

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH DO-IT-YOURSELF CURATORS AND RESEARCHERS OF EARLY COMMERCIAL RECORDINGS IN CROATIA

ABSTRACT

Even though local musics and musicians were involved in the production and circulation of records by the multi-national companies all the way from the beginnings of the 20th century, and since the 1920s also by the domestic companies, commercial sound recordings have until recently had hardly relevance at all in the academic music studies in Croatia, as well as in other parts of former Yugoslavia. Archival and library institutions, similarly, have had meagre interest to preserve this part of music heritage, and among collections which did, ultimately, find their place in the institutions, exclusively as private donations, only a very limited portion has been digitized and made available for listening. On the other hand, certainly also due to the given circumstances, this (academically sunken) heritage has its incredibly dedicated do-it-yourself collectors, archivists, curators, researchers, re-recordists and/or creators of online repositories, often all in one; not only prosumers (that is, both producers and consumers) but also curarchers (curators and researchers) of recordings. They represent a prime example of bottom-up heritage making, based on affective attachment to heritage objects, and an enormous investment of their exclusively voluntary labour. I came in contact with them in relation to the project on the record industry in Croatia from the 1920s to the 1950s, which I have been leading since 2020.

The intention of this paper is to describe various facets of our collaboration, and to examine challenges it brings, in particular as regards our different positionality in reference to collaborative knowledge production and its ethics, the understandings of notions such as tradition, community and intellectual property, and the issues related to ontology, epistemology and axiology of knowledge. In any case, they appear as important partners in the pursuit of decolonizing the music studies in Croatia.

