Emma Baulch, *Genre Publics: Popular Music, Technologies, and Class in Indonesia*. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2020, 227 pp. ISBN: 9780819579638, price: USD 24,95 (paperback).

Genre Publics is dedicated to the development of Indonesian popular music over the last five decades with a particular focus on the 1990s and 2000s. This last period was a crucial time in Indonesia's history, when Soeharto's New Order regime that reigned over the country for 32 years came to an end (in 1998) and a new era of reform (or *reformasi*) characterized by efforts to democratize and decentralize the archipelagic state commenced. While providing intriguing insights into Indonesian genres of popular music, the book's analytical emphasis goes significantly beyond the field of music production as such. Based on her close readings of and listening to pop and rock bands and individual star performers, Emma Baulch enquires into the connection between musical style and the emergence of Indonesian publics. Large parts of the book are concerned with these genre publics, i.e. with how particular musical genres generate discourses reflecting social inequality and enable forms of sociality that inform the public sphere. Baulch pays particular attention to changes in technologies and media and how they relate to the rise and popularity of the musical genres as well as to imaginaries of a middle strata of society, unveiling that both music and media technologies are conceptualized through a (contested) repertoire of hierarchies in Indonesia.

The book is divided into three parts, with the first scrutinizing the complex entanglements between technological developments, musical genres, and class formation; the second and third explore the hierarchies of genres and their dynamic development that points to the (dis)continuities in how Indonesian publics are imagined as spheres of inequality. Instead of solely relying on the Western social science concept of class, Baulch adopts the Indonesian expressions of *gedongan* and *kampungan* (that serve as the titles for parts two and three of the book) as analytical categories, highlighting the centrality of these terms in all their semantic variations for Indonesian conceptions of cultural-cum-social hierarchy. Starting from the sensory universe of music, *Genre Publics* thus not only introduces the reader to class-based tastes and sensibilities but also considers the material foundations of the social world, ranging from those Indonesians who live and work in spacious buildings (*gedong*) to those who stay in the narrow lower-class quarters (*kampung*). This approach of taking emic concepts seriously is complemented by a comprehensive reading of theoretical literature in anthropology, cultural and media studies, and philosophical work on the public sphere that inspires the author's varied and detailed analyses. Equally important, the book engages in dialogues with the

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regional literature on Southeast Asian developments in music and other cultural expressions without ignoring the works that have been published in Indonesian.

In the first part of *Genre Publics*, Baulch opts for a genealogical approach to class formation and introduces the reader to the Indonesia of the 1970s and its popular music. She questions the work of scholars that focus on the political economy and the role of the state in their attempts to explain the rise of the Indonesian middle class and their cultural and political significance. Instead, she detects the advent of a middle stratum of society in the discourses about popular music as they were circulated by the music magazine *Aktuil*. In light of the co-optation of pop music by the New Order, Baulch is interested in the magazine as a platform for stories about the music genre of rock that did not enjoy a smooth relationship with the military regime. Through rock music and its representations in music magazines, Baulch argues, a space emerged for the expression of a *gedongan* “dissenting middle-class subjectivity” (p. 38) that distanced itself from the pop genre (as being perceived close to the regime) on the one hand, and from lower-class popular music like *dangdut* (representing the *kampungan*) on the other. As Baulch shows, the figure of the critical middle-class citizen associated with rock music endured in the post-New Order era and rose at times to unprecedented prominence, such as when Slank—perhaps Indonesia’s most popular band—supported the rock music fan Joko Widodo in his successful presidential campaign in 2014.

Slank is one of several bands that rose to prominence in the 1990s, taking part in a local music boom that Baulch closely associates with the introduction of private commercial television in Indonesia that became a major venue for these bands. As a result, the sharp distinction between the genres of rock and pop began to collapse, while leaving the class-based categorization of taste, i.e. *gedongan* versus *kampungan*, largely intact. However, Baulch also analyses alternative trajectories into this new realm of sonic-cum-visual mediation that she sees closely connected to a consumer citizenship that encompasses not only music consumption but a whole middle-class lifestyle emphasizing personal autonomy and self-transformation. In her discussion of the decidedly *kampungan* music group Kangen Band from provincial Lampung, and its genre Pop Melayu, Baulch makes clear that there is a path to national fame by defying middle-class tastes, as the 2000s also witnessed cracks in the field of cultural production and its mediations that until then had been largely geared towards a middle-class audience. Through groups like Kangen Band, with its success on the national level due to frequent television appearances and the allure of its rags-to-riches story, their lower-class fans have at least partly become incorporated into consumer society and its pop universe.

The second part of the book further delves into the *gedongan* realm of Indonesian popular music by investigating the role of MTV Indonesia in constructing a public for the middle class that is inhabited by actors as disparate as the punk band Superman Is Dead and the pop diva Krisdayanti. Baulch focuses on the visual representations of these two musical acts in videos and books that highlight personal transformation and fluid identities, while being anchored within the Indonesian nation. In this part of the book, Baulch also investigates the trend in the 2000s of rediscovering the music of the 1970s through tribute albums and features in music magazines propelled by international record labels that opened branch offices in Indonesia in the 1990s. In Baulch's revealing interpretation, these tributes did not just recall the bands of a bygone era but let the New Order appear as a golden age of popular music suggesting continuities between the New Order past and the post-New Order present, which is quite contrary to prevalent political assessments of a break between an authoritarian and a post-authoritarian era.

In the last part of the book, Baulch comes back to the *kampungan* world of Indonesian music through Kangen Band and its provincial origins when their CDs were only distributed through street stalls (*emper-emperan*). Baulch associates this strategy of music circulation through an informal economy with a counterpublic that affords alternative subject positions beyond middle-class ideals. Similarly, she asserts, Kangen Band's fan club evolved into a community where lower-class belonging and desires could be lived out, while simultaneously subscribing to the corporate branding of a music group that likes to disturb *gedongan* sensibilities through its *kampungan* image. The last example in *Genre Publics* that is dedicated to notions of *kampungan* is the Balinese pop singer Nanoe Biroe, who sings his songs in low Balinese, which precludes a national career. Baulch's discussion of Nanoe Biroe and his lower-class Balinese fans comprises a meticulous analysis of the wallpaper that covers the back of his merchandise shop on which the singer positions himself among images of international and national pop stars and political figures. Baulch reads this cosmopolitan *mélange* against the backdrop of increasingly exclusive assertions of Balinese identity in post-Soeharto Indonesia. Defying this trend, Nanoe Biroe created his own Balinese community that regularly meets offline as well as online, such as on Facebook, that has evolved into a predominantly female fan base.

Genre Publics offers important insights into the connections between Indonesia's music scene, imaginaries of the social, and the country's (cultural) politics. It presents a thoughtful reading of Indonesia's more recent history through the lens of music production and consumption that reveals the (dis)continuities between the New Order and post-New Order eras. While the book indicates

that in the cultural realm with its middle-class sensibilities and hierarchies of taste there was no clear break with the Soeharto regime, it also shows that the varied interplay between musical genres and media technologies generated new (counter)publics that left room for alternative ways of entering the music scene and establishing fan communities. Moreover, the genre publics and their adjunct socialities that Emma Baulch so vividly describes will remind some readers of similar developments in Indonesia's Islamic landscape that transformed in conjunction with the changing media uses of preachers and their followers. *Genre Publics* represents a significant contribution to the scholarship on Indonesia's public sphere, and deserves a wide readership across disciplinary boundaries. And it is certainly a highly recommended read for all those who enjoy listening to and reflecting on Indonesian popular music.

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