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Longing Band play at Beautiful Hope

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Longing Band play at Beautiful Hopeⁱ

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Abstract

This article enquires into the contextual dimensions of Indonesian consumerism by presenting the rise to national fame of provincial boy band, Kangen (Longing) Band. The case of Kangen Band suggests that Indonesian consumerism entails new ways of heralding the masses that rely on and play with old generic terms, *kampungan* (hick-ish) and 'Melayu' (Malay). It also reveals some of the specificities of the Indonesian consumerist environment, in which Ring Back Tones (RBT), pirate recordings and corporatized fandom are important resources in the formation of consumer subjectivities.

Keywords

consumerism, mobile telephony, fans, pop genres

Introduction

[W]hat we need to avoid is the search for pre-established sequences of institutional change, axiomatically defined as constitutive of the consumer revolution. What this might encourage is a multiplication of scenarios concerning the appearance of consumer society, in which the rest of the world will not simply be seen as repeating, or imitating, the conjunctural precedents of England or France.

In mid 2010, I attended an on-air event for the television station SCTV in a lavish housing complex called Harapan Indah (Beautiful Hope), in Bekasi, on the periphery of Jakarta. I was staying in well-established, leafy Menteng, at the city's heart. Getting to Bekasi meant a long taxi ride through the night, past the jungle of tall office buildings - the embassies, the construction and mining giants, and the multilateral aid agencies, their banks of square windows glinting like sequins. We ascended to a lonely tollway, and little could be seen but other cars speeding by.

Eventually, the toll road gave way to a familiar, harried scene. Dusty, exhaust-stained kiosks made of plywood - a hairdresser, a street-side dentist, a grease-smeared motorbike repair shop - lined the roadside. Suddenly, the scene was transformed again, as we turned onto the newly paved and palm-lined road to Harapan Indah. Rods of laser light could be seen in the near distance, moving crazily in haphazard arcs, exterminating any fears of rain. The lights directed the gaze toward the location of the stage, which also soon came into view. It was flanked by walls of fluorescent orange and yellow LED lights, advertising the event sponsor. Four acts appeared on stage that night: Maia Duo, Hijau Daun, Kahitna and Kangen Band. My mission tonight was to catch Kangen Band (Longing Band).

Kangen Band first piqued my interest in 2009, when I undertook a study of Jakarta-based music writers. I found that, among them, the matter of Kangen

Band's (lack of) quality was not negotiable.. The band's appearances on national television also elicited criticisms from several high profile composers, who considered their songs to be poorly composed (Cahyono 2009a, 2009b).ⁱⁱ But the band's producers focused on Kangen Band's rise to fame despite humble beginnings as a success story to be celebrated (Sujana 2009).

It was from these promotional efforts that I first learned the producers' narrative of Kangen Band's rise to fame. This story begins around in 2004, when a group of youths from Lampung, in Southern Sumatra began gathering together and busking on the streets during the free time they had from their day jobs (they worked as pushcart traders and construction workers).

Eventually, they began staging more formal performances at music festivals in their hometown. By mid-2005, the collective had chosen the name Kangen Band and recorded a demonstration compact disc of original compositions by guitarist Dodhy. In the months following, songs from the disc were broadcast in strategic public places around Lampung: on the radio, on the *bemo* (public transport vans), in malls, and in the form of 'unofficial' or pirated compact discs sold by the roadside,ⁱⁱⁱ at informal stalls known as *emper-emperan*. By 2006, Kangen Band's popularity manifested in similar form on Java.

In 2006, a former print journalist, Sujana, who had recently established an artist management company, Positif Art, 'discovered' Kangen Band and invited its members to sign with Positif Art and pioneer its novel strategies for pop production: These included signing a recording contract with Warner Music to repackage their debut album, *Tentang Aku, Kau dan Dia* (On Me,

You and Him), which had previously been so widely disseminated in unofficial formats. When incorporated into the publishing and distribution systems of a major recording label, Kangen Band proved to be commercially successful. However, once part of such official systems of musical reproduction, Kangen Band also assumed a new format: Originally, the group conceived of their performances in the register of *pop Indonesia* (Interview, Andhika). After signing with Positif Art, however, Kangen Band became known as a *pop Melayu* band, a label that classified Kangen Band as a band emerging ‘from below’,^{iv} or from the lower classes. In the commercial production of Kangen Band, old generic terms *Melayu* and *kampungan* were strategically employed to evoke upward mobility.

