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# When Yugoslavia Began to Speak Jazz: The Magazine *Svijet Jazza* (1941) in Interwar Popular Culture*

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# Када је Југославија почела ɉез говорити: Часопис *Svijet jazza* (1941) у међуратној популарној култури

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Abstract

Published in Zagreb between January and April 1941, the monthly magazine *Svijet jazza* [*The World of Jazz*] was the first periodical in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia dedicated exclusively to jazz music. It featured original articles and reviews of prominent musical events, as well as translations from a range of foreign jazz magazines. Taking inspiration from American publications such as *The Orchestra World* and *Metronome*, *Svijet jazza* brought together contributors and correspondents from Ljubljana, Belgrade, Split, and New York. Its publication came to an abrupt end, after only four issues, with the outbreak of World War II in Yugoslavia. An analysis of *Svijet jazza* reveals how jazz in interwar Yugoslavia emerged as a marker of modernity and an integral part of the broader field of popular culture.

Keywords: Magazine *Svijet jazza* [*The World of Jazz*], jazz music, Zagreb, interwar Yugoslavia, popular culture.

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Апстракт

У Загребу је од јануара до априла 1941. године излазио месечни часопис *Svijet jazza*, први специјализовани лист посвећен џез музици на простору Краљевине Југославије. У њему су објављивани оригинални чланци и прикази важнијих музичких догађаја, као и преводи текстова из разних страних музичких часописа. *Svijet jazza* следио је узоре америчких часописа као што су *The Orchestra World* и *Metronome*, а међу сарадницима и дописницима налазили су се аутори из Љубљане, Београда, Сплита и Њујорка. Излажење часописа прекинуо је почетак Другог светског рата у Југославији, након свега четири објављена броја. Анализа часописа *Svijet jazza* показује како се џез у међуратној Југославији јавља као симбол модерности и део ширег поља популарне културе.

Кључне речи: часопис *Svijet jazza*, џез музика, Загреб, међуратна Југославија, популарна култура.

## Introduction: Jazz in Interwar Yugoslavia

When Serbian writer and modernist intellectual Rastko Petrović (1898–1951) wrote that "only once we have overcome our obsession with Europe and learned to speak its language will we be able to discover what in ourselves is of real worth – and to express it so that it may hold meaning for the rest of the world," he captured a paradox that shaped the cultural life of interwar Yugoslavia – the desire to modernize and to belong to Europe, accompanied by an unease about losing one's own voice. As historian Radina Vučetić observes, this ambivalence defined the challenges of Yugoslav society during the 1920s and 1930s: a fascination with Western models of progress, culture, and style, coupled with a persistent fear of moral and cultural disintegration (Vučetić 2018). In that tension between imitation and invention, between Europe and its peripheries, such as interwar Yugoslavia, jazz appeared as one of the striking symbols of modernity (Tomašević 2009, 63–64, 71; Golubović 2024).

While interwar Yugoslavia regarded Europe as its principal cultural reference, it is essential to acknowledge that jazz embodied merely an indirect European influence – its origins and essence were unequivocally American. During the World War I, American military bands, perhaps most notably the 369th Infantry Regiment from Harlem, led by James Reese Europe, played in France and introduced European audiences to syncopated rhythms that were new to them (Jackson 2003, 17–18). Having already gained visibility in England and France, jazz reached Germany soon afterwards. According

to Michael Kater, it was probably through French prisoner-of-war camps and the presence of Allied occupation forces that German listeners first encountered this new musical idiom (Kater 1992, 5). By all accounts, these performances left a lasting impression, and in the years that followed, many American musicians like Paul Whiteman, Ed Kirkeby, Vincent Lopez, Harry Reser, and Lonnie Johnson helped to make jazz popular all over the continent (Lotz 2007, 67).

According to reports in the period press, jazz performance and listening practice in interwar Yugoslavia dates back to the early 1920s, often described through hybrid spellings such as *žaz*, *jas*, *džaz* and *džez* – a linguistic uncertainty that mirrored the broader struggle to define the unfamiliar rhythm.[1] Although no reliable documentation exists about the precise circumstances of its arrival, sources from that period suggest that its earliest impulses also came from American soldier-musicians who remained in Europe after the World War I. Some of them have performed in Zagreb's Music Hall,[2] where domestic musicians soon began to adopt this new music (Hrvoj 2009, 185). During the 1920s, the main urban centers of Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana, Split, and Sarajevo developed into leading focal points of the emerging jazz culture. Together with the growing availability of gramophone records,[3] sound films,[4] and occasional guest performances by American artists, jazz gradually became an important channel of cultural exchange with the United States – particularly in a society where French and German were still the most widely spoken foreign languages (Gašić 2005, 12, 87). It is also worth noting that by the early 1920s, German and Austrian films dominated the repertoire of Yugoslav cinemas, while American productions were rapidly

1 According to Dutch jazz scholar Walter van de Leur (2012), a new kind of American dance music described as *jes*, *jas*, or *yasz* appeared in the Netherlands as early as 1919, which indicates that, at the time, the term jazz itself was still unstable across Europe. The same fluctuation in terminology can be observed in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia as well.

