CHAPTER SIX

POP MELAYU VS. POP INDONESIA: NEW INTERPRETATIONS OF A GENRE INTO THE 2000S

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Introduction

This chapter presents the rise to national fame of the pop Melayu band, Kangen Band, as an example of reclaiming of the derisive term *kampung-gan*. In it, I argue that this reclaiming represents an interesting case of genre manipulation, and consider what this can reveal about how Indonesian pop genres are constituted, what they 'are' and what they 'do'. In so doing, I seek to rework existing scholarship relating to Indonesian pop genres and modernity, as well as interrogate some broader theories of genre.

In this essay, I extend the argument that Indonesian pop genres are not purely technical categories, they touch on myths of class and nation (Wallach 2008; Weintraub 2010; Yampolsky 1989). As we shall see, in the New Order period, pop music genres reached out to these myths by positioning themselves variously vis-à-vis the capital city, Jakarta. Such positioning, achieved through use of the terms *gedongan* (a term that strives to infer refinement by stressing the non-masses' central position in the urban environment) and *kampung-gan* (a term that strives to enforce sub-alterns' marginal position in relation to the metropolis, see also the previous contribution by Weintraub), continues to haunt the constitution of genre in the post-New Order period, but in novel ways. These novel ways, I argue, may be seen to result from industrial transformation and new systems of knowledge production.

The Contentious Rise of Pop Melayu

In the middle years of this decade, a group of youths from the provincial city, Lampung, in Southern Sumatera gathered together and began busking outside of their day jobs (as pushcart traders, construction workers), then staging more formal performances at music festivals in their home

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town. By mid 2005, this group had named itself Kangen Band, and recorded a demo CD of original compositions by guitarist Dodhy. Over the course of the rest of the year, and due to orchestrations by band members as well as events beyond their control, Dodhy's compositions could be heard and bought in various strategic public spaces around Lampung: on the radio, on the bemo, in malls and in the form of compact discs arranged on plastic sheets spread by the roadside. By 2006, Kangen Band's popularity manifested in similar form on Java. From such airplay and roadside exchanges, Kangen Band members drew no financial reward. But, in contrast to the official condemnations of piracy, which paint this practice as undermining musicians' interests, Kangen Band members recall this time with great enthusiasm; it led to their well-documented rise to national prominence (Sujana, 2009).

In 2006, a former print journalist, Sujana, who had recently established an artist management company, Positive Art, discovered Kangen Band and invited its members to pioneer Positive Art's strategy for pop production. The band agreed to the remastering, repackaging and redistribution of its debut album that had so pervaded public spaces in Lampung and across Java the previous year; a venture shared, like subsequent Kangen Band productions, by Positive Art and the Indonesian branch of Warner Music.

Just as it had been in unofficial format,¹ when incorporated into publishing and distribution systems of a major recording label, Kangen Band also proved to be commercially successful. But once part of such official systems of musical reproduction, Kangen Band began to assume new form. No longer simply a sonic text (that is, one not accompanied by visual images of the performers), Kangen Band now began to appear on national television, a base requirement of official strategies for the promotion of pop music. It also became incorporated into a broader narrative, which allowed for its emplacement in certain national imaginings. On signing to Positive Art, Kangen Band became known as a pop Melayu band. The band's commercial success beneath the auspices of major label recording was, then, the event that gave rise to the re-employment of this term, Melayu, to describe an emerging pop genre.

¹ I prefer the terms 'official' and 'unofficial' over 'legal' and 'pirated'. 'Pirated' implies theft, but members of Kangen Band (and Inul Daratista before them; see Heryanto 2008) did not take issue with the widespread reproduction and exchange of their performances at the level of the *emper-emperan*.

Subsequently, in Kangen Band's wake, all of the Jakarta-based major recording labels have begun to develop 'Melayu' repertoires, and a number of these 'pop Melayu' bands have also been commercially successful.

The virtue or otherwise of these pop Melayu boy bands' emergence on national stages was hotly debated in some circles. Kangen Band's appearance on television was much to the chagrin of a considerable number of critics, who found Kangen Band – specifically the chronically acned lead vocalist, Andhika – to be unsightly. Such alleged unsightliness was then heavily airbrushed out of the cover of their first album with Warner Music, a repackaged version of the album *Tentang aku, kau dan dia*, (On me, you and him) which had been so widely disseminated in unofficial format. However, although remastered, little musical manipulation took place. Warner's repackaged version of *Tentang aku, kau dan dia* sounds, in parts, blatantly under produced. Andhika's wavering, thin, wispy, and off key vocals were left as they were. According to Sujana, who discovered the band and manages it to date, producers were anxious not to miss the 'Kangen Band' moment by spending much time in studio engineering the sound. This again had critics in an uproar.

Furthermore, rather than distancing themselves from the image of provincial vulgarity associated with the term *kampung*, in response to criticism, the band's publicity machine began to make much of its humble, marginal beginnings. In cinematic and literary form, narratives of the bands rags to riches story appear in chain bookstores and on television. Here is an inspirational story of the *wong cilik* (little people) battling against the odds. In 2007, for example, after Kangen Band signed to Warner Music, RCTI aired a film which recounted their rise to fame, entitled *Aku memang kampung* (Proud to be a hick). In 2009, the band's manager published a book recounting its rise to fame and entitled *Rahasia Kangen Band: Kisah inspiratif anak band* (The secret of Kangen Band: The inspirational story of a pop band). The cover of the book depicts the band's journey away from the provincial *kampung*, towards the metropolis. Both productions implicate a reclaiming of the term *kampung*, normally employed as a term of derision.

Genres

In the English language academic literature, how Indonesian popular music relates to a positioning vis-à-vis the metropolis has been a compelling question for a lot of writers (Barendregt 2002; Baulch 2007a; Browne

2000; David 2003 and this volume; Frederick 1982; Gjelstad 2003 and this volume; Heins 1975; Heryanto 2008; Luvaas 2009a; Murray 1991; Pioquinto 1995; Piper and Jabo 1987; Wallach 2008; Weintraub 2010; Yampolsky 1989). In fact, how consumption and performance of musical aesthetics is connected to peoples' proximity or distance from a metropolitan core of cultural authority, truth and knowledge has been a primary theme of this literature. In it, a *kampung-an-gedongan* dichotomy is quite often invoked. Some writers suggest that *kampung-an-gedongan* are styles of performance and directly relate to social categories determined by wealth.² Others gloss *kampung-an* and *gedongan* as 'genre ideologies' inferring unwieldy, yet coherent, articulations of space, capital, language and styles of performance (Wallach 2008:51–2). Others still show how *kampung-an* is made up in the process of its mediation (Browne 2000; Wallach 2002; Weintraub 2006).

Broadly speaking, *kampung-an-gedongan* are said to relate variously to certain Indonesian genres of popular music. This paper will refer to some of those genres, namely: Melayu music, ranging from *dangdut*, a hybrid form distinguished by consistent use of a Melayu vocal style, a *suling* (bamboo flute) and *gendang* (two-headed drum) (see also the contributions by David and Wallach to the present volume), to *pop Melayu*, distinguished through use of iconic elements of the Melayu vocal style, but otherwise using Western instrumentation; *pop Barat*, meaning popular songs in English sung by American or English bands, *pop* (and *rock*) *Indonesia*,³ referring to songs usually sung in the national tongue but making use of a Western pop idiom.⁴

² 'The division between rich and poor extends to performance, with an evident dichotomy between the *gedongan* spectacular style typified by Guruh Soekarno Putra, and the *kampung-an* style, used as a term to suggest crudeness and mindlessness and more recently taken up by *kampung-an* performers themselves as a source of pride' (Murray 1991:3).

