Brand New Your Retro? Yugo-nostalgia and/as Yugo-futurism in alternative and popular music

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Abstract: Through its different forms, Yugoslav (popular and alternative) music serves as one of the essential and most common materials of post-Yugoslav collective memory, both trans-nationally and trans-generationally. Similarly, numerous approaches, different theoretical and media discourses, covering the several decades of the musical and pop-cultural production – also known as Yu-Rock – were usually understood as practices of Yugo-nostalgic consumerism. However, this paper opposes such a reading of both (Yugo-)nostalgia and Yugoslav popular and alternative music/cultural scene of the late socialist Yugoslavia. In spite of the seminal notion of retromania, which can absolutely be applied to the revival and domination of the Yugoslav New Wave scene of the 1980s in the last several decades in the regional media- and memoryscape, also against all "top-down" nationally driven restrictions, the afterlife, the reception, and reflection also score different elements and modes related to both the affect and memory, and to the Yugoslav legacies – such as retro-utopia, neostalgia, or Yugo-futurism, and New Yugoslavism – neologisms all coined by or directly applied to the actors of the actual scene. The paper highlights several reflections on Yugo-nostalgia and the utopian and futuristic articulation of both the socialist past and the post-socialist present, as well as the explicit (self-)referentiality regarding the YU Rock/New Wave production as represented and performed by one of its key actors, Disciplina Kicme, i.e. Disciplin a Kitschme, and its similar off projects. The band figures as one of the key representatives of the scene and of the Yugoslav supranational phenomenon. Thus, by looking into their work in the post-Yugoslav period, which combines the elements of nostalgia structurally and thematically, through performance, lyrics, symbols and aesthetics, the paper argues for the emancipatory use of nostalgia rather than a mere retrospective idealization and de-politicized re-branding, namely, as a critical reflection and as a tool to rethink the futures in time of the cancellation of the future.

Keywords: Alternative Music; New Wave; Retrotopia; Neostalgia; Collective Memory

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Résumé : À travers ses différentes formes, la musique yougoslave (populaire et alternative) constitue l'un des matériaux essentiels de la mémoire collective post-yougoslave, tant au niveau transnational que transgénérationnel. De même, de nombreuses approches ainsi que différents discours théoriques et médiatiques portant sur plusieurs décennies d'une production musicale et pop-culturelle connue sous le nom de Yu-Rock ont été perçus comme des pratiques de consommation nostalgique de la Yougoslavie. Pour autant, cet article s'oppose à une telle lecture de la (Yugo)nostalgie et de la scène musicale populaire et alternative yougoslave de la fin de la période socialiste. La notion de rétromania reste bien sûr essentielle et peut tout à fait s'appliquer à la renaissance et à la domination de la *New Wave* yougoslave (née dans les années 1980) dans le paysage médiatique et mémoriel de ces dernières décennies, à contre-courant de toutes les injonctions nationales imposées d'en haut. Toutefois, l'héritage et la réception du Yu-Rock exploitent également des éléments liés à l'affect, à la mémoire, et même au patrimoine yougoslave, produisant des phénomènes comme la rétrotopie, la néostalgie ou encore le yougo-futurisme. Ces néologismes ont tous été inventés par les acteurs de la scène musicale actuelle ou leur sont directement associés. L'article met en lumière plusieurs interprétations de la nostalgie yougoslave et de l'articulation utopique et futuriste entre le passé socialiste et le présent post-socialiste du pays. L'article s'intéresse aussi à l'(auto-)référentialité explicite de la musique rock/*New Wave* incarnée par l'un de ses acteurs clés, Disciplina Kicme, (*Disciplin a Kitschme*) et ses projets similaires en-dehors de la Yougoslavie. Le groupe est l'un des principaux représentants de la scène supranationale d'origine yougoslave. Ainsi, en examinant le travail post-yougoslave de ce groupe qui combine, structurellement et thématiquement, les éléments de la nostalgie dans leur performance, paroles, symboles et esthétique, l'article plaide pour un usage de la nostalgie plus émancipateur qu'une simple idéalisation rétrospective et dépolitisée. Il s'agit alors de considérer la nostalgie comme une réflexion critique et un instrument opératoire permettant de repenser les futurs à l'heure de l'annulation de l'avenir.

Mots clés : Musique alternative, *New Wave*, rétrotopie, néostalgie, mémoire collective

Introduction

Reflecting on her seminal work on the future of nostalgia, Svetlana Boym stated that "the twentieth century began with utopia and ended with nostalgia. Optimistic belief in the future became outmoded, while nostalgia, for better or worse, never went out of fashion, remaining uncannily contemporary" (Boym, 2007: 7). However, what might have sounded paradoxical a couple of decades ago today seems more like a realistic description of the state of contemporary popular culture and politics. More than a historical emotion, as Boym framed it, nostalgia serves as the defining emotion of our age (Tanner, 2021). Indeed, taken either as an emotion, as a cultural or industrial niche and marketing strategy, or as a mode of cultural memory, nostalgia is everywhere.

This observation can be closely linked to the notions of "retromania," particularly in popular music, as suggested by Simon Reynolds (2011), or the "cancellation of the future" in the present capitalist society and popular culture, as addressed by the late Mark Fisher (2014). Reynolds and Fisher both reflect pop culture's re-appropriation of its past, which relies on repeating the bygone past and backwardness rather than attempting to create something new. Moreover, Fisher further dramatizes the situation by stating that the 21st century doesn't seem to have started yet, adding that we are "trapped in the 20th century" (8). However, it appears as old news to many subjects and social groups living in the so-called post-socialist transition.

In this article, I will dive deeper into the post-socialist context and examine the negotiations between Yugo-nostalgia and/as Yugo-futurism. I will first highlight the potential political and emancipatory aspect of (Yugo-)nostalgia and its capacity to address the different temporalities and actualization of elements from the past used to imagine the present and future. In this respect, I will also examine selected YU-Rock and New Wave articulations to address these aspects in the context of current dominant retro-trends in popular music.