2 The space that once hosted the Music Hall is today home to the Zagreb Youth Theatre [Zagrebačko kazalište mladih].

3 Jazz's rise in popularity was closely linked to the emergence of new media and technologies. One notable example is Zagreb record company Edison Bell Penkala (active 1927–1936), which played a significant role in promoting popular music. A recent edited volume, *Rana domaća diskografska industrija: Edison Bell Penkala, Elektroton i Jugoton* (Ceribašić, Dunatov and Vukobratović 2025) offers a detailed discussion of popular music in chapter V.

4 In addition to the establishment of the Edison Bell Penkala, it is worth noting that the first sound film in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was shown in Zagreb's *Olimp kino* on 11 November 1929 (*White Shadows in the South Sea*, d. William Van Dyke, 1928), confirming the city's role as a genuine center of modern trends. On the development of film culture and reception of sound films in interwar Yugoslavia, see Kosanović 2011, 34–36.

gaining ground in the domestic market. The number of imported Hollywood films grew steadily, gradually displacing other European productions. In 1926, permanent branches of Fox (Fox Film Corporation Jugoslovensko d.d.) and MGM (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Jugoslovensko d.d.) were established in Zagreb, soon followed by Paramount and Warner Bros (Kosanović 2011, 37). These American–Yugoslav companies served as key intermediaries for a swift expansion of Hollywood cinema in the country, and its films not only introduced new cinematic aesthetics but also popularized the latest American popular and jazz music (Hrvoj 2009, 187; Golubović 2025). In this sense, the story of jazz's arrival in Yugoslavia closely reflected the broader European encounter with this American form of modern music.

The consumers of jazz, popular music, and urban entertainment largely belonged to the middle class, which embraced these forms as markers of modern lifestyle and cosmopolitan identity (Babović 2018). Yet, many intellectuals in Yugoslavia regarded jazz as a manifestation of moral decline and cultural decadence. Serbian literary critic Bogdan Popović (1863–1944) associated black jazz bands, foxtrot, Argentine tango, Dadaism, Futurism, other modern movements, and "primitive excesses" with "a return to barbarism," claiming that they undermined the very foundations of civilisation (Popović 1923, 223). Miloje Milojević (1884–1949), a composer and musicologist, similarly criticised Josephine Baker's 1929 Belgrade performance as "an unnatural refinement of exoticism," contrasting it with what he called the "healthy art" of Borodin's (Александр Порфирьевич Бородин) *Prince Igor* (Milojević 1929, 9),[5] while in Zagreb, her concert was initially banned following protests from conservative and ecclesiastical circles (Džozefini opet zabranjuju 1929, 4). Such expressions of cultural anxiety reflected a broader mistrust of modernist tendencies, particularly among the older generations who, even before the World War I, had sought to establish firm pillars of bourgeois culture. Against this backdrop of cultural ambivalence, one may ask: what was actually written about jazz in interwar Yugoslavia?

Although jazz had already found its way into dance halls, cafés, and clubs, traces of its reception in the press were scattered and often ambiguous. References to jazz appeared across a range of periodicals – from daily newspapers to illustrated magazines, music and film journals, and entertainment weeklies – where the term *jazz* was used almost interchangeably with dance music. The same was true across Europe. The growing enthusiasm for new social dances such as the foxtrot, tango, shimmy, and eventually the Charleston,

5 More on Josephine Baker's 1929 performances in Belgrade and Zagreb, see Čupić 2011, 31–67 and Babović 2018, 140–173.

gave additional impetus to what was broadly understood as "jazz," a term that increasingly accompanied this new wave of popular entertainment (Kater 1992, 5). This broader landscape provides the necessary context for examining the magazine *Svijet jazza* [*World of Jazz*], one of the most intriguing and short-lived publications of the period.

## *Svijet jazza* and Interwar Music Periodicals

The first issue of *Svijet jazza* was published in Zagreb in January 1941. It was the first Yugoslav magazine dedicated entirely to jazz, appearing monthly and aiming to position this genre within the broader landscape of modern culture. The magazine carried the subtitle "list moderne glazbe i njenih stvaralaca" [Magazine about Modern Music and Its Creators], which reflected its ambition to present jazz as part of the wider field of contemporary artistic expression. With only four issues released before the outbreak of the World War II, its brief lifespan highlights the fragility of cultural ventures in uncertain times. The January issue comprised only six pages, while the remaining three extended to eight each. Contributors and correspondents were Srđan Krizman from New York, Miodrag Jovanović Štule from Belgrade, Saša Skale from Ljubljana, and Branko Milin from Split (Svijet jazza 1941, 2). This shows that *Svijet jazza* was an attempt to create a cultural network that connected local musical centers and established contact with the wider world. Only six articles were signed by name: two by Branko Milin, two by Vladimir Francetić, one by Zvonimir Bradić, and one by Štule [Miodrag Jovanović Štule]. The remaining contributions were signed with initials or left anonymous. Despite its modest length, the magazine was richly illustrated, featuring striking photographs of leading jazz musicians and orchestras of the day. It was printed at the "Merkantile" printing house, owned by Jutriša and Sedmak, which was located in the center of Zagreb at 35 Ilica Street.