³ My own simplified characterization serves the purpose of the current study. Yampolsky offers a more multi-faceted depiction: 'Pop Indonesia is one genre within the complex that an English speaker might call 'Indonesian popular music.' The larger category includes several other genres – among them Rock, Country, Jazz, *Kroncong*, *Dangdut*, *Qasidah*, and Hawaiian – that an Indonesian would differentiate from Pop Indonesia. (If he were thinking in musical terms, he would; sociologically it is possible to use 'Pop' as an umbrella term for Pop Indonesia, Rock, and Country)' Yampolsky (1989:2). In this chapter, *pop Indonesia* is used as in a sociological sense, and includes rock. See footnote below for an elaboration of how categories of Indonesian rock and pop have converged over time. For discussion of rock/pop as a continuous genre field, see Johan Fornas (1995).

⁴ A number of writers have provided rich and varied illustrations of uses of *kampung-an* to describe the performance and consumption of Melayu forms, and this usage hints at the *gedongan* nuances of *pop Barat* and *pop Indonesia* (Browne 2000; Murray 1991; Wallach 2008; Weintraub 2006) Philip Yampolsky's (1989) article, though, discusses derisive

A number of those who have written about Indonesian popular music contend that *pop Indonesia* is a *gedongan* form; that it enjoys a privileged relationship to the rhetoric of modernization Pembangunan espouses.⁵ Some have pointed to how print media help maintain *pop Indonesia*'s *gedongan*-ness by drawing and redrawing impassable lines distinguishing *pop Indonesia* from *dangdut*,⁶ a sign of the *kampungan*, that state of modernity's lack.⁷ Others show how the very *gedongan*-ness of *pop Indonesia*, and *dangdut*'s attendant *kampungan* dimensions, are partly maintained through the spatiality of its public display (Heryanto 2008:27; Wallach 2002). Some have even suggested that practices associated with *pop Indonesia* domesticate the New Order vision of modernity.⁸

The New Order and pop Indonesia

Indeed, the fact of pop Indonesia's close ties with Soeharto's New Order as a regime of governance and as a cultural environment has only been of passing interest in English-language scholarship, but of quite central importance in Indonesian writing (Mulyadi 2009; Setiyono 2001; Sopian 2001). Such close ties can only be understood in the light of the prohibitions placed on the airing of 'Western' (I use inverted commas since similar prohibitions applied to cha cha cha and mambo) popular music in the national public space during the course of Guided Democracy (1959–65).

descriptions of *pop Indonesia* songs as *cengeng* (sob stories) printed in the daily *Kompas*, and both Mulyadi and Solihun detail similar derisions of pop in the 1970s magazine devoted to rock, *Aktuil* (Mulyadi 2009; Solihun 2004).

⁵ '[Pop Indonesia] represents urban life, in particular that of Jakarta, the centre of the Indonesian entertainment world It also represents middle-class youth – the world of clean-cut teenagers, forever frolicking about and pining away; and, by representing Jakarta and youth in a largely Western musical idiom and instrumentation, it offers one answer to the question of how to be modern' (Yampolsky 1989:9–10).

⁶ Weintraub discusses how in a feature on *dangdut* in *Tempo* magazine, pop Indonesia performers and composers are cited as characterizing the *dangdut* vocal style as difficult and specialized (Weintraub 2006:415).

⁷ The idea of the *kampungan* as a state of modernity's lack is inspired by Mark Hobart's (2006) discussion of print media assessments of the television consuming masses, in which he states: 'In every article I have read to date, *masyarakat* were people 'out there', on whom reason had a weak grip and who were prone to influence, emotion and recidivism. They were defined by lack' (Hobart 2006:403).

⁸ '[T]he continuing conflict between *dangdut* and the more middle class oriented and westernised pop Indonesia, not to mention Western imported music itself, can be viewed as a battle between competing visions of modernity: the collectivist, egalitarian, national vision of the Sukarno era versus the individualist, status-obsessed developmentalism of Soeharto's New Order' (Wallach 2008:252–3).

In 1959, just as some young Indonesian people began to respond to the availability of Elvis Presley records, and to showings in Indonesia of the film *Rock Around the Clock*, and began to form into rock and roll bands, Soekarno delivered a speech in which he espoused the need to take steps to protect national culture from foreign influences. Initially, these steps comprised bannings of particular kinds of music on the national public radio, *Radio Republik Indonesia* (RRI). Further steps to protect the national culture were taken in 1963, when a Presidential Decision forbade any public airing of rock and roll, and in 1964, when police operations were undertaken in the provincial city of Bandung, with the aim of publicly burning Elvis records and 'disciplining' young men with shaggy, Beatles-style haircuts. At the same time, the rules of these prohibitions were neither clear cut nor consistently applied. Sometimes, musicians performing the forbidden styles appeared as guest stars at state sponsored live events, or as contestants in the national public radio song contest (Mulyadi 2009).

In separate writings, Mohamad Mulyadi and Agus Sopian detail the military's use of state-prohibited western style pop and rock music to interest people in its new regime of governance, beginning with the mass killings and arrests of 1965–6. Mulyadi recounts how 'ABRI staged a series of musical events called 'soldier stages' co-ordinated by an outfit called Body for Co-operation between Artists and the Army Strategic Command The Body's strategy was to invite those artists who had been banned by Soekarno was part of an effort towards moral transformation' (Mulyadi 2009:20).

These soldier stages apparently caused some confusion about which sounds were sanctioned and which were outlawed, creating a kind of musical parallel to the political about-turn needed to suddenly outlaw a major political party, and set about killing and arresting its members and alleged sympathisers. In December 1965, a columnist for the Protestant newspaper *Sinar Harapan* wrote: 'Are we now allowed to play songs with a beat like rhythm, or songs that contain destructive musical elements?' (Mulyadi 2009:21; Sopian 2002).

From late 1965 through the early 1970s, live and telecast (on public television TVRI) musical events were used to associate the military uniform with pop music. The military uniform was ubiquitous on TVRI's music show, *Cameria Ria* since after 1965, senior military personnel established and played (dressed in their uniforms), or sponsored, Western pop bands. Popularization of the idea of the novelty of military rule, then, through 'forbidden' musical performance, was one of the first tasks of the to-be leaders – a task that well preceded the flow of foreign capital for infra-structural development.

Some of the currently existing, *pop Indonesia*-devoted recording labels were established in this environment, in the late-1960s.⁹ Taking advantage of the regime's pro-West cultural proclivities, they devoted their efforts to re-recording *pop Barat* – albums by European and US artists – then sold them on the Indonesian market (Sopian 2002:26; Sakrie 2009:60–7). Due to the advent of cassette technology, the trade in Western pop became lucrative; more lucrative in fact than that of pop Indonesia, which included production costs. *Pop Barat* could simply be re-recorded; the production costs were borne elsewhere. Not until the 1980s did pop Indonesia become a more serious contender, commercially speaking, as those recording labels that had hitherto devoted their attention to re-recording Western pop recordings began to upgrade their interest in developing pop Indonesia repertoires.¹⁰ As a result, new higher sales figures for *pop Indonesia* recordings were reached, although sales of *pop Barat* continued to exceed those of *pop Indonesia*.

Re-Emergence and Derision of Melayu-Ness

What troubles the link between aesthetic Westernisation and newness is the development of a new Melayu sound in the early 1970s. This sound, which subsequently became known as dangdut, came to be exchanged in very large volume throughout the 1970s, 80s, 90s. There are various views on how and why dangdut came to be understood as a Melayu form. According to Philip Yampolsky, dangdut was widely seen to evolve from a musical style that featured on scores for films made in Malaya (personal

⁹ According to Wallach (2008:31) the establishment of *pop Indonesia* as a genre marked that of new hybrid performances upon the advent of rock and roll, first seen in performances by Koes Plus, Eddy Silatonga and Emilia Contessa, presumably prior to the fall of Guided Democracy. Citing Yampolsky, Wallach draws attention to the importance of pop Indonesia's bossa nova and swing based predecessor, *hiburan*, in pioneering a certain kind of hybrid performance that was then taken up by pop Indonesia: '*Hiburan*... demonstrated that Indonesian performances and Indonesian languages could be incorporated into clearly a Western context. When pop emerged, demonstrating the same thing with greater energy, and linking its audience to the dream world of Western entertainment media, *hiburan* dried up and blew away' (Yampolsky in Wallach 2007:30–1).