Yugo-nostalgia and/as Yugo-futurism – toward emancipatory potentials

Predominantly understood in the context of the post-socialist nostalgic, or *ostalgic*, phenomena in formerly socialist states in Eastern Europe, Yugo-nostalgia (*Jugonostalgija*) is undoubtedly firmly positioned within the memory landscape in the post-socialist and post-Yugoslav context.1 Yugo-nostalgia is broadly understood as the positive remembrance and emotions toward the socialist Yugoslav state and the overall past period of socialism.2 It went through various semantic changes and appropriations over the last few decades. The very term Yugo-nostalgia was coined as a derogatory political label by the Croatian press in the early 1990s (Ugrešić, 1998), and it later served as a counter-memory practice. Since the end of the wars, Yugo-nostalgia has usually been associated with various consumerist practices in different genres and media, which are dominantly viewed as highly depoliticized (Volčič, 2007; Luthar, Pušnik, 2010).

1. The notion of Ostalgia or *Ostalgie* is a coinage that refers to the post-DDR nostalgia for the period of communism before the reunification of Germany in 1990. In the past several decades, it has also been used as an umbrella term for the variety of contextually specific memory practices referring to the socialist period across formerly socialist states in Europe (cf. Velikonja 2009, Bošković 2013, Kolanović 2018).
2. SFRY, the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, existed from 1945 until the violent breakup, followed by a series of wars during the 1990s.

As several authors point out, Yugo-nostalgia is usually framed by a set of dichotomies (Hofman, 2015; Petrov, 2016). In the first place, with regards to the dominant binary framework of conflicting memories concerning the remembrance of Yugoslavia's socialist past, Yugo-nostalgia is seen as an idealization of the former country and its ideology (Luthar, Pušnik 2010; Galijaš 2015). Thereby, it stands in direct opposition to historical revisionism based on the ethno-nationally erasure of Yugoslavia's past.[3] The binary framework is also perceptible in the dominant approaches to the concept. As Ana Hofman notes, in such approaches, Yugo-nostalgia is seen as either a derogatory and trivial practice or a more productive political memory practice and sociocultural phenomenon (2015: 146).

Similarly, according to Tanja Petrović, there are three dominant ways in which the concept of Yugo-nostalgia is challenged and discredited (2012: 124-138). The first one is related to the international, Europe-wide context, in which the socialist past is viewed as highly problematic for the future democratization of the newly formed states. The second type of narrative comes from within the national perspectives and the local political elites. Yugoslavia's (socialist) past is seen as politically threatening and unethical, given the 1990s violent breakup of the country. Finally, the third type focuses exclusively on the trivial and consumerist, i.e., de-politicized, aspect of Yugo-nostalgia. It refers to the many objects and symbols of the popular and everyday culture of the time – in both consumption and production practices – which excludes political and ideological aspects and precludes any possibility of a productive and emancipatory aspect.

Responding to such approaches, Petrović criticizes the one-dimensional understanding of Yugo-nostalgia and reminds us to pay closer attention to the heterogeneity of the narratives and practices designated as (Yugo-)nostalgic and calls for their proper contextualization. Indeed, by seeing only a one-sided and simplified nature of (Yugo-)nostalgia, such accounts also fail to take into consideration the much more complex, multilayered or polysemous nature of nostalgia (Mihelj, 2017: 240). They usually fail to recognize the ambiguities, antagonisms, contradictions, and paradoxes in the articulations that deal with the material of the past. Moreover, it is worth noting that Yugo-nostalgia does not necessarily refer to the sentimental emotional state of individuals or groups longing to restore the Yugoslav state or the past in its totality. Instead, Yugo-nostalgic memory relates mainly to the period's mundane and ordinary aspects of life, to Yugoslavia's everyday and popular culture, and to the personal and collective experiences and sensations shared by different social groups.

3. For other relevant typologies and modes of remembering the Yugoslav socialist past in the post-Yugoslav and post-socialist mnemonic context, see Scribner, 2003; Velikonja, 2017; Kolanović, 2018.

The field of popular culture is of key importance here. First, Yugoslavia's (popular) culture, which was created trans- or supranationally, represents one of the main identity markers and highlights of socialist Yugoslavia (Volčič, 2007: 23). Similarly, its content and narratives in post-Yugoslav memory also confirm that it outlived the Yugoslav state and affects different groups and generations in the present (cf. Perković 2011; Perica, Velikonja 2012; Petrov 2016). The representations of different features and motives belonging to Yugoslavia's past, both unofficial and official state symbols, as well as cultural references, can thus be found across genres and media – in literary works, films, TV shows, popular music, museum exhibitions, the Internet (cf. Velikonja 2009; Perica, Velikonja 2012; Petrović 2012; Bošković 2013; Petrov 2016; Pogačar 2016). For that reason, consuming popular content from the Yugoslav period or using those symbols in contemporary productions, especially in music or film, does not necessarily rely on the uncritical deployment of the past. Therefore, although many of these narratives and memory representations include a commercial note, it is essential to acknowledge that several modes and potential deployments of the material of the past can co-exist simultaneously, allowing for a more nuanced reading of nostalgia (Petrov, 2017). Finally, as I approach Yugo-nostalgia by examining the articulation of popular and alternative music in the (post-)Yugoslav context, I am particularly interested in the potential of these narratives to intervene in the present issues and to be future-oriented. This also includes viewing (Yugo-)nostalgia *vis a vis* the recent developments in various discourses in cultural studies, especially regarding the retro trends dominating popular culture and popular music.

In this respect, Svetlana Boym's take on nostalgia and her distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia provides a fruitful insight and an excellent departure point regarding the diversity of nostalgic memory practices and of their potential uses (Boym, 2001). It applies both to the post-socialist, i.e., the specific post-Yugoslav context, and to the various articulations of popular culture.[4] Restorative nostalgia is dominantly associated with national memory. It aims to restore the complete image of the past that is fixed and frozen in time. On the other hand, reflective nostalgia relies on the fragments, details, and leftovers of the past. Boym notes that reflective nostalgia "does not follow the single plot, but explores ways of inhabiting many places at once and imagining different time zones" (xviii). Thus, as a form of nostalgia that also emphasizes uncertainty and underlines the interweaving of individual and collective frameworks and symbols of memory, it often combines irony and critical reflection with longing and affect (50).