The founders and editors of the magazine were two enthusiasts who were among the pioneers of jazz in interwar Yugoslavia – pianist Srećko Tekauc and drummer, arranger, and conductor Uroš Jurković (1914–199?). While little biographical information is available about Tekauc, it is known that in 1940 and early 1941 he performed in the so-called "vedre večeri [cheerful evenings]" and in Radio Zagreb concerts featuring operetta numbers and popular songs. He also played piano in the Swing Trio (Lučić 2003, 69). Jurković's career, by contrast, is somewhat better documented. By the late 1930s, his ensemble Jurković & Quick Swingers (sometimes referred to simply as the Swingers) was one of the five major jazz orchestras active in Zagreb (Križić 2018, 453). Together with clarinettist Srđan Krizman and the aforementioned Tekauc,

he formed the Swing Trio in 1938, modeled after the Benny Goodman Trio.[6] From 1933 onward, Jurković performed with his orchestra on Radio Zagreb, presenting both jazz and dance music under the title Plesni orkestar Radio Zagreba [Radio Zagreb Dance Orchestra]. He was also the first jazz commentator on the station, introducing listeners to the styles of various orchestras and to interpretations by prominent jazz musicians (Körbler 2018, 487–488).[7] Given his broad and versatile experience as a performer, arranger, bandleader, and radio commentator, it is hardly surprising that Jurković approached the idea of a jazz magazine with confidence and optimism.

The magazine's purpose was outlined in the opening statement of the first issue, titled "Zašto izlazimo [Why We Are Publishing]." They noted that the need for such a periodical had existed for some time, and that it was envisaged as a means of connection, collective advancement, and exchange between young jazz musicians and their audiences. The magazine was to serve as "a starting and meeting point for all their problems," inviting collaboration "to raise the level of jazz in our country and thereby a proper understanding of modern jazz music, which is a reflection of our time." They added that comparable journals already existed elsewhere in Europe, where jazz had been received with greater understanding, and observed similar progress locally. Finally, they presented *Svijet jazza* as a vehicle for promoting high-quality jazz through informed criticism, modeled on the leading American periodicals of modern jazz, *Orchestra World* and *Metronome* (Zašto izlazimo 1941, 1). Thus, the idea of a devoted jazz magazine emerged as part of a broader effort to promote the music and secure its recognition within modern cultural life. This raises the question of how *Svijet jazza* positioned itself within the landscape of contemporary periodicals – both in relation to other Yugoslav music and entertainment magazines, and to similar jazz publications that had already appeared elsewhere in Europe.

As already noted, *Svijet jazza* was the first Yugoslav magazine dedicated entirely to jazz. Although film magazines played an important role in popularizing jazz (Zašto izlazimo 1941, 1), most music periodicals mentioned the genre only sporadically, and usually as a marginal topic. The most notable exceptions were *Revija muzike* [*Review of Music*] (Belgrade, 1940) and *Ritam* [*Rhythm*] (Zagreb, 1941), both of which dedicated significant space to popular music. Yet, the extent to which such popular content was disregarded by

6 Ivo Körbler dates the beginning of the ensemble's activity to 1937 (2018, 487), while Davor Hrvoj only mentions that the trio was formed in the mid-1930s (2009, 186).

7 A detailed article on Uroš Jurković, outlining his collaborations with various musicians and ensembles, appeared in the magazine *Ritam* (Mam. [Marjan Marjanović?] 1941, 9).

musicologists at the time is best illustrated by Aleksandar Vasić's observation that Stana Đurić Klajn based her entire assessment of *Revija muzike* on its first issue (out of six), where she had already associated it with music of an "entertaining character." Her conclusions, once established, proved rather categorical and reflected the professional conventions of the period, when popular music was not regarded as a legitimate subject of musicological inquiry (Vasić 2015, 120). Remarkably, *Revija muzike* had to wait seventy-five years before it attracted substantial scholarly attention to its treatment of popular music (Milanović 2015). To the best of our knowledge, *Ritam* has, so far, attracted no dedicated scholarly attention.[8] In Europe, periodicals that featured jazz first appeared within the broader realm of dance-music journalism. The *Melody Maker* (London, 1926) and *Rhythm* (1927) were primarily dedicated to popular dance music, as was the French *Jazz-Tango* (founded in October 1930 under the name *Jazz-Tango-Dancing*). By contrast, the Dutch *De Jazzwereld* (1931) is often regarded as the first magazine dedicated entirely to jazz. It aimed to promote and defend jazz, to nurture both its performers and its audiences, to encourage radio dissemination, and to bring together a community of devoted listeners (Van de Leur 2012). With such a conception and mission, its appearance signaled the gradual diverging of jazz from popular dance music, reflecting an emerging awareness of jazz as an autonomous artistic field. In this respect, *Svijet jazza* shared the same aims as its European predecessors, seeking to legitimize and advocate for jazz within modern cultural life.

## The Content and Aesthetic Orientation of *Svijet jazza*

*Svijet jazza* did not publish long articles. Its contents mostly consisted of short reviews of domestic jazz concerts, news from other Yugoslav cities, translations of short foreign articles, and texts on musical instruments important for jazz ensembles. The articles, though diverse in scope, can be divided into three broader thematic groups: jazz performance (ensembles and performers), gramophone records (reviews and recommendations), and urban culture (a chronicle of city life). The scope of these thematic areas naturally varies, with some receiving considerably more attention than others. Despite

8 *Ritam* is occasionally mentioned in the literature. Blažeković notes that it featured articles on jazz and popular music (2002, 105), while Majer-Bobetko describes it more broadly as a magazine that aimed to popularize diverse aspects of musical life, including jazz, amateur performance, composer profiles, and concert reports (1992, 187). The owner and publisher was Boris Kregar, and the editor was Lujo Mayer. With the outbreak of the war, *Ritam* shared the same fate as *Svijet jazza* – only three issues were published.

their brevity, the contributions on local musicians and bands represent one of the most comprehensive existing sources on the Yugoslav jazz scene on the eve of the World War II.

