

## DJ Robert Soko • Balkan Beats (Berlin, Bosnia)



**BALKANBEATS** was established 1993 by Robert Soko in Berlin \*\*\*\*\* is a regular "late night dj performance" at the Mudd Club (Berlin), La Java (Paris) and Buffalo Bar (London) \*\*\*\*\* goes for tolerance, passion and sexy-ritam \*\*\*\*\* Charlie Gillett (BBC) described it as "postmodern disco by way of Abba via the Balkan states" \*\*\*\*\* presented live: Darko Rundek, Fejat Sejdic Orkestar, Kultur Shock, Rambo Amadeus, Edo Maajka, Wicked a.o.

Since 1993 Berlin audiences have been regularly seduced into BalkanBeats world of magic rhythms and tribal beats. DJ Soko and his artist team create a thrilling blend of ska, gypsy and urban music which has crowds singing and dancing from Los Angeles to Berlin. His mix of hit covers, cult songs, and modern pop fused with traditional Balkan folk result in a infectious dance atmosphere which goes continuously for eight feverish hours. The best place to catch the so called "culture recycling" fever is at the Mudd Club where DJ Robert Soko performs for sold out crowds twice per month. There is no secret, it's just about the beauty of musical diversity and BalkanBeats team knows their turntable diplomacy is helping to bridge a cultural divide.



Robert Soko and associates at the BalkanBeats club night in Berlin belong to the lineage of Gypsy, Balkan and East European roots revival pioneers who established the current frenzy across Europe and the States among people and venues such as Shantel, the Mehanata Bulgarian Bar, Russian Disko, Gogol Bordello.

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**The story goes like this:** In the early 90s a young Bosnian sought refuge in Berlin and like many exiles he wanted to forget the war and the whole shebang. Robert began to throw parties for like-minded migrants and played the old yugo hits. With a melange of irony and nostalgia they finally began to celebrate old socialist bank holidays and the idea of BalkanBeats was born. In the Arcanoa, a Kreuzberg underground punk bar, they tried to regain their lost past and identity. The fascinating, bizarre, somehow tragicomical celebration of the exiled became a regular event that soon had to take place in larger venues. After a few transit stops, BalkanBeats are blasting in Berlin's Mudd Club since 2001.

**Now, Soko plays on a regular basis in New York, Prague, Paris and London.** BalkanBeats are highly addictive - it's in their savage energy, the colourful, fresh timbre, and passion. The inexhaustible diversity stems from Slavic, Oriental, Jewish traditions, and from the culture of the Roma people. The music's natural openness enables an easy and exciting BalkanBeats released transfer to modern times. In 2005 his first compilation that instantly became a classic of the DJs and aficionados of the genre among Bucovina Club vol.1 and Electric Gypsyland! Playing at Mehanata/NY, The Parlour Club/LA, Knitting Factory/NY, the Netherlands (Lowlandsfestival 2005), Amsterdam, Paris

**DJ Robert Soko in the Internet:** [www.crossculturemusic.de/dj\\_robert\\_soko](http://www.crossculturemusic.de/dj_robert_soko)

## Biography

Robert Soko was born 1970 in Zenica, Bosnia (former Yugoslavia). In the early 90s he moved to Berlin where is he still living.

1993 he began to throw parties for like-minded emigrees and played the old yugo hits. With a melange of irony and nostalgia they finally began to celebrate old socialist bank holidays and the idea of BalkanBeats was born.

Since 2001 he is blasting twice monthly in Berlins Mudd Club: gypsy grooves, tribal beats, and Balkan Ska.

DJ Robert Soko plays all over Germany as well as in Paris, Prague, London and New York. What had started as survival training of emigrants has become an international cult affair.

BalkanBeats DJ Sets are highly addictive with their savage energy, the colorful, fresh timbre, soulfulness and passion. The inexhaustible diversity stems from Slavic, Oriental, Jewish tradition, and from the culture of the Roma people.

## Discography (Compilations):

Robert Soko has released three Compilation CDs called BalkanBeats (Vol. 1, 2, 3) that instantly became a classic of the djs.

- **BalkanBeats Vol. 1 (Eastblok Music 2005)**
- **BalkanBeats Vol. 2 (Eastblok Music 2006)**
- **BalkanBeats Vol. 3 (Eastblok Music 2008)**
  
- **Brass Attack (Piranha Music 2007)**
- **Brass Noir CD edition (Piranha Music 2008)**

## Press | selected articles

“**BalkanBeats happens to be the original.** They are the **best sort of interpreters** of this music, because they are really able to pick up the perfect mixes and create psychological intensity to build up and to take people down, its quite an experience.”