4. For the direct application of Boym's two categories in the context of Yugo-nostalgia, see Lindstrom, 2005; Beganović, 2012.

The reflective, critical, and open-ended aspect of nostalgia, as suggested by Boym, plays a significant role in the possible and diverse deployments and multilayered narratives and aspects applied to Yugo-nostalgia. It also helps to highlight the emancipatory potentials of the concept, as already stressed in recent studies by different scholars (Palmberger, 2008; Velikonja, 2009; Perica, Velikonja, 2012; Petrović, 2012; Bošković, 2013; Petrov, 2016). Similarly, it suggests a shift in temporal orientation, calling for the constant negotiation between instances of the past and present, and imaginations of the future (Mihelj, 2017: 239-240). In this respect, according to Velikonja, nostalgia is more than a simple idealization of a bygone past; it is always oriented towards the present. It critically engages with ongoing hegemonic narratives and discourses, and potentially serves as a starting impulse for re-thinking alternatives to the *status quo* (Velikonja, 2009: 374-375).

The nostalgic evocation or reconstruction of the past, even if linked to pop-cultural narratives and products exclusively, very often serves to re-negotiate Yugoslavia's socialist past and also potentially challenges dominant memory narratives about the Yugoslav past and its socialist legacy (Pogačar, 2016: 281). The same applies to the intense consumption of Yugoslav pop-cultural products and texts, such as songs, films, design, etc. Also, Petrović sees the need for continuity as one of the key components in negotiating between narratives and issues of the past and present as well as between individual and collective memories (2012: 131). This is particularly relevant given the specific post-Yugoslav/post-war setting since the country's violent breakup impacted many people's everyday lives and biographies. It is even more significant in a political climate in which words like "Yugoslavia" or "Yugoslav" are viewed as highly problematic in both political and everyday life.

Furthermore, by negotiating between two periods, nostalgia also tells us what is missing in the current period compared to the past (Velikonja, 2009). As Keightley and Pickering point out, nostalgia is a composite of lack, loss, and longing (2012: 117). Thus, the reflexive take on the past suggests a re-evaluation of past experiences, achievements, and losses. Additionally, it serves to critically observe various dominant discourses and narratives created in the present. Various motives, symbols, or features of the official and/or cultural productions from the past can be incorporated into different narrative strategies to create multiple meanings and political readings. Thus, irony, parody, and melancholic tonalities are essential to these articulations.

From another perspective, such attempts to criticize the present also open up the potential of (Yugo-)nostalgia to re-think or envision a better future by reflecting on the elements, experiences, or narratives of the past

(Velikonja, 2009). Nostalgia is not exclusively oriented toward the past or the present. As Boym suggests, it can also be prospective, oriented towards the future, or even sideways (2001: XIV). In this respect, just like several other authors, Mitja Velikonja underlines the utopian aspect and the re-application of past elements and materials to imagine a better future as the most substantial emancipatory potential of (Yugo-)nostalgia (2009: 390-395). Moreover, according to Velikonja, "nostalgia always refers to the period that had a future, looked forward and dreamed about better times." (2014: 72). In the case of the Yugoslav and post-socialist case, the lived experiences of supranational and inter-ethnic solidarity and unity among several generations of Yugoslavs, sharing the overall ideological and cultural orientation towards a better future, and its numerous articulations in very powerful cultural and artistic scenes, as well as Yugoslav socialist legacies, not only serve as an image of a better and happier past. They also serve as material for various nostalgic and memorial re-readings and re-applications in the negotiation and the imagination of the future.

In other words, the retro-utopian dimension of Yugo-nostalgia can be perceived by evoking, tracing, and mapping optimistic and future-oriented promises, narratives, and practices. This furthermore includes reflecting on failures and non-accomplished potentials of Yugoslavia's socialist past. Applied to the present-day post-Yugoslav setting, they are re-actualized and thus usable for new potential frameworks of (collective or individual) identities in the present and future. Thus, as literary critic and writer Dinko Kreho notes, this type of Yugo-nostalgia should primarily be viewed as nostalgia for the future and, consequently, as a future of and *within* Yugo-nostalgia.[5] Kreho's point of view refers directly to Mark Fisher's reflection on nostalgia for non-materialized and potential futures from the past that are haunting us in the present (2014: 27). It can be viewed as a type of Yugo-nostalgic futurism that is confronting the loss of futurity in the post-socialist hegemonic discourse, and equally opposes the dominant ethno-nationalistic discourses that exclude the Yugoslav socialist and supranational paradigm.

At the same time, the utopian and future-oriented perspective of Yugo-nostalgia also addresses the negotiation of the notion of Yugo-futurism, which can virtually be seen as the complementary concept of Yugo-nostalgia or as one of its potential deployments and enactments. Yugo-futurism has been used informally as a relatively new term, mainly in pop-cultural and artistic discourses across the post-Yugoslav space. It can be read as an alternative to the highly contested Yugo-nostalgia, as it opposes the affective component that is integral and crucial to the notion

5. http://proletter.me/portfolio/jugonostalgija-za-buducnoscu/ (last accessed: 07.07.2020)

of nostalgia.[6] This aspect is mainly emphasized by the younger generations who have no first-hand memories of the socialist period, or it can be directed against the dominant post-Yugoslav ethno-nationalist paradigm, insisting on cultural cooperation and newly established ties but also leaving the space open for further and future readings of the post-Yugoslav and post-socialist space (Majstorović, 2013: 148-150).[7] Similarly, Velikonja also points to a significant number of various creative manifestations and articulations in design, visual arts, music, and multimedia production, what he also terms "neostalgia", i.e., new nostalgia. Again, this is primarily widespread among the younger, post-Yugoslav generations, and it foregrounds parody, irony, and the creative re-contextualization of the essentially official symbols of the past period (2009: 385-388).

