the war against the Yugoslav National Army and the Croatian Serb forces) as well as the need to revitalise faith in God and the family. At the heart of the veterans' experience, as represented in this music, was the betrayal of supposed war heroes by co-nationals who had asked awkward questions about soldiers' criminal actions during the war and co-operated with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY or 'Hague Tribunal'). Several of the men who performed this music (for most of the decade after Tuđman, it was a male preserve) were star attractions for their record companies. Marko Perković Thompson and Miroslav Škoro dominated Croatia's (airplay-based) music charts with each new single. Dalibor Bartulović-Shorty, a rapper from Vinkovci, crossed over from the hip-hop scene into mainstream pop after releasing a song about his home town which wrote Homeland War memory directly into the history of Slavonia.<sup>14</sup> Niko Bete, the performer of one campaign anthem which promoted Ante Gotovina's heroism and innocence and two similar anthems for Mirko Norac,<sup>15</sup> did not achieve the same commercial prominence, but his

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<sup>14</sup> See Baker 2009, pp. 40-43.

<sup>15</sup> Gotovina and Norac were Croatian generals who had both been indicted for war crimes and fled from justice. Gotovina was indicted in July 2001 for crimes against humanity and violations of the laws and customs of war committed during Operation Oluja (Storm) in August 1995, the Croatian Army's final offensive against the Croatian Serbs. He remained at large until December 2005, when he was arrested in Tenerife. Mirko Norac spent sixteen days on the run from a Croatian arrest warrant in

songs – especially the Gotovina anthem, ‘Ante, Ante, svi smo za te’ (‘Ante, Ante, we’re all with you’) – were ever-present in the soundscape of demonstrations in support of the fugitive general.

The most famous and most controversial of the post-Tuđman patriotic musicians, Thompson, drew extra authenticity from his service as an army volunteer defending his home village during the Homeland War. He had composed his debut hit, ‘Bojna Čavoglave’ (‘Čavoglave platoon’),<sup>16</sup> during and about that experience; it made his biography an inextricable part of his celebrity persona and remained a fixture in his concert repertoire, despite the introduction’s incorporation of the slogan ‘za dom spremni’ (‘Ready for the Home[land]’), which had been used by the Ustaše.<sup>17</sup> In

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February 2001 and was indicted the next month with four other men on charges of murder in the Gospić pocket in October 1991. Norac was convicted by a Croatian court in March 2003 and, in 2004, further indicted by the ICTY for crimes committed in the Medak pocket in 1993. The case was transferred to Croatian jurisdiction and he was convicted on this indictment in May 2008 for failing to stop his soldiers killing and torturing Serbs. See Pavkalović, this volume.

<sup>16</sup> The standard translation of ‘bojna’ is ‘battalion’. However, the Čavoglave unit, consisting of local men who had taken up arms to defend the area after the regular Croatian forces, was self-evidently not of battalion size. Calling it a bojna may have helped present an image of a larger force to the enemy and/or reflected the fluidity of Croatian military organisation and vocabulary in autumn 1991. Thanks to Dejan Jović and Louise Askew for their advice on this translation.

<sup>17</sup> The argument in defence of the slogan claims that the Ustaše were not the first to use the slogan because it combines war cries used by two historical Croatian heroes: Nikola Šubić Zrinski (who held off Suleiman the Magnificent’s Ottoman forces at the

Croatian public discourse, where moral authority to speak about the consequences of the war was normatively reserved for those who had made sacrifices in it (soldiers, mothers, refugees), Thompson was able to credibly express the dissatisfaction of veterans not only after Tuđman but even in the late 1990s. His first song on the theme, in 1998, railed against veterans' loss of power and dignity since the war; in its video, it also opposed the trial of the Bosnian Croat colonel Tihomir Blaškić at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

The veterans' movement of the late 1990s had enjoyed a friendly relationship with Tuđman's government; its position in politics altered significantly during the brief era of centre-left rule, when Ivica Račan (the former leader of the Croatian League of Communists, turned democratic socialist) served as prime minister and an avowed liberal, Stipe Mesić, had been elected president. The most active veterans' group, Udruga hrvatskih vojnih invalidi iz Domovinskog rata (HVIDRA: Association of Croatian War Invalids from the Homeland War) took an prominent role in the right-wing protest movement which sought to undermine the Račan government and perhaps even to provoke so much disorder that it would be impossible for Račan to govern (Fisher 2003, p. 75). Thompson increasingly oriented his repertoire around history, war memory, faith and his love for his native region (topics he had begun to explore in the late 1990s), and his next album, in 2002, focused almost exclusively on

