

FROM BANNING TO COMMODITY INCORPORATION: BINDING, BONDING, AND BANDING IN EASTERN EUROPEAN MUSIC

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The political and economic changes across Eastern Europe have resulted in significant changes in music and culture since 1989. By tracing the changes in music over time we can better understand the significance of politics and economics in Eastern Europe since music is linked to politics and economics and a central component of culture too often ignored by social scientists. Rarely is attention drawn to the use of music in propaganda, film, cultural events, and everyday life. Also, music has often been treated in isolation from everyday life, politics, and economics—particularly in music criticism (see Carducci 1990). It is my intention here to show how the study of music can help us understand political persuasion and advertising, cultural hegemony and counter-culture, consumerism and creativity, in Eastern Europe. Using a few brief examples from Hungary (with supporting research from Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia), as well as three key concepts to describe changes in music binding, banding, and bonding I will show how music is appropriated by the State to persuade its subjects to embrace the political economy. The significant changes in Eastern Europe show a period of relatively heavy Censorship (Socialism), to an explosion of Expression (post-Socialism) to a new period of Incorporation and Commodification of music (Capitalist-Consumerism). Under Socialism music was Banned, Tolerated, or Promoted across Eastern Europe and Asia depending on how best it served the interests of the various socialist states. In a highly fetishized manner music was ideological and could be used to promote socialism. At the same time dangerous music was banned and some musicians became de facto dissidents (Haraszti 1987). In Hungary, some music was tolerated because it was thought to be neither dangerous nor beneficial; it was thus commodified within the dual economy, and thus rendered beneficial to the State in an ironic way. After socialism, music's Pandora's Box (and all other forms of discourse) was opened and people used many ways to express themselves and listen to others—only some formed bands, night clubs and cafes, but many went out to listen and talk (Ries 1997). By the late 1990s this plethora of discourse and musical expression was silenced again through the mechanisms and techniques of commodity incorporation.

In this article I will offer a brief history of State music in Eastern Europe in a broad perspective from Socialism to Capitalism or more accurately a consumer culture and

political economy showing the role of music in historic changes (Szemere 2001). I conclude with the current discourses of young people living in a hegemonic corporate State which advocates consumerism, yet restricts consumption through high prices, taxes, and low wages. In this environment young people pirate music off the Internet, engage in black market trading, and lament the state of music and culture today. Conversations about the death of music proliferate and give locals a sense of shared solidarity and dissatisfaction in the new musical hegemony. Although I have had many conversations and interviews with professional and semi-professional musicians I focus here on the political economy and consumer culture of post socialist Eastern Europe supplementing my observations and analysis with interview material from young people in Debrecen, Hungary. [1]

In order to understand the changing nature of music making and consumption in Eastern Europe we must think about how to make sense of the changes. For this I employ a number of key concepts—Binding, Bonding, Banding, Incorporation and Commodity Fetishism. Binding is a concept taken from Michael Urban and Gregory Bateson's concepts of the double bind or catch-22 situation (Urban 1985; Bateson 1968). Banding and bonding are suggestive concepts from Mark Slobin's *Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the West*. Binding simply put is a when someone is encircled, restrained, obliged to do something they otherwise wouldn't do. Binding is a way of forcing people to do what they would not normally or naturally do; it is in the Weberian sense a form of power. It is more than simply a bind, a difficult or annoying situation, it is a mechanism of power used to manipulate people, influence, persuade, and control them. Complete control is impossible, but the attempt to control music is a sign that music is one significant site for contesting political, economic, and cultural hegemony. Binding is not the same as double binding, it is not a catch-22 situation, but could lead to double bind relationships and thus might explain many seemingly non-rational or irrational behaviors observable within the field of music in Eastern Europe. Bonding simply put is a link, a connection, a union of people caught in a bind, a kind of fictive kinship or friendship between people who form an informal group to escape a feeling of bondage. Banding then is a set of musicians who form a formal group or "band" to make

money, to get prestige, social status, or seek other material rewards and therefore make a formal or informal contract to provide a service to patrons or clients.

My argument put simply is this: in Eastern Europe musicians are used to promote the hegemonic political economy and culture by the techniques of binding and banding. The State uses musicians to attempt to maintain the status quo through persuasive performances which if unmasked look surprisingly like propaganda. The State here includes the government, corporations, and institutions of society (what we call civil society). For those people who see through State sponsored music, i.e., see it as propaganda, they respond with a number of strategies for producing alternative discourses, which include bonding techniques, and include playing music for music's sake without the intention to seek material or social status rewards as much as for "spiritual" rewards. Their music may or may not contain explicit political messages, criticism of the economic system or culture, but often contains an implicit critique or alternative worldview. In the context of post-socialist consumerism the activity of playing music at home or in a small pub might signify a kind of hidden resistance or refusal to simply consume the music produced by the State, to remain passive consumers, or to remain silent.