The first issue (from January) brought reports on Nina Selak and jazz orchestra The Devils, Johnny Remenar's newly formed orchestra, and the saxophonist Bojan Hohnjec, whose band was analyzed in detail – from its instrumental lineup to issues of dynamics and ensemble cohesion. In February (the second issue), the magazine turned its attention to jazz activities in Sarajevo (the Hulla and Colibri orchestras), Split (the Midnight Club orchestra led by Srećko Ivančić, and Quick), as well as Ljubljana, where dance orchestras such as Adamič–Broadway and Odeon were active, alongside smaller groups like Nocturno, Ajax, New Boys, and Akordeon. It also mentioned performances by singer Vladimir Francetić at Zagreb's Hotel Esplanade, where the well-known dance orchestra Universal-Band regularly played. A curious anecdote is that Hohnjec's orchestra was temporarily banned from performing because all of its members were high-school seniors preparing for graduation. The third (March) issue continued to map the expanding jazz scene across Yugoslavia. It introduced Lolly Schön, the new vocalist of Johnny Remenar's orchestra, and a recently formed Zagreb ensemble led by brothers F. and M. Johan. Reports from Belgrade noted the Štule–Jovanović orchestra performing at the artists' ball "Babilonska kula [Babylon Tower]" while in Novi Sad the Melody Boys played at the "Danubius" rowing club ball. Meanwhile, in Zagreb, Nina Selak and the Devils appeared at the graduation event of the School of Commerce held at the Glazbeni zavod. It also included a profile of Bojan Adamič, described as "the most prominent jazz musician in Ljubljana," along with news from Sarajevo (a concert by Melody-Band) and a letter of encouragement to the magazine's editorial board sent by Stipe pl. Vučetić, conductor of the Studentski Jazz Rio orchestra in Tuzla.[9] The final issue (April) captured the peak of Yugoslavia's pre-war jazz enthusiasm. It opened with an extensive report on the jazz competition held at Zagreb's Hotel Esplanade, organized by MGM and the Urania Cinema – an event that symbolized the growing visibility and confidence of the local jazz scene. Alongside news of Srđan Krizman's activities in New York, the magazine announced a national songwriting contest for the best schlager, reflecting its ambition to stimulate original popular music production. Branko Milin contributed a thoughtful piece on small orchestras, complemented by notes on a newly formed harmonica ensemble and on Bojan Adamič's guest performances in Zagreb. The issue closed with short updates from Sarajevo and Tuzla, showing how widely jazz had permeated urban culture through

9 Today, Tuzla is the third-largest city in northeastern Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Yugoslavia's urban centers by the spring of 1941. These performances can also be viewed from the perspective of urban culture, as a chronicle of the musical life of different cities and as an illustration of the fact that jazz had extended beyond its principal centres – Zagreb, Ljubljana, and Belgrade. Although jazz ensembles were active in smaller towns across the country during the 1930s, their presence was less visible because these places received far less public and press attention. This helps explain why contemporary reporting focused more on larger cities, especially those within Zagreb's cultural orbit. When considered together, these reports reveal not only the geographic spread of jazz activities across the country, but also the unevenness with which they were documented. Far from offering a coherent picture, the magazine reflects a limited and regionally uneven set of reports, with the richest coverage drawn from Croatian and Slovenian cities, more modest material from towns in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and only occasional references from Serbia.

Several translated or adapted texts reinforced *Svijet jazza*'s connection to international jazz culture. For example, the first issue included the article "Problemi saksofona [Problems of the Saxophone]," translated from the American magazine *Orchestra World*. Written by the magazine's regular contributor N. C. Bates, the piece addressed various technical aspects of saxophone performance (1941, 4). The February issue featured a text from the same magazine on warming up the lips for trumpet playing, written by Fred Woodaman (1941, 5). The last two issues published "12 osnovnih principa dobrog pijaniste [Twelve Basic Principles of a Good Pianist]" (1941a, 4; 1941b, 4), a translation of Teddy Wilson's text.[10] Sharing the same pedagogical tone, the magazine published "15 zlatnih pravila za drummere [Fifteen Golden Rules for Drummers]," a brief article probably written by Jurković that addresses issues of technique and musicianship (you 1941a, 6–7).

A short text titled "Američki muzički magazin našem listu [American Music Magazine to Our Journal]" published on the front page of the March issue, reported on the wholehearted support that the editors of *Orchestra World* extended to the Zagreb magazine. Significantly, it also noted that the American journal had sent photographs of orchestras and leading jazz figures to be featured in *Svijet jazza*. In the same issue, images of American actress and singer Dorothy Lamour and American jazz trombonist and composer Tommy Dorsey were already used for the magazine's visual layout. The translated articles and the documented contact with the editors of *Orchestra*

10 Teddy Wilson (1912–1986) was an American jazz pianist and bandleader, best known for his work with Benny Goodman, Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, and Billie Holiday. He was a leading representative of the swing era sound.