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siege of Sziget) used 'za dom', while King Petar Krešimir IV (1059–74) used 'spremni' in defiance of Venice. See, e.g., Goran Rohaček (vice-president of Hrvatska čista stranka prava: Croatian Pure Party of Right), 'Neznanje je majka svih zala', Hrvatska čista stranka prava, available at: [http://www.hcsp.hr/index.php?subaction=showfull&id=1216038493&archive=&start\\_from=&ucat=3](http://www.hcsp.hr/index.php?subaction=showfull&id=1216038493&archive=&start_from=&ucat=3), accessed 3 June 2009.

‘patriotic’ themes. His back-story as a veteran was one of the best-known stories in Croatian entertainment and was reinforced by his practice of opening each concert with ‘Bojna Čavoglave’.<sup>18</sup>

A series of scandals from 2003 onwards built up a widespread (but not all-encompassing) public perception of Thompson as an extremist, complicating his claims to stand for the entire Croatian people. In February 2003, a small group of audience members gave Ustaša salutes at a free Thompson concert on Trg bana Jelačića (the central square of Zagreb) during the introduction of ‘Bojna Čavoglave’ when Thompson, as usual, sang the words ‘za dom’ and had the crowd respond ‘spremni’; that November, the owners of two concert venues in the Netherlands asked Thompson not to perform; a month later, an internet portal publicised bootleg recordings of a singer it claimed to be Thompson performing Joško Tomičić’s song ‘Jasenovac i Gradiška Stara’ (‘Jasenovac and Stara Gradiška’), which glorified mass murder in the Ustaša concentration camps; the organisers of Thompson’s next stadium concerts in 2007 stated they would ban concert-goers from bringing flags or clothing which referenced the NDH or Pavelić, yet the usual photographs of black-clad teenagers displaying the telltale ‘U’ and saluting still occupied the media for several days; during his diaspora tour, Thompson encountered complaints and/or had concerts cancelled in Austria, Switzerland, Canada, Australia and the USA – but not Germany; a police inspector who reported Thompson for expressing hatred towards national minorities after another free concert was suspended himself; Istrian regionalist politicians began to stand up to Thompson concerts in their localities. In the meantime, Thompson’s fellow musician Miroslav Škoro had positioned himself as

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<sup>18</sup> From 2007, his concerts opened instead with the first song on his 2006 album, which called on contemporary society to turn away from sin.



a more centrist patriotic singer who was not dogged by the same connotations of extremism.

Škoro and Thompson had recorded several songs together and shared the basic theme of heroic veterans betrayed by traitors inside and enemies outside the nation; both also used frequent historical references in their patriotic lyrics, although Škoro avoided any allusions to the Partisan–Ustaše conflict or the Communist persecution of Croat nationalists. The writer Miljenko Jergović (2005) called Škoro ‘the Thompson of the new government’, likening him to the prime minister since 2003, Ivo Sanader. Sanader himself had given a fierce anti-Račan speech during the largest pro-Gotovina rally on the Split Riva in 2001; after beating Ivić Pašalić’s hard-line wing to the HDZ leadership at the next party congress, he had appeared to mellow into a centre-right leader in the Christian Democrat tradition, whose foreign policy aimed at integrating Croatia into the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The opposing view, that no good and much ill would come of sacrificing Croatia’s hard-won sovereignty, was rarely heard in the consensus of the major parties but resonated among many ‘fringe’ parties and in everyday life.

The patriotic popular music of the post-Tuđman period was coloured with an increasing amount of Euroscepticism – a term which originated from British political discourse and stands for suspicion of the European Union (EU) as a threat to national sovereignty. The British and Dutch governments’ frequent demands to postpone Croatia’s accession negotiations until Gotovina had been arrested are likely to have contributed to a perception that the EU as an institution cared little for Croatian national interest; moreover, Dejan Jović (2006, pp. 88–90) has argued that, during the late stages of Tuđman’s rule, the once-desired ‘Europe’ itself became an Other in presidential discourse as a result of Tuđman’s disappointment with the EU’s ‘Western

Balkans' strategy. While Tuđman continued to define the nation against 'the Balkans', Yugoslavia and 'the East', he also came to consider that 'Europe' as an institution would threaten Croatia's political and cultural self-sufficiency. This 'paradox of the west' arguably lay behind late Tuđmanism's tendency towards cultural autarky.