The opposition between State sponsored music and amateur musicians and their supporters is sharply contrasted at times in private discourses and academic writing; however the sharp division is hard to maintain if one observes the behavior of people. Music is never completely passively consumed: State sponsored music is often influential on amateur musicians, people get songs stuck in their heads playing fragments of these tunes over and over in their minds, and people sing in the shower, dance, talk about, and search out music. However the stereotype persists of a hegemonic pop music industry, which dominates and silences people's own music: folk music, amateur music, alternative rock, folk dance, acoustic instrumentals, etc. To understand the process and practice of interaction between the State apparatus and the people who inhabit it we can turn to Dick Hebdige's concepts of ideological and commodity incorporation (Hebdige 1979). Hebdige argued that the capitalist State incorporates and uses any anti-State music in two ways: it demonizes anti-State discourses as dangerous, immoral, or evil, and at the same time turns recorded music into a commodity and distributes it en masse as long as it generates a profit. In Eastern Europe, the communist state used a similar technique of banning, tolerating or promoting music, but fared much worse than their capitalist counterparts at neutralizing the effects of anti-State music. But Hebdige's theory is a bit shallow since this process of incorporation works both ways. Active consumers of State music use the music on

radio, TV, in pubs, shopping malls, on CD or the Internet as the raw materials for their own music, anti-State discourses, social symbols and the like. They demonize pop idols, parody, rework, or reinterpret pop songs, form satirical dance moves, and simultaneously search out spaces to play music outside the State apparatus, plundering sheet music, folk music archives, joining folk dance classes or groups, in effect bonding outside the State's hegemonic control. This is a dynamic, ever shifting, ever contested process of incorporation and escape. Simply put music is about a power struggle over the meaning of life.

Music, Meaning, and Commodity Fetishism.

In Eastern Europe, as well as in many parts of the world, music is fetishized; that is, it has a mystical power which is transferred to the possessor of the music in descending order from the composer to the musicians to the listener, consumer, radiating outward. This power is often referred to short hand as "cool." It may confer upon the musicians or consumers such powers as sexual powers of seduction, insights into the deeper meaning of life, or producing envy, desire, jealousy, awe, etc. This kind of fetishized power originates in the musicians' ability to evoke moods, feelings, poetics, compact narratives, dance rhythms, cautionary tales, political messages, or social critique. But a musician's cool is dependent upon creativity, improvisation, and beauty without perfection, confidence, grace under pressure, generosity, deep insight into what is important, the ability to find deep meaning in lyrics, a kind of interpretive ability. In the socialist period many forms of music and art were censored in an attempt to elevate the leading role of the party in the process of engineering souls, the creation of a new socialist man. This process involved banning, toleration and promotion of certain musics, arts, and their creators. Part of the result of censorship was the elevation of certain artists to an almost martyr-like status of cool. With the end of socialism and a new form of censorship based on market principles the meaning of music and the way in which it has become fetishized has significantly changed. Where once the meaning of lyrics were highly valued as communication and dissemination of anti-State messages in a period of harsh censorship through circumlocution, metaphor, and other methods of speaking and reading "between the lines," now lyrics have become devalued as meaningless and unimportant. Part of the process has involved the rise of commodity fetishism with the advent of capitalist values imported into Eastern Europe through the international trade in CD recordings, the black market, and Internet connections.

Much of the music found today in Eastern Europe comes from production and distribution networks located in England and America where the primary language is

English, although there is also a great interest in Latin American music. Even if the consumer has mastered English (or Spanish) the full meaning of the text eludes the listener. As an example, Blues music has been highly valued and popular across Eastern Europe since the mid 1970s when English rock bands and blues influenced groups arrived via records and radio to then communist countries—much of the meaning of the words were lost on the audiences who sometimes puzzled over texts, connotations, and meanings of the words. New meanings were thus generated, as no source of authentic Anglo-African-American interpretive strategy was available. Often words were simply ignored or thought to be gibberish, a trick of voice, and a kind of scat signifying nothing. What was valued was the exotic sound and rhythms, the transgressive feeling of listening and possessing forbidden, dangerous objects. The music itself was fetishized as something mystical, magical, and precious. This movement and act of creating wholly new meanings out of smuggled sounds generated a mentality and consumer orientation that thrives today, although the initial interest in blues, jazz, Dixieland, and rock 'n' roll has waned. Today rap, hip-hop, and soul are more popular and important to young people, while the previous generations hold onto the music that emerged during their teenage years: folk music and folk dance, Dixieland, jazz, rock 'n' roll, blues, Anglo-Saxon blues, punk, etc. Often most of this music is “silent” without linguistic meanings, but full of semiotic content. One solution of course is not to learn the language of the imported music but simply to copy the music note for note, either through sheet music or by intense listening and analysis to recordings, and then write lyrics in the local language imagining what the song might be about, how it makes the author feel, etc. Some produce translations of songs such as Hobo Blues Band's interpretations of Tom Waits, The Doors, Allen Ginsberg's poetry set to Rolling Stones-style blues and rock forms. [2]

