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WORLD CONTRA ETHNO... AGAINST AS USUAL

Abstract: The term *world music* has been widely accepted as a marketing sign for music "other" than modern pop-music. However, in our country, for various reasons described in this paper, this term is substituted by the prefix *ethno*, thus making some special types of music declared as *ethno-pop*, *ethno-jazz*, even *ethno-folk*. Basically, the main reason of the existence of such term is exclusively connected to market, being just a device for promotion of otherwise un-interesting un-traditional (un?)music...

At the end of the 1990's and especially in the beginning of the new century, we were flooded with music editions such as *Balkanika 2000*, *Čuvari tradicije (Guardians of Tradition)*, *Serbia Sounds Global* and numerous similar and less similar titles. Their common denominator is that they all, in one way or another, draw on some kind of *tradition*, whatever that essentially represents for the authors and performers of these editions.

Let us make one thing clear straight away – the term *world music* has never really come into wide use in our country. That is why we have terms such as *ethno-jazz*, *ethno-pop* and even *ethno-folk*. Let us try to at least scratch the surface of these events, primarily from the terminological aspect.

Why not use the term *world*, but use the term *ethno* instead? It is neither quite so easy to answer this question, nor to define a general tendency. Although it has been in use worldwide for practically twenty years, *world music* is not used in our country. Perhaps also because we already had specific terms which clarified certain kinds of popular music, such as the famous *shepherd's rock*, associated with the music of the *Bijelo dugme* ("White Button") band in the second half of the 1970's. It was, in fact, Bregović's drawing on certain folklore elements, which being an unusual method was given such a name by the music media (I believe already in the review of the second album of *Bijelo dugme*, *Šta bi dao da si na mom mjestu /What Would You Give To Be in My Place/* in the magazine *Džuboks /Jukebox/*, 1975). It was in the 1980's, when the pop production of other than Western cultures was greatly promoted worldwide, both in the form of independent projects and in the form of cooperation with leading pop musicians from the West, that the marketing term *world music* first appeared purely in order to differentiate the material and label what is not *standard pop* (that is, Western-style pop music). And over there things still function like that. Therefore, *world music* is the equivalent of *non-West*, or better still *non-Western* music. And practically everything falls into that category: from authentic recordings of the singing of African shepherds, to arranged Bulgarian choirs, to cheap disco productions with added folklore themes. In such a "categorization", our performers of

so-called *turbo-folk* were also promoted in Western countries as *world* (for instance, you can occasionally find Ceca's albums in London megastores under this category). What is important is that this term *per se* does not point to any one particular kind of popular music, but rather to a diversity which retains its unity only thanks to a certain exclusivity and difference from the "standard".

And what about our *ethno*? In our country, of course, *world* music would not be accepted. We quarrelled with the world in the beginning of the 1990's and we also already had some of our own names from before, such as shepherd's rock. Since music always follows social developments in one way or another and our society was excluded from the world community in the beginning of the said 1990's, it is no wonder that a generally accepted term did not come into wide use in our country as well. There is also an additional reason, or motive, if you will – to defend our national identity. We cannot use something that has been introduced among our enemies. There are, of course, other reasons as well, but we will come back to them later. Naturally, in such an environment, everything with the prefix *ethno* automatically brings to mind the primeval, the Nemanjid dynasty, the age of the Serbian kings, our *tradition* which is the richest in the world... This music attempts on several levels to point out its God-given value to the consumer, usually through an accompanying study or a simple booklet in the edition. First of all, it is described as temporally remote, as *primeval*, which points to its clear value in comparison with the *modern*, practically infamous (those who create "ordinary", "standard" pop music are not exactly automatically considered traitors, but they simply copy the imaginary notion of the West). Furthermore, this music is also represented as *traditional*, which is supposed to ensure the continuity of the *primeval*. Territorially, this music is most often linked with the Balkans in a variety of ways, but as Professor Čolović can say a lot more about this much better, I will not go into all the connotations of such a characterization.