¹⁰ This interest followed pressure on the Indonesian government to prosecute these companies after Bob Geldof, an English musician, complained that pirate copies of Live Aid, a concert involving top UK and US artists to raise funds for famine victims, originated in Indonesia and were for sale on the European market. Consequently, locally reproduced and distributed Anglo-American albums were subjected to taxes, leading Indonesian recording executives to more seriously scout out pop Indonesia acts could conceivably be sold in recorded format to Indonesian consumers (Sopian 2002).

correspondence, 21 August, 2009), but Weintraub attributes dangdut's Melayu associations with Rhoma Irama's forceful role in narrating the genre's history, and insisting on strong links with aesthetic forms originating in Deli, North Sumatera (Weintraub 2010:33).¹¹

Scholarship on *dangdut* is fabulously varied in its interpretations of the genre, and this may be due to the diverse range of contexts in which *dangdut* is practised, and its endurance beyond the New Order, forcing new political readings.¹² Once carved out as a genre, *dangdut* may well have opened space for performing despair or rough communality in ways that flaunted transgression of prevailing notions of the refined, perceived as proximate to the modern. However, we should be careful not to focus our inquiries only on *dangdut*'s appeal, thereby assuming the existence of 'the people' as *dangdut*'s source.

'[T]he name 'dangdut' is actually an insulting term used by 'the haves' toward the music of the poor neighborhoods [where it originated]'; explains Rhoma Irama in Weintraub's analytical piece on *dangdut*'s representation in the print media. 'They ridiculed the sound of the drum, the dominant element in *Orkes Melayu* [one of *dangdut*'s musical precursors]. Then we threw the insult right back via a song, which we named "Dangdut"' (Weintraub 2006:414). According to Weintraub, the offending term originated in an article printed in the magazine devoted to rock, *Aktuil*.¹³ Certainly, Irama's statements illustrates that the term was very quickly

¹¹ In Weintraub's book, the view of dangdut as strongly grounded in Melayu is not consensual. Weintraub (2010:34) quotes Elvi Sukaesih as refuting any stylistic similarities between Melayu music and dangdut.

¹² Some argue that dangdut articulates a collectivist, egalitarian vision of Indonesian modernity (Wallach 2008). Some say it offers a window onto the possibilities of stardom and celebrity enabled by the New Order (Frederick). Some say its sartorial flashiness and aggressiveness was attractive to an emasculated urban underclass (Murray 1991). Some attribute the genre's past popularity to its adaptability – the idea that dangdut can be 'about' just about anything and is therefore broadly accessible (Weintraub 2006), some to discursive tensions and contradictions within the genre that make it pleasurable to consume (David 2003), some to the repression of political Islam (Heryanto 2008), some to the fact that dangdut songs address 'real life' (Weintraub 2006). Some, however, say that dangdut lyrics are of little consequence because people do not listen to them (Pioquinto 1995; Browne 2000). Others argue that 'sad' dangdut lyrics are of great interest: 'sad' male vocalists present an image of emasculated manhood and 'sad' female vocalists voice female concerns and problems (David 2003 and this volume).

¹³ Weintraub (2006:429) reports that in an interview, Silado claimed to have invented the term. But when Weintraub searched for the 1972 article in which the term dangdut was reportedly termed by Silado, he could not find it. But he includes in his article a quote from Rhoma Irama, the composer and performer widely credited with inventing dangdut. Irama does not name *Aktuil* but confirms that the term dangdut was first coined in a derivative article in the print media (Weintraub 2006:414).

excorporated, and this complicates the Melayu–Indonesia relation somewhat, a point Weintraub does not stress enough. In my view, Irama's response betrays his astute commoditisation of the poor, for neither he nor the musical sound he developed originated in poor neighbourhoods (Frederick 1982). This reading supports the statement above: the relationship between dangdut and the people is not necessarily one of source to expression.

According to Weintraub, as well as through Rhoma Irama's celebrations and commodifications of the *rakyat* ('the people'), another way in which dangdut's special relationship to the people was invoked was through derisive designations of its perceived *kampung* character, mainly in the medium of print. A core argument of Weintraub's piece, and a point also touched upon (but less forcefully) by several other observers of Indonesian pop. As Browne (2000), Mulyadi (2009), and Solihun (2004) also attest, rehabilitations of Melayu–*kampung* have very often taken place in print media. Incidentally, all these writers cite those publications that have been key to the heralding of an Indonesian middle class in the New Order period, such as *Tempo* (Weintraub 2006), *Jawa Pos* (Browne 2000) and the rock devoted magazine, *Aktuil* (Mulyadi 2009; Solihun 2004). Weintraub (2006:413) considers most directly the matter of Melayu–*kampung* as part of addressing the middle class, and devotes his article to the question of 'what kind of story has been told through *dangdut* about the people in popular print media?'¹⁴ He states (2006:417):

Dangdut became a social text for assigning all sorts of meanings – *kampung* for example – through which elites could register their own class position... Dangdut fans, synonymous with the masses, were discursively produced in popular print media according to middle class and elite notions of the *rakyat* [the people] as explosive and uncontrolled.

Pop music criticism was not a particularly promising career choice in New Order Indonesia, but representations of the people in print media articles about music are relevant, and can be located in a broader context of a mythology of middle classness that grew in key publications, part of a new chapter in print capitalism on the advent of the New Order, which I do not have space to expand on here, but have discussed at length in a separate paper (Baulch 2010).

Suffice to say, the main point to be made here is that, rather than as a reflection of existing social entities, pop genre distinctions and their

¹⁴ Weintraub's use of the word 'popular' is confusing, because he cites *Tempo* extensively.

attendant *kampung*–*gedongan* dimensions may be more usefully considered in a context in which print media have played a crucial role in endowing literate Indonesians with considerable cultural authority and, by extension, in building, and continuously reinforcing, a myth of a ‘middle class’, reading public as a truth bearing public. The devaluing of both dangdut and the *kampung* that Weintraub discusses, that is, may be understood as integral to this evolving myth, which notably took place just as the rural masses were deprived of their political rights by the ‘floating mass’ doctrine,¹⁵ outlawing political party activity below the level of subdistrict.

But we should not overstate the determining role of disdainful writings that draw genre distinctions. Certainly, *pop Indonesia* and *dangdut* are not equally positioned on a hierarchy of cultural status and prestige. They represent a relation of power, but this relation does not always already subjugate dangdut. Most of those writing about dangdut do indeed note, but only obliquely or in passing, the dialogic character of Melayu/*kampung*; it is constituted in the process of to-ing and fro-ing between efforts to Other *kampung* and efforts to commodify it, in the name of the masses. Certain meanings remain dominant, but cannot snuff out all alternatives. At the same time, the poor enjoy relatively little power to manipulate representations of their musical consumptions. They can only speak back to *kampung*’s Othering through commodification of the *kampung* in their name, such as that undertaken by Rhoma Irama, cited above. In this sense, we may consider that dangdut was partly constituted through a dialogic process of Othering and commodification. Indeed, there are other ways in which dangdut was constituted, as clear from the above review of scholarly literature on the genre. Nevertheless, I stress here the dialogue of Othering and commodification as it provides an apt comparison with the process of *pop Melayu*’s constitution. On the one hand, the Kangen Band success narrative mentioned above, commodifies the *kampung*, and the urban-rural contrasts that emerge from it are continuous with 1970s films in which Rhoma Irama starred (Frederick 1982:115). On the other, in authoritative music criticism in the medium of print, contemporary *pop Melayu* is derided as a threat to the civilized

¹⁵ Anticipating the general elections of 1971 and in order to de-politicise Indonesian society, Suharto had introduced the ‘floating mass’ concept that banned all organised political activities at village level. Instead the central government was to carry out the will of the people.

metropolis, recalling denigrations of dangdut as discussed by Weintraub (2006), cited above.