In the 1990s there was a shift in popular music from blues, rock and punk to disco, techno, hip-hop, and rap. With techno, there was little need to think much about lyrics; however (and most ironically), rap is often lyric-centered. Many people listen to Euro-American rap enthusiastically with little idea of the lyrical content. Other groups like Belga parody African American rap and hip-hop styles making fun of Hungarian imitators and Hungarian Nationalists, asking “Why don't the world listen to Hun-Rap?” The answer is obvious: no one else understands the words and Hungarian Rap isn't fetishized like African American rap music is around the world. More than 80% of all music bought, listened to, stolen, and/or consumed in Eastern Europe comes from England and America. There is a virtual monopoly on music in Eastern Europe despite the efforts of the nation-states of Eastern Europe

to protect local music. What could be more threatening to the nation-state than to have its population singing, humming, and dancing to the beat of a different drummer? This is thought to be the Americanization of Europe putting changes into a nationalist language of invasion, and erasure of local ethnic symbols and styles, but this is not purely ethnic despite the fact that the 2003 European MTV music awards went to Americans, except for Robbie Williams (British—thus European). What is more obvious to me is a process of globalization, which Marx called capitalism (Marx 1978), where the means and modes of production, as well as corporate offices are located in America, while third world workers are paid pennies to copy the music on to cheap plastic CDs sold at astronomically high prices in places like Hungary or “reasonable” price levels on the black market in modern shopping centers in Belarus and on the streets of Kiev in the Ukraine. On the black market the fetishized American and British music is stolen, copied, and sold so that profits stay in the country and in the hands of black marketers.

Music, Socialism, and National Socialism: A Brief History of Binding.

As I have argued elsewhere (Smith 2002), Socialism and Nationalism, among other things, were characterized by social relations and authority structures, which I call patron-client relations, diarchy, and double binds. This is when to sole sources of authority are invested with absolute authority and subjects are asked to do two completely opposite things—a double bind or as Orwell put it “double-think” (Orwell 1948). Double binds lead to corruption or particularly Eastern European kinds of patron-client relations. The musical culture of Eastern Europe has been totalitarian for a long time now. It is an all or nothing proposition. Like the famous dictum “if you're not with us then you are against us,” music must support the government or else it is subversive. There is little art for art sake anymore; it is not for personal enjoyment; it must be productive. Art and music, as imagined in people's minds, must be about individual expression, cultural creativity, and spiritual enlightenment. But in the 20th century, music also became a tool for political and economic power. It was not only co-opted by the nation-state for political purposes (classical European music and folk music), but also used to make money and thus enhance economic power. Music simultaneously must be political and economic and yet also be a non-political, non-economic activity, non-religious, purely spiritual thing. Music thus is popularly seen as schizophrenic—lyrical, yet not text dependent, political yet apolitical, money making, but not profit oriented, a hobby and a profession, a high art and yet a folk medium, international and yet nationalistic, etc.

The National Socialist states of the mid 20th century and the Socialist states of the late 20th Century tried to ban, tolerate, and promote music as they thought would benefit them irregardless of popular desire and economic profitability. They saw music in a nearly purely political way. Did it advance the cause of National Socialism or Socialism or did it waste time and energy that could be devoted to "better purposes?" As has been reported many times before many artists, writers, musicians, performers, were ruined under these regimes. By banning music the government in effect created a desire to resist, a kind of advertising, which thus promoted forbidden things. It promoted a kind of dual personality a public persona and a hidden one. Musicians developed this mode of music making where a band would play in public for money or protection by playing State-supported and approved music and after hours play in secret, music, which bonded the people together against the state. The musicians themselves were caught in a bind of playing music for the State and thus making a living, surviving, or staying out of trouble, yet playing music in secret or in less public places for enjoyment or other creative cultural desires coming from European traditions. This tension of accommodation between State desires and popular desires was a constant struggle for musicians and audiences for over 50 years. The State supported and promoted music that was ideologically correct while tolerating some music, which appeared non-threatening, at the same time arresting and imprisoning musicians and audiences which operated in a hidden economy of social relations and meaning making. From National Socialism to Socialism the State's support of ideology and music shifted in content, but not form or practice. With the fall of socialism restrictions were lifted and the hidden economy took to the streets and public places where people expressed themselves like never before. Music, jokes, conversations and commodities were made available and consumed, enjoyed and celebrated, encouraged and supported. But after a brief period of relative freedom (and a window of opportunity) capitalist forces pursued a relentless campaign of incorporation and silencing of competing voices and commodities—and thus alternative music.

Music in the 1990s was amateur, perhaps low quality, with poor equipment, training, and performance abilities, yet it was a kind of folk music by and for the people. It didn't matter what the genre was, jazz, rock, tanchaz, or blues, what mattered was that it was free of state control. It was popular if it was an expression of individuality and inner feelings. Many small pubs and clubs opened up and a diverse set of musicians would play to a wide range of audiences for little or no money. Of course, selling tickets made money, but most money came from the sale of drinks and cigarettes. Little money was made by musi-

cians; a lot more money was made by recently privatized record companies, pubs, clubs, culture houses, and the like. People who had previously been the custodians of socialist property got their newly privatized properties cheap through patron-client wheeling and dealing. Previously socialist properties, Socialist Party Headquarters, Communist Youth League Centers, Socialist Sport Centers and the like were privatized and used to hold small amateur music concerts, discos, and other cultural events often featuring a great diversity of organizers, audiences, and performers. The patrons however were almost universally those who had been brokers in the dual economy of patron-client relations that mingled the formal socialist property and production with the hidden black economy of informal use rights. [3]

One of the most significant developments across Eastern Europe is the dominance of Western, i.e., English-American music in the form of commodities—CD recordings or bands or singers imitating Western styles. Musicians and audiences alike fetishize western music, and prestige and profits are dependent on delivering MTV quality music. The privatized State properties have been appropriated for the dissemination of high quality (i.e., high tech) commodities—CDs, hi-fi home entertainment systems, sound systems, light shows, music videos, and so on. Musically the products are quite bland, over produced, and lacking innovation. Western music making, production and performance, has become the standard upon which almost everything is evaluated and marketed, as one music professor from Debrecen put it:

"Hungary is built on a culture of shame, depression, unwritten rules of village life, even in the city; all of this affects music, because if you are not the best why bother trying, you have to be a genius or you are nothing, but there is a new music culture of producing garbage pop music which is about money, quick money rather than a creative progression of ideas and emotions, techniques and application. People don't listen to music anymore, it's background music and people don't play music anymore, it's all about money. This is a degeneration of the entire culture, which can be seen in music too; where people lose contact; they hide in their boxes (apartments) and don't talk like neighbors used to. People are too materialistic, they want to hear perfect pop music so simple no one could make a mistake playing it, but it has no feeling, no life, and no spirit. It is safe, but mechanical, it has no human feeling and energy in it. And music is part of the eastern European mentality of patron-client favoritism; you have to know someone who knows someone to get a job or a concert; this corruption leads to the death of music as art, rather than as business."

Although my neighbor Norbert is a highly trained professional (playing and teaching classical music), he

articulates a point of view, which is often echoed by many younger residents of Hungary as well as students, amateurs, and consumers in Belarus, Romania, and the Ukraine. Consultant/ informants often cite a few alternatives, such as the Hungarian-Slovakian group Ghymes, Serbia's No-Smoking Orchestra, and the work of Leningrad, Quimby, Goran Bregovic, Sloba Horo, Boban Markovic, and lesser known groups; yet most of the TV, radio, discos, night-clubs, and pubs are flooded with the sounds of Western pop music and their local imitators. Most groups form in order to make money—banding—while few musicians have the time, energy, and space to bond through music playing at parties or in small pubs. Most of the musicians and audiences are caught in a bind of wanting to play and listen to music and the need to make money in a new “capitalist-consumerist” culture and political economy. The post-socialist political economy in Hungary requires people to work more than ever to pay the ever-rising cost of living, the high tax rates (at more than 40% income tax, 12–25% VAT), and licensing fees, rents, and other expenses. Everyone must try to maximize profits by producing the cheapest music sold at the highest price or get out of business. This means that most pubs, clubs and discos play Western Pop music, most bands play cover songs of MTV hits. This means that consumers try to download and copy the most widely circulated music on TV, radio, and the Internet. DJs get copies of CDs and play them for money at university, high school, and disco parties—usually pirated pop music. All of this in effect means the silencing of amateur music, folk music, classical music, writing, playing, improvisation, and creativity in favor of marketing, business, profits, and the lowest common denominator. In this sense capitalism has brought equality, but not freedom. Certainly you are free to play any music you want, but only if you have the time and money to do so. You need a place, instruments, and other basic needs like food, shelter, clothing, heat, water, etc. Certainly you are free to listen to any music you want to, but only if you have the money to buy CDs, concert tickets, or Internet access and a CD writer. Most people lack the resources to support local music.

Voices of the Next Generation:

In the section that follows I quote extensively from a set of interviews conducted in the fall semester 2003 at Debrecen University with students. They articulate in their own words the trends that I have outlined above. I have tried not to edit out or condense their comments because I wish to convey the feeling and the dynamics of how they talk about music, what is at stake for them. You may read their words as evidence for the above analysis or see what follows as an alternative to master narrative techniques and/

or rock criticism and music press interviews. What my consultant/informants lament is the loss of culture—not the loss of “traditional” culture, but the loss of a dynamic creative process—Culture—through globalization, which favors consumer culture over organic culture. Although I quote here students 20–25 years of age, I have found that many people of various ages (17–50 years old) hold similar views. As a participant-observer I have performed in local bands, at weekend parties, on local TV, at backyard Bar-B-Qs, at weekend cottages, in clubs, pubs, and bars, with local musicians in Hungary (1995–1997, 2001–2004) as well as in Belarus (2000–2001, 2004). I have conducted a series of interviews over a long period of time from the 1990s to the present (2004) with musicians and audiences, neighbors and friends, students and teachers. [4] Over and over again I have heard similar conversations, stories, comments, and laments.

A psychology student, Zsuzsa, said, “People listen to pop techno and other artificial music because they have never heard real music, played on real instruments. The music of today, this new century of music is preprogrammed computer music recorded on digital technology and released to the radio and played everywhere. It makes me angry! The lyrics are so simple and uninteresting. They are about nothing.” When I asked who listens to this music my consultant/informants had a hard time giving an answer. Another student Ildiko said, “No one really listens to that music, it's like background, you can dance to it, sort of...at the disco, but you can't really listen to it.” Another Katalin explained, “People are too lazy to try to find good music or real music; people stopped learning how to play instruments and have taken to images and computer programs. You don't need to do anything to find this music it just comes to you everywhere you go it follows you and you can't shake it.” When asked why they don't like techno music one woman Julika responded, “It isn't good, there is no melody, no lyrics, no song. What makes a good song is like what makes a good movie. There are few good movies anymore mostly Hollywood films which are tragedies with a happy ending; they have closure, but good lyrics tell a story, evoke a situation or a set of complex feelings without closure so you want to hear them again.” Another woman Szilvia said, “They have multiple melody lines or rhythms so they are complex; one instrument playing off the other with changes and movements. You want to listen to it over and over again, to the music, to hear one instrument then the other and how they play off each other. You hear something new each time.”