Euroscepticism had less impact on the development of Croatian popular music as a whole after Tuđman, yet particular musical texts still contained a strong Eurosceptic strand. The discourse of the anti-ICTY protests flowed into a generalised opposition to the EU through the idea of the internal traitor, who was as much in focus as was the external European threat to sovereignty. Shorty used one single from his second album to criticise Croatians whom he considered to be pandering to Europe and disdaining authentic values such as respect for Slavonia's suffering during the Homeland War.<sup>19</sup> A song by the tamburica group Mladi 6 focused on the 'ex-comrades' (i.e. ex-Communists) who now pretended to care about Christ although the narrator remembered them as atheists: they had already sold off the islands and were now getting around to the waterways, but should not touch the plains (the narrator warned, referencing the title of Miroslav Škoro's debut wartime hit) because 'we' had gone to war and died for them. Other songs by Thompson and Škoro made more abstract allusions to strange malevolent outsiders and the flawed members of the nation who were in cahoots with them.

Grassroots Euroscepticism overlapped with and outlasted the pro-Gotovina campaign, while several political parties used a discourse of the EU as a neoliberal front for large corporations which would exploit Croatia's natural resources. Croatian

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<sup>19</sup> One sequence in the song's video showed him in jail while a man in a white shirt with an EU armband was evaluating him on a clipboard as a 'primate'; later on, he punched through an EU emblem on the screen.

Euroscepticism comprised a field of stances towards Europe. The 2007 manifesto of Ivic Pašalić's mid-2000s political party Jedino Hrvatska (Only Croatia) said that it distinguished Europe from the EU because 'Europe was the centre of world civilisation and the EU was an unequal community of states';<sup>20</sup> Shorty's attack on Europe had made no distinction between the civilisation and the institution. The discourses were nonetheless compatible enough that they could be seen as one strand of thought in entertainment as well as political life. The anthropologist Michaela Schäuble has interpreted veterans' disaffection, angry posturing and willingness to shock as an expression of powerlessness in the face of globalisation as it played out in the small towns and city outskirts of Croatia, not to mention an expression of their resentment that Europe and the USA had not intervened to prevent Croatia having to fight for independence.<sup>21</sup>

Not only Euroscepticism and globalisation but also the politics of post-Communist memory were played out in Croatian popular music, just as, in other post-socialist countries such as Hungary or the Baltic states, the same conflicts centred on monuments, museums and the use of public space. Dislike of Thompson involved not only the symbolic distancing strategies of references to the Balkans, peasants, the mountains and Herzegovina, which Stef Jansen (2005) apostrophised as 'anti-nationalism' when he encountered them in the mid-nineties, but also a clash of

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<sup>20</sup> 'Stranka Jedino Hrvatska najavila izlazak na izbore', available at:

<http://www.javno.com/hr/hrvatska/clanak.php?id=81036>, accessed 3 June 2009.

<sup>21</sup> Michaela Schäuble, "'Imagined Suicide': Self-Sacrifice and the Making of Heroes in Post-War Croatia', *Anthropology Matters* 8 (2006), 1, available at:

[http://www.anthropologymatters.com/journal/2006-1/schauble\\_2006\\_imagined.pdf](http://www.anthropologymatters.com/journal/2006-1/schauble_2006_imagined.pdf), accessed 3 June 2009.

incompatible historical narratives about the Second World War. The overtones of memory politics became explicit in 2008 in a confrontation between Thompson and the Istrian regionalist MP, Damir Kajin, who lobbied for the cancellation of Thompson concerts in Umag (near the time of an international tennis tournament) and Pula (where Thompson's management proposed to hold the concert in the municipally-owned Roman arena).

The complex relationship between Istrian and Croatian identity was mediated in Istria by a discourse of Istrian tolerance, which Istrians understood as the result of the region's historical experience and considered made them *more* Croatian than the hyper-nationalism of 'Balkan' regions of the country (Kalapos 2002, p. 85). Kajin epitomised this narrative of Istrian identity when he stated that 'Istria cared about Croatia in a different way' and added that the values which defined Istria made it different from Sinj or Čavoglave'.<sup>22</sup> He also stated, as columnists opposed to Thompson had for years, that Serbian pop-folk concerts were attended by 'the same audience which goes to a Thompson concert'.<sup>23</sup> Later, at a concert in Križevci (central

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<sup>22</sup> T Kocijančić, 'Umag nije Bandićev Zagreb', available at: <http://www.sdp-umag.org/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=530>, accessed 3 June 2009.

