**Wenn eine Band lange Zeit lebt:  Puhdys, Politics, and Popularity**

At roughly the same time Erich Honecker ascended to the leadership of the German Democratic Republic, rock music became accepted by the East German authorities. This acceptance was nothing new in and of itself; the state had had a history of alternately supporting and suppressing rock music for well over a decade. However, by the early 1970s the GDR faced the fact: it could not hold down rock and roll.

Many artists gained fame at this time, but Die Puhdys became by far the most successful rock group in the GDR, and they remained the country’s top band until Reunification. More than 25 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, die Puhdys still demand sizeable audiences. Of course, even in the best of circumstances, success leads to contempt. The knowledge that all East German artists heard on the radio or seen on stage had – necessarily – got the approval of the state heightens that contempt. Add onto this the anti-authoritarian nature of rock and roll culture in general, and it should surprise no one that the GDR’s most successful group met with disdain from several quarters. Today, many rock fans and critics still dismiss die Puhdys out of hand as crude *Staatsrocker*.

This paper will examine the rise of die Puhdys, focusing primarily on the songs collected on their first, eponymous album. Such an examination serves two purposes. First, it provides a long overdue reappraisal of die Puhdys’ early years, establishing not only that they received more than a modicum of good timing, but also that their early music and lyrics transmitted sophisticated multivalent messages which helped them reach the top of the East German rock scene. Second, this paper shows the degree to which East German radio and the West German record industry initiated the rise of “DDRock” and later cemented its place in the country’s cultural arena.