One informant Gabi summarized and elaborated on what music is and what it should be:

“You have these lyrics which draw you into the drama or story or feeling and there is no ending to the story no resolution of the problem so you don't think ok I heard

that before, I know what it sounds like, I know how it ends...so this new music which young people listen to is just a generational thing where it is new so it's their music, the music of the 21st century, but it is just fed to them and they don't think about it; they just accept it; it is part of their identity, but I can't listen to it. Even though it plays everywhere, I don't listen to it; it's this background noise... it's just noise. It has this same beat; the computer-generated drum, which is the same beat as a heart or similar, but not like a human heart really, which misses a beat and changes with your emotion. But you know it is simple and repetitive and the lyrics are too simple like 'Let's party, hey, ok. Let's go!' and other stupid things...they have no depth, no poetry, no emotion really, nothing real about it; really it's like robot music for robots."

Good music is like poetry, the lyrics are rhythmic, but more importantly they are evocative, they are not spelled out; they use euphemistic language, they evoke ideas and situations, events and characters. They are not prosaic as much as poetic; they are condensed and yet leave room for multiple interpretations; they are inspirational in giving thought and feelings that the writer perhaps never intended, but with new music and new films everything is spelled out and shown to you; you no longer have the room to imagine what the story is about or the music. MTV provides images which kill the creativity of imagining the story or situation, but here you go...see this is the setting; this is the story; this is the way it looks...it makes the listener, the audience lazy, it crams them full of other people's ideas then nothing but a beat and a few repeating shouts or exaltations to dance, have sex, take drugs, anything but living in the real world. Music takes you away from your problems lets you think about something else it allows you to think about another time and place.

The pop and techno music isn't without its fans, but few people I have talked to like this music (about 10%). Those who like pop music were unable or unwilling to talk about what they liked about it, why they liked it. Most pop and techno fans, when asked said, "It's really good, I don't know, I just like it." One woman said, "I don't really care, I just want to dance and not think about it." Ironically, Hungarians seem to be the most articulate about things they don't like. So I asked about what music people listen to, and most said it is music, which is put out on the Internet, they download it and listen to it; if they like it then they make a copy of it. The answers were not about genre, style, particular artists, or periods as much as what is accessible and also alternative to that which is promulgated by the State. Often this music is not played on the radio, sold in shops, or shown in video form on TV. They say things like "Why buy it or copy it? It's everywhere. You don't need to get a copy; it plays all the time, everywhere I go." One psychology student Zsolt said to me that the ritual life of

Hungarians seems to be disappearing—connecting music and ritual.

"The ritual of today is shopping. It is something people dress up for and plan as an activity for the family instead of going to church...they go shopping, instead of playing music they go shopping, it is a special time. So folk music was the sound and rhythm of ritual and now we have this techno music and canned music at the shopping mall, we go shopping to it. The disco plays the same music, it is where we go shopping for girls or boys, to meet."

Another Zsuzsa interrupts and says "But who can afford to buy music? We download it from the Internet and make a copy on CD." A young man Tamas breaks in, "We want to go to concerts with local bands but there is no place to hear this music. People play punk rock in garages but there is no room for live music, no space for amateur music. We can't afford instruments or a place to play." He went on to say that he is trying to learn to play bass guitar with a band, but isn't very good since he just started. Another woman Veronika starts in after a brief silence, "I think this is why young people are taking an interest in folk dance classes, even though there was a period of about 10 years when it was dead. The problem is that there is no cultural center where you can get music and dance lessons if there is you have to pay which means working a lot then you have no time and energy." Tamas chimes in: "You need to work too much to get enough money to rent a place or get instruments so there is only time and energy left to watch TV or listen to the radio because this takes less time, energy, and money." Another student Eva says,

"You make money to buy computers and CD writers and spend time downloading music rather than making it yourself. It's like a drug because you buy something or download it from the Internet and you feel good for a while then the effect wears off and you want more, it's a vicious circle. It's the new religion—shopping. It is a kind of communion where you connect to people through a common activity everyone is shopping together yet isolated. Like the Internet brings people together yet keeps them separate. They are all doing the same thing yet not really together with each other."

The first student Veronika continues,

"Music is also like sports, you join a club because you want to play then they ask you are you serious about it and serious means forming a professional group to make money. Love of music isn't enough, you have to have goals and the goal in life now is about making money. So it's like this with music if you play music for music's sake or for fun or whatever because you want to be creative this is not enough. People say you are wasting your time unless you have a plan to make money making music. It makes everything into one big work without time to enjoy

life. You get married stop spending time with friends stop spending time on hobbies and get down to working and having children and then hope you are still young and full of energy so when you retire you can enjoy life, but then your life is over and you haven't lived yet. In Debrecen the cultural center used to be a place where you could go and learn music, they had instruments and teachers and dance and art classes and so on and now you have to pay, but the cultural center is gone. They knocked it down and there is nothing now."