However, what is meant by the retro-utopian and Yugo-futurist aspect of Yugo-nostalgia is by no means leaning on the ready-made material from the past. Instead, this primarily implies the critical self-reflection and re-evaluation of the past while questioning its possible re-actualization in the present or future. In other words, even in its orientation toward the future, it relies heavily on the reflexive take on Yugoslavia's ideological, cultural, and artistic heritage and numerous potentials and discontinuities. Therefore, regarding the potential negotiation of these terms, Yugo-nostalgia and Yugo-futurism, I propose to view both notions as complementary. This also implies embracing Yugo-nostalgia *as* Yugo-futurism and Yugo-futurism *through* Yugo-nostalgia, stressing the capacity of both terms to be read and deployed in the future.

Therefore, in the following analysis, I will look into the music of the Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav periods in order to highlight the negotiations between the (Yugo-)nostalgic tonalities and the imagination of (Yugo-) futurism in the post-Yugoslav context. As a soft memory material, music is a significant trigger of affective memory and nostalgic evocation. It also lies at the heart of many mnemonic narratives, discourses, and reflections. In this respect, I will first outline the significance and ambiguities of Yugoslav pop-rock music, particularly in the context of the New Wave scene of the 1980s, but also in the light of contemporary practices and trends of retro and nostalgic re-visiting.[8]

6. One of the recent issues of the renowned Slovenian journal for theater and performative arts, "Maska" is also dedicated to the notion of Yugo-futurism and Yugo-futurist art. https://maska.si/revija/jufu-2/ (last accessed: 05.10.2023)
7. In this sense, it is also similar to the "Yugosphere", a concept coined by British journalist and researcher Tim Judah, as another alternative to Yugo-nostalgia, and which relies on the creative and economic exchange and cooperation among various subjects between formerly Yugoslav states (cf. Petrović, 2012).
8. Although I am fully aware of the generic and regional diversity of the musical production in the Yugoslav period, by using the term (Yugoslav) popular music, I primarily refer to Yugoslav pop-rock, i.e., YU-Rock, the musical production that existed between the 1960s and early 1990s. I will highlight the so-called New Wave (Novi Val, or Novi Talas) scene that emerged at the beginning of the 1980s and was one of the more creative alternative/subcultural and state-wide recognized de-centralized musical scenes.

In the last section, I will examine the music production of one of the key representative bands of the YU-Rock and Yugoslav New Wave scene, *Disciplina Kičme/Disciplin A Kitschme ("Backbone Discipline")*. Instead of a reception analysis or an in-depth textual analysis of the band's lyrics, the focus is on highlighting some key features and strategies in which elements of the past and futurism are negotiated and applied during the different phases of the band's career, especially in the post-Yugoslav period. As *DAK* certainly figures as one of the emblematic (post-)Yugoslav bands, belonging to both popular and alternative scenes, the examination of (Yugo-)nostalgic and (Yugo-)futuristic elements seems crucial *vis a vis* dominant retro trends in the context of popular musical culture.

Post-Yugoslav re(tro)-approaching of Yugoslav Rock

As Ana Hofman points out, music-related studies are ranked highly in post-Yugoslav memory politics, given the variety of genres. Also, they are most frequently mentioned in different accounts of Yugo-nostalgia (2015: 147).[9] Furthermore, because of its high presence in other media as well, Yugoslav music remains a vital element in addressing the issues of post-Yugoslav memory politics, culture, identity, and nostalgia use.[10] However, as several authors already stress, this phenomenon and the high interest in Yugoslav popular music does not necessarily have to be taken as the nostalgic idealization and commercialization reserved only to the post-Yugoslav context (Velikonja, 2014; Hofman 2015; Petrov, 2016, 2017). Rather, these accounts largely resemble the contemporary examinations and retrospective interest in global trends and dynamics in popular and subcultural domains.

These practices are also set in dialogue and follow the overall retro trends as emblematic features of the popular and subcultural scenes in contemporary music culture. They highlight self-celebration through various acts and practices of re-branding and recycling the old (cf. Reynolds, 2011; Gueston, Le Guern, 2014: 73). This is even more obvious regarding the set of cultural practices and events that Reynolds attributes to the notion of "retromania", such as the re-vivals, re-issues, re-makes, and re-enactments through a plethora of re-prints of old musical products (2011: XI). These practices include the "YU-Rock" and "Balkan-Beat" parties and festivals

9. Several recent studies might illustrate various focal points, mostly regarding different music genres and examinations in different environments (cf. Petrović 2012; Velikonja 2014; Hofman 2016, Petrov 2016; Jovanović 2017).
10. This is also noticeable in a plethora of memory narratives that either thematize or include Yugoslav popular music across media - mostly documentary and feature movies, TV programs, biographies, and autobiographies of specific musicians or bands throughout past decades (cf. Kolanović 2018; Milivojević 2022).

across and beyond the post-Yugoslav space, CD re-issues, tribute bands, and tribute recordings, as well as re-appearances of the most significant or even more innovative Yugoslav bands in their original formation, but only for honorary tours of the biggest stages in former Yugoslav states, which are also usually labeled as explicit signs of commercial and de-politicized Yugo-nostalgia (Baker, 2010; Perković, 2011, Volčič 2007).[11]

YU-Rock refers to the rock music produced in Yugoslavia from the early 1960s until the early 1990s. It primarily followed the same trends and developments as in the USA and Great Britain. Thus, from the mid-1970s onward, the local Yugoslav rock bands, more original and unique, abandoned the practice of covering the rock standards and appropriated various genres of "Western" pop-rock music, often combined with local motives. In this way, they gradually formed a broader all-Yugoslav audience and created the pan-Yugoslav rock and alternative scene. The most popular bands in the period came from different Yugoslav republics – *Bijelo Dugme, Smak, Korni Grupa, Leb i Sol, YU Grupa, Pop mašina, Time, Buldožer, Riblja Čorba,* etc. That primarily pointed to the phenomenon's overall significance and popularity. On the other hand, it also followed and confirmed the dominant cultural and ideological model of supranationalism and territorial de-centralization applied to Yugoslav socialism (cf. Tomc, 2003; Janjatović, 2007; Ivačković, 2013).

