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Thomas Wilke (Halle)

## Turntablerockers behind the Wall: The early years of disco in the GDR between 1970 and 1973.

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Der Beitrag thematisiert die Diskothekenanfänge in der DDR vom Ende der 60er Jahre bis 1973. Er zeigt die Schwierigkeiten, Provisorien und die zunehmende breite gesellschaftliche Akzeptanz dieser Unterhaltungsform. Mit der steigenden Akzeptanz sahen die kulturpolitischen Entscheidungsträger wachsenden Handlungsbedarf, so dass die anfänglich relativ freie Entwicklung in die bestehenden Vorstellungen und Strukturen eingegliedert eingepasst und gelenkt wurde. Das wird im Folgenden anhand der Praxis der Eignungsgespräche, des konstruierten Zusammenhangs von Diskothek und FDJ und institutionellen Auswüchsen deutlich gemacht. Als problematisch stellten sich die örtlichen und technischen Disko-Provisorien dar, da weder die staatliche Unterhaltungstechnik noch die bestehenden Räumlichkeiten mit der Entwicklung Schritt halten konnten. Zur weiteren Veranschaulichung werden in einer kursorischen Rundreise die Anfänge der Diskothek in der DDR in fünf größeren Städten rekonstruiert.

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*Er ist heute hier und morgen dort  
Hat 'ne Wanderdiskothek.  
Wird heute ausgebuht, ist morgen Gott,  
und es geht, solange es geht.  
Schon zehn Jahre tourt er durch das Land  
Und kennt hundert Säle wohl  
Und er hatte sich was vorgestellt  
Und schon oft die Schnauze voll:  
He, he Jockey, reite los, nun reite schon, mach  
sie froh!  
Reite, sonst machst du pleite, mach schnell!*

*Today he is here tomorrow there  
Has a moving discotheque  
Today he gets boos, tomorrow he's adored  
And so it goes on as long as he can.  
For ten years he is been traveling the whole  
country  
And probably knows a hundred halls  
And had imagined something  
And often was fed up to the back teeth:  
Hey, Hey Jockey, ride away, now ride and  
make them happy!  
Ride, or you will be bankrupt, hurry up!*

Band Metropol „Auf Achse“, 1981

### Introduction

Discotheque, by the etymological meaning of the word originally a place to present collected records, nowadays first stands for a specific location with a unique set of communication, second for a particular form of amusement and third for a genre of popular music.

The first mentioned meaning of disco can be found until the end of the 1950ies. At the same time the first discos in the second meaning developed in the West European societies as places where music collectively was listened to and danced to – as argued by

Brewster for the UK (Brewster 2000: 50), by Shapiro and Poschardt for France (Shapiro 2006: 291; Poschardt 2001: 103) and by Quirini for West Germany (Quirini 2001: 7). Resulting in the cultural, political and economic conditions of East Germany, specific particularities occur for the discos and the deejays in the the beginning of the 1970ies in the socialistic society of the GDR. Deconstructing the situation of disco between 1970 and 1973 by pointing out some concise examples, means to clarify the background for the later established official definition and normative comprehension of discotheques following in 1973. Along with that, the special features of disco and deejays will be outlined.

### From live Performance to the dominance of record music

The genesis of disco in the GDR in the 1960ies was not like in western countries driven by private entrepreneurial initiatives as a reaction of a demand for amusement, but as a result of an official self-perceptional process reflecting the existing spectrum of dance events by the government and socialist youth organization. Since 1973 deejays, as central figures responsible for the musical arrangement and other entertaining elements, were officially labelled as *Schallplattenunterhalter* (*Record Entertainer*). Because of its artificial character this term did not become part of every day life language. It was solely used in official contexts and partly in media coverage. At the same time young people undermined the political strategy of 'socialistic' terms for western culture and utilized words like discjockey, discotheque and *Diskotheker* (a German flexion for the DJ) in common use.

Of course youth collectively listening to music and meeting for dance, already was a common phenomenon in the GDR. A concrete date for the change can not be fixed, but until the end of the 1960ies dance music was performed by a live band or an orchestra on stage, instead of using mechanical reproduced music. Predominantly, small bands with a limited repertoire of current popular dance musik tried to meet the increasing demand of public dancing, without a real chance to meet the needs quantitatively.

The institutional restrictions included three substantial dimensions: Firstly, the mechanism of ratings and examinations as a barrier for upcoming young musicians and bands. Secondly, in 1958 the government established a directive regarding the contingent of songs from East and West to be played at discos. The share of western originated music – only licensed records were allowed – must not extend 40 per cent of all music. The lack of technical equipment for performances as a third element complicated it even more. Additionally, the bands did need a certain amount of time to rehearse new songs, which in turn caused a lack of actuality.