Sinj is the birthplace of Mirko Norac and the location of the Alka, the annual jousting festival which became a key site of resistance to Račan and Mesić during the early 2000s protests. See Schäuble, 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Gorana Banjeglav, 'Neka Thompson pita kuma zašto su cajke u Istri', *Javno*, 14 August 2008, available at: <http://www.javno.com/hr/hrvatska/clanak.php?id=172220>, accessed 3 June 2009. Kajin was responding to accusations that it was hypocritical to obstruct Thompson while Serbian pop-folk singers were able to perform at nightclubs in Istria.

Croatia), Thompson told his audience that ‘we’ll also come to Istria, to Pula, to the Arena, to the parts where there is still Communism. We’ll kill Communism.’<sup>24</sup>

Kajin, when asked for his comment on Thompson’s statement, presented a counter-narrative in which the Communists had had a positive, even a patriotic, effect on Istria’s history (Italy, not Yugoslavia, had possessed Istria between the First and Second World Wars; Fascist rule had imposed forced Italianisation policies on Istria until 1943, when the Partisans had taken control of the region). ‘We do not intend to reject those values our grandfathers and fathers fought for,’ Kajin said; and he added that most of Thompson’s audience in Istria (as per the discourse that nationalism and intolerance were associated with recent migrants from ‘backward’ regions) would be ‘people who have come in the last 20 to 25 years’ rather than ‘autochthonous Istrians’.<sup>25</sup> The transnational memory politics of post-Communism found their Croatian expression in the recontextualised discourses around folk culture, urban development and internal migration which had existed since industrialisation, itself a product of socialism, had altered the demography of Yugoslavia’s cities.

### **The (re-)construction of a post-Yugoslav musical space**

The Narodni radio/Hit Records promotional complex headed by Juraj Hrvačić was heavily involved in disseminating new patriotic popular music. Miroslav Škoro was on the Hit roster; Shorty was signed to Aquarius but owed his crossover into the

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<sup>24</sup> Mladen Starčević, ‘Thompson zbog poruka mržnje neće skoro u Istru’, *Javno*, 7 September 2008, available at:

<http://www.javno.com/hr/hrvatska/clanak.php?id=179919>, accessed 3 June 2009.

<sup>25</sup> Starčević, ‘Thompson zbog poruka mržnje neće skoro u Istru’.

mainstream to Narodni radio; the same radio station also sponsored the stadium klapa concerts of 2006–07 which made Tomislav Bralić and Klapa Intrada a headline act on the back of their single ‘Croatijo, iz duše te ljubim’ (‘Croatia, I love you from the soul’) – a patriotic ‘evergreen’ in the making.<sup>26</sup> According to *Arena* magazine, which reported sympathetically and regularly on Thompson’s activities, Thompson had held a 20 per cent share in Narodni radio since 2004 (Milas 2004). The station also heavily advertised Thompson’s concerts in Croatia and abroad. This picture might have appeared to justify the arguments made by the weekly *Nacional* in the 1990s that Hrvačić’s media group had been financed by a HDZ ally, the soon-to-be-disgraced tycoon Miroslav Kutle, in order to give Ivić Pašalić’s wing of the party continued media access in the event that HDZ lost an election and could no longer use the state media for its own communication (Maksimović 1999).

However, the Kutle–Pašalić axis had been dismantled in the last year of Tuđman’s rule itself when Kutle was imprisoned, and Ivo Sanader’s defeat of Pašalić for the HDZ leadership would have disrupted any such arrangements further. Not only that, but Hit Records also began to reintroduce Bosniak sevdah singers such as Hanka Paldum and Halid Bešlić into the Croatian music market: sevdah had suffered during the 1990s exclusion of ‘eastern’ folk music, and – apart from a few tentative and politically-inspired attempts to showcase it as a sign of Croat–Bosniak friendship after the formation of the Muslim–Croat Federation in Bosnia-Herzegovina – had counted as a foreign product. In 2008, Hit even released a compilation of post-2000 songs by Neda Ukraden, a Bosnian Serb singer born in the Croatian town of Imotski who had recorded many albums for Jugoton until 1990; after 1992, when war broke out in Sarajevo and Ukraden moved to Belgrade, the Croatian media had constructed her for

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<sup>26</sup> A ‘klapa’ is a Dalmatian close harmony group.

many years thereafter as someone who had rejected a possible Croatian identity and thus betrayed her country. A group from Serbia, Trik FX, was also invited to perform at the 2008 edition of HRF, the Hrvačić network's pop festival. This recognition of former Yugoslavia as a cultural and linguistic area was hardly in keeping with Tuđman's ideology, which fled from any hint that Croatia had anything in common with the Yugoslavia it had left behind.