*World* illustrate the growing permeability of Yugoslavia's cultural sphere to American influences. During the 1920s, jazz and popular music had largely reached the region through cultural intermediaries in France and Germany, but the rise of sound film in the 1930s intensified direct exposure to American culture – a shift clearly reflected in the pages of *Svijet jazza*. The inclusion of translated pedagogical-like texts and photographs of American performers and orchestras reveals the editors' awareness of jazz as a global cultural style. The dominant influence of American musicians is also evident in the recurring column "Portreti američkih leadera [Portraits of American Leaders]," which appeared in each issue of the magazine: Benny Goodman (January 1941, 5), Tommy Dorsey (February 1941, 6), Duke Ellington (March 1941, 5), and Artie Shaw (April 1941, 5). The selection of these figures clearly indicates which artists were regarded as the principal models for Yugoslav jazz musicians. Through such gestures, *Svijet jazza* presented jazz not as a distant import but as part of a shared, transnational language of modernity.

## Constructing Jazz: Theory, Performance, and Ensemble Sound

More than being a magazine for promoting jazz and connecting musicians and enthusiasts, *Svijet jazza* sought to define the very essence of the genre, to articulate its aesthetic, moral, and professional boundaries. This ambition is most clearly reflected in a small number of theoretically oriented texts that provide a valuable basis for reconstructing how jazz was conceptualized and discussed within the local context. One of them, titled "Zašto mnogi ne nalaze u jazzu muzičku vrednost [Why Many Do Not Find Musical Value in Jazz]," argues that "performing modern jazz music to be easy and simple," adding that not every piano improvisation of schlagers qualifies as jazz. Importantly, the author draws a clear distinction between jazz and popular music, arguing that widespread misconceptions about jazz arise from inadequate interpreters: "They are often convinced that jazz is any trivial 'schlager' or contentless operetta piece played with a few beats on the drum." Therefore, "a few poorly placed syncopations" do not constitute modern jazz (este. 1941, 2).[11] The text also underscores the importance of gramophone records as a means of learning how jazz should be performed, since it is presented as a form of music that requires technical skill and knowledge. In essence, it was among the main

11 The pseudonym este. most likely derives from the initials S. T., suggesting that the author of the article was Srećko Tekauc.

arguments for considering jazz an art form, contrary to widespread prejudices. Therefore, the text seeks to elevate jazz above the clichés of a chaotic genre, emphasizing order, discipline, and musical literacy as the very foundations of its artistic legitimacy. Throughout this and other articles, the recurring expression "modern jazz music" reveals an attempt to frame jazz as a modern art rather than simple entertainment, seeking to legitimize it within contemporary musical and aesthetic discourse.

Another article of particular importance is "Paralele o džezu [Parallels about Jazz]." In it, the author argues that the manner of performance depends not only on the individual musician but also on race, nationality, and the way jazz is cultivated in a given cultural environment. Particularly interesting is his observation that the situation in France resembles that in Yugoslavia, describing it as "a country of schlager songs." Yet, as he explains, these are not "American dance schlagers" but "songs in the true sense of the word, those that spring from the boulevards of Paris," which, as he stresses, "have nothing to do with jazz" (You. 1941b, 2). Such remarks again suggest that genuine jazz models were sought primarily in America, raising the question of what, if anything, from European popular music could even be regarded as jazz. The author also draws an illuminating parallel between the jazz scenes in Zagreb and Belgrade. The main difference, he explains, lay in the scarcity of trumpeters and trombonists in Belgrade, where smaller ensembles emerged, unlike in Zagreb, where complete orchestras were formed. Yet he adds that a positive aspect of these smaller Belgrade bands was the development of a more pronounced "hot" style (You. 1941b, 2).[12] In this way, the article provides valuable insight into how jazz simultaneously evolved in the Yugoslav capital and in what was considered the country's jazz stronghold.

The final text invites a closer look at the concert reviews and ensembles featured in the magazine. Already in the first issue of *Svijet jazza*, one can notice the editors' intention to cultivate the audience's taste through reviews and critiques of jazz ensemble performances. It should be noted, however, that the tone of these reviews was consistently benevolent, written with the genuine wish that the ensembles would continue to improve and succeed. One such example is the review of Johny Remenar's new orchestra, in which the author praised the arrangements and the attention given to dynamics, though noting that the sound was not yet sufficiently refined, as the wind section was too loud and the balance among the instruments uneven (T. 1941, 3). The orchestra of saxophonist and clarinetist Bojan Hohnjec received similar praise

12 "Hot" was a style of jazz playing characterized by a fast tempo, pronounced rhythm, and a high level of improvisation.

for its brass section, though the drummer was described as "talented, but lacking a sense of finesse and taste" (S. T. 1941, 4). These concert reviews also make it possible to reconstruct the sound practice of the ensembles, since they contain information about the instruments that formed them. For instance, the orchestra led by tenor saxophonist Johnny Remenar performed with four saxophones (including Remenar), three trumpets, a trombone, and a four-piece rhythm section (T. 1941, 3).[13] The orchestra of Bojan Hohnjec featured a somewhat fuller formation, including clarinet (Hohnjec), four saxophones, three trumpets, two trombones, piano, guitar, double bass, and drums (S. T. 1941, 4). The ensemble of Miodrag Jovanović Štule, who played the accordion, consisted of four saxophones and a rhythm section (St. 1941, 3). The Adamič-Broadway Orchestra, on the other hand, appeared in several different formations. At a graduation event in Celje,[14] the group performed with four saxophones, two trumpets, a trombone, piano, and drums. However, at one of the major events of the season, the "Slovenski večer [Slovenian Evening]" held at the Concert Hall in Ljubljana's Tabor Quarter, they played as a thirteen-member orchestra featuring four saxophones, five brass instruments, a three-piece rhythm section, and Adamič himself as a trumpeter and bandleader (A. S. 1941, 4).