In March 2009, for example, as part of its regular profiles on the music industry, the Indonesian licensee of *Rolling Stone* (hereon, *RSI*) magazine ran an article entitled 'Inilah musik Indonesia hari ini'. The article was excerpted from a transcript of a focus group discussion moderated by Wendi Putranto, and involving nine industry figures. The introduction to the discussion sets a certain tone; it is derisive of pop Melayu, musical uniformity, piracy, free live concerts and the widespread consumption of ring back tones (Putranto 2009:65):

Pop Melayu bands have suddenly attacked the capital and have suddenly become superstars, with their uniform music

The people are given no choice in the matter because the mass media fully supports Melayunization. [The indie band] Efek Rumah Kaca is one of the only bands to rise up in protest, with their [ironically titled] song 'Nothing but Love', which became a minor hit.

But most people don't seem to care and can't be bothered debating the issue. Most of the people enjoy buying pirate CDs or pirate MP3s, or picking out their 30-second ring back tone, enjoy celebrating or rioting at free concerts. Many of them feel that cheating on their lover qualifies them to write a song. Recently, these phenomena have begun to clearly manifest in our society.

The idea that *pop Melayu* bands are universally lacking in musical quality is something of a house position among staff writers at *RSI*. In my interviews with them, staff writers Ricky Siahaan and Hasief Ardiesyah separately iterated similar positions. When I asked him why *pop Melayu* bands whose compositions enjoyed healthy sales records rarely emerged in *RSI*, Ardiasyah replied: 'None of us consider their music good.... [It's] a quality issue,' and Siahaan said:¹⁶

You can say that we have a high degree of idealism that holds us back from including those musics we think of as lacking in quality. We are careful to ensure that we only discuss certain kinds of music if we feel we can vouch for its quality. So, for instance ST12, Kangen Band, and so many, all those bands whose compositions sell so well as ring back tones. Because now the music industry is ruled by ring back tones. I mean, nobody buys CDs or cassettes any more. Everyone is downloading ring back tones. And that's where the industry makes its money, in ring back tones. Now, all those champions of the ring back tone, [*Pop Melayu* bands] ST 12, Kangen Band, Hijau Daun.... In our

¹⁶ Interview with Hasief Ardiasyah, October 8 2009.

opinion we are now at the lowest peak of the music industry, quality-wise. And we are not going to give over to them a portion of our magazine, *RSI*.

These characterizations of *pop Melayu* are not, in and of themselves, particularly remarkable. It would be possible to argue that this mode of genre distinction draws on the elitist claims to musical authenticity that appear in rock, as discussed by Fornas (1995:99). They also resemble the moral panics, sparked by the specter of a dominant, ubiquitous, homogeneous, unrefined and mass mediated musical genres that have so often accompanied the rehabilitation of *kampung-gedongan* in print media. In this sense, the *Rolling Stone* writers' derisions of *pop Melayu* resemble the derogatory characterisations of dangdut in *Tempo*, as analysed by Weintraub (2006). In terms of social meaning, *pop Melayu* in some respects resembles dangdut. But aesthetically, and in terms of the historical consciousness it evokes, *pop Melayu* is distinct from dangdut. Below, I discuss these similarities and differences by analysing four albums by the three top *pop Melayu* bands nationally at the time of writing: Kangen Band (*Tentang aku, kau dan dia* and *Bintang 14 hari*), Wali (*Cari jodoh*) and ST12 (*P.U.S.P.A.*).

Pop Melayu-Dangdut

According to Lono Simatupang, Melayu is a *ritme* (rhythm). This *ritme* is achieved in Melayu Deli through use of the *rebana* and in *dangdut* through use of the *gendang*. But *ritme* rarely features in popular characterisations of what distinguishes contemporary *pop Melayu* from pop Indonesia. In my conversations with critics and performers, *cengkok* is a key term that defines contemporary *pop Melayu*, and this stresses vocal quality, not *ritme*. This distinguishing feature has more in common with Wallach's characterisation of dangdut (see his chapter to this volume). Wallach's research on to the process of recording dangdut revealed that 'the vocals play a... central, structuring role.... [A]ll the melodic, rhythmic and sonic features of a dangdut song ideally derive from a vocal melody that constitutes its most essential component' (Wallach 2008:99).

Many critics complain that *pop Melayu* lyrics are obsessed with sexual infidelity, its motivations and emotional effects, and add the term *mendayu-dayu* – a kind of moaning, evocative of despair – to contemporary *pop Melayu*'s defining features (Putranto 2009). *Mendayu-dayu* certainly emerges quite strongly in some pop Melayu lyrics, most particularly in the songs on Kangen Band's first album. In this sense, some

contemporary *pop Melayu* performances may well be likened to the performances of a particular kind of male sentimentality in the register of dangdut. Take, for example, A Rafiq's rendering with great conviction a song composed by Ellya Khadam, entitled *Kau Pergi Tiada Pesan*, some of the lyrics of which run thus: '*Kemanakah ah...akan kucari* (Where, ah... am I going to look) / *gelap terasa ah...dunia ini* (it is a dark world) / *bagai tiada matahari* (for those upon whom the sun doesn't shine) / *Kau pergi tanpa pesan* (you left without a notice) / *kunanti tiada datang* (I have waited, but you did not come) / *Dimana kau kini, Dimana kau kini* (where are you now) / *aku tiada berkawan lagi* (I have no friend left) / *aduh du du du du...*'.

Many critics of *pop Melayu* have referred to its uniformity, but I beg to differ. To my amateur ear, there are considerable musical and lyrical differences in the ways in which Melayu is rendered in Kangen Band's first album (*Tentang aku, kau dan dia*), Wali's *Cari jodoh* and ST 12's *P.U.S.P.A.* To be sure, there are some consistent elements in the repertoire. All of the songs attend to love relationships; almost none of them, with the exception of Kangen Band's *Anugerah* (*Engkau selalu setia walau aku tak punya*; 'you are always faithful, even while I don't owe a dime') mention economic hardship. None of the songs present the woman as properly servile or domesticated. But which iconic Melayu elements are used, how they are used, the positioning of the male singer in the love relationships sung about, the treatment of sex and of Islam, vary considerably across the repertoire.

When I first listened to it, exactly what musical elements of Kangen Band's first album allow it to be categorised among other performances of *pop Melayu* were quite confounding to me, and the reason for the absence of Melayu features will become clear below. Nowhere on any of the songs on this album are any of the iconic musical elements of Melayu foregrounded. By contrast, much of ST12's *P.U.S.P.A.* is strongly rock-accented, but overlaid with cengkok-style vocals on many of the songs. In this respect, Kangen Band's second album, *Bintang 14 Hari*, sounds quite like ST12's *P.U.S.P.A.* There is a greater effort to effect a *cengkok* like vocal, and a heavier rock sound. On *Cari Jodoh*, Wali's Melayu character comes through in many of the songs' *ritme*, in which the snare-cymbal-bass, in conversation with the bass guitar, is used to a gendang-like effect.¹⁷ Lyrically, speaking, the albums are also quite distinct from one another. Whilst Melayu musical elements are difficult to discern in Kangen's first album, its lyrical concerns recall very much David's insights into male

¹⁷ This *ritme* may be found in the songs *Cari jodoh*, *Kekasih halal*, *JODI* and *Yank*.

impotence in sad dangdut songs (see her chapter in this volume). That said, it is worth noting that I am hesitant to describe such sadness as David does, in terms of 'impotence' and 'emasculatation'. It is highly possible that this sadness, which, following Weintraub (2006:418), I prefer to describe as despair and loneliness, evincing a sense of things being beyond reach, and beyond control, is actually meant as a valid dimension of masculinity, rather than something that undermines it.