By using record music as a bridge between live performances, a modification started in the mid-sixties since the audience danced to these songs. Looking back to the starting time of discotheques, the professional *Schallplattenunterhalter* Burkhard Walter mentions in 1983: "The young men [were] very thankful for every demand. They accepted a *Diskotheker*, who prevailingly played his own favourite records." (Walter 1983, 16, here and all following citations are the author's translations.)

A transformation took place until the end of the 1960s, resulting in a dominance of mechanical reproduced music being played. With other elements of entertainment, live and record music were integrated into a joint program of a whole evening.

The birthplace and -time of discotheques could not be exactly located – even in contemporary discussions in the GDR during the eighties. Anyhow it was defined in the close linkage between the quasi-institutional youth clubs and the new phenomenon disco.

„Hence this young form of entertaining art – exactly ten years ago the first discotheque was founded in Berlin by the *Oktoberklub* – became an outstanding place within the intellectual and cultural life of our republic.“ (Ohne Autor 1978: 2.)<sup>1</sup>

Inside the *Singebewegung* (a political singer and songwriter movement) as a part of the parties' youth organisation the group called *Oktoberklub* established the subdivision *Oktoberklub-Klub*.<sup>2</sup> In the End of the 60ies this subdivision did organize dance events labeled *offene Klubform* (a form of club open to the public) where the attendees could choose between different activities, besides dancing.

„There was the very important *Tränke* [a rural word for the Bar, T.W.], which had also at that time a better offer than in some of the *Jugendtanzgaststätte* [dance restaurant for the youth, T.W.] in our days. There was the *Quasselecke* (Palaver-Corner) for the non-dancers, who discussed all the time. There was a Agitprop-Shop selling placard, badges and posters and naturally the dancefloor.“ (Podium-diskotheke 71: 03.06.1976, author's translation)

The Club members even came together beyond the rehearsal meetings of the *Singeklub*. It was possible to find out, if this was organized or just spontaneously as a result of group dynamics. It became apparent that the official retrospective view situated the initial point of discotheque in Berlin and therewith ignored simultaneous developments in the republic or just did not perceive them:

„So we began to build up a discotheque and initiated in the *Kreiskulturhaus* Berlin-Mitte [the cultural center, T.W.] a series of events called *Arbeiter- und Studentenklub*. This was the place where we gained experiences and developed the first program sequences.“ (Kanter/Lasch 1972: 24)

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- 1 Another current document for the birth of of discotheque is a nonpoint source, too. „At the end of the 60s and the beginning of the 70s the new phenomenon of discotheque did emerge in our republic, initially mainly as internal events by the *Singeklubs*, which are characterised by a mindfull, lively and intensive personal communication.“ (Lehmann 1983: 43). More concrete details are missing.
  - 2 „Inside the cinema *International* in the Karl-Marx-Allee in Berlin there was the OKK, Oktberklub-Klub. This was an attraction. Live music by songwriters and club events with record music for dancing. Between the dance sessions live music performances or other artistic performances took place. In the A&S-Club [Arbeiter- und Studentenclub, meaning workers and students club, T.W.] we began to establish a similar composition of discotheque. Like the OKK the A&S-Club also was a *Singeklub* – in this case the *Telesingeklub* of the Berlin gastronomers.“ (Lasch 2006).



## DJs in their infancy

In February 1972 the monthly music journal *Melody & Rhythmus* reported for the first time extensively and detailed on disco and specified the number of existing discos in the republic to be about 700. (Melodie & Rhythmus 1972: 3) Formerly published sporadic articles classified the disco as a powerless phenomenon consisting of only very few singular events. The now mentioned number of 700 discos is based on the persons involved in performance and organization of discotheques and did not mean the clubs and locations where dance events took place – these remained an exception. Solely naming the quantity, it was impossible to find out the origin and the composition of the number. But it illustrates an evolving dynamic, since in 1970 in a comparable article a number of only ten discos and therefore deejays are mentioned. (Hansen 1983: 98) The article above from 1972 formulated generally the contemporary expectations deejays were confronted with (by the officials). They should conciliate „worth knowing informations about soloists, orchestras, musicians and arrangers“, as well as assuming „with entertaining prattle about the specifics of the music, the sound and so on.“ (Melodie & Rhythmus 1972: 3). The marked spectrum makes up analogies to the *Conférencier* (master of ceremonies) and introduced the occupation of a diskjockey under the label *Diskjockeyi* for the first time to the readers:

„The occupation *Diskjockeyi* is new in our country, resulting in the absence of a clear shaped occupational image. A few things are certain: A *Diskjockeyi* is familiar with the aims of our cultural policy, the ‚ABC‘ of dance music as well as with the arrangement and performance of high level dance events and he should have a good educational background, a good appearance and special *Conférencier* skills.“ (Melodie & Rhythmus 1972: 3)

By declaring the lack of a „clear shaped occupational image“, the pattern of the deejay is set out in writing, including the fundamental requirements for successful acting on stage. Accentuating the „aims of our cultural policy“, naturally, the direction of the development also is formulated. This concept of occupation existed onward until the *Diskotheckenordnung* (bill of discotheques) was established in August 1973 and remained furthermore, since it goes back to the approved cultural-political elements and the demand for entertaining education resp. educational entertainment. In combination with the more practical requirements, the mentioned concepts formed the discourse of the discotheque and therewith the actual appearance of discos, too. Inevitably combined with that were boundaries to be set and exactly formulated.

„To cite an extreme type: He now believes, as a touring discjockey with his own *Westplattensammlung* (collection of records from the Western countries) travelling around the country – earning 500 Marks each night by performing discos against the law, soon will be finished without future perspectives: And this with the authorization of all the deejays – and also bands and musicians – how work according to the law including the regulations for the arrangement of the program.“ (Melodie & Rhythmus 1972: 3)

Just mentioning the „extreme type“ can be seen as a sign that such behavior existed in the beginning of disco, which could not be controlled without appropriate regulations. Labeling a dance event as being against the law, only based on knowing the salary and the

exclusive usage of records by non-socialistic bands – which only very few deejays could resort to, manifest how much the loss of control was feared as well as the global attempt of discursive control of disco. To legitimize these attempts to all of the protagonists, one referred to those observing the law without clarifying, how much the actors felt imposed by these normative options of action.

These few examples of the contemporary discussion give an impression of the whole issue and allow to draw a conclusion of the tendentious development of this new form of entertainment, which in the beginning was only partly controlled. Besides the cultural-political allocation of the deejay as a profession, there were no further ideas of perspectives, potentials and chances of popular (dance) music, entertainment electronics, content and aesthetics of performances and the consequences of all of these elements for the popular music.

Also in the western countries the ideas and perspectives were missing, but without a superior official instance, the market takes the role of a regulation entity. Since the administration of the GDR had a fundamental skeptical attitude towards new developments and resulting in the historical lack of the legitimation of the state, a manic control approach regarding internal affairs accrued, which caused an inevitable need to act also for the subject 'disco'.

„Monitorings showed: The longer this phenomenon discotheque could develop without regulation, the more the menace increased, that it is used to transport bourgeois ideology (because of the close connection to and influence of the western media). This is not an exception, but a confirmation of the old ideological class struggle wisdom: 'Where we are absent, there is the opponent.'" (Lehmann 1983: 44)

This phases of non-regulation lasted until the beginning of 1973. Until then only very few regulations were existing, which were not accomplished comprehensively. By 1973 only two determinations regarding the sector of entertaining arts existed which regulated the salary and the accreditation of deejays.

A binding remuneration agreement for entertaining arts regulated the salary for the deejays, which depended on the professional classification of each DJ. This classification was printed on the official licence for performing discos – the so called *Pappe* (carton). (Kanter/Wollenzin 1977: 155) The concept of grading was adopted from other professional and amateur musicians. The *Bezirkskulturkabinette* (cultural authority of each district) invited nascent deejays, where a cultural commissary interviewed the candidates and they had to pass a qualifying examination.<sup>3</sup> Besides the general education, the beginning oft the examination focussed on practical abilities, such as moderation. A confirma-

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3 This procedure continued until the 1980s: „The qualifying examination should not be dominated by requests regarding expertise (e.g. in Leipzig: ‚What is meant by the strategy of *Bitterfelder Weg*?), but more to find out the talent, attitude, credibility, values. Only small details often make a deejay not reliable, which are however some times ignored: for example speech-disorder, erratically view, awe to get in contact with others, not a minimum grasp for melody and dynamics.“ (Walter 1981: 17).

tion of attending such an examination is printed below – due to the fact that the original is hardly readable, it is the duplication – it also demonstrates the aftermaths.

Conspicuous are the administrative processes starting with the decision to grade one as proper for the profession. The *Bezirkskulturkabinett* invited the new 'colleagues' to a basic *Disco-Sprecher* course. (*Disko-Sprecher* is another specific GDR term for DJ, referring to speaker.) The attendees have already been classified – the authority insinuated that they will attempt the course, a concrete decision by them was secondary.