Such prefaces to editions of that music would not be problematic if the kind of music they described really lay behind them. However, if you look at each individual case, it is easy to realize that the indicated "qualities" are deviated from. For instance, on their album *Čuvari tradicije* the Teofilović brothers preserve the traditional singing from Kosovo in – parallel thirds! Any additional clarifications in this case are simply pointless. On Sanja Ilić's album *Balkanika 2000* there is a sea of folk musical instruments, which had never played together, until he composed them into a motley which is supposed to evoke, at least occasionally, Serbian sacred music and Chilandar!?! And so on and so forth... However, let us go back to the essence of the prefix *ethno*.

Sometime toward the end of the 1970's, an official research of the famous British magazine *Melody Maker*, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY or Former Yugoslavia) was ranked fourth in the world in the sphere of music production. Meaning, in terms of the quantity of popular music made and sold. Ahead of the then SFRY were the United States, Great Britain and Jamaica. This result is certainly worthy of attention and respect. What happened then? With the economic crises of the 1980's, production decreased.

With the wars of the 1990's, it definitely came to a halt, except for some of its segments. *Turbo-folk* appeared as standard entertainment, but also as the guardian of the "national". The break-up of Yugoslavia also strengthened the so-called *pink* culture (named after *Pink TV*, which was its greatest promoter). Turbo-folk and the sounds of Tehran and Ankara became the dominant music category. The pop music of the end of the 1970's no longer existed. Sporadic editions of former great names only confirmed the fact that rock and pop music were slowly but surely dying out. Financially, every singer or player of turbo-folk was in a much better position than his colleagues in the pop rock section. So what happened? A certain, rather large number of pop musicians, frustrated and unsuccessful in their domain, began to make excursions into folk music, so to speak. However, in their excursions, they started to use quotations or arrangements of our folk melodies and the prefix *ethno* was added. Just as a marketing move in the West separates *world music* from the rest on the shelves at megastores, without changing the essence, so *ethno* separates its creators, in terms of marketing, from the rest of the commercially mostly unsuccessful, musicians. The essence remains intact here as well. The term *ethno* also includes a whole set of styles: from literally performed folk singing as with the band *Moba*, to arranged transcriptions of folklore with production alterations (with the obligatory concert performance in stylized national costume) such as Biljana Krstić's album, to classical jazz improvisations to "folk" themes like Maljoković's orchestra, to, say, philosophically-architecturally monumental projects such as *Balkanika*... Therefore, evidently this is just a marketing move. Let us try to sell that which is "culture", which is the "national being". No one really even thinks about the use, the theoretical use, of the term *ethno*, or of the essence of it. How else would a performer from New Orleans call his jazz? His, presumably, is not *ethno*, whereas this quasi-Serbian is? Well, jazz is *ethno* music by its very being, regardless of the region. Peter Gabriel would certainly never characterize himself as an *ethno* musician because he draws on motives from Africa – many others do the same. But Gabriel does not "need an imaginary prefix in order to sell 500,000 albums... Another phenomenon is evident in our *ethno* movement. When you analyze the published materials and become familiar with their origin, you realize that there is very little or almost nothing related specifically to Serbian musical folklore. Authors most often draw on the folklore of the Balkan peoples – there is Walachian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Greek, even Hungarian music. Serbian music is least present percentage-wise. Why? In all probability, Serbian folklore does not seem commercial enough to the authors or they lack the auctorial imagination to make it commercial enough, so they draw on other sources. In the *Serbia Sounds Global* edition there is less Serbian musical folklore than any other?! It is evident that beneath such a title lie only marketing and some kind of market struggle against turbo-folk, the established sovereign.

Time for discussion is running out and there is too much talking anyhow. What conclusion can we draw? We are against. Against turbo-folk, even if you do come across a perfectly good song sometimes. Against those who make popular music modelled on the corrupt West. Against "authentic" folklore which is not interesting in itself. Against such a term *world* which, to its disgrace, lumps even someone like Ceca

together with such grand masters as Darko Macura or Sanja Ilić or Jovan Maljoković or... We are AGAINST.

Translated by Jelena Nikezić