Ten out of the twelve tracks on Kangen Band's first album give voice to the male vocalists' (Andhika) loneliness.¹⁸ However, in the wave of commercially-produced *pop Melayu* to be signed to major Jakarta-based recording labels since Kangen Band stepped up onto the national stage in 2006, this sadness and despair never emerges again with such intensity. It is possible that the change in the politics of relationships lyrically evoked by Kangen Band stands as an instance of domestication, but it could just be that the circumstances of the lyricist, Dodhy, had changed.¹⁹ What is clear is that on Kangen Band's second album, produced under Sujana's auspices, the male singer emerges as one much more in control of his relationships. This second album is more slickly produced, and more muscular, and a *cengkok* style has been stressed more strongly. Lyrically, speaking, the position of the man has changed. He only appears as a victim of bitter jealousy in *Yolanda*.²⁰ In two of the twelve songs on the album (*Jangan pernah berobah, Saat terakhir*), he is abandoned and the tears fall, but it is not clear whether another man is involved.

The image of the philandering woman does emerge in Wali's *Cari jodoh*, but not as overwhelmingly as in Kangen's first album.²¹ *Cari jodoh*,

¹⁸ The image of the philandering woman emerges strongly; either the singer is trapped in a three-way relationship (*Penantian yang tertunda, Selingkuh, Tentang bintang, Tentang aku, kau dan dia*) or has been abandoned for another man (*Karma, Jika, Adakah jawabnya*). In two other songs, he waits helplessly for his lover to return from afar (*Menunggu, Petualangan cinta*).

¹⁹ This requires further research – I am looking forward to listening out for differences between ST12's first album, *Jalan terbaik*, which was released independently as mentioned, and its most recent and first major label album, *P.U.S.P.A.*

²⁰ In the other songs, he confidently tackles head on relationship problems (*Doy*), declares his love intending to sweep her off her feet (*Kembali pulang, Cuma kamu*) asks forgiveness for wronging his lover (*Dengar dan rasakan, Bintang 14 hari, Dinda*), or saves fallen and wronged women (*Jangan menangis lagi, Yakinkan aku menjemputmu*). In this lyrical sense, too, Kangen Band's second album is more akin to ST12's *P.U.S.P.A.* As well as the muscular rock sound, the songs on this ST12 album present an image of empowered and sexually active manhood (*Putri iklan*) who engages in casual affairs (*Tak dapat apa apa, P.U.S.P.A.*), and resists being ordered around by a woman (*Cari pacar lagi*).

²¹ In *Cari Jodoh, Puaskah, JODI, Yank* and *Adinda*, the singer is abandoned, wronged or lonely, but only *Puaskah* and *Adinda* are mournful tunes.

is so upbeat it presents as a parody of that quest, and all its contradictions (*Pengumuman, pengumuman* (Announcement, announcement) / *Siapa yang mau bantu tolong aku, kasihani Aku* (who would like to help me, care for me) / *Tolong carikan diriku kekasih hatiku* (please help me find my beloved) / *Siapa yang mau* (who wants to)?').

To the extent that it serves as a sign of the *kampungan* – sometimes reclaimed, sometimes derided, depending on whose interests are at stake – *pop Melayu* resembles dangdut. However, musically and lyrically speaking, contemporary *pop Melayu's* links to dangdut are tenuous indeed. Nor does contemporary *pop Melayu* evoke an historical consciousness that links it to dangdut; *pop Melayu* performers do not imagine their music-making as part of a broader Melayu narrative that includes dangdut. This means that contemporary *pop Melayu* does not rely on dangdut to constitute itself, in the way that dangdut came to rely on Melayu Deli (Weintraub 2010). Contemporary *pop Melayu* betrays, then, Weintraub's characterization of genre's stylistic qualities and historical significance. He writes (2010:12):

The stylistic qualities and characteristics that constitute specific genres are important to analyze because they contain a unified set of texts, a vocabulary, and specific ways of speaking. Music genres represent historical continuity and stability, and mark common training, aesthetics, techniques, skills and performance practices.

On the contrary, contemporary *pop Melayu* seems devoid of historical gestures. None of the *pop Melayu* musicians I interviewed in 2010 mentioned male dangdut musicians as important sources of inspiration, and when pressed, seemed unaware of famous dangdut composers' place in popular musical history. ST 12 composer, Charly van Houtten likens his music to that of Peterpan and of Ary Lasso (Solihun 2010:34). Apoy, the composer for Wali, cites influences outside of *pop Indonesia*, but Melayu Deli is not among them. He recognises *lagu Minang* as influencing his art (Solihun 2010:30), and claims that vocalist Faank's skill at singing in the cengkok vocal style derives from the fact that he is *pandai mengaji*.

Further, there is no purely musical relation between *pop Melayu* and Kangen Band's first album; the event that gave rise to the re-employment of the term, *pop Melayu*. In its initial moments surrounding the production of the first album, the band made no attempt to use widely accepted musical markers of Melayu (such as a certain vocal style or rhythm) as a way of signalling a popular alternative to *pop Indonesia* (Interview, Andhika). In fact, Kangen Band did not understand their first album as a *pop Melayu*, but a *pop Indonesia* album, for the band started out covering

Sheila on Seven, Padi and Peterpan (Sujana 2009:31). It was only after signing to Positif Art and Warner Music that Kangen Band became categorised as a *pop Melayu* band.

When a *pop Indonesia* sound can be sold as *pop Melayu*, this suggests some degree of convergence and cross over quite at odds with the dangdut-pop Indonesia segregation mentioned above. Many observers have noted how *dangdut* and *pop Indonesia* have historically been segregated realms. In fact, aside from both being genres of popular music, there is very little that these genres share. According to Wallach, the idea that these two genres are distinct from one another manifests in the arrangement and pricing of cassettes at the point of sale. Dangdut cassettes are placed lower down, and are cheaper. Nor do they share recording studios, or even recording labels. When *pop Indonesian* musicians attempt to perform dangdut, they are often said to fail miserably (Weintraub 2006; Panen Dangdut 1975; Wallach 2008).²²

This kind of segregation draws attention to the very material, spatial and naturalising dimensions of a taste hierarchy, a most striking example of which is the idea that pop singers are incapable of effecting the dangdut *cengkok* vocal style. The current wave of *pop Melayu* bands also occupies a lowly position, but it is not maintained in the same way. In many ways, *pop Melayu* is closer to pop Indonesia. The two genres now share producers, live and televised stages, and recording labels – some domestically owned and some transnational. *Pop Melayu* CDs sell for the same price as *pop Indonesia* CDs, and are not spatially segregated in stores. They share pop charts, which are generated from radio requests. Pop Indonesia bands even cover *pop Melayu* hit songs.

Pop Melayu indeed has a recent history of cross-fertilization with pop Indonesia, and for this reason it may not be surprising that the two genres now share national stages. *Pop Indonesia* bands Koes Plus, Mercy's, and DLloyd produced *pop Melayu* albums in the mid 1970s, inspired by dangdut's growing popularity. (According to a *Tempo* review of this mid-seventies wave of *pop Melayu*, such pop Indonesia bands opted for the Melayu Sumatera, as opposed to the Melayu *dangdut*, style but Frederick says that Koes Plus etc played the proto-dangdut style, Melayu-Deli, see also Weintraub's chapter in this book) But these productions were experimental (and critically unsuccessful) forays into the genre by *pop Indonesia* bands, not a distinct genre unto themselves. Further, they were far from

²² Nevertheless, dangdut and pop cohabited at recording label Remaco. For a discussion of these and other examples of pop Indonesia-dangdut encounters and meldings see Aribowo (2002); Panen Dangdut (1975); Sakrie (2008a, 2008b, 2009a and b).

the lower class nuances of either dangdut or Kangen Band. In fact, critics assessments of this mid-seventies wave yielded the term, Melayu Mentengan, referring to an elite suburb in central Jakarta (Panen Dangdut 1975). Clearly, then, whilst contemporary *pop Melayu* technically resembles its 1970s' predecessor, in terms of its social meaning, it does not. Socially, it resembles dangdut but refrains from gesturing towards dangdut. This raises questions about the social meaning of contemporary *pop Melayu*, and how it is built.

According to Simon Frith (1996:88):

A new genre world... is first constructed and then articulated through a complex interplay of musicians, listeners and mediating ideologues, and this process is much more confused than the marketing process that follows, as the wider industry begins to make sense of the new sounds and markets and to exploit both genre worlds and genre discourses in the orderly routines of mass marketing.