The status of popular music from other parts of Yugoslavia in fact presented the most apparent case of change in the Croatian music industry after Tuđman. Especially at the start of the decade, when the fall of Milošević in October 2000 meant that the wartime leaders of Serbia and Croatia had both ceased to govern their countries within the space of a year, cultural relations between Croatia and the other ex-Yugoslav states appeared to be a major talking-point. In 2001–02, three stars from Belgrade – Đorđe Balašević, Momčilo Bajagić-Bajaga and (much less problematically) Zdravko Čolić – gave their first concerts in Croatia since the break-up of Yugoslavia.<sup>27</sup> Decisions by Croatian acts to perform in Serbia or Montenegro became a business matter rather than the cause for media-fuelled outrage they had been in 1999, when Alka Vuica, Dino Dvornik and Doris Dragović had accepted the first invitations to perform across the well-patrolled political and symbolic border. The most problematic aspect of the relationship was Serbian pop-folk, which professional discourses during the 1990s had structured as Croatian popular music's continued Other. Many Serbian stars of the 1990s had been connected to the 'enemy' regime, chief among them Ceca Ražnatović – whose marriage to the paramilitary commander Zeljko Ražnatović-Arkan symbolised all possible dimensions of Serbian difference at

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<sup>27</sup> Čolić was from Sarajevo but had lived in Belgrade since the outbreak of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH).

once. However, even performers whose careers had begun well after the fall of Milošević still came within the boundaries of the inimical other, ‘srpski turbofolk’ (‘Serb pop-folk’).<sup>28</sup>

If the newly transnational relationships of ex-Yugoslav popular culture could initially be conceptualised as a binary between Croatia and Serbia–Montenegro (Baker 2006), by the end of the decade this was no longer the case. The growth of Montenegro’s own music industry after independence suggested that a national music industry was almost as essential a sign of sovereignty as a national anthem or a flag<sup>29</sup> – and retrospectively called attention to whether Croatian popular music, with its linguistic similarities to Montenegrin rather than Serbian, might have had some extra autonomist significance in pre-independence Montenegro.<sup>30</sup> Musical production in every ex-Yugoslav state was influenced, in ways which still require further research, by the dispersal of musicians from Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) across and beyond former Yugoslavia. The musical cultures of pre-war Bosnian cities such as Sarajevo and Tuzla were renegotiated through Bosnian performers’ interventions into the

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<sup>28</sup> ‘Turbofolk’ was originally a satirical coinage by the rock musician Rambo Amadeus and later a term for mid-1990s Serbian pop-folk production; in Croatia its meaning was more general and included pop-folk of all origins up to the present day, with a commonsensical allusion to Serbia.

<sup>29</sup> See Billig 1995.

<sup>30</sup> Standard Croatian used a language variant known as ijekavica and standard Serbian used ekavica (ijekavica used the vowel ‘ije’ in many words where ekavica would use a long ‘e’ instead); ijekavica was also the basis of Montenegrin, and was spoken in much of BiH, although the Serbianisation policies of the 1990s extended the use of ekavica in Serb areas.



musical space of their new host countries, and musicians from BiH (Edo Maajka; Davor Sučić-Sula from the Zagreb/Sarajevo branch of the rock band Zabranjeno pušenje) arguably provided the most outspoken critique of post-conflict social and political realities in ‘urban’ (anti-folk) Croatian music.<sup>31</sup> Neither could one overlook Macedonia’s position in the reconstituted cultural space of ex-Yugoslav popular music after the transnational mourning of the singer Toše Proeski, who had developed a parallel career by singing first in Serbian and then also in Croatian before he died in a car crash in 2007 on a Croatian motorway outside Nova Gradiška.<sup>32</sup> Proeski’s posthumous hits in Croatian and English were still fixtures in the Croatian ‘domestic’ pop-rock charts more than a year after his death.

Nonetheless, Serbian culture, music and language remained constitutive Others in Croatia, most noticeably in the language policy which applied to popular music. A Croatian act covering a song which was originally in Serbian would alter the words to

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<sup>31</sup> Sučić and his band had been a core member of the Sarajevo ‘new primitives’ movement in the 1980s and continued its practices of mocking inequality and hypocrisy into the new political circumstances of post-Yugoslavia; Edo Maajka had been too young to belong to the movement but his use of humour and Bosnian slang had much in common with the creative work of the ‘new primitives’ (although the same could not be said for his lyrics’ anger or bad language). Ana Dević, personal communication, 27 February 2009.