Taken together, these examples reveal the gradual standardization of jazz ensemble instrumentation within the Yugoslav context. The consistent presence of the rhythm section and the four-part saxophone and brass groups suggests that local orchestras have increasingly modeled themselves on the structure of the American big bands. Along with the photographs of ensembles that appeared in the press and magazines, and some surviving sound recordings (Jazz u Hrvatskoj 1995), reviews such as those published in *Svijet jazza* allow us to hear, in words, the sound of a music that was, at the time, just beginning to define itself.

## From Record to Screen: Jazz, Media, and Modern Culture in *Svijet jazza*

As elsewhere in Europe, new media such as gramophone records, radio, and sound film played a central role in shaping popular culture in interwar

13 The review uses the term *ritam* [rhythm], referring to four instruments forming the rhythmic foundation of the ensemble: piano, guitar, bass, and drums. In addition to the term *ritam*, the magazine adopted other expressions related to jazz music in their original form, such as *jam session* and *drummer*, which reflects the gradual adoption of American terminology in the local musical discourse.

14 Celje is a small Slovenian town located northeast of the capital, Ljubljana.

Yugoslavia.[15] It is almost impossible to find a scholarly reference in domestic historiography dealing with popular culture and music, or the processes of modernization in the interwar period, without mentioning these new influences on everyday life. These media not only transformed musical experience but also established new patterns of listening and circulation that subtly altered urban habits and taste. These media also played a crucial role in the dissemination of jazz, which found its voice within the pages of *Svijet jazza*.

The magazine featured advertisements for Elektroton, a successor of sorts to Edison Bell Penkala, which promoted its "world schlagers for dance and song" and operated stores in Belgrade (Terazije 5, Passage), Zagreb (Ilica 35, Oktogon), Ljubljana (Nebotičnik Passage), Novi Sad (Željeznička 4), and Maribor (Gosposka 20).[16] Only the final April issue included record reviews and recommendations. In the article "Treba slušati ploče [One Should Listen to Records]" several Brunswick[17] releases available for purchase in Elektroton stores were also recommended: Bob Crosby's "Between the devil and the deep blue Sea" and "Grand terrace rhythm," Fletcher Henderson's "Big John's Special" and "Limehouse Blues," Count Basie's "Swinging the blues," Louis Armstrong's "Dipper Mouth Blues" and "If we never meet again," Stuff Smith's "Twilight in Turkey," and "Where is the sun" (Treba slušati ploče 1941, 5). This list is significant for several reasons. According to the Discogs database (n.d.), all of the listed Brunswick records were released between 1934 and 1938, a period that saw the bankruptcy of Edison Bell Penkala in 1937 and the emergence of Elektroton which continued to operate until the end of the World War II. Three Edison Bell Penkala catalogues from this time were considerably smaller in scope than those of previous years, clearly indicating the company's declining business trajectory. The catalogues from 1935 and 1936 featured schlagers, slow-foxes, foxtrots, and tangos from sound films, often described as being performed "with the accompaniment of world jazz orchestras" (EBP 1935, 15–22; EBP 1936) The final catalogue from 1936–1937 included a section entitled "Original American Dance Novelties," highlighting American musicians and orchestras performing foxtrots, slow-foxes, rumbas, and tangos (EBP 1936–1937).[18] Elektroton continued this tradition, and its 1937 and 1938

15 For an excellent overview of interwar popular culture and entertainment in interwar Yugoslavia, see Vesić 2023.

16 Elektroton was founded in Ljubljana in 1933, and after the bankruptcy of Edison Bell Penkala it first took over the company's store in the Oktogon, subsequently beginning to expand into other cities across the country. For more about Elektroton, see Bulić 1980, 25–26; Ceribašić, Dunatov, and Vukobratović 2025, 25–28.