Above, I have discussed how Rhoma Irama excorporated the initially derogatory term, dangdut, and in the process commodified the *rakyat*. This reading of dangdut, in which a musician/composer plays a central role in both defining the genre musically and in marketing its social meaning, blurs the neat distinction Frith draws between the 'complex interplay of musicians' etc, and the 'marketing process'. To be sure, Irama may well be considered both a 'mediating ideologue' and a musician in conversation with other dangdut musicians, but are not musicians and mediating ideologues also implicated in the imagining of markets? The case of Irama's dangdut would suggest so, while that of contemporary *pop Melayu* reveals that musicians and performers can sometimes play no determining role in genre construction. *Pop Melayu* emerged, after all, not from a complex interplay among musicians commonly acknowledging generic rules, but from an event: the well publicised discovery of the provincial Kangen Band by a Jakarta-based producer, and members' thoroughly documented relocation to the capital. In this sense, contemporary *pop Melayu* may be considered pure marketing.

There is much to be discussed about the success or otherwise of this marketing venture, but that will not be the subject of this chapter. Below, I focus my discussion on how contemporary *pop Melayu* emerges from a process of mass marketing, and pay particular heed to the new modes of knowledge production and new 'mediating ideologues' emerging from the coincidence of political change with developments in the technologies for mediating pop music. These changes open space for the re-assigning of both Melayu and *kampungan*.

The Dispersal of Pop Indonesia

Above, I have recounted how new sales figures for pop Indonesia albums were reached in the 1980s, and it was to this already growing *pop Indonesia* industry that major multinational recording labels arrived in the late-1990s. A 1988 deregulation package had surrendered the state monopoly over television and allowed for foreign recording labels to distribute their products through local recording companies. A 1994 Decree allowed foreign companies to distribute their own products and develop local repertoires. Sony Music, Warner, EMI, BMG and Universal all established offices in Jakarta in the second half of the 1990s, and encouraged the across-the-board adoption of a royalty system, which now governs contractual deals between recording artists and recording labels. At the time of writing, multinational firms Warner, Universal, EMI and Sony share the Indonesian recording industry with local groups, Musica and Aquarius. Over the same period, sales of *pop Indonesia* have overtaken those of *pop Barat*, and the meaning of *pop Indonesia* has changed. Structurally, pop Indonesia has globalized, but aesthetically it has undergone a certain transformation.

As widely known, in 1998, Suharto fell, marking the end of the New Order, but we should be careful not to link the structural globalization of *pop Indonesia* to Suharto's fall per se, for it was catalysed by the New Order economic deregulation policies in the 1990s and attendant rhetoric of openness. Nevertheless, the aesthetic localization that has taken place under the auspices of globalized recording manifests most clearly in the post Suharto period, and does so in the following three ways: increased sales, or the greater volume of *pop Indonesia* material now exchanged on the Indonesian market; the increased exchange value of pop Indonesia performers and performances; and the new ways in which consumers now imagine the field of *pop Indonesia* production.

In May 2004, business magazine *Swa* ran a cover story entitled 'Boom bisnis musik: Mau kaya raya dan populer? Gelegar bisnis musik menjanjikan banyak peluang, yeah...!' (Music business boom: Do you want to be filthy rich and popular? The music boom promises heaps of opportunities, yeah...!). The report consisted of separately-authored feature articles which generally lauded the music industry's capacity to generate billions of rupiah for recording labels, producers, television stations, recording studios, musicians, music schools, songwriters, music retailers, dancers, video clip production houses, and artist management firms alike. In the years since the publication of the *Swa* report, changes have taken place

that erase some of these parties, such as artist management firms, and outlets for official recordings, from the list of those who are able to profit from the so-called local music boom. Due to piracy (and not iTunes), sales of official recordings have fallen drastically, and recording companies have adopted the task of artist management and music publishing, elbowing independent outfits out of the industry. However, content providers, companies that provide segments of songs to telecommunications companies for sale as ring back tones, have emerged as new independent players in the industry. Profit from sales of ring back tones can be substantial, and accrue to songwriters, recording labels, content providers and telecommunications companies.²³ The ownership of mobile phones has increased tenfold to 42 million since 1998 (Heryanto 2010:192). Incidentally, advertising funded television with national reach is now the primary medium for advertising pop music products, and mobile phones provide the key to generating profit from such products. Furthermore, by the turn of the century, sales of official recordings of *pop Indonesia* began to exceed those of *pop Barat*, and this situation endures to date.

But sales figures alone do not tell the whole story of shifts in the meanings of *pop Indonesia*. With the demise of the New Order, new opportunities for performance emerged. The process of obtaining a permit for concerts, for example, was freed from lengthy bureaucratic procedures, and this greatly expanded the space available to promote *pop Indonesia* acts, in turn serving as advertising space to promote other products. Private television stations blossomed, featuring live, televised performances by *pop Indonesia* performers, or featuring *pop Indonesia* performers in advertisements. Successful acts soon came to be viewed not only as products or commodities of the recording labels, but as advertising space for promoting other products, as certain sounds and performance styles became linked to certain commodities. Once endorsed by Iwan Fals (a folk singer whose songs were widely used as anti-Suharto anthems by students activist of the 1998 generation), Inul (a *dangdut* singer whose provocative dance style gained substantial moral support after she was criticized by Muslim clerics and the pious, proseletyzing founder of *dangdut*, Rhoma Irama) and Ary Lasso (who was sacked as the vocalist for the

²³ Putranto (2006) explains how ring back tones, sometimes referred to as *RBTs*, and sometimes as *nada sambung pribadi*, are different to ring tones. Ring tones are the sound the cell phone emits when called, and ring back tones are the sound callers hear when they ring a number. The sound callers hear will depend on whether users of that number have purchased a ring back tone, and which ring back tone they have purchased. Ring back tones require a code for activation and, unlike ring tones, cannot be pirated.

pop group, Dewa, when his heroin habit got the better of him, and then rehabilitated and made a comeback as a solo artist some years later), drinking a certain energy drink could fill one with grit and determination. Once endorsed by all male pop bands such as Gigi and Padi, both of which feature guitarists famous for their musical virtuosity and composing skills, smoking a particular cigarette could imbue one with physical vigor and a creative mind.

That technological change has brought with it changes in the media content is well exemplified by the fact of the so-called 'local music boom', and how quantitative changes in pop Indonesia exchanges (album sales, concert fees, etc) constitute this boom has been well noted (Heryanto 2010). But some related transformations that have yet to be subjected to scholarly analysis. Over the period since the transnationalisation of the Indonesian recording industry, not only have sales of *pop Indonesia* well overtaken those of Euro-American pop; the meaning of pop Indonesia itself has changed. The proliferation of new media formats for exchanging music, such as television and mobile phones, has accompanied the qualitative transformation of the Indonesian pop musical environment, including the new sketches of class and nation.

For example, one may observe without implying any causal link, that just as televisual and telephonic mediation has become central to the exchange of pop, since the late-1990s, *pop Indonesia* has begun to break out of its assignation as a gedongan realm; the realm of the 'other-worldly' metropolis and Western derivation. For young people all over the archipelago, *pop Indonesia* is more and more part of the mundane. *Pop Indonesia* has dispersed, and its ties to an 'originary' UK/US rendered fragile.

This point is well illustrated by a recent conversation I had with an amateur Balinese musician, seventeen year-old Komang. Komang is a talented guitarist and vocalist, and has been in a number of amateur pop bands during her teen years. She is an avid fan of *pop Indonesia* acts Cokelat and Afgan, but her broad active listening crosses genre lines: she claims a deep appreciation of both the *dangdut* vocal style and of *pop Melayu* Kangen Band's tunes. This is not someone with limited musical interests nor horizons. Komang's mother is a friend of my parents in law, I often bump into Komang there when visiting. One day, as I chatted to her, a song by the band Dewa filled the air. It reminded me of a Beatles song, and I asked her if she had made the same association. Given her deep musical involvement, I was taken aback by her reply. 'Who are The Beatles?' she asked me.