With the confirmation letter the authority also sent a leave of absence, which could be handed over to the employer – so the prospective deejay did not even have to act on his own.<sup>4</sup> And finally with this document one could get an interim licence by the county department of culture – a subdivision of the *Bezirkskulturkabinett*.

Bezirkskulturkabinett für Kulturarbeit  
801 Karl-Marx-Stadt  
Straße der Nationen 25

, den 2. 4. 73

99 Plauen

Werter Kollege,

Im Ergebnis des am 25. 3. 73 durchgeführten Aufnahmegesprächs werden Sie von der [Abteilung] als geeignet für die Tätigkeit als Disko-Sprecher eingeschätzt.

Auf Grund dieser Einschätzung haben wir Sie in den Grundlehrgang für Disko-Sprecher vom 22.10. bis 26.10. 1973 in Zwickau eingestuft.  
Sie erhalten dazu noch rechtzeitig eine Einladung.

Dieses Schreiben gilt als Antrag auf Freistellung von der Arbeit gemäß Gesetzbuch der Arbeit § 77, Absatz 2. Bitte klären Sie das Problem mit ihrer staatlichen und gewerkschaftlichen Leitung selbst. Informieren Sie uns jedoch umgehend, wenn die Teilnahme am Lehrgang gefährdet ist.

Ferner bitten wir Sie, die Abteilung Kultur Ihres Rates des Kreises aufzusuchen, wo Sie gegen Vorlage dieses Schreibens eine bis zum Lehrgang befristete, vorläufige Auftrittserlaubnis erhalten können.

Die Abteilungsleiter wurden bereits von uns informiert.

Mit sozialistischen Gruß  
stellv. Direktor

58 073/6067

Table 1: letter with results of the qualifying interview

4 The leave of absence for the employer was determined by law and demanded with culture political arguments, since working as a deejay was rated as a verifiable community service. Conf. Paragraph 13 Abs. 1 und 2 der Anordnung über die Ausübung von Tanz- und Unterhaltungsmusik, GBl. II Nr. 65/1964.

If the candidate was certified as appropriate, he received an interim certificate for performing disco. This interim certificate served as *Spielerlaubnis für staatlich geprüfte Schallplattenunterhalter* – the official term – which indeed did not exist in the beginning of the 70s. Instead, the cultural agencies took the badges used for amateur and semi-professional musicians and added the specification *Schallplattenunterhalter* in types or sometimes even hand-written. Besides this bureaucratic and at the same time authorizing forms of establishing an integrated image of the profession, the deejays took the initiative in cooperation with the cultural agencies. End of May 1973 the organizations *Zentralhaus für Kulturarbeit* (a central cultural agency situated in Leipzig), the central council of the youth organization FDJ and the taskgroup for discotheques at the central council for the organisation of the Tenth World Festival of Youth and Students 1973, arranged a first central workshop addressed to deejays in the whole republic. The workshop called *Podiumdiskothek 73* took place in the *Haus der jungen Talente* (one of the biggest culture clubs for the youth) in Berlin. Karl-Heinz Wollenzin, the lead manager of this event, instructed the first discjockeys of East-Berlin in the enunciator studio in the Berlin *Haus für Kulturarbeit*. In the youth magazine *Junge Welt*, Waltraud Brünnig reported for the whole republic a number of „approx. 3.000 *Schallplattenunterhalter*” and therefore came to the conclusion that within such a mass phenomenon the deejays are responsible for the audience regarding “the aesthetic-cultural and political-ideological education” (Brünnig 1973, 5). This responsibility is not yet realized by every deejay – an argument by Brünnig which is not founded in detail.

„270 of the best *Schallplattenunterhalter* from all districts of the republic” took part in a three day lasting workshop *Podiumdiskothek 73* and the management intended to come to a „unitary orientation for the future development of discotheques.” (Brünnig 1973, 5). Additionally, representatives of the national broadcasting service, the ministry of culture and the state-owned record business, were invited. Characteristically for the GDR-principle of delegation and the integration into the cultural scene, only the best were represented at such events and they took place with participation of the societal institutions. Since 1973 workshops for deejays were arranged all over the republic with different regional quantities and qualities. One achievement of the workshop was the concrete promise of the broadcasting service to establish a special programme for deejays to tape-record popular music. This programme, labelled *Podiumdiskothek* was installed in June 1973 on the channel DT64 by the *Berlin Rundfunk*. The radio-show can be seen as a unique attempt to overcome the lack of international popular music: Based on dubious licensing methods the tape-recording was explicitly intended. Deejays had to pay a six-month fee to the *Anstalt zur Wahrung der Aufführungsrechte* (the GDR performing rights agency a pendant to the British MCPS-PRS Alliance) and thereby legally were allowed to use the airplay-music in disco dance events. This procedure made the expensive import

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5 In this context Brünnig asked programmatically: „How can we integrate discos in our cultural life, when they are popular with the youth because of their various and flexible programme? Which requirements for deejays are resulting in our attempt of integration? And how can we fit the differentiated and ambitious needs for expedient recreation activities of disco audience?” (Brünnig 1973: 5)



or the purchase of foreign licences unnecessary, even if the offer in the one-hour radio-show is hardly comparable with the international popmusic production and quantitatively was not adequate at all.