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Yugoslav rock scene was heavily influenced by the radical shift in musical articulation shift resulting from Punk and post-punk, i.e., new wave subcultural music production.[12] This phenomenon first highlighted the change in the musical/melodic aspect, but it also brought an innovative approach to the musical production, its visual identity, performance, and "do-it-yourself" design and overall approach. Above all, the most significant and most noticeable was a clear cut in the lyrics. For the first time, they included an explicit and more profound social critique and self-reflexivity in the 1980s (cf. Reinkowski 2014).

As several authors have pointed out, rock and popular music played a significant and ambivalent cultural and political role in Yugoslavia (cf. Tomc, 2003; Perica, Velikonja, 2012; Petrov, 2016; Muršič, 2017). On the one hand, it was a state-sponsored or state-tolerated cultural phenomenon. As such, it served as an explicit manifestation of equal participation in production and consumption within the larger field of popular culture

11. For the same practices in different genres of Yugoslav popular music, see Baker, 2010; Petrov, 2016.
12. The New Wave (*Novi Val* or *Novi Talas* as termed in the Yugoslav context) style in rock music is not exclusively Yugoslav but a transnational phenomenon. It is closely related to youth (sub)cultures, first emerging in the USA and UK. In both contexts, it leads back to the mid-and late 1970s, combining different musical, artistic, and visual modes in production and performance (cf. Reinkowski, 2014).

for all Yugoslav nations and ethnic groups (almost) equally, shedding light on bands and band members from every part of the country. More significantly, it also served as the medium for the transgenerational transfer of the official socialist ideology and partisan mythology (Perica, Velikonja, 2012: 55-63). Namely, various bands and performers recorded and performed numerous tracks with socialist and partisan topics, including motifs from official history narratives or covering traditional songs. Also, they were invited to and took part in various official events organized by the communist party (*ibid*.). On the other hand, as primarily a youth-oriented culture, rock music also became a dominant medium to express the interests of various social groups and identities and to negotiate social issues. Thus, as Muršič notes, as much as it represented an important part of the system, it also served as an island for experimentation and confrontation with the system (2017: 10).

In a similar respect, highlighting the influence and the significance of this phenomenon, Ante Perković calls Yugoslav pop music – with particular regard to the Rock and alternative scene primarily – the (Yugoslav) "seventh republic" (2011).[13] According to Perković, from the 1960s onward, and especially during the last Yugoslav decade, between Zagreb and Belgrade, Yugoslavia's two most important cultural and administrative centers, an alternative landscape was established. For Perković, this represented a utopian space where diverse nations and traditions were not necessarily viewed as problematic but were rather seen as a comparative advantage. Instead, it should be seen as a pop sphere that developed and spread across the Yugoslav space, parallel to and independent from the official and elitist cultural production. Also, viewed from the post-Yugoslav vantage point, it is clear that it outlived the Yugoslav state and continued to exist, establishing continuity with the past, while also being directed toward the future (21).

Juxtaposing retro- and nostalgic orientation with futurity, openness, and progressiveness – in both content and form – in Yugoslav rock music seems to open up a set of paradoxes and ambiguities. This appears particularly interesting regarding the New Wave scene – taken here in both Yugoslav and transnational contexts – and the period of the 1980s. As a more recent period, the 1980s has served as an emblematic and a dominant point of reference in retro and nostalgia-fueled culture since the early 2000s (Reynolds, 2011). This has been done either by re-visiting and re-discovering bands, songs, and scenes, by reproducing the exact sound of the period by new acts and performers, or even by making ironic intertextual use of existing past features.

13. Perković's coinage primarily refers to the six republics within the Socialist Federative Yugoslav State. Also, it serves as an appropriation of Greil Marcus' study on Bob Dylan's "Invisible Republic".

In the Yugoslav context, however, the 1980s were the period directly associated with the New Wave scene that was rapidly growing across the country in all major Yugoslav cities and republics: Slovenia (*Pankrti, Borghesia, Laibach, Lačni Franz*), Croatia (*Prljavo Kazalište, Azra, Film, Haustor, Paraf*), Bosnia (*Zabranjeno Pušenje, Plavi Orkestar*), Serbia (*Šarlo Akrobata, Električni Orgazam, Idoli, Disciplina Kičme, EKV, Partibrejkers, Rambo Amadeus*). Therefore, it is paradoxical at first glance that the future-oriented and forward-looking scene, although showing no signs of retro tonalities or references to earlier periods, is found in a significant number of (Yugo-)nostalgic memory narratives and retro-colored events and productions (cf. Milivojević, 2022). Additionally, many acts associated with the New Wave and the 1980s scene have resurfaced for honorary or anniversary tours, exclusively performing their old repertoire. They have also been featured in CD re-issues and compilations, often retrospectively grouped with mainstream or folk performers not previously associated with the Yugoslav rock scene.

On the other hand, it is because of its symbolic capital that such a high interest in these acts and their re-invention also makes sense. According to Pogačar, Yugoslav pop and rock in the 1980s served as a "formative" genre for many Yugoslavs. Also, in the following period, it was seen as the last common identity platform opposing the nationalist paradigm and even taking explicit antinationalist and anti-war positions during the wars of the 1990s (2016: 293). Furthermore, the resurgence and reproduction of this music and different pop-cultural artifacts conjure up both emotions and sensations from the past. Despite re-contextualization, this phenomenon opens up perspectives for alternative visions oriented both towards the past and future for the younger generations who who did not directly experience the period (Milivojević, Müller-Suleymanova, 2022: 187).

In the last section, I will examine (Yugo-)nostalgia and/as (Yugo-) futurism in the (post-)Yugoslav work of the *Disciplina Kičme*, one of the New Wave-based bands that is still active, and whose relation to the past is different from the previous retro and nostalgic patterns. Instead, through a more reflexive approach, *DAK* attempts to re-negotiate different temporalities by combining elements of various musical genres and by re-visiting the seminal features of the Yugoslav socialist past.