The young man learning bass, Tamas says to this,

"You can go see one good band a year maybe, but nothing else. There was a place in Nyiregyhaza where you could go one night a week and there were local bands from high schools and the university but it closed because there wasn't a big enough audience. There are no good concerts on the weekends because all the students leave the city and go home and there aren't enough people left in the city to support a real music club."

The first psychology student Zsolt said,

"The ritual life is almost non-existent now and there is all this commercial music made for money, but I think there was a time when all the folk music and folk dancing was gone and no one wanted to do it they wanted all this flashy stuff they could buy, but now they can't afford it the price is too high and everyone wants to be a star or give up, but then lately people have come back to folk music and folk dance because there is more meaning in it, more community and solidarity in doing things together rather than just shopping. It is making a comeback because consumerism is so empty. It is such bad quality, it has no quality; it's worse than bad; it's completely empty. Music and dance change you, there is a ritual in it; you become a different person and place yourself in a different time and space, you forget yourself and your daily life and all your troubles and it's like a drug in that way you lose your mind and yet unlike drugs, it isn't bad for you."

In another group of students I found similar laments this time with a group of biology students. One Ph.D. student Csilla said similar things as the psychology students quoted above:

"But there are some people who don't listen to music and don't dance; they hear music on the radio or TV or whatever and yet they don't listen to music, it requires active attention and letting yourself go not something simply in the background. Professional music is like that, it's background music; music you don't really listen to very much with boring lyrics and the same music. There are people who are mega stars and on TV all the time, but their music is totally forgettable. You don't really miss it when it's not on. You don't seek it out. It is just stuff that comes to you over the radio and on TV. It's in the free concerts in the summer and on the radio at the shop-

ping center. There is not much new music in the sense of something that really sounds different. There are these bands boy bands and girl bands which have people who can't sing, but the managers are so good that they make a lot of money on boring tunes sung by people who can't sing; they have that look and they make tons of money. They don't even sing in concert they just move around a bit on stage and lip sync. There is no band; it's just a CD with the music composed by someone else, on computer, and copied onto disc."

I asked, "Who buys this music?"

"I don't know how they make money on this music. I guess the radio stations buy the music and the TV and the shopping malls and so on, but no one buys the CDs really. I don't know anyone who buys it. If someone has it then it's downloaded on to CD from the Internet, but they get on talk shows and stuff so I guess the TV buys the music and that's how they make a lot of money. Maybe it's people who don't really listen to music; well it isn't really music is it? They just buy it to be cool. You know teenagers who get money from their parents and buy this stuff it's like a status symbol. They buy it and show off and then forget about it and follow the next thing. It is popular because it isn't Hungarian yet it is Hungarian. It's about showing that you are modern and part of the West, because after Communism anything western was good and everything here was shit. Although people are starting to see that it isn't true there was this belief and everyone rejected Hungarian music and folk dances, but now there are underground bands that play a combination of different styles together a blend of Hungarian folk music and punk or something with some disco influences with Gypsy and Turkish drumming you know like from the Balkan peninsula. It is like blues and folk music and so on. But it's still hard to find; you have to have friends who know this music; you can't find it on the radio or in the shops. They don't get marketed. The corporations and media still focus on the music of the 1990s where bands and musicians just copied western music and translated the lyrics or made a rough copy of the same words, the same sounds, and the music was the same only now you could understand the lyrics. But it was basically a copy, a bad copy, but there wasn't anything else."

Another Biology student Miklos said,

"There was a time when you couldn't really hear anything new or different; it was simply what the star makers wanted you to hear and listen to. And there was no choice really because they control the media. They dictate the musical taste; it's like a dictatorship. We had all this freedom to do what we wanted to after Communism and it turned out we didn't want anything. We were lazy and just wanted to relax and buy things; get the things we missed out on. Things from the West, but then we just stopped

trying to do anything; it was easy. You just turn on the radio and there is all these different kinds of music from all over the world. We just eat it up and the folk music seemed so bland for a while because we were so used to it we heard it all too many times."

I quote these young people at length because I want to draw attention to their words. They emphasize the loss of local, organic music, and culture. They articulate "anger" over the loss of "real" music, played on "real instruments." They see a kind of "dictatorship" over their needs, thoughts, and desires. They see a "star system" of mass production by "star makers." They see consumerism as a kind of substitute for "spiritual solidarity" ritual and religion, morals and art. What is being promulgated by the State is "empty"—mass-produced and disseminated via a complex modern media machine. They lament the loss of time and opportunity to engage in a meaningful life of creativity, but also the freedom to live an exciting life before they are forced into the world of work, family, and responsibility. Growing up means getting "serious" and being serious is about making money. As one person, who is no longer studying, put it: "Nobody asks me if I'm happy. They just want to know how much money I'm making." Consumerism, for the people I spoke with in Hungary, is dangerous because it makes them "lazy," unthinking, and artificially satisfied with what is available. Consumerism thus articulated is an invisible agent, which so articulated deflects blame away from consumers and places blame on others—the State, teenagers, the media, club owners, etc. But it is also the people who lament, as much as a privileged or ruling elite, who are to blame for political and economic changes in Eastern Europe. As Miklos said, in the quote above, "they control the media," but "we are lazy" and "just eat it up."