17 On Brunswick, see Holmes 2006, 36.

18 For more about Edison Bell Penkala catalogues from the mentioned period, see Golubović

catalogues likewise featured dance music and schlagers from sound films and operettas (Elektroton 1937, 3–4; Elektroton 1938, 2–20). It is important to note that most of the schlagers listed in these catalogues were in German, originating from popular German sound films of the time. This linguistic and cultural orientation toward Central Europe further illustrates the extent to which Yugoslav record production was shaped by continental, rather than American influences. Listed sources suggest that domestic record production in Yugoslavia made little distinction between popular music and jazz. By the mid-1930s, however, this differentiation had already become established in much of Europe, where jazz was increasingly recognized as an autonomous artistic genre rather than merely dance or entertainment music. In Yugoslavia, jazz in its authentic American form was largely absent from local production, which explains why Elektroton was mentioned in *Svijet jazza* (1941) not as a recording label, but as a retail shop offering imported records that clearly attracted the country's jazz enthusiasts.[19] Another important point regarding the listed Brunswick records is that the most recent among them was released in 1938. In the article "Zašto mnogi u džezu ne nalaze umetničku vrednost," the author observed that "the musical value of jazz could be judged by listening to the recordings of the aforementioned orchestras, which today, unfortunately, are almost impossible to obtain" (este 1941, 2). It seems likely that the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939 slowed down – or perhaps entirely interrupted – the import of new jazz records. That, however, did not prevent the magazine from publishing a short text on the best records of 1940, in which, according to expert Gordon Wright, special mention was given to Duke Ellington, Woody Herman, Louis Armstrong, Tommy Dorsey, and Muggsy Spanier (Duke Elington 1941, 8).

Although film magazines and sound cinema played a notable role in the popularization of jazz, *Svijet jazza* dedicated little space to the subject. It only announced two new films featuring Deanna Durbin and Linda Darnell, major stars of the sound era, in which new musical hits were expected to appear (Tesla Film 1941, 6; Stazom zvijezda 1941, 8). It is particularly striking that radio was never mentioned, even though Uroš Jurković performed on Radio Zagreb and served as the station's first jazz commentator. The articles on records, as we have seen, are not numerous, yet they reveal important insights into the musical preferences of Yugoslavia's early jazz pioneers. With only four

2025, 544–545.

19 Elektroton stores offered records produced by the following companies: EBP, Odeon, Polydor, Cetra, Columbia, HMV, Radiola, Patria, Telefunken, Ultraphon, Brunswick, Kristall, Imperial, Rekophon, Homocord, Elton, Elektrola, Elite, and Excelsior (cf. Bulić 1980, 26; Ceribašić, Dunatov and Vukobratović 2025, 27).

issues released before the magazine was interrupted by the war, *Svijet jazza* remains a fragmentary yet revealing trace of how interwar jazz culture in Yugoslavia sought to define itself.

## An Improvised Coda

It may sound surprising, but *Svijet jazza* was not the first magazine in interwar Yugoslavia to feature the term "jazz" in its title. The earliest example is the Dadaist publication *Dada Jazz* from 1922, which, despite its name, had nothing to do with music. It emerged as a result of the conflict between Yugoslav Dadaists and Zenitists.[20] In contrast to this avant-garde deployment of the term *jazz*, a word that could suggest both chaotic energy and the emergence of a new cultural era, *Svijet jazza* was genuinely devoted to jazz and its culture, securing a pioneering place in the country's musical history. Postwar jazz magazine *Ritam: Jugoslovenska revija za džez i zabavnu muziku* [*Rhythm: The Yugoslav Review for Jazz and Popular Music*, 1962–1965] later recognized the interwar *Svijet jazza* and *Ritam* as its predecessors (Ritam 1962, 6). Finally, the question arises as to how recent historiography has approached the magazine and to what extent its significance has been recognized.

A review of the consulted literature shows that, depending on the context in which it is mentioned, *Svijet jazza* has been ascribed different meanings by musicologists and jazz historians. Historiographical information on the magazine primarily comes from the work of musicologists who have dedicated much of their research to interwar Croatian/Yugoslav music periodicals, notably Sanja Majer-Bobetko and Zdravko Blažeković. In one of the earliest references, Majer-Bobetko initially described *Svijet jazza* as the first Croatian musical journal to engage professionally with jazz and popular music, noting that it included translations from various foreign periodicals and reviews of relevant musical events (1992, 186). Two years later, she expanded on this account, identifying the magazine's editors (Srećko Tekauc and Uroš Jurković), correspondents from several Yugoslav cities and New York, and the diverse range of texts it featured (1994, 107).[21] In her article "Croatian music journals

20 After a dispute between Yugoslav Dadaist Dragan Aleksić and Zenitists Branko Ve Poljanski and Ljubomir Micić, Aleksić responded to the anti-Dada publication *Dada-Jok* (May 1922) by issuing two single-issue pamphlets of his own, *Dada-Tank* (June 1922) and *Dada Jazz* (September 1922).

21 Majer-Bobetko notes that "the authors of these texts, except Zvonimir Bradić, remain unknown, as they signed only with initials (St., T., A.S., S., este., You)." This statement, however, is not entirely accurate, since several articles were signed by B. [Branko] Milin, Štule [Miodrag Jovanović Štule], and V. [Vladimir] Francetić. As previously discussed, You was most likely a