<sup>32</sup> Proeski had entered the Croatian market by singing duets with Croatian performers (as several Bosnian pop singers had also done before him); one of his duet partners, Antonija Šola, who had written several of his Croatian songs, subsequently began recording in Macedonian.

use the Croatian rather than the Serbian variant,<sup>33</sup> although occasional items of Serbian lexis could sometimes be retained. When Ivana Kindl covered a famous Zdravko Čolić song, ‘Ti si mi u krvi’ (‘You’re in my blood’), the lyrics retained the modal verb construction of the word ‘da’ followed by an infinitive, which was not used in standard Croatian;<sup>34</sup> when Maja Šuput and the group Feminnem covered another one, they kept ‘teatar’ for ‘theatre’ rather than changing it to the standard Croatian ‘kazalište’. Čolić’s songs had in any case been in ijekavica, the variant Čolić as a Sarajevan spoke. It still seemed that for a Croatian singer to vocalise ekavica was beyond the pale. When the group ENI recorded a version of ‘Retko te viđam s devojkama’ (‘I rarely see you with girls’) by the Belgrade new-wave rock band Idoli, its title and chorus changed to ‘Rijetko te viđam s djevojkama’; in 2006, a Croatian tabloid started a polemic about a Croatian singer, Severina Vučković, allegedly singing a song in ekavica, based on a Serbian tabloid having transcribed the lyrics into ekavica from another variant (Baker 2008, p. 747).

It was almost a commonplace to observe that, despite the cultural policy of the 1990s, pop-folk from Serbia in particular was popular among the very generation which ought to have been ‘Tuđman’s children’ inculcated with his patriotic values. Less clear, however, was whether those ‘children’ attached any political meaning to their listening to Serbian pop-folk – even though the national media still tended to interpret the popularity of pop-folk as a politically significant phenomenon. Serbian

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<sup>33</sup> Where a word differed between ‘ijekavica’ and ‘ekavica’ (i.e. it used the vowel ‘ije’ in one variant and ‘e’ in another), it would be transposed into the ijekavica word.

<sup>34</sup> However, they reversed the gender of the lyrics so that the female narrator was being rescued from ‘strašni haremski čuvari’ (‘terrible harem guards’) rather than carrying out the rescue.

rock was no longer the threat it had been in the mid-1990s, when HGU was able to impose sanctions on Croatian musicians who performed with Belgrade bands like Partibrejkers in third countries: by 2007, Partibrejkers were able to headline a rock festival at Jarun (the lake complex in Zagreb) without complaint. Serbian pop-folk was another matter, and was best integrated into Croatia in those areas where the main Croatian music and broadcasting organisations were least involved. It had long been recognised that the black market had sustained cultural interaction between Croatia and Serbia/Bosnia despite the 1990s policy which sought to insulate Croatia from its ‘former neighbours’; the pirate cassettes and CDs sold on market stalls had since been matched if not overtaken by internet file-sharing, MP3 blogs and the anarchic grey market of YouTube, where users in Croatia and across the diaspora uploaded clips from old video tapes or re-recordings of archive material broadcast on television. During the early 1990s, watching videos imported from the homeland had been a frequent social activity for families and neighbours in the Croatian diaspora (Kolar-Panov 1997): a decade later, the same tapes provided resources for a dispersed, virtual and casual community.

Serbian pop-folk found its place at the decentralised margins of the music industry. From 2002 onwards, when the classic Serbian pop-folk star Miroslav Ilić toured several discotheques in Croatia, nightclubs gradually increasingly began to book Serbian as well as Bosnian performers in their pop-folk programmes; one proprietor, Alen Borbaš from Osijek, positioned himself as Croatia’s leading folk entrepreneur by organising an annual folk awards ceremony in his nightclub (he was only able to use the city stadium instead when Anto Đapić ceased to be mayor of Osijek).<sup>35</sup> The

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<sup>35</sup> Borbaš went on to launch *Folk* magazine and act as the Croatian representative for Balkanika television.

mobile phone ringtone market, aimed at youth, was perhaps the most successful of all in accommodating Serbian pop-folk. Ringtone advertisements in magazines and free newspapers offered a selection of recent hits divided into categories, one of which would always be folk (and would 'even' include a few hits by that benchmark of otherness, Ceca Ražnatović). The ringtone market drew little attention in comparison to the music industry's other revenue streams, but in everyday life was nonetheless significant to its consumers, whose choices of ringtone could signal the presence of themselves and their personal technology many times a day. The cracks in a prescriptive Croatian national cultural sphere appeared to come precisely at this everyday level.

