

PRESS RELEASE

Piranha Records Present:

Robert Šoko & Robert Rigney
Balkan Beats – An Oral History
Berlin 2025, 450 pages | english



30 Years of Balkan Music Madness – Forward In All Directions

With *Balkan Beats – An Oral History* Robert Šoko and Robert Rigney compiled a vivid, no-holds-barred journey through three decades of Balkan music mayhem that reshaped dancefloors from Berlin to New York, Istanbul to Tokyo, and beyond. Inspired by "Please Kill Me - Uncensored Oral History of Punk" by Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain, Šoko & Rigney draw from **over 130 interviews, articles, and personal memories** to tell the story of this vibrant and chaotic cultural uprising. Written in a witty, emotional and authentic spirit, the book captures a scene that dared to be "*the new punk*" and stands as the first global pop phenomenon that travelled *East to West*.

Piranha Records is delighted to celebrate this landmark release with the writers, remembering well the early days of the party when Europe was still divided and the genre was still a curiosity from behind the Iron Curtain, an intoxicating "Gypsy perfume" rather than the global dancefloor phenomenon it would later become.

Piranha's legendary *Heimat Klänge* festival in Berlin introduced, already in the late 1980s, acts like the **Jova Stojiljkovic Duva Orkestar**, **3 Mustaphas 3** and **Ferus Mustafov** to Western audiences who discovered they could dance just as wildly to these Eastern rhythms as to their familiar Western sounds.

It all got into the 5th gear by the time **Fanfare Ciocărlia** burst onto the scene, when Piranha, together with pioneering agency **Asphalt Tango**, released their first three albums to worldwide acclaim (1998–2001). Together with Gogol Bordello, Goran Bregović and Shantel more Piranha Recording Artists like **Boban & Marko Marković**, **Boris Kovač**, **Darko Rundek**, **Dunkelbunt**, **Fanfare Tirana**, **Frank London**, **Magnifico**, **Mercan Dede**, **Ruth Yaakov**, **Solomon & Socalled**, **Watcha Clan** and others then helped to propel the sound from the Balkans' backyards to global stages.

The word spread round, people were looking for something new and BalkanBeats was it. Concocted in Berlin underground clubs from the bottom up, free of music industry mechanisms, it quickly spilled over to venues in America and Japan, shooting Robert Šoko and his hybrid blend of raw brass energy and urban edge to global dance-floor fame. BalkanBeats became the soundtrack of choice for a generation in search of something real, sweaty, soulful, celebratory, untouched by the corporate must-sell approach.

Praise for *Balkan Beats – An Oral History*

"*Gleefully blunt.*"

— **The Wire**, London

"*This book will be mined for raw material by Balkan culturologists for years to come.*"

— **Prof. Eric Gordy**, University College London

"*Finally the inside view of the Balkan Beats craze, from Yugo-land to Yugo-wars to Yugo-diaspora. Hardcore anthropology writing on drugs!*"

— **Christoph Borkowsky**, Piranha Records Berlin

About the Authors – www.balkanbeats-book.com

Robert Šoko, DJ, producer, and creator of the *BalkanBeats* club nights, has been a driving force behind the global Balkan sound movement.

Robert Rigney is a Berlin-based journalist and author specializing in music, culture, and migration.

About Piranha Records – www.piranha.de

Founded in Berlin in 1987, **Piranha Records** has been a pioneer of global music innovation, introducing sounds and artists from around the world to international audiences for over 35 years.