



the tongue at or near the front teeth, coming across as theatrical, historical and different from the vernacular, thereby giving the song a ‘historical legitimacy’ (p. 38).

Chapter 5, ‘Authenticity, Art, Memory and Stardom’, reflects on the live album’s role in cementing Piaf as invincible, an *artiste* who had suffered and survived, and as a saviour. Looseley acknowledges that her style of singing and performance reified a specific kind of white Frenchness, an ‘imagined community’ (p. 74) from which many non-white French citizens were excluded. The bond she had with her audience, Looseley argues, depended ‘on her representing a lost, white Paris of memory and myth’ (p. 74). This was the world of the *chanson*, not really a genre of music, more a way of singing Frenchness and one which was being challenged by the Hallydays and Hardys of a different pop cultural France. Looseley spells out how Piaf managed to escape being just a conduit to a partial and nationalist nostalgia, ‘not as a nostalgic relic unable to reconcile the two cultures but as a redeeming angel summoned back to reconcile the two cultures’ (p. 81). As an ageing, scarred survivor, whose life story mirrors France’s recent histories, she offers recognition of shared pasts and hope for shared futures.

We end with reference to the #MeToo movement, Piaf a beacon of hope and an inspiration to women for the control she had over her career and sexuality. There is much to like in the book, and the way Looseley pulls together the various cultural, political, historical and biographical strands makes for a quick, entertaining and informative read. There is some flowery journalese in there, a few melodramatic turns of phrase and tone, but they work with the subject matter, conveying a sense of enjoyment that is infectious.

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***I’ll Be Your Plaything*. By Anna Szemere and András Rónai. New York: Bloomsbury Academic. 139 pp. ISBN 978-1-501-35443-4**  
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Anna Szemere and András Rónai’s book is the first to explore a Hungarian album as part of Bloomsbury’s 33 1/3 series. Bea Palya’s *I’ll Be Your Plaything* (2010) is a collection of covers, and as we learn from the book, it is not even among Palya’s most popular releases, making it perhaps a less obvious candidate for the series. Szemere and Rónai’s analysis nevertheless demonstrates that it is indeed a very well-chosen case. It enables the authors to simultaneously reflect on contemporary and

state socialist Hungarian popular music, to offer insights into the links between popular culture and (post)socialist collective memory, to consider music industry relations, including global hierarchies, from a particular Eastern European perspective, and finally, to ponder questions of gender, feminism, and ethnicity. Szemere's previous influential work on (post)socialist and contemporary Hungarian popular music (e.g. Szemere 2001, 2018; Szemere and Nagy 2017) and Rónai's experience as a music critic in Hungary (including a previous publication on Palya; Rónai 2017) enable them to present a rich analysis reflecting on each of these issues through a deep and intriguing engagement with musical form and aesthetics. The book also contributes to the growing area of studying popular music 'covers', translations or adaptations from an Eastern European perspective (see e.g. Ignác 2023, which includes another contribution by Szemere; Lange and Szemere 2023). Reflecting on the complexity of the practice of covering, Szemere and Rónai distinguish between 'paying homage' (pp. 58–9), 'crystallizing a recording artist's individuality, persona, and performance style' (pp. 59–60), 'localization' (pp. 60–61), and 'ironic and humorous covers' (pp. 61–2), structuring their analysis of most of the 32 tracks on the album – which also include shorter interludes – on the basis of these categories.

Born in 1976, singer and songwriter Bea Palya became, over the 2000s and 2010s, one of the most successful solo artists in Hungarian popular music. Her work, as the album demonstrates, has fused folk music (Hungarian, Roma, Bulgarian and various other influences), Indian classical, jazz, pop and contemporary experimental/avant-garde forms in various and unique ways. *I'll Be Your Plaything* is a collaboration with her long-time creative partner Samu Gryllus. The album covers pop hits from the state socialist era that had been featured on the *Táncdalfesztivál* (Dance song festival) television talent contest (running from 1966 to 1994), a defining Hungarian popular cultural phenomenon, alongside two global pop hits from the US. In addition to the notion and practice of *play* in its many senses, which permeates the album – and is thus also integral to the analysis – the book emphasises the concept of *dialogue* in both its form and content: the introduction reproduces an exchange between the two book authors, a musing on popular music, politics and remembering that serves as a kind of meta-text; the authors then provide a peek inside the history of creative collaboration between the two main creators of the album. This intriguing insight into the creative process mirrors the record's aesthetic approach, one which Rónai (2017) has called 'gentle deconstruction' – the analysis reveals the various ways in which the creative process is made visible, or rather audible, in the songs (one of the more obvious examples is a track where a Skype conversation, in which Gryllus and Palya discuss potential copyright issues with an American song to be featured on the album, is heard over various related musical fragments and improvisation, resulting in an ironic musical commentary on authorship and the global copyright regime). The analysis also leads us into a dialogue between the 'old' songs and the new versions, the two historical eras, between East and West (represented by popular music from the US), and between social worlds: the village and the cosmopolitan world of cities and their art worlds. Bakhtinian dialogism, together with the concept of the intermundane (Stanyek and Piekut 2010) and Actor Network Theory are mobilised by the authors to make sense of these interactions and relations.