## **Conclusion**

The greatest continuity in the relationship between popular music and politics after Tuđman appeared to be the narrative that Croatia's innocent, defensive and heroic war meant that none of its participants could have committed war crimes; Tuđman had striven to instil it as common sense into the boundaries of Croatian public discourse, embedding silence over war crimes, murders of Serbs, ethnic cleansing and Croatian politicians' own expansionist ambitions in BiH within the all but indisputable concept of a nation rising up to resist aggression. After Tuđman, the formerly-presidential narrative's undertones of Euroscepticism came into the foreground as the Croatian state became further implicated in networks of international governance and capital and Croatia's relationship with the Hague Tribunal became a European affair. The standpoints of the large-scale right-wing publicity campaign which had marked Račan's ministry were defeated on a party political level: Ivić Pašalić founded two

parties after he left HDZ but neither came close to winning a seat in the Sabor (parliament), and the far right contained too many splinter groups to be electorally effective. The most successful far-right option was the Croatian Party of Right (HSP) led by Anto Đapić, but even this only won eight seats at the 2003 elections and a single seat in 2007. At the same time, the strand of popular music which communicated the discourses of Pašalić and HSP was one of Croatia's most reliably successful showbusiness products. Indeed, both Pašalić and Đapić attempted to connect their own parties to Thompson's image and popularity: the HSP anthem was an otherwise unreleased song by Thompson and remained so even after Thompson left the party,<sup>36</sup> in 2007, Pašalić's party of the time gave away promotional scarves in the Croatian national colours (red and white check) outside Thompson's concert at the Maksimir stadium in Zagreb and the scarves appeared in several press photographs from the concert.

Although the oppositional patriotic narrative faded from mainstream party politics and ceased to set the tone for mass demonstrations on the scale seen in the early 2000s, the sentiments of the histrionic anti-Račan years were preserved in popular culture through the continued performance, airplay and sale of that period's oppositional-patriotic popular music. Music which communicated the protestors' ideas was evidently appealing and profitable enough for performers and executives to continue producing it. Thompson's record label Croatia Records reported that the 45,000 copies of his album 'Bilo jednom u Hrvatskoj' ('Once upon a time in Croatia') sold in

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<sup>36</sup> At the time of writing, the party's main site no longer attributed the anthem to any musician; two regional branch websites in Osijek–Baranja county and Slavonski Brod still attributed it to Thompson.

2007 made it the label's best-seller of the year.<sup>37</sup> Yet the appeal of oppositional-patriotic music did not translate into political capital: at the 2007 general elections, Pašalić and his party received 15,902 votes,<sup>38</sup> far fewer even than the number of people present at Thompson's concert at Maksimir. Had Thompson's many fans wanted to express their support at the ballot box for the parties which most closely matched the discourse of Thompson's own songs, they would have had ample opportunity to do so, yet participation in a concert audience – even joining in the chants and salutes which could be guaranteed to scandalise the next morning's curious press – did not seem to be carried over into political participation. The observation raises a provocative, even unwelcome, question: whether the experience of taking part in such an audience in fact siphoned off the enthusiasm to display and demonstrate in other spheres which might have accreted if Thompson and his concerts had not been there.

Patriotic popular music in the vein of Thompson and Škoro certainly appeared to be commercially viable enough to outlast the opposition to Račan, the flight of Gotovina and the demystification of Norac.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps, as a schoolteacher in Slavonia

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<sup>37</sup> Croatia Records, 'Thompson – Bilo jednom u Hrvatskoj, uživo: Split Stari Plač', 18 January 2008, available at:

[http://www.crorec.hr/crorec.hr/vijest.php?OBJECT\\_ID=601008](http://www.crorec.hr/crorec.hr/vijest.php?OBJECT_ID=601008), accessed 3 June 2009.

<sup>38</sup> Državno izborno povjerenstvo Republika Hrvatske, 'Službeni rezultata izbora za zastupnike u Hrvatski Sabor', 22 December 2007, available at:

[http://www.izbori.hr/2007Sabor/rezultati/rezultati\\_izbora\\_sluzbeni.pdf](http://www.izbori.hr/2007Sabor/rezultati/rezultati_izbora_sluzbeni.pdf), accessed 3 June 2009.