## Early Disco - Acceptance of temporary measures

„In the founding years of the discotheques run-down musicians, home constructors only interested in technical systems, record collecting individuals and enunciators of all genres had ambitions to perform discos.“ (Walter 1981: 17)

Discos took place in the state-owned restaurants, in ballrooms of rural community halls and in the youth clubs and typically the deejays had to bring the whole machinery including the sound and light equipment. Following Hartmut Kanter and Stefan Lasch, authorities in the scene who had great influence on the upcoming development of discotheques and moderated the radioshow *Podiumsdiskothek*, “everything what commonly is called disco scene” started past the IX. Convention of the youth organisation FDJ. (*Podiumsdiskothek* 71: 03.06.1976) Since this convention happened in May 1971, one can see the connection between memories and real historic events – without a cogent relation between event and the phenomenon disco. Insisting on a connection between the FDJ and disco in official presentations can be seen as an indication for a non compensated desire for legitimation. To promote the image that the FDJ widespread reacts to the needs of the youth, it is positioned as a main-actor for the development of discos. In 1976 Kanter and Lasch defined discotheques as being more than just playing records:

„It is an arranged interesting dance evening, where more happens; where one can meet interesting people, can sing and play, watch movies and cabarets, and where one can discuss all the world and his wife.“ (*Podiumsdiskothek* 71: 03.06.1976)

Trying to fit this claim an extensive qualifying programme for DJs was established in 1973, which only was realised fractional regarding the lack of human resources, technical and spacious premises. Besides the normal menu service, the state-owned restaurants established dance events with different qualities nationwide. To sketch the perception and the emerging self-conception plus the aesthetical criteria of disco, the following discotheques between 1971 and 1973 in Erfurt, Weimar, Jena, Leipzig and Berlin were selected.

A short article in the monthly magazine *Melodie & Rhythmus* about the Erfurt restaurant *Freundschaft* (friendship) in April 1971 documents the upcoming change very good: The new type of entertainment and the related scepticism of guest and host. A dance event with a live performing band is described: The drummer had a major problem with the very small stage and could not cramp his style. A failure of communication between the bandmates was the result.

„But now all of that should be changed. After several unsuccessful trials finally, the restaurant will now obtain a discotheque instead of a band. At the same time problems arrived. Guests, who felt comfortable until now hope that after the renovation everything stays just like it is today. On the other hand the idea of a discotheque is



connected with hopes to open up the opportunity to go to the discotheque, also for the many youngsters meeting at the meadow. It is another task, to arrange these evenings as interesting events." (Kerst 1971<sup>4</sup>: 21)

One receives the impression that after merely experiences with a live band, now this restaurant "obtains a discotheque". The passive phraseology is remarkable: the restaurant should obtain or receive something and could not act independently. It is blurry that neither author nor audience realized that changes will occur by establishing a discotheque – otherwise they would not have claimed the status quo ante, so that everything went on the same after renovation. With a new room layout, which is not further explained, on May 1<sup>st</sup> 1973 in Erfurt opened the mentioned restaurant *Freundschaft* as an eatery with a discotheque. All restaurants in the GDR were classified into three categories – this eatery was ranked middle category II. (Cf. Herbst et al. 1994, 389-291) It was open daily from 9 am to midnight, dance started at 7 pm. Only the missing inventory of records is mentioned negatively by the author: „At least one must assume that by opening a discotheque an adequate inventory of records must exist." (NN 1973e, 23). This demonstrates the absence of a clear distinction between a dance event in an eatery and a disco in a place designed for it – both were equalised.

Nearly at the same time in the Erfurt quartier *Johannesplatz* a new build restaurant for pupils was opened. Lacking other cultural offers, quickly popular music was played there and the youngsters danced. The *Plattenabspieler* (meaningful a pejorative word for deejay) as a freelancer earned 9,20 Marks per evening and two young men working as security guards shared another 50 Marks. (Cf. Gööck 1980: 22) Manifestly, the nonexistence of standardising regulations in the starting time of disco can be seen in the fact, that the security of the eatery (and its inventory) was ranked higher than the work of the deejays. The dance room had a capacity of about 600 to 700 individuals and – in contrast to most locations in the republic – a PA system was pre-installed. The problem was, that this PA was inadequate for the dimensions of room and audience.