Conclusion

In Capitalism, as Milton Friedman theorizes it, you are free from ideological and economic totalitarianism (Friedman 1968). But in reality, what gets effectively banned is anything, which does not make a profit. While small scale amateur music is tolerated, as long as it stays at home and in the backyard, at low volumes, and doesn't lead to people thinking too much about their predicament—gross inequality, environmental destruction, globalization, the loss of organic cultural creativity, alienation of labor and genuine social relations, etc.—then fine, no problem for the State. What gets promoted is a kind of pop music for profits—capitalist-consumerist music—the overproduction of plastic CDs, DVD concerts, and expensive sheet music booklets. Recently I noticed that it is possible to use both sides of a CD, so why is it then that so many CD albums that are over 70 minutes long are double-CDs and

cost twice the price? Could it be that capitalism's logic is not about freedom, democracy, or choice but about maximizing profits through the creation of desire and the masking of social and ecological costs? Wouldn't it be more logical to promote local music through concerts than producing large quantities of high priced and non-recyclable plastic discs? Although some young people in Eastern Europe have turned from pop music to folk music forms and folk dance classes, most corporations buy, promote, and use pop music to sell other products through advertising, Muzak, and high volume sound systems which encourage audiences to consume more beverages than talk to each other in public social spaces—town squares, pubs, festivals, etc.

If the regimes of the late 20th century Eastern Europe were engaged in silencing music or appropriating it for ideological purposes then what has changed is the way this is done in the 21st century post socialist era. Alternative musics and discourses are silenced by high volume pop music, on music TV programs, which feature a constant stream of advertising—pop CDs, fashions, mobile phones, etc. In pubs and hypermarkets where one must shout to be heard in conversations, and in a continuing set of patron-client relations, which determines who can perform and where, music is appropriated for political and economic purposes—continuing patron-client relations and promoting consumer oriented profits. High costs for music making limit personal choices: what to listen to, whether to learn to play an instrument, the ability to play with others, how to share music with others, whether to write original melodies and lyrics or copy pop music styles and do cover songs. Folk music is in danger of extinction for similar reasons, it has been appropriated by nationalists, silenced by commodity fetishism, made unavailable by high prices on traditional instruments such as balalaikas, bag pipes, lutes, cimbaloms, hand drums, etc, and banned by local "noise-level" ordinances.

In conclusion I wish to point out that music as an art form is in danger of being commodified "to death" across Eastern Europe. At the same time people blame others for being too lazy to resist, while justifying their own inaction because the situation is "impossible"—"a vicious circle." I tried briefly here to show how music is political, how it involved a process of banning, tolerating and supporting as well as binding, banding, and bonding, how it was appropriated and commodified, fetished and ultimately attacked as something uncontrollable by State forces, because it was free. And yet the struggle continues despite the process of capitalistic incorporation. Because music is used by the State in propaganda, advertising, and profit oriented production people respond by valuing music for pleasure. Simultaneously people are caught in a double bind either one makes and consumes profit

oriented music or fails economically. Either one devotes all their time and energy in banding or makes less music, poor quality music in bonding. It's an all or nothing proposition.

With the domination of pop music people are reacting more and more against corporate music as the multinationals engage more and more in saturation marketing and copyright protection measures. People try evading corporate control and high prices by circulating CD copies much like the hidden economy of goods and services under Socialism. What might become fetishized again are homegrown sounds and music circulated on home copied CDs while plundering the formal economy for the raw materials and services. Every day I meet new people who are making folk music for no other reason than it is fun, it is liberating; it is creative and thus human. More and more I talk to people who are sick of corporate sponsored music and instead join folk dance groups, sing in schools, and churches. I see people who play music, record music, and circulate music through a network of friends and neighbors. This sounds surprisingly familiar in an era that has been labeled "post" socialist as people reconstitute a dual economy of consumer capitalism and black-market gift-giving economic activities around music. While there is a lot more to be said about music, such as performance, creativity, meaning, socio-cultural-psychological matrixes, and so on, I am limited here due to time and space constraints. Instead I would like to suggest that more critically oriented, insightful, multidisciplinary, and thorough research and attention be given to music and ethnomusicology. Additionally, besides documenting changes, endangered indigenous music, survival strategies, revivalist movements, opinion polls, and music criticism—usually promotional in nature—we should look at how social science and the humanities might facilitate interventions in local cultural productions and their support (or lack of support) that values ordinary people's interests and desires rather than global corporate capital's interests and profit making agenda. We need to engage in encouraging creativity in universities and cultural centers that can effectively counter globalization and the destruction of local cultural traditions and their evolution.

ENDNOTES

1 My fieldwork in Eastern Europe in the area of music and dance has tended to focus on everyday life and popular opinion based on conversations and interviews with consumers, supporters, organizers, as well as professional and semi-professional musicians. I focus here on the political economy and consumer culture of post socialist Eastern Europe supplementing my observations and analysis with interview material from young people

in Debrecen, Hungary. My research includes extensive interviews with musicians and students in Minsk, Belarus; however, I am unable to quote at length from transcripts due to the culture of fear regarding tape recorders, note taking, and the watchful eyes of the KGB.