Ten years previously I conducted some research among Balinese men around the same age as Komang, also amateur musicians. I had found

that among them, questions similar to the one I had posed to Komang – comparing *pop Indonesia* sounds with those originating in Anglo-America – were prominent in their imaginings of the field of pop music production. Questions about *pop Indonesia* composers' Anglo-American influences were highly important to those amateur musicians' consumptions of *pop Indonesia*. But in Komang's reply, we see a different way of imagining the field of pop production. Her ignorance of The Beatles illustrates a profound change in the way Indonesian consumers of *pop Indonesia* perceive the world of cultural production. Although some *pop Indonesia* musicians continue to cite Anglo American acts as sources of inspiration, in the minds of many *pop Indonesia* consumers, the genre has nothing to do with the West. It is produced in Jakarta, for a national audience, and most often sung in Bahasa Indonesia. Many observers note, however, that the distinction is often difficult to discern.

Indeed, as mentioned above, the band that gave rise to the re-employment of the generic category, *pop Melayu*, Kangen Band, originally thought of itself as a *pop Indonesia* band before the label 'pop Melayu' was thrust upon it by producers, begging the question raised at the chapter's outset: what 'is' contemporary *pop Melayu*, and what does it 'do'? In what follows, I propose that *pop Melayu* may be understood in context of developments in technologies for mediating pop music, which in turn yield new fields of intellectual endeavour: the interpreting, chronicling and imaging of history through strategic uses of genre conventions.

The Staging of Production

While undertaking research in Jakarta in 2004, I was struck by the frequency with which media spotlights, increasing in number, turned to those normally thought of as standing behind the scenes of pop music production: artist and repertoire (hereon, A and R) directors at recording labels. The staging of production indeed seems to be a new phenomenon of consumption globally, and deserves greater analysis than I can afford here. Suffice to say, instances of such staging include the prominence afforded to music producers, such as Quincy Jones and Timbaland, whose narrating voices (Jones) and singing, dancing bodies (Timbaland) on albums and music videos of the artists they are responsible for producing are seen to enhance the value of those commodities. Another example is the behind the scenes clips that often appear in split screen with rolling credits at the end of feature films. The fact that such split screens appear as *animations* at the end of animated films too suggests that they may not

always be meant as representations of the real. At the end of one of my daughter's Barbie videos, Barbie slips out of her role as the ice-skating, cloud-dwelling Princess Anika and reverts to Barbie, a straight-up tech savvy girl who swaps email addresses with the male lead: 'And mine is Barbie@barbie.com.'

The staging of production evident in the media performances of Artist and Repertoire directors (who recruit and manage the recording labels' repertoire) I had noticed in Jakarta in 2004 arose in part from the new ideas about how to produce music that came with the recording industry's deregulation. To date, most of the A and R directors of Jakarta-based transnational recording labels are those who were closely involved in the establishment of local labels in the 1970s. But beneath the auspices of transnational labels, and therefore more closely drawn into global marketing trends, their task is transformed. The introduction of royalties for contracted artists upon recording's transnationalisation is most oft-cited. But equally important is the fact that, with the transnationalisation of Indonesian recording, no longer were recording labels simply a site for generating signs from individual commodities that together make up a labels' repertoire. The labels have become signs in and of themselves, branded commodities. This development, which I will attempt to illustrate below, is suggestive of post-modernity, and confuses a production-consumption dyad. The sleeve of the Barbie film assures us that Barbie plays Princess Anika, but can we be sure? Is it not that Princess Anika is playing Barbie? After all, the email address, Barbie@barbie.com is sure to generate only silence, unless perhaps to say: 'Buy me'.

In 2004, similar interminglings of stage, performance and behind-the-scenes could be seen in the Jakarta pop musical environment, and were most striking in discussions of Sony Music in the public sphere, of which I present the following examples. When I met the composer/singer Oppie Andaresta in early 2004, Universal had recently informed her that they were doing away with their entire local repertoire and that, therefore, her recording contract with them was no longer valid. She was seeking a new deal with a different label, and told me that Sony would be her first choice. In her view, Sony are renowned for the kind of professional management modes she favours. Of particular note, she insisted is Sony's transparent reports of album sales and, therefore, their estimations of royalties due to their artists. At a live-to-air concert to celebrate his band's tenth anniversary at the studio of Trans TV, Gigi's vocalist Armand Maulana thanked Sony Music's Senior Director of A and R, Yan Djuhana, whom he referred to as 'Golden Ears' (*si telinga emas*) and whose support was apparently

responsible for the group's longevity. Upon establishing itself as a site for the development of local repertoire, as deregulation policies allowed, Sony was intent on imposing itself as the very sign of musical quality and patriotism, of national modernity indeed.

Above, I have argued that in the New Order period, pop genres were maintained through a ritual distinguishing; a labour to which writers (music critics) were key. Print journalists were valorized in ways that accorded truth value to their writings. In the post-Suharto, transnationalised pop musical environment, the task of enunciating the modern is extended to other media workers, such as A and R directors, who are held to bring their own kind of specialist knowledge to the task. The term 'Golden Ears' is often applied to such workers, mystifying them in a manner once restricted to writers, and suggestive of their role in forging a modernity that is not only spatial (as in *gedongan* and *kampungan*), but also sonic. When I first heard the term Golden Ears, it was being applied to Yan Djuhana, but since then I have heard it applied to a range of producers, including Sujana, the manager and producer of Kangen Band who 'discovered' *pop Melayu*. Here, the term Golden Ears suggests, are the pioneers of our sonic modernity.

The valorisation of Indonesian artist and repertoire directors in a context of transnational recording labels' attempts to brand themselves as patriotic ventures seems to support Mazzarella's (2003) argument that the globalisation of media structures opens space for new interpretations, and interpreters, which he calls 'hinge occupants', of the local. In his book on advertising and consumerism in India, Mazzarella (2003) contends that that contemporary cultural politics is riddled with global-local translation projects. Institutions of consumer capitalism, in his view, are most adept at such translations. He avers that 'these institutions – marketing and advertising agencies, commercial mass media, and all the auxiliary services that accompany them – are perhaps the most efficient contemporary practitioners of a skill that no-one can afford to ignore: the ability to move fluently between the local and the global...' (Mazzarella 2003:18). In his respective studies of advertisements for mobile phone service providers and condoms, Mazzarella shows how, in justifying their 'hinge' positions in this translation process, local elite cultural producers (specifically advertising executives) reproduce imagined dualisms between globalizing capital and local cultural difference.

I prefer Mazzarella's terms, 'hinge occupants' and 'interpreters', over Frith's 'mediating ideologues', for it opens the way to consider pop genres as ongoing processes of interpretation, rather than as ideologies. 'Hinge

occupant' accurately describes those writers who denigrated dangdut as *kampung* in the medium of print, discussed by Weintraub (2006). It also aptly describes Rhoma Irama, who melded rock and Melayu aesthetics, then attributed to this hybrid a social meaning through his deft excorporation of the term dangdut. Whilst any act of consumption and reading entails a process of interpretation, some interpretations are more determining than others, and reveal the importance of habitus. Mazzarella's point is that the political power with which certain habiti of interpretation are endowed works to circumscribe the local, and assert its defining features vis a vis the global. Similar power, I propose, may be attributed to habiti of interpreting Indonesian pop genres, and changes in these habiti can be seen to underlie changes in pop genre distinctions.

For example, new valorisations of A and R executives do appear to draw on old patterns of producing intellectuals, historically proximate to the medium of print. But they are also eased by global patterns of staging production, patterns to which transnational recording companies, such as Sony and Warner, part of broader multimedia conglomerates, are closely linked. Sujana's mediation of *pop Melayu* provides a case study of how such hinge occupants, or intellectuals, engage developments in the media environment to propose novel formations of a national modernity. As in Sujana's case, these engagements may not take place directly beneath the auspices of multinational media corporations. Nevertheless, they are heavily influenced by the new, transnationally manifest ways of imagining national populations as hierarchies of media consumers. Contemporary *pop Melayu* is to large extent testimony to Sujana's astute observations of the extent to which a changed media environment would allow for manipulation of key, longstanding signs: Jakarta and Melayu/kampung.