A narrative of upward mobility serves as a central object in the current study of Kangen Band. Broadly speaking, the article presents an enquiry into Indonesian consumerism, and I use the narrative to trace some of the historical forces implicated in the crystallization and dissolution of particular consumer subjectivities. However, whilst the narrative of upward mobility dominated official Kangen Band performances, it was not the only signification. An examination of official fan practices reveals Kangen Band’s performances to be polysemic. Further, the unofficial field in which Kangen Band initially circulated in purely sonic (not visual) form, regionally, via pirated recordings and radio broadcasts predated the meta-text of upward mobility. In this unofficial field, Kangen Band’s meaning was less certain. The article initially addresses this undetermined domain, which I characterize as ghostly, then follows with a consideration of the band’s commercial production under

the auspices of Warner Music and Positif Art, which stressed visibility. In the following section, I discuss how ghostliness and visibility describe separate realms of consumption with distinct political implications.

From the ghostly to the visible

The roles YouTube plays in contemporary cultural productions urges social researchers to tread carefully when interpreting the political implications of the consumption and production of amateur performances - in the current case, those of Kangen Band prior to its recruitment to major label production processes. For example, YouTube makes it difficult to celebrate the capacity of amateur performances to bypass official processes as a subcultural victory. Such bypassing simply attests to shifts in cultural economies enabled by digitality. Here, then, the characterisation of unofficial Kangen Band performances as ghostly is not meant to imply that they self-consciously resisted big capital pop musical institutions. Invocation of ghostliness, rather, is an attempt to begin sketching how the Kangen Band phenomenon reveals cracks in the public culture and its uncanny dimensions. In such uncanny spaces, I posit, cultural performances can be loose, relatively unregulated, and quite open to interpretation.

The first way in which Kangen Band's unofficial performances were ghostly pertains to their wide circulation in purely sonic form. In a pirate economy awash with unofficial video recordings, this is unusual. In his book, Sujana expresses frustration at the utter unavailability of any images of Kangen Band

that may have aided him in his quest to uncover its potential. However, prior to its production by Positif Art and Warner, the Kangen Band sound was already ubiquitous. Songs from the debut album circulated as radio broadcasts, they pervaded malls, and they sold spectacularly at the *emper-emperan*. Despite such ubiquity, the band remained invisible.

The second dimension of Kangen Band's early ghostliness pertains to the uncertain generic affiliations of its sound – an uncertainty accentuated, perhaps, by the absence of any visual cues. As I mentioned in the introduction, Kangen Band's composer, Dodhy, originally conceived of his compositions in the register of *pop Indonesia*: a genre which stereotypes metropolitan, middle class culture. But the compositions on Kangen Band's debut album do not display the lyrical proclivity for hip, metropolitan language or self-confident masculinity that are normally features of this genre. In fact, the songs brazenly make use of provincially inflected slang and are markedly sad and despairing, and in this sense they are excessive and wild, because they apply a typically Melayu sensibility (David, 2003) to pop Indonesia.^v This rendering blurs the distinction between Melayu and pop Indonesia, and their attendant meta-texts of lower classness and middle classness respectively. suggests pop Indonesia's availability for subaltern ex-corporation, or poaching (Jenkins, 1992), and unhinges the songs from the kinds of metatext generic certainty can provide.

This generic unhinging is built upon by the way in which Kangen Band, in its early, unofficial form, manifested as a particular kind of digitally mediated

social phenomenon. Similar to the YouTube phenomenon, digital sound reproductions enabled Kangen Band recordings to spread rapidly and in great volume. YouTube played a minor role in the music's dissemination; of greater significance was the pirate economy of unofficial roadside exchanges, radio broadcasts, and sales at the *emper-emperan* - which, *ipso facto*, generated a large volume of phoned-in radio requests, and vice versa. This mode of proliferation distinguishes the techno-social dimensions of amateur Kangen Band performances from similar phenomena mediated by visually rich, interactive web formats such as YouTube. Early Kangen Band performances were purely sonic commodities, and enthusiasm for them was not socially networked in a web-mediated sense.^{vi} The dialogue between radio and the *emper-emperan* gives rise to a more ethereal kind of network, for it neither records numbers of hits nor provides space for viewers' comments. Together with the band's invisibility and generic uncertainty, this ethereal network yielded descriptions of the band's songs as strangely appealing, ghostly.^{vii}