Retro, (Yugo-)nostalgia, (Yugo-)futurism: negotiating (post-)Yugoslav temporalities with *Disciplina Kičme*

The Belgrade-based band *Disciplina Kičme* has undergone several incarnations since the early 1980s, led Dušan Kojić Koja, the band's founder, composer, and primary vocalist and bass guitarist. After the country's breakup, the band remained active under the slightly modified name, *Disciplin A Kitschme*, which has been in use since the mid-1990s. What distinguishes *DAK* as both a typical and an exceptional band of the YU-Rock and Yugoslav New Wave scenes can be detected in its evolutionary trajectory spanning several decades. Its significance lies in its influence and connection to the broader landscape of alternative and popular music in post-Yugoslav region. It is also obvious in the band's musical, lyrical, political, and visual expression.

In this regard, experimentation, originality, and critique of the social mainstream, dominant culture, and official narratives have been critical features since the band's early period in the 1980s. Moreover, those features can also be used to describe the band's more recent phase. *DAK* started in the early 1980s with a formation comprising bass guitar and drums. Although these two instruments have remained present until this day, in the late 1980s and early 1990s the band featured two drummers, a brass section consisting of trumpet and saxophone, as well as incorporating a turntable and sampling. This innovative and distinctive sound revolutionized Yugoslavia's music scene, propelling DAK to significant popularity before the dissolution of the SFRY. (Janjatović, 2007: 62-64; Ivačković, 2013: 351-353).

Addressing the notion of nostalgia and Yugo-nostalgia in the context of *DAK*'s music seems highly problematic to anyone familiar with the band's history and its future-oriented approach and constant efforts to reinvent their music in each phase of their history. Moreover, in numerous interviews, the band's leader, Koja, explicitly opposed the notion of Yugo-nostalgia. This can primarily be interpreted as the rejection of the uncritical longing for the Yugoslav state or official ideology. Furthermore, it also implies an explicit refusal to reproduce and restore the band's sound and repertoire from its earlier years or its peak of popularity in the Yugoslav 1980s, which is mostly the case with many Yugoslavia's New Wave bands. Also, looking into their musical production, one notices the constant negotiation of different temporalities. The band combines nostalgia, retro, and futurism tonalities in its compositions and performances by incorporating various sound and visual elements.

Since its beginnings, *DAK* has integrated different influences as well as new and old music genres, combining rock n' roll, jazz, funk, rhythm n' blues with post-punk, hip-hop, and drum and bass. In different ways and in numerous instances, the band uses irony, parody, and sincere homage, incorporating various musical elements and sequences into their original songs. More prominent examples can be found on several albums from the band's earliest phase. *DAK* establishes intertextual links with their songs to create an ironic distance from the original material. First, it is the case with the song *Pečati* from the band's debut album, which includes a solo sequence on bass guitar playing Yugoslavia's national anthem. Similarly, on the band's third album – the first with brass instruments – the closing tune, *Ne, ne, ne…*, includes a brief sequence in which the trumpet plays the Serbian nationalist classical melody, *Marš na Drinu*. The band plays with political symbols through intertextual links and pastiche in both cases. The first example, wherein the national anthem is played on bass guitar, suggests an ironic distance and represents an explicit subcultural subversion of the official state symbols. However, it also establishes an alternative rock culture connection by referring to Jimi Hendrix's emblematic performance of *Star Spangled Banner* at the Woodstock festival. In the second example, the band revisits the classical melody composed during World War I and belonging to the Serbian nationalist canon, thus explicitly displaying an ironic distance and playing with the nationalist conflicts already present in socialist Yugoslavia.

Negotiating temporalities through the combination of various musical elements and revisiting old material is explicitly embraced as part of the band's constant experimentation. However, the band defies retro elements in re-producing the original sound from the past periods in the way it was used frequently in the early 2000s, as noted by Simon Reynolds or Mark Fisher. Rather, in its treatment of the modern and futuristic music genres in each period – in the late 1980s, the 1990s, and 2000s – *DAK* finds a way to navigate between the new/futuristic and old/nostalgic approaches.

In the 1980s, this approach was explicitly evident in DAK's emblematic experimentation with the newly emerged hip-hop culture and sound, which was highly innovative and unique within the Yugoslav context. The band integrated rapping, sampling, and scratching, which are key elements of hip-hop subculture and music (Christopher, 2019: 49-50). Moreover, it is through rap that Koja created his *alter ego*, the superhero character *Zeleni Zub*, who has also served as one of the pop- and subcultural symbols of the late Yugoslav scene.[14] Furthermore, in numerous songs, music videos, and albums from that period, the band incorporated retro-futuristic references and comparisons inspired by early comic book

14. Koja and his character were included in one of the most popular movies among the younger generation in the last years of socialist Yugoslavia, *Kako je propao rokenrol* (1989).

culture and, more directly, by superheroes such as "Batman," "Mandrake," and "Phantom." Similarly, regarding the sampling used, Roy Christopher also reminds us that "sampling technology allows producers to make new compositions out of old ones, using old outputs as new inputs, like a hacker cobbling together code for a new program or purpose" (*ibid.*). Thus, in some of the band's biggest hit songs from the late 1980s and early 1990s, one finds samples from hip hop futurist band Public Enemy and radio programs from the period, but also old funky tunes, vintage cartoons, and early post-war Yugoslav movies, all combined.

Drawing upon the minimalistic formation of bass and drums in two post-Yugoslav phases, namely the 1990s and 2000s, the band also combined the two opposite musical genres to explore and negotiate between the future and past. Initially, as a reconstituted band with new members residing in London, a consequence of the Yugoslav War in the 1990s, Koja and DAK revitalized the band's traditional sound. They achieved this by performing and recording a series of both old and new songs, not only by singing them in English but also by embracing futuristic and innovative styles such as drum and bass and rave. However, unlike electronic productions and DJ-based sets, the drum and bass sound on DAK's three albums (*I Think I See Myself on CCTV; Heavy Bass Blues; Refresh Your Senses, Now!*) was played live using classic live rock instruments.