"A radio with a 2 x 25 Watt output and a set of speakers were present.<sup>6</sup> Using it at maximum level after four weeks a mending was inevitable. These technical circumstances determined the turnus of dance events. With the disco illumination there were only few troubles: The neon light quickly was switched off during the dance rounds." (Gööck 1980, 22)<sup>7</sup>

6 Nowadays the rule of thumb for the firm capacity of the acoustic irradiation in a room is one watt per squaremeter, so the demand for output increases with the size of the room and the present individuals.

7 In this condition Peter Meister found the disco in 1972, displacing his forerunner. He brought his magnetic tape recorder and started to play music without hesitation. Soon after he met the first technician, he was bringing his self-constructed amplifier and was starting to construct a disco light system. In this way the disco continued. In 1978 Peter Meister reflecting the starting time mentioned „On May the 4th 1972 I performed my first disco there [at the Erfurt restaurant ‚Treffpunkt Johannesplatz', T.W.], at a time of the beginning of disco in the GDR. At that time practically no instruction for this form of entertaining event did exist. Many bands who dominated the dance music bagain until then, saw discotheque as unwanted rivalry." (Meister 1978: 14).

The situation for dance bargains was very lean in Weimar in June 1971. Analysing the entertainment situation in the republic, the journalist Kerst reports only five dance halls and one discotheque, where one could “dance to music from *Amiga*<sup>8</sup> records” (Kerst 1971<sup>b</sup>: 20). Even if this disco was situated in the state-owned restaurant *Konzertkaffee* and not in a special designed building, it was highly frequented by young audience. The interior decoration was criticized by Kerst “since some coloured lamps do not make an age-appropriate disco out of a long-serving Café.” (Kerst 1971<sup>b</sup>: 20)

Ideas and claims, how a disco must be designed, to be appropriate for the young audience and its taste, existed. But these remained undertimed. Exceptionally in this case it was the music, for which concrete regulations were established: Following the *Plattenjockey* Christa Fienhold – one of the very few feminine deejays – at this time many titles of the bands like *Thomas-Natschinski-Gruppe*, *Horst-Krüger-Septett* and the *Theo-Schumann-Combo* were hip in discos. This was popular beat music originated in the GDR with long instrumental parts.

In August 1971 an article focussing on dance-bars and discos in Jena was published in *Melodie & Rhythmus*. Now at the beginning of the text the author reports prominent about two discos.

„The Cafe *Paradies* housed the first discotheque of the state-owned restaurant company. Together with another related disco this Cafe can be seen as a ‘force’ in Jena. By now there are friends of dance music, who claim, that in Jena good music is only played in discos.“ (Kerst 1971<sup>c</sup>: 20)

It is interesting, that Kerst does not mention the want to dance and be amused as a major attracting factor of the both Jena discos, but the high quality of music and the inspirational abilities of the deejay.

„*Platten-Jockey* Lutz Illig, formerly a drummer, amateur pantomime with experiences in *Herzklopfen kostenlos* (a talent-show on TV), and a gift of humor does not only have the serendipity to know the favourite tunes of his guests but also can hot up the party for everyone in the restaurant.“ (Kerst 1971<sup>c</sup>: 20)

Such qualities were welcome and got an adequate place in the media coverage, because they could be used to promote and to anchor a role model.

Also the Potsdam example from December 1971, the discotheque at *Weinbergterrassen*, shows that the level of the disco was depending on the competences of the deejay.

„Achim Deike, a chemistry teacher, serves as a deejay for the dance-willing of all ages. [...] He artfully arranged the dance parts, speaks cultivated and has a natural and casual appearance. His moderation-texts were on high level, he avoided tasteless gags.“ (itz 1971, 20)

Labeled as „*Schmuckkästchen*“ (jewel box) the Leipzig discotheque *Treff 71* at the beginning of 1972 „was a real enrichment for the gastronomical establishments“ (NN 1972a, 22) Talking about the disco the Assistant Director of the organisation for the youth restaurants *Treff* in Leipzig starts swarming.

8 *Amiga* was the label for popular music in the state owned record business beside *Eterna*, *Litera* and others, classified by genre and content.