I have not undertaken an extensive review of the literature in the field; however, students and scholars of Eastern Europe might find the following research and publications suggestive for the study of music and dance in Eastern Europe building on innovations and insights developed in the West. These were influential to my research and analysis: Attali 1989, Slobin 1993, on dance and gender; McRobbie 1991, Cowan 1990, the semiotics of popular culture; Chambers 1986, mass movements and mass protest through music; Garofalo 1992, street performance; Harrison-Pepper 1990, pirate radio and music; Hind and Mosco 1985, music television; Kaplan 1987, Goodwin 1992, race, identity, politics, hip-hop and rap; Gilroy 1987, Hebdige 1987. For an idea of how to study consumerism, home production, audience response, and interplay between mass culture and amateur creativity see Willis 1990. For a history and political significance of imported musical styles and local imitators in Eastern Europe a good place to begin would be Kosztolányi 2000; Ryback 1990; Starr 1983; Ramet 1994; Szemere 2001. For Roma/gypsy music and culture see Lemon 2000; Stewart 1988, 1989, 1997; Sarósi 1978; and Foneseca 1995. Although the suggested reading above is far from exhaustive it represents an intellectual break from the ethnomusicological tradition for studying ethnic music, folk music, and dance in isolation (Nettl 1983). Since the postmodern turn in anthropology and the advent of cultural studies in England many researchers have sought out multidisciplinary perspectives for studying interrelations between music, dance, creativity, capitalism/communism/post-socialist changes, consumerism, and politics. For an excellent overview, suggested theories and methods and general understanding of this movement toward multidisciplinary and multi-sited research and politics, see Slobin 1993, 1992/1987. For the relationship between dance and state sponsored music, see Shay 2002. For a general introduction to the study of Central and Eastern European music see, Slobin 1996. For Folklore and the study of traditional music under socialism see Porter 1995.

2 Like many white Anglo-American audiences before, lines from blues songs have no clear meaning for consultant/informants in Eastern Europe—"goofer dust all around your bed/ You wake up and find your own self dead"... "I gotta Black Cat Bone and a mojo too, little Johnny cockeroo gonna jump and mess with you." The significance of the lyrics are lost and new ones must be created or simply ignored as "meaningless gibberish" (interview with G. Starikov, Minsk 2004). Lost is the

cultural and religious meaning of these lines as part of the Black Atlantic diasporic fusion of many years and diverse cultures mingled together through the colonial period (Hebdige 1987; Thompson 1983). Similarly once this music arrives to Eastern Europe, blues has little sense of narrative, evocation, religious meaning, poetic humor, etc. (Calt 1973). The blues as a form becomes a new kind of classical music written down note for note on sheet music like Mozart, Beethoven, Bartok, etc. (interview with G. Starikov, Minsk 2004). Blues becomes fetishized as twentieth century classical music for a generation of listeners and musicians now middle-aged—fixed, frozen and ready-made. Lost is the dominance of a percussive performance style, multiple meters, overlapping call and response, improvisation and the evocation of social imperfections contrasted with implied criteria for perfect living through complex offbeat phrasing of the lyrics. While musicians and audiences might sing the lyrics to songs the meaning of the text is lost on them. What is important is that the blues symbolizes for them something “other” exotic, mysterious, exciting, and thus new.

3 It is not surprising then that in the city of Debrecen (Hungary) that the Socialist Party Headquarters’ “private club” was turned into one of the most profitable night clubs in the city and that the new owner is also a regular local TV personality. It is not surprising that the same individual is engaged in running summer camps for kids, which had once been “owned” and operated by the Communist Youth League. It is not surprising that many former Communist Youth League organizers are now being elected to local government offices and/or management positions in civil society. Former communists are going into business including the music business. In Minsk (Belarus) the KGB and local militia (police) are still paid bribes or given favorable treatment for not investigating possible violations of city and national legal codes in the operations of nightclubs where musicians perform. In Hungary there was a transition from Socialism to Consumerism not capitalism as such, but rather business and marketing, where as in Belarus we can see the opposite a nation still mired in a communist style political economy and culture including music making and consumption.

4 I have conducted a great deal of research regarding music, dance, and political economy in the past since my honors thesis research in London on the connection between social movements, social networking, underground clubs, squatting, and Thatcherism (1988) (Smith 1989). I followed up with my interests in music and song writing conducting research in Santa Cruz, California for a graduate seminar in Ethnomusicology with John Schechter at the Music Department. Further research was conducted on how children learn to dance to TV

programs when unattended through imitation and experimentation for Olga Nájera-Ramírez’s Anthropology of Dance seminar; also a research project focusing on underground “anarchist” cafes, fanzines, and pirate radio in Santa Cruz California 1992. Unfortunately, I was highly discouraged from pursuing research on music, dance, and popular culture and their connection to ethnicity and nationalism, political economy, culture and revolution in Eastern Europe by the Anthropology Department at UCSC (1991–1995). This was before Steven Feld, Donald Brenneis, and Mark Slobin came to UCSC when the climate and interests of the department changed toward encouraging new approaches in ethnomusicology and dance. Instead I was forced to abandon formal ethnomusicological research and alternatively focused on other equally interesting developments in black market economics, informal relations, moonlighting, disengagement, apathy, conversation, laments, jokes, patron-client relations and double bind theory. Despite myself (trying to please my own and my department’s interests), I ended up talking a lot about music and playing music with friends in Hungary and Belarus. Since they knew I was a musician I was asked to play and discuss American folk music and music in general. I thank them sharing their thoughts, hospitality, and music, but also for demanding I pursue my interest in music and dance.

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