Similarly, even after the band's return to Belgrade, they kept the new name on their following three albums, composed and recorded with the new members. The band also maintained its distinctive heavy bass blues approach. During that phase, however, the band included harmonica and another female vocalist instead of the emblematic brass section of the 1980s. On their most recent albums (*Kada kažeš muzika, na šta tačno misliš, reci mi?; Uf!; and Opet.*), *DAK* re-created its sound by challenging more traditional genres such as rhythm n' blues. Again, this was done mainly by combining elements from the opposite musical genre and by questioning the retro and futuristic approach. The band thus created a drum-and-bass oriented rhythm n' blues sound based on heavy distortion and loud up-tempo sound. But the band also created linearity and coherence in its production and recordings. Their sound is constantly intersected with small audio traces of leftovers and outtakes from the past, with their own performed sessions, and numerous snippets used in sampling, instrumental mistakes, and skips. Those elements helped the band create and underline an ambiguous treatment of temporality. Such a treatment relies on a specific combination and examination of both past and future elements and approaches, as exemplified in the lyrics of the song *Čovek koji ne nosi sat* ("A man who doesn't wear a watch"), from the first album the band released in the 2000s:

Čovek koji ne nosi sat
Dobro zna da poštuje vreme
Kad mu pričaju
Kaže im da mu ne govore
("A man who doesn't wear a watch
He knows how to respect time
When they talk to him
He tells them he doesn't want to know")[15]

Just as the band adopts a reflexive approach to contemporary retro by mixing various music genres, it is both possible and crucial to explore the negotiations between Yugo-nostalgia and Yugo-futurism. This exploration begins with questioning the assertion that Disciplina Kičme/Disciplin A Kitschme is a Yugoslav band. This statement is not necessarily bold, especially considering that the band's first widespread hit in the 1980s was a cover of the YU-Rock classic "Čudna šuma" by YU Grupa. What's more, *DAK* opens the song with female voices over the drums intro: "Najbolja jugoslovenska grupa svih vremena, Disciplina Kičme!" ("The greatest Yugoslav band of all time: Disciplina Kičme!").[16] The Yugoslav and supranational distinction is most apparent in the band's initial concept and evolution, also referring 1980s Yugoslavia, via a statement that DAK is also and primarily an emblematic Yugoslav New Wave band.[17]

Yet, as Ljiljana Reinkowski notices, it is also worth keeping in mind that the Yugoslav New Wave, emerging from the grassroots perspective embraced by the younger generation of Yugoslavs and firmly rooted in the official ideology of supranational "brotherhood and unity", was more than a rock scene. The Yougoslav New Wave also included other art forms, mirroring the country's social and political developments. It critically addressed those issues through popular culture, challenging the older Yugoslav generations, and disrupted ideological frameworks and official master narratives (2014: 394-395). Thus, Reinkowski contends, the Yugoslav New Wave could also be seen as the new or final Wave of Yugoslavism, representing the final expression of Yugoslav brotherhood and unity, whose potential was left unfulfilled because of the disintegration of the country just a few years later (*ibid.*).

This is evident in the case of *DAK* during the same period. Specifically, in the last few years prior to the dissolution of the Yugoslav state, when the band reached its the peak of popularity in Yugoslavia, it

15. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXJsLNZResI (last accessed: 11.04.2023)
16. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aRGAHn--iQc (last accessed: 11.04.2023)
17. Similarly, the band's albums were released by labels from various Yugoslav republics, namely Slovenia and Serbia. Although this was a common practice in the Yugoslav period, in the case of DAK, it was both major and independent labels, which confirms their popular and alternative status.

had two members from Belgrade and Zagreb, respectively. This reflected the significance of the Yugoslav New Wave scene in the later period and its integrative role among the Yugoslav youth. Zagreb's band members Jurij Novoselić and Srđan Gulić were previously active members of key New Wave bands in Zagreb, namely *Haustor* and *Film*. In this case, as Reinkowski also argues, the new wave of brotherhood and unity was not exclusively rooted in ethnic/national common characteristics but rather in their transnational and pop-cultural bonding. It therefore represented a voluntary and more inclusive alternative to the official brotherhood and unity among all Yugoslav nations and nationalities (cf. Perica, Velikonja 2012; Wachtel 1998).

Furthermore, in the post-Yugoslav period, the dis/continuities in the band's career mirrored the dis/continuities in the supranational ideology of socialist Yugoslavia. These trends also applied to the generation associated with the Yugoslav New Wave and the broader Yugoslav rock music scene. In the case of DAK, with the beginning of the war in Croatia in 1991, the dissolution of Yogoslavia also meant the dissolution of the band.[18] Thus, by explicitly opposing the dominant ethno-nationalist paradigm based on anti-Yugoslav feelings, DAK underscored different perspectives on its Yugoslav identification. First, it is achieved by the deterritorialization of the band and of its past repertoire in London, following Koja's emigration in the 1990s. The notion of deterritorialization does not only imply the physical dislocation of the band, or of the band's members. Rather, it refers to Deleuze and Guattari's concept, in which a particular idea, a cultural or social practice, or a body alters its original context and is recontextualized in a new and different setting. Through deterritorialization, new potentials and possible interpretations, readings, and relationships emerge, thereby influencing the new context (1987). Thus, applied to DAK, the band's first album of the 1990s, *I Think I See Myself on CCTV* (1996), featured almost exclusively new drum and bass versions of the band's old songs from the Yugoslav period, sung in English, and in a later period continued to re-create the sound, even recycling old elements. The same can also be applied to the band's career and history.

Similarly, the band was equally active in the post-Yugoslav space and continuously performed in all former Yugoslav republics. In doing so, it reaffirmed the cultural and geographical ties once challenged by the dissolution of the state and of its vital scenes. Lastly, in the 2010s, the band restored the broken Serb-Croatian ties by including Igor Đeke from Croatia as the new member on harmonica.