„The room was divided into saucer-type niches, creating an intimate atmosphere. Certainly the parasol mushroom styled elements of the ceiling, including harmoniously integrated spacy headlights, appear fancy. The PA is almost perfect. The deejay had two *Phonowiedergabegeräte* (sic!) [turntables] and a magnetic tape recorder, controlled with a mixer they could be used in several variations. Six separate operatable speaker sets, made it possible to set the sound volume for every niche like it was wanted by the guests.“ (Ohne Autor 1972<sup>a</sup>: 22)

Also in Leipzig in the southwestern worker quarter a disco existed since September 1972. Because of the location and the red interior it was named *Rote Diskothek* (The Red Disco). This disco is exceptional, because it is one of the very few locations continuously used as a discotheque open Wednesday till Sunday from 4 pm until midnight. The redesignment of the “*Bums-Saal* [colloquial term for dance room, T.W.] of an old tavern” (Reischock 1973: 5) was initiated and realized by a group of young workers, gastronomers and students. In a short time the disco established successfully, under the head of a *Klubrat* (club-council) with seven members. The catchment area of the disco reached as far as 45 km even to Halle and surrounding townships – an indication for its popularity. Even if only the capacity was about 100 persons, on some Sundays up to 500 people stood in the line to get in – waiting times of three hours were not unusual. (Cf. Reischock 1973: 5) The unobstructed enforcement of the law for the protection of the youth regulations was positively pointed out. Regularly at 10 pm the lights were switched on and the security controlled the IDs of the younger audience. Reischock reported, that at the *Rote Disko* a control was unnecessary, because the minors leave on their own.

Last but not least another example of the beginning years clarifies the existing startup atmosphere and the the bottom-up initiative of young people plus the collaboration as seen in Leipzig. In March 1973, the year of the Tenth World Festival of Youth and Students in Berlin, the *Sputnik-Diskothek* opened up there. It was established by a bottom-up initiative of a local FDJ group, remodeling a traditional pub in the Greifswalder Straße. The permission for this project, was given by the organisation of the state-owned restaurants to the tavern manager – at the same time the father of an initiator.

A graduated Oeconomist from the consulting association of retailing business was interested in the remodelling and new interior. Students from the *Hochschule für Angewandte und Bildende Kunst Berlin-Weißensee* (Academy of applied arts Berlin-Weißensee) helped with the interior and the local appartement administration was organising the craftsmen. At least more than 6.000 hours of voluntary work added for the *Sputnik-Diskothek*. After opening not only dance events took place, but the FDJ group also tried to bring up a diversified programme:

„Knitware fashion shows, concerts of chanson singers, a slide-show quiz on the Festival of Youth and Students, disco with knowledge quiz ‘Between Bach and Beat’ – old hats in new fashion (with a guest deejay from the academy of oeconomy), fashion boutique with bargain and sales, road safety education with advices for moped fans and so on.“ (Bahre 1973: 18)<sup>9</sup>

9 A letter to the editor from October 1973 protested against this hymn of praise. The experience the author of the letter made in the Sputnik Diskothek was so bad, that he sent an appeal to the

## Prospects of the further development

Summarizing the referred aspects of the beginning years, one finds out that in a very short time a widespread acceptance of discotheque was achieved. A consensus regarding the advantages of this art of entertainment existed, which promoted the further development. Other factors, like the unproblematic set-up and the low costs, speeded up the establishment of disco even more. The law regulating disco effective since August 1973, only partly argued in this article, established the conditions for the specific structure of the GDR disco scene. Since the law has been comparable with these regarding other existing genres of entertaining arts, like amateur and professional musicians, the disco scene developed similar, too. A unique development began, which is uncomparable to western discotheques.

Since 1973, on every administrative level – cities, counties, districts – working groups were founded, which were officially connected by the central *Zentralen Arbeitsgemeinschaft Diskotheken* at the *Zentralhaus für Kulturarbeit* in Leipzig founded in the same year. At the same time a training program, including repeated examinations and advanced education was established. Thereby a hierarchical system for different competences (basic, middle, high and special level) was generated and introduced. Within this system salary and the area where the deejays were allowed to perform was strictly regulated: For example a middle level certificate allows one to perform only within the boundaries of the district. Since 1973 first professional deejays are documented, in 1975 the number already reached 42. (Cf. Hahn 1975: 10) The majority of disco events from the beginning until the collapse of the GDR in 1989 arranged and performed by amateurs, in a nearly constant relation of about 50 to 60 amateurs per one professional deejay. The amateurs had to verify that they work in a fulltime job, which secures the main income, to perform disco was officially only allowed as a secondary, additional work. (Cf. Eisenbarth 1988: 14)

Besides the workshops mentioned above as places of discussion, productive exchange of ideas and views other events existed with a more 'inside' character. Such special events were competitions where deejays presented their shows to a judging panel and the best received an award. On republicwide level since 1976 these competitions were held every third year, in the regions it depended on the organization of the relevant working group.

