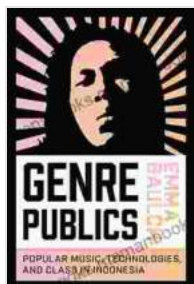


Popular Music Technologies and Class in Indonesian Music Culture: An Ethnographic Study



Genre Publics: Popular Music, Technologies, and Class in Indonesia (Music / Culture) by Emma Baulch

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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Music has always been a powerful force in Indonesian society, shaping cultural identity, expressing social values, and providing a means of entertainment and communication. In recent decades, the advent of new music technologies has had a profound impact on Indonesian music culture, transforming the way music is created, performed, and consumed.

This article explores the role of popular music technologies in shaping class distinctions within Indonesian music culture. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted in Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, I examine how the use of different technologies, such as traditional instruments, Western

instruments, and digital audio workstations (DAWs), reflects and reinforces social hierarchies within the music industry and among musicians.

Traditional Instruments and the Politics of Authenticity

Traditional Indonesian music is characterized by the use of a variety of instruments, including the gamelan, angklung, and suling. These instruments are often associated with particular ethnic groups and regions, and they play an important role in traditional ceremonies and rituals. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in traditional Indonesian music among urban youth, who see it as a way to connect with their cultural heritage.

However, the revival of traditional music has also been accompanied by a politics of authenticity. Some musicians and scholars argue that traditional music should only be played on traditional instruments, and that the use of Western instruments or electronic technology is a betrayal of tradition. This view is often held by members of the upper class, who see traditional music as a symbol of Indonesian national identity and cultural purity.

In contrast, many young musicians from lower-class backgrounds are experimenting with new ways to incorporate traditional instruments into popular music. They often use traditional instruments alongside Western instruments and electronic effects, creating a hybrid sound that reflects their own diverse cultural experiences. This approach to traditional music has been criticized by some purists, but it has also gained a wide following among young people who are looking for new ways to express their Indonesian identity.

Western Instruments and the Global Music Market

Western instruments, such as the guitar, bass, and drums, are widely used in popular music around the world. In Indonesia, Western instruments were first introduced by European colonizers in the 19th century. They were initially used in military bands and in the music of the elite. However, in the mid-20th century, Western instruments began to be adopted by Indonesian popular musicians, who used them to create new genres of music, such as kroncong, dangdut, and rock.

Today, Western instruments are ubiquitous in Indonesian popular music. They are used by musicians from all social classes, and they can be found in a wide variety of musical genres. However, there is still a hierarchy of instruments within the Indonesian music industry. Guitars and drums are seen as the most prestigious instruments, and they are typically played by musicians from upper-class backgrounds. In contrast, bass guitars and keyboards are seen as less prestigious, and they are often played by musicians from lower-class backgrounds.

The hierarchy of instruments within the Indonesian music industry reflects the broader social hierarchy in Indonesian society. Upper-class musicians have access to better education and resources, and they are more likely to be able to afford to buy expensive instruments and equipment. They are also more likely to have connections to the music industry, which gives them access to opportunities to perform and record their music. In contrast, lower-class musicians often have to rely on cheaper instruments and equipment, and they may have less access to the music industry.

Digital Audio Workstations and the Democratization of Music Production

Digital audio workstations (DAWs) are software programs that allow musicians to record, edit, and mix music. DAWs have become increasingly popular in recent years, as they make it possible for musicians to create professional-quality recordings at home. This has led to a democratization of music production, as musicians from all social classes now have access to the same tools and technologies.

However, there is still a digital divide in the Indonesian music industry. Musicians from upper-class backgrounds are more likely to have access to the latest DAWs and plugins, while musicians from lower-class backgrounds may have to rely on older or pirated software. This can give upper-class musicians a competitive advantage in the music industry, as they are able to create more polished and professional-sounding recordings.

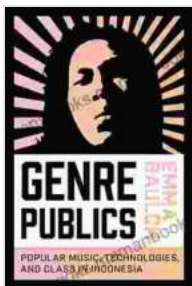
Despite the digital divide, DAWs have had a positive impact on the Indonesian music industry. They have made it possible for musicians from all social classes to create and share their music with the world. DAWs have also led to the emergence of new genres of music, such as electronic dance music (EDM) and hip-hop, which are often created by musicians from lower-class backgrounds.

Popular music technologies play a significant role in shaping class distinctions within Indonesian music culture. The use of different technologies, such as traditional instruments, Western instruments, and DAWs, reflects and reinforces social hierarchies within the music industry and among musicians. However, the democratization of music production through DAWs has also created new opportunities for musicians from all social classes to create and share their music with the world.

As new music technologies continue to emerge, it is likely that the class landscape of the Indonesian music industry will continue to change. However, one thing is for sure: music will continue to play a vital role in Indonesian society, providing a means of entertainment, communication, and cultural expression for people from all walks of life.

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