18. https://zurnal.info/clanak/disciplina-kicme-je-djelovala-u-postavi-bratstva-i-jedinstva/5534 (last accessed: 11.04.2013)

Reflections of the Yugoslav past and elements of nostalgia are also revealed in the band's renewed discography, audio and video productions. The band's lyrics are often quite critical of the hegemonic discourses of the post-socialist transition. They dramatize various phenomena – from capitalist pop-cultural consumerism and social media influence to regional nationalisms. Similarly, DAK rejects the nostalgic ready-made appropriation or the severe retrospective aestheticization of the past in terms of performance, by combining the older material, now presented in a completely new tonality and different generic modes, with their new songs. The band foregrounds the new flexibility inscribed in the reflective take on the past (Boym, 2001). It thus also looks to re-contextualize the same material, which enables the negotiations between different temporalities and cultural symbols.

Such a treatment of the past is illustrated by two music videos in which the band revisits two symbols of the future-oriented imagination of Yugoslav socialism. The two physical sites that can be seen on those videos – buildings located in Belgrade –, serve as unofficial memory sites. Made for the new version of the band's old song, *Do not!*, the video highlights the typical socialist urban landscape and the utopian architecture of socialist Yugoslavia.[19] Although based in London at the time, the band revisits Belgrade in this video meant to illustrate an updated version of the band's first single. The socialist setting thus implies a reflexive take (and continuity) on the socialist and Yugoslav past. Thereby, the band disregards the sharp cut in the band's career and the post-Yugoslav context. The same architecture can also be seen in one of the band's more recent videos, for *Reci ruke u vis!*. This time, however, it is coupled with another building, the Student's Cultural Center (*Studentski Kulturni Centar, SKC*), which served as a critical venue in developing the alternative and new wave cultural scene in Belgrade and Yugoslavia in the 1980s.[20] Associated with the band's sound, The image of this architecture, laden with symbolic meaning and personal experiences, is treated as the leftover and the ruin of the past period. In this respect, it suggests the notion of loss and invites possible alternative readings. Therefore, by reflecting on the elements and sites from the Yugoslav socialist past, the band invites the audience to re-evaluate the bygone and lost ideas and elements and apply them to the apparent or future setting.

Following those examples, *DAK*'s musical treatment of past material indicates that the band does not challenge the retro or nostalgic components. As already mentioned, the band leader's rejection of nostalgia can also serve as an act of distancing from the ongoing dominant meta-discourses on Yugo-nostalgia and its various manifestations in past decades

19. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=waFe4uqU7V0 (last accessed: 11.04.2023)
20. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ue5zTFEGKGs (last accessed: 11.04.2023)

(cf. Petrović, 2012: 147-148). Moreover, both *DAK* and Koja figure as key symbols of the Yugoslav pop-cultural and subcultural scene in the 1980s, and thus also became the subject of numerous (Yugo-)nostalgic narratives and approaches. Similarly, by performing *Disciplina Kičme*'s old songs, although in an entirely new arrangement, and also by producing and recording new music in the post-Yugoslav period with other projects, Koja also intervenes actively as a commentator reflecting on those narratives and the country's overall production. In that respect, such involvement and reflection also belong to the specific and symbolic pop-cultural "Yuniverse," as Martin Pogačar puts it. Re-actualizing that phenomenon in the post-Yugoslav current context expands its range and significance for the future, transgenerationally and transnationally (Pogačar, 2010: 199).

Conclusion

In shedding light on the multilayered and emancipatory potential of (Yugo-)nostalgia, this article sought to challenge the traditional view of nostalgia as a backward-looking sentiment, particularly in its intersection with contemporary politics and popular culture. It thus investigates multiple possibilities of negotiating between Yugo-nostalgia and/or Yugo-futurism, mainly through reflecting on different temporal instances as well as on the critical, creative, and self-reflexive examination of (post-)Yugoslav popular and alternative music. The field of popular culture, Simon Reynolds explains, seems crucial, not only because nostalgia is often used as a pop emotion but also primarily because the notions of retro or retromania, alongside that of nostalgia, are shaping the discourse surrounding popular music, memory, and the utilization of the past. However, as Mitja Velikonja reminds us, although there are visible differences between retro and nostalgia, retro productions should not be taken unconditionally but should be appropriately contextualized (2014: 62-63). Thus, this article contends that the (post-)Yugoslav context significantly contributed to the updating of the two concepts, in negotiating between past and future elements and in applying them to popular culture and music. As one of the leading (post-) Yugoslav bands, *DAK* embraced a "brand-new retro" approach, thus highlighting the confluence of past and future elements and features. These articulations create the opportunity to explore futuristic elements derived from the past. Simultaneously, this deeply reflexive perspective leaves the future ripe for potential re-applications of diverse elements and tonalities from the past, which can influence and re-shape multiple identities. Hence, this approach underscores the capacity of popular music to act as both the catalyst and the arena for potential negotiations between the past and the future, especially within

the specific (post-)Yugoslav context, despite and through nostalgic or retro impulses.

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https://zurnal.info/clanak/disciplina-kicme-je-djelovala-u-postavi-bratstva-i-jedinstva/5534
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=waFe4uqU7V0
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ue5zTFEGKGs

Discography:

Disciplina Kičme/Disciplin A Kitschme Discography
Sviđa mi se da ti ne bude prijatno (Helidon, 1983)

Ja imam šarene oči (Dokumentarna, 1985)
Svi za mnom (Helidon, 1986)
Uživo! Najlepši Hitovi! (PGP RTS, 1987)
Dečija pesma (PGP RTS, 1987)
Зелени Зуб na planeti dosade (PGP RTS, 1989)
Nova iznenađenja za nova pokolenja (PGP RTS 1991)
I think I See Myself on CCTV (Babaroga Records, Tom Tom Music, 1996)
Heavy Bass Blues (Babaroga Records, Tom Tom Music, 1998)
Refresh Your Senses, NOW! (Tom Tom Music, 2001)
Kada Kažeš Muzika, Na Šta Tačno Misliš, Reci mi? (PGP RTS, 2007)
Uf! (PGP RTS, 2011)
Opet. (Mascom Records, 2015)