1903–1945 as music-historical sources," *Svijet jazza* is mentioned only briefly, as part of a list of eighteen music journals published in interwar Croatia (2019, 378). Zdravko Blažeković notes *Svijet jazza* among the holdings of the National and University Library in Zagreb, providing its catalogue number (NSK 87.400) in his article (2002, 105).[22] For jazz historians Miro Križić and Davor Hrvoj, *Svijet jazza* represented an important historiographical source for their research. This is confirmed by Križić's observation that "from Marjanović's journal *Ritam* and from the competing editorial duo Tekauc–Jurković, it is possible to reconstruct the Zagreb jazz scene of the late 1930s […] these magazines have helped me to complete my understanding of the origins and continuation of the jazz fever in Croatia" (Križić 2018, 545). In *Muzička enciklopedija* [*Musical Encyclopedia*] published by the Institute of Lexicography in Zagreb, the entry on "Jazz" includes a subentry "Yugoslavia." While it offers some information on the history of interwar jazz, the magazine itself is not mentioned (Kovačević 1974, 257–258), whereas *Leksikon jugoslavenske muzike* [*The Lexicon of Yugoslav Music*] later notes that the first jazz journals published in Zagreb were *Svijet jazza* and *Ritam* (Kovačević 1984, 217). Interestingly, the magazine is listed in "Bibliografija periodike 'NDH' 1941–1945 [Bibliography of Periodicals of the 'NDH' 1941–1945]," compiled "just for internal use" by the former Archive for the History of the Workers' Movement in Zagreb. The compilers explicitly stated that the bibliography includes "all periodical newspapers and publications issued on the territory of the NDH" (Njegovan 2008, 127). The historical fact is that the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) was proclaimed on parts of occupied Yugoslavia on 10 April 1941, after the Axis invasion, and the final issue of *Svijet jazza* did appear that same month. Yet, it remains doubtful whether the magazine should be associated with the NDH as the beginning of a new historical chapter on the territory of Yugoslavia, rather than be seen as bringing to a close the period of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Taken together, what does this tell us about *Svijet jazza*? What is its historical and historiographical significance?

pseudonym of Uroš Jurković, while este. (and possibly also variants such as St. and T.) can be attributed to Srećko Tekauc. Apart from the fact that both were founders of the magazine (and thus likely contributors), this assumption is further supported by the limited number of individuals in Yugoslavia who, at the time, possessed substantial knowledge of jazz.

22 Searches in the Co-operative Online Bibliographic System and Services (COBISS) in successor states of Yugoslavia where it is currently available (Slovenia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and North Macedonia) indicate that, to the best of our present knowledge, the only surviving copy of *Svijet jazza* is held by the National and University Library in Zagreb.

Although the potential of *Svijet jazza* appears not to be fully recognized, possibly because only four issues were published, it remains a significant historiographical source for studying the early development of jazz in interwar Yugoslavia. Through its pages, the journal reveals much about the cultural aspirations of its time, particularly the growing dominance of American music and culture – embodied by figures such as Duke Ellington and Benny Goodman – over the earlier French and German influences associated with operetta, schlagers, and sound film. It also reflects a growing awareness that by the 1930s jazz had become distinct from dance music. For the magazine's authors, jazz was not simply improvisation or popular amusement, but a form of modern art requiring both mastery and sensitivity.

Its very existence carries a striking paradox: published only months before April 1941, when the country's political and cultural landscape was disintegrating, *Svijet jazza* looked outward, embracing global musical trends with optimism and curiosity. As such, it stands as a mirror of the aesthetic sensibilities of the prewar Yugoslav urban milieu and a valuable source for understanding the intersections of art and everyday life in the region's cultural history. Its legacy reminds us that jazz had already become part of the Yugoslav cultural landscape long before it gained institutional recognition.

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Марија Голубовић

## Када је Југославија почела џез говорити: часопис *Svijet Jazza* (1941) у међуратној популарној култури

### (Резиме)

У раду се анализира часопис *Svijet jazza*, први специјализовани лист посвећен џез музици на територији Краљевине Југославије, који је излазио у Загребу од јануара до априла 1941. године. Замишљен по узору на америчке џез часописе *The Orchestra World* и *Metronome*, лист су покренули млади Загрепчани Урош Јурковић и Срећко Текауц, пионири џеза на подручју некадашње Југославије, с амбицијом да створе место повезивања и информисања младих џез музичара и њихових љубитеља. Основни циљ био је подизање нивоа домаћег џеза, а тиме и, како је истицано, исправно разумевање модерног џеза као уметничке форме која одсликава карактер тога времена. У оквиру часописа објављивани су прикази музичких догађаја у Загребу и другим југословенским градовима, текстови о истакнутим америчким џез музичарима и њиховим оркестрима, преводи из страних листова и написи готово педагошког карактера. Мрежа сарадника – од Срђана Кризмана у Њујорку до Миодрага Јовановића Штулета у Београду, Саше Скале у Љубљани и Бранка Милина у Сплиту – показује како се *Svijet jazza* налазио на пресеку локалних сцена и ширих европско-америчких музичких токова. Часопис је био осмишљен као месечник, али су због ратних околности објављена свега четири броја.

Како бисмо што боље приказали контекст у којем се *Svijet jazza* појавио, у раду смо најпре осветлили развој џеза у међуратној Југославији и позиционирали овај лист у односу на друге, мање или више сродне музичке часописе и њихову уређивачку политику. Полазећи од тога, анализирали смо часопис из разних аспеката, укључујући садржај и естетску оријентацију, конструисање џеза у контексту теорије, извођаштва и ансамбала, као и улогу нових медија. Тиме смо настојали да покажемо да *Svijet jazza* представља богати историографски извор и вредно сведочанство једног кратког временског раздобља. Стога, иако је изашао у само четири броја, *Svijet jazza* представља јединствени документ раног југословенског џез живота. Он показује како су млади музичари сами артикулисали своју позицију, замислили простор комуникације и поставили темеље за разумевање џеза као дела културе савремености у међуратној Југославији.