Officially, the deejays had musical restrictions, regarding the relation between music from eastern and western countries. This so called 60:40 regulation was barely enforced in the praxis. The toleration of western music in discos can be seen as an unofficial conclusion, resulting from the inadequate and unsatisfying music offer plus the impracticality to cut the influence of West German media. The disco could not develop an independent political character. Instead, officials tried to implant the general and overarching educational approach, typical for the socialist party. In doing so on the one hand the en-

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*Arbeiter- und Bauerninspektion der DDR.* (Cf. Friese 1973: 26–27). The *Arbeiter- und Bauerninspektion der DDR* (ABI) was a societal and state-controlling body of the SED central committee and the council of ministers, addressable for citizens with every day, ordinary problems.



telechy of disco was underestimated. On the other hand the educational competences of deejays and the demand for good entertainment of the young audience were overestimated. Installing fixed structures and mechanisms of official cultural grants and benefits, the basis for the deejays was secured until the collapse of the system – also in face of interim solutions for technique and locations. This institutionalized security produced a unique culture of deejaying and discotheque. In an international comparison this led to a short headstart of discos in selfconcept and the corporate acceptance, which soon vanished due to the restrictions by the government. Those retarded the free evolvment and could only work inside the GDR and therefore ended with the peaceful revolution in 1989.

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*Interview:*

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## Sports on Television in the GDR in the 1980s. A Movement between the Political-driven Olympic Boycott 1984 and Growing Popularization

Seit der Durchsetzung des Fernsehens als Massenmedium Mitte der fünfziger Jahre des 20. Jahrhunderts ist die Entwicklung und Geschichte des Sports eng mit diesem Medium verknüpft. Sportliche Großereignisse wie die Olympischen Spiele und die Fußball-WM gehören zu den immer wiederkehrenden Programmhöhepunkten in den Fernsehkanälen vieler Länder. Grundsätzlich machte in diesem Punkt auch die Fernsehanstalt der DDR keine Ausnahme, wie die überlieferten Programmstatistiken und Programmpläne belegen. Doch es ist zu fragen, ob sich in einem sozialistischen Staat wie der DDR, dessen gesamtes Gesellschaftssystem sich an dem Führungsanspruch einer kommunistischen Partei ausrichtete, spezielle Formen der Sportberichterstattung herausgebildet hatten. Bekanntlich stand der DDR-Spitzensport weitgehend im Dienst der Politik. Die Athleten traten bei internationalen Wettkämpfen oftmals als „Diplomaten im Trainingsanzug“ auf. Denn bei der engen Anbindung der Medien an die offizielle Staatspolitik sind solche gleichermaßen politischen Einwirkungen auf die Sportberichterstattung gewiss nicht ausgeblieben.

Zur Beantwortung dieser Frage werden zwei Wege beschritten. Zuerst soll in einer kurzen Überblicksdarstellung herausgearbeitet werden, welche Entwicklungslinien und Grundtendenzen das Sportfernsehen der DDR insbesondere in den achtziger Jahren bestimmten. Bildete das tatsächliche Sportereignis mit seinen unterhaltenden Komponenten den Schwerpunkt der Berichterstattung oder gab es lediglich politischen Anschauungsunterricht in Sachen Sport? Die Fallanalyse zum Olympiaboykott 1984 hingegen untersucht, inwieweit sich die politischen Entscheidungsprozesse nachzeichnen lassen, die im Anschluss an den Boykottbeschluss durch die Sowjetunion zu einem Verbot der Berichterstattung von den Olympischen Sommerspielen in Los Angeles 1984 im DDR-Fernsehen führten.

Umfangreich durchgeführte Erhebungen in den Aktenbeständen der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED) und des Staatlichen Komitees Fernsehen sowie die Analyse von Sendemitschnitten des Sportprogramms des DDR-Fernsehen ermöglichen zum ersten Mal einen detaillierten Einblick in die redaktionellen Abläufe und politischen Vorgaben bei der Gestaltung des Sportprogramms im DDR-Fernsehen. Ferner trugen die Interviews mit zahlreichen Zeitzeugen maßgeblich zur Vervollständigung der Erkenntnisse aus der Aktenrecherche und Programmanalyse bei.

### TV Broadcast of Sports Events in the GDR – A Social and Historical Framework

Ever since (the) television has become a mass medium in the mid-50s of the 20th century, the history and development of sports has been closely linked with this medium. Major sports events such as the Olympic Games or the Football World Cup have always been part of recurring TV programme highlights of many countries. Basically, the broad-