I would like to highlight two central questions raised in the book. First, the theme of remembering: the authors simultaneously address the issue of

representation of the state socialist past in a crisis-ridden global capitalist present (notably, the album was released in 2010, in the wake of the 2008 global economic crisis, a year that also marked a new political era in Hungary), and the issue of nostalgia within global trends of 'retro-culture', 'necro-marketing' (p. 39) and a rapidly growing global heritage industry. Szemere and Rónai place the album in 'global trends of retromania and hauntology', referring to the ideas of Reynolds (2010) and Fisher (2014), respectively, but they also invoke Boym's (2001) concepts of restorative and reflective nostalgia – the latter theory, unlike the first two, incorporates a specific Eastern European historical context and epistemology. Being linked to the Dance Song Festival, the majority of the songs covered were themselves already interesting mixes of the Western-oriented 'beat' style of the rebellious youth of the 1960s and the conservative *estrade*-like 'dance song' setting on state television, a musical framework – or rather, cage – through which youth culture was domesticated and incorporated. Based on Szemere and Rónai's analysis, the playful, experimental pop/folk/world music/avant-garde approach to these songs on *I'll Be Your Plaything* stands out in contrast to the masculine, conservative, rock-based culture of restorative nostalgia, which is arguably a more dominant, even hegemonic form of remembering in Hungarian popular music (the latter is illustratively invoked by Rónai in his opening vignette). The album can thus be regarded as a step taken towards the autonomy of remembering within a dual regime of the global industry heritage and local memory politics.

Second, the book reflects on Palya's feminism – the ways in which gender relations, femininity and womanhood are represented by certain songs on the album, as well as the rest of her work and career. Evoking Cixous's (1976) *écriture féminine*, the authors present Palya's music as specifically female – a voice articulating a variety of female experiences, also shaped by ethnicity and social class. On the one hand, as the authors show, Palya's stance is a clearly postfeminist, neoliberal one: the album's title, reworking Kati Kovács's defiant original 1966 Dance Song Festival performance of 'I Won't Be Your Plaything' ('Nem leszek a játékszered') as a more playful and ambiguous track, is highly symbolic of a shift from second-wave to postfeminism. Moreover, as the authors reveal, Palya has responded to the music industry's sexism, as well as the global power inequalities experienced through being signed to a major label, by setting up her own record label and running her career with an independent, entrepreneurial mindset. At the same time, several tracks on the album convey a strong representation of transgenerational female experience: the mother–daughter relationship is placed at the centre, and depicted as part of a line of female heritage, represented most clearly through Palya's duet with her own mother. The lives of working women during the state socialist era and the patriarchal relations prevailing in such contexts of waged work are represented through recording samples from Palya's mother's audio memories from the Szeged garment factory where she used to work. These serve as a poignant 'meta-commentary on gender relations in socialist-era Hungary' (p. 91) on the album, sonically interweaving personal and collective, Eastern European women's memory.

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***The Journal of Beatles Studies*. Edited by Holly Tessler and Paul Long. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2022. 177 pp. ISBN 978-1-802-07766-7  
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It took more than 50 years after their separation for an academic journal devoted exclusively to the Beatles to be created. Edited by Holly Tessler (University of Liverpool) and Paul Long (Monash University), the bi-annual and fully open access *Journal of Beatles Studies* opens a new era for this research area, focused on field diversification and multi-disciplinarity. Published in autumn 2022, the theme of the first issue – 'Navigating and narrating the Beatles: establishing a research agenda for the twenty-first century' – encourages a new approach on how and why to work on the Beatles today. The journal's aims are to facilitate the connection between Beatles scholars, and to include non-academic discussions, fully embracing the cultural weight of the Beatles' legacy on a wider perspective. This first issue is divided into four main sections: the first is a presentation of the journal and its creators; the second gathers the academic articles devoted to the theme of the issue; there follows a non-academic section called 'Across the Universe', devoted to current artistic or cultural events related to the Beatles; the final section is dedicated to book and media reviews.

The first article (pp. 11–38) focuses on Dori Howard's personal experience of the Liverpool Hope University's MA entitled 'The Beatles, Popular Music and Society', a post-graduate degree created by Mike Brocken in 2009. Howard stresses the many valid different ways to study the Beatles, and her 'autoethnographic' (p. 12) perspective – based on her own narrative and several testimonies from other generations of students – tends to prove the legitimacy of this curriculum and how it has helped students to become complete Beatles professionals. In the second article (pp. 39–67), Clare Kinsella and Eleanor Peters show how the city of