*Radio Deutsche Welle, April 2003*

“The raw, bass-driven beat that powers the music is **proving infectious** even for usually dance-shy Germans. The sound is catching on throughout Germany and in other parts of Europe... turntable diplomacy is helping to bridge a cultural divide.”

*The Boston Globe, USA, November 2002*

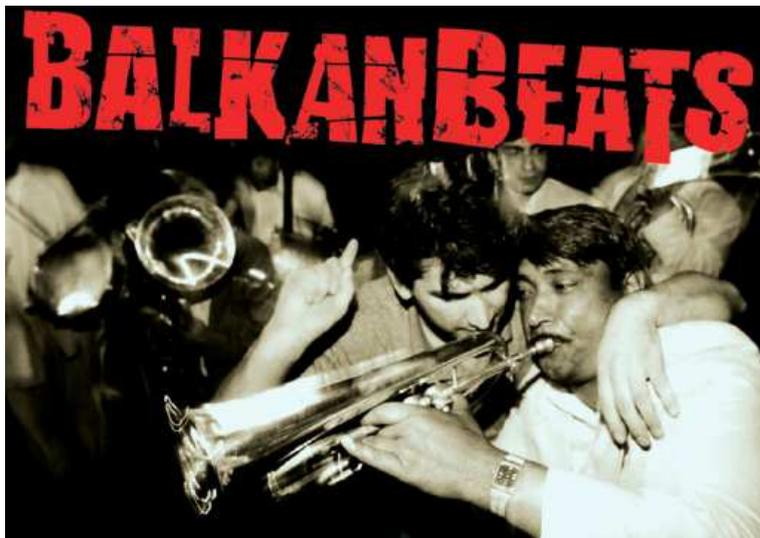
„Robert Soko is **one of the most reputed people in Balkan dance music.** In the early 90’s a young Bosnian named Robert Soko sought refuge in Berlin. Like many exiles he wanted to forget the war and the whole shebang. He began to throw parties for like-minded emigrees and the idea of BalkanBeats was born.“ *Democracy, Belgium*

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### CD Reviews

"An alternative to the 'turbofolk' vision of Balkan music, selected by Berlin-resident DJ trio BalkanBeats (dj soko,dj marko, djane tatjana). Reflecting the multi-hued origins of Balkan music, the collection ranges from high speed Balkan brass bands to ska, from contemporary fusion to indie rock with clarinets. All Balkan musical life is here, and it is clapping it's little hands and stomping it's rhythmic feet and no mistake. Artists include Boban Markovic, Mahala Ari Banda, Besh O Drom, Kulture Shock, Frank London, Fanfare Ciocarlia and Goran Bregovic, among others - at times teetering on self parody and **always furiously energetic.**" *World Music Charts (Europe), July 2005*

"Hailed a the ultimate Balkans Compilation! With Fanfare Ciocarlia, Boban Markovic, Goran Bregovic and featuring several unpublished tracks. Traditional and urbane sounds emerging from Gypsy Grooves, Tribal Beats and Balkan Ska makes this compilation an addictive sampler. With **wild energy, multicolored, fresh tone qualities**, the inexhaustible variety of eastern European Roma and Jewish music traditions is plundered."  
*Passiondisk (United Kingdom), June 2005*



"This is the album I needed when I played records at the Big Chill for the first time, two years ago. I don't know about you, but I thought the Big Chill was all about mellow grooves in the summer sun, and that's the kind of record I had in my box. But after two cool cuts I was faced by two young women, demanding that the music be more exciting, something to drive them wild. The rest of the set was a slightly panicky search for the few fast songs that I happened to have with me. **This year, with this album in my**

**hand, I'll be more than ready for those dancing dervishes if they come back for more.**

Balkan gypsy music basically has two speeds - breathlessly fast and heart-stoppingly slow. BalkanBeats virtually dispenses with the slow ones, so the whole thing is a bit like Madness on speed. One strand of the music is called Turbo, a sort of post modern disco music, with a four-to-the-floor drum on quite a few tracks, and an Abba-style chorus on others. But the wild horn arrangements and manic singing dispel any thought of slick formulas, and you flail around the room, glad that somebody somewhere is unashamedly offering you a good time, no strings of self respect attached. Where reggae and funk once trod the dance floors, **Turbomania stomps with mighty steps. See you in your dancing boots.**"

*Charlie Gillett (BBC-Radio, The Observer), UK, July 2005*

"There one would like to cobawl, however, this fails in the absence of linguistic proficiency. What remains? **Wild dancing!**" *Zitty Magazine, Berlin June 2005*

"conclusion: An album that **makes you addicted.**" *Schrillerille (Switzerland), June 2005*