In a separate paper (Baulch 2007b), I have argued that, in the post-Suharto era, marketing parlance, which categorises Indonesian people according to their perceived capacity to consume media, was transposed onto pre-existing notions of the *kampung*. This development should be read as a result of post-Suharto flourishing of media in various formats, and the related rise in prominence of the US firm, Nielson Audience Measurement. In their attempts to sell their imagined audiences to potential sponsors, radio stations, recording labels, and music magazines and television stations all employ the same Nielson Audience Measurement categories of media consumption. In 2004, my research in Jakarta revealed that the lower reaches of this hierarchy barely registered on the radar of

Jakarta-based pop institutions, all of which rushed to sell the various pop-related products to the more privileged, metropolitan, educated youth, denoted by the categories ABC.²⁴ Consequently, media producers spoke of the masses as if they were a minority whose media consumption habits could only emulate those of the well-to-do.

Since 2004, however, the way Jakarta-based media producers imagine the lower reaches of this hierarchy has changed. This change coincides not only with the advent of contemporary *pop Melayu* and related contestations over the meaning of *kampung*, but also with the emergence of these lower reaches, the masses, as a pop music target market of undeniable importance. At a time when the business of recording in crisis globally due to falling sales as a result of digital downloads, those Indonesian masses residing in the nation's peripheries, well beyond the metropolis, have emerged as astoundingly enthusiastic consumers of pop music in the format that now accounts for the greatest profits accruing to various parties in recording. This format, called ring back tones or *nada sambung pribadi*, delivers music in the form of song segments to mobile phones for a weekly or monthly fee. The work of producing music for a profit therefore to large extent requires heralding those masses who, according to the regimes of audience measurement that exist, buy most of it (Solihun 2010). By reinventing *pop Melayu*, Sujana honed significantly the art of heralding these masses.

Indeed, a central feature of Kangen Band's publicity, or at least its visual presence on the public sphere, has been the tale of member's progressive civilizing on their move to Jakarta. This is certainly the tale Sujana tells in his book on his discovery of Kangen Band, which has served as an important source in the writing of this chapter. Notably, the cover of this book renders the band members as cartoon figures with broad smiles plastered on, making their way past a road sign that reads 'kampung'. In other words, the cover depicts their movement away from the *kampung*. Tukul Arwana, a successful comedian and talk show host whose character is an ugly man of humble village origins with a wicked sense of humour, is quoted on the cover thus: 'Keep going forward, Kangen Band... just

²⁴ These categories span from 'A' – the highest income earners, to 'F' the lowest. Notably, such categorizations necessarily link capacity to consume with musical and television viewing habits, for the only media audience research company, Nielson Media Research, employs the same categories in their descriptions of viewing patterns, as do radio stations, recording labels, and music magazines in their attempts to sell their audiences to potential sponsors.

believe in yourself, like me.' As I discovered while conducting research among Kangen band fans, the story Sujana's book narrates is certainly well known, although the spectacular and well-rehearsed character of this civilizing narrative is likely more due to its frequent retelling on television, not to readings of Sujana's book. In mid-2010, the majority of fans gave as the reason for their enthusiasm for Kangen Band: 'They came from below.'

Conclusion

To suggest that this interpretation of contemporary *pop Melayu* as a movement from below, from *kampung* to metropolis, emerges in context of the masses re-attaining their political rights in post-New Order Indonesia may well seem plausible. Narratives and practices that valorize upward mobility certainly depart from the image of the *rakyat* that the floating masses doctrine inferred. But the coincidence of technological advancements and political change make interpretation of these phenomena tricky. On the one hand, the local music boom, which is the context in which I have set Sujana's *pop Melayu*, may be seen as resulting from more intensive investment in Indonesian acts by a newly transnationalised recording industry at the end of the Suharto era. Further, indeed the floating masses doctrine died with the New Order, but so do other developments not directly related to post-authoritarianism ease new representations of the masses. Pop music's reliance on advertising funded television and mobile phones is a feature of post-Suharto Indonesia, but not directly related to a post-authoritarian polity. Some aspects of the post-Suharto pop musical development are only tenuously connected to regime change and reflect more strongly Indonesia's increasing global interconnectedness prompted by Suharto-era 'deregulation' policies. Some new ways of defining pop genres, that is, emerge not from the political empowerment of the masses, but from key hinge occupants' interest in rendering into the vernacular global developments, such as the global proliferation of audience measurement regimes.

Sujana's *pop Melayu* is a case in point. As already mentioned, *Melayu* by no means describes the performative impetus that prompted Dodhy to pen the very sentimental songs on the debut album. As mentioned in the above analysis, most of these songs evoke a masculine sentimentality, an emotional state presumably provoked by the marginalisation and disenfranchisement of men whose laments the songs retell. Similar

sentimentality is a feature of some dangdut compositions, but Dodhy wrote the debut album in the register of *pop Indonesia*. Since signing to Positive Art, on subsequent albums Kangen Band has been encouraged to adopt a more empowered and muscular speaking position and sound. Consequently, very little of the original Kangen Band sentimentality is present in Positif Art's pop Melayu repertoire.

In his book on popular music in Indonesia, 1997–2001, Jeremy Wallach views

...national music and the nation as *mutually constitutive*: each is simultaneously a reification and palpable presence that relies on the other to provide a legitimating framework. Thus 'Indonesian' popular music appears to validate a particular sense of Indonesian-ness, just as the sense of Indonesian-ness generates a need for recognizably Indonesian popular music Wallach (2008:6, emphasis in original).

Following Wallach, I propose that political change – which could entail the establishment of a new state or simply that of new policies for regulating media flows – give rise to changes in senses of nation and the meanings of national genres, including their inter-relations. In this chapter, I have attempted to qualify transformations of Melayu's significance and in its relationship to *pop Indonesia* by comparing contemporary pop Melayu to Weintraub's characterisation of generic style in his book on dangdut. As the story of the production of Kangen Band as a pop Melayu band suggests, stylistically speaking, contemporary *pop Melayu* bears few of the stylistic traits Weintraub attributes to genres, nor does it necessarily represent historical continuity. As discussed, among contemporary *pop Melayu* musicians, there is little sense of the place of their music making within a history of popular music, and this could suggest that the genre exemplifies a post-modern historical rupture and pastiche (Jameson 1991).

Rather than of a post-authoritarian context, this development speaks more forcefully to me of how the contestations and shifts that we have been discussing – the dispersal of *pop Indonesia*, the marking of pop with provincial difference, and the backlashes this marking has provoked – are all couched as patriotic moves. This, in turn, seems to suggest an intense compulsion among those hinge occupants empowered to chronicle and organise culture, to attaining authenticity at the site of the nation, or some other variant of 'the local'. Genre, then, serves as a site at which pop is rendered into the vernacular, as a sign of context.

Some brief reference to Arjun Appadurai's theory of context (1996) is apt at this point. For him, locality is by no means a given but exceedingly

fragile; its dangerous border zones must be ritually maintained, usually by those with restricted knowledge. We may see such ritual maintenance being undertaken by hinge occupants (Rhoma Irama, Sujana, and the music critics) at crucial habiti for interpreting (valuing, devaluing, excorporating, distinguishing, categorising) pop. The question that emerges then, following Appadurai's theory of context, is how these hinge occupants' interpretations reproduce locality.

In conclusion, I would like to draw attention to one of the most persistent features of the vernacular to emerge from the current study: that of the metropolis, Jakarta. As we have seen, it was images of the metropolis that emerged in the early New Order period as devices for naturalizing socio-cultural distinctions and a differential proximity to modernity. More than a decade after the fall of the New Order, the metropolis persists as a device for heralding the masses in new ways, using new media structures and technologies. It persists, that is, even as these new heraldings bathe in a viscous pool of global interconnectedness. New, transnationalised structures open new spaces in which the local is produced, but certain national myths endure.

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