Once signed to Warner, however, Kangen Band's ghostliness became a figment of its past. The band's image materialized, as it appeared in music videos and on live telecast performances - much to the chagrin of a number of authoritative critics, who lambasted the band's poor-quality compositions and unsightliness, due in part to the lead singer's chronic acne, as evidence of the band's inherent vulgarity (Cahyono 2009a, b). The band's unsightly appearance was, in fact, heavily airbrushed out of the cover of their first album with Warner, *Yang Sempurna* (Perfection), the repackaged version of the debut album *Tentang Aku, Kau dan Dia*. Nevertheless, although the audio

tracks were remastered, little additional audio production took place. The resultant repackaged recording is imbued with a sense of under-production: Instrumentation, sounds tinny, the vocals are thin, often out of tune, and wavering. Warner's repackaging, then, entailed only a partial makeover. The band was rendered visible, but the original, unofficial sound was essentially retained. This suggests, not an elimination of vulgarity, but an airbrushing and yet strategic use of it.

The second way in which Kangen Band assumed a new form pertains to the strategic use of the terms *Melayu* and *kampungan* (hick-ish/ bogan-y) in the course of the band's promotion. As mentioned above, the band's generic re-assignment, from *pop Indonesia* to *pop Melayu*, eased its official production as a narrative of upward mobility. In response to strong criticisms of the group, the band's label capitalized upon the image of provincial vulgarity associated with the term *kampungan* and highlighted the members' humble beginnings. In cinematic and literary form, narratives of the bands 'rags-to-riches' story began to appear in chain bookstores and on national commercial television. In 2009, for example, the band's manager published a book recounting its rise to fame, entitled *Rahasia Kangen Band: Kisah Inspiratif Anak Band* (The Secret of Kangen Band: The Inspirational Story of a Pop Band). Tukul Arwana, a successful comedian and talk show host who characterizes an ugly man of humble village origins with a wicked sense of humour, is quoted on the cover: 'Keep going forward, Kangen Band...just believe in yourself, like me.' Prior to this publication, in 2007, after Kangen Band signed to Warner Music, the television station RCTI aired a film that

recounted their rise to fame, entitled '*Aku Memang Kampungan*' (Proud to be a Bogan/Hick). Both productions implicate a reclaiming of the term *kampungan*, normally employed as a term of derision, and suggest an attempt to herald the masses in new ways, using *pop Melayu* as a mode of address. A brief foray into the broader field of public discourse in which this strategic use of *kampungan/Melayu* may be located is necessary to contextualize its value for Kangen Band's image production.

Kampungan has historically been an important theme within scholarship on Indonesian popular music. Such discourses dichotomize *kampungan* and *gedongan* (trans: urban?) ideals. These are terms that literally refer to the structured environment (the housing and commercial structures of the villages and slums of the city), but signify more widely as positions of centrality and marginality in relation to the metropolis, implying vulgarity in contrast to refinement.^{viii} Broadly speaking, *kampungan-gedongan* are said to relate variously to the two musical genres with which this article is concerned: Melayu music, which ranges from *dangdut* (a hybrid form defined by a Melayu vocal style and instrumentation including the *suling* (bamboo flute) and *gendang* (*tabla*-like drum)) to *pop Melayu* (a genre based on the iconic elements of the Melayu vocal style, but which otherwise employs Western instrumentation) and *pop* (and *rock*) *Indonesia* (which refers to songs usually sung in the national tongue but which makes use of a Western pop idiom). A number of writers have provided rich and varied illustrations of uses of *kampungan* to describe the performance and consumption of Melayu forms, and point to the *gedongan* nuances of *pop Indonesia* (Murray, 1991; Wallach,

2002; Yampolsky, 1986). *Kampung* and *gedongan*, then - and by extension, pop Indonesia and pop Melayu - may