<sup>39</sup> See Pavlaković, this volume.

commented to me when I visited the region, it continued to be produced for the simple reason that the market of men who identified themselves within the social classification of ‘veterans’ was several hundred thousand strong (not to mention their teenage children), albeit low in individual purchasing power. However, certain musical texts, such as the Niko Bete songs for Norac and Gotovina, circulated widely (indeed, were sometimes ‘officially’ distributed for free) without corresponding commercial gain in measurable sales for their performers. Some but not all large concerts were also free at the point of attendance,<sup>40</sup> although it was in any case a common practice for local councils to finance free concerts (by a range of musicians) in their locality on public holidays or other significant dates. From one point of view, the financial model of patriotic music might appear to bear out the argument of the business analyst Chris Anderson that distributing a product for free enables it to ‘go viral’ and reach more people who would be prepared to pay for something you produce.<sup>41</sup> Alternatively, one might consider that the rules of the cultural economy did not necessarily apply to post-Tudman patriotic music on the grounds that its goal was not concerned with the exchange-value of the musical product (trading sound recordings, concert admissions, royalties or performance fees for money) but rather with maintaining the values communicated through the music in a prominent position in everyday life.

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<sup>40</sup> Including Thompson’s annual celebration of the end of the Homeland War (and Operation Oluja) in Čavoglave and both his controversial concerts on Trg bana Jelačića (in 2003 and 2008).

<sup>41</sup> Chris Anderson, ‘Free! Why \$0.00 is the Future of Business’, *Wired*, 25 February 2008, available at: [http://www.wired.com/techbiz/it/magazine/16-03/ff\\_free](http://www.wired.com/techbiz/it/magazine/16-03/ff_free), accessed 3 June 2009.

Focusing on patriotic popular music as the meeting-point of music and politics in Croatia would seem to suggest that Tuđman's success in structuring public discourse extended beyond his death, the electoral rejection of HDZ in 2000 and Sanader's defeat of the party hard-liners before HDZ returned to power in 2003. Yet the situation of Croatian popular music as a whole (music where national identity was signalled implicitly not explicitly – through knowledge of the performer's nationality, use of the Croatian language, musical arrangement and the locations of songs' videos) presents a different perspective. Seen from this angle, Tuđman's cultural policy fundamentally failed in creating a Croatian national consciousness which did not relate to Yugoslavia. The generation of children who grew up during and after Tuđman's rule still listened to new as well as old music from the rest of former Yugoslavia and, as musicians, participated in musical projects across the borders which had only existed as state boundaries since their childhood. The image of aspiring singers from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia (but not Slovenia) competing on the 2008 reality show *Operacija Trijumf* (*Operation Triumph*), singing duets with established acts from across the region and being evaluated by a Croatian composer–manager, a Serbian lyricist and a Bosnian television producer would have horrified Tuđman as the threat of a new Balkan federation.

These 'marketable version[s] of the past' (*OT* came several years after a *Big Brother*-style pan-Yugoslav reality show, produced in Macedonia) arguably did little to promote a historical understanding of why the real Yugoslavia had collapsed (Volčić, 2007, pp. 34–5). A few musical texts – far fewer than in the case of films<sup>42</sup> – attempted to comment on the architects and consequences of post-Yugoslav violence

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<sup>42</sup> See Dević, this volume.



and clientelism, but as a rule popular entertainment did not seek to inspire reflection on the activities and failings of power-holders or macro-economic forces. Neither should one overstate the impression of a conceptual Yugoslavia being consciously reassembled through shared cultural consumption. The reappearance of a common Yugoslav marketplace for entertainment (which of course excluded the patriotic products intended for national consumption alone) might largely have arisen from a pragmatic recognition of a mutually intelligible linguistic area – although even that defeated a precept of Tuđman’s ideology, which prescribed that Croatian and Serbian should be linguistically distinct. Even though Tuđman’s narrative of the war (and sometimes even Tuđman himself) retained a place in the sphere of everyday entertainment thanks to the ongoing production of popular music, such texts coexisted with an amorphous musical space which bore little resemblance to the ‘spiritually renewed’ concept, anti-eastern yet ambivalent towards the West, that Tuđman had desired. The political establishment of post-Tuđman Croatia avoided the micro-management of Croatian culture which had gone on during the 1990s. One is nonetheless left to wonder whether politics or technology ultimately did more to undermine Tuđman’s attempt to cordon off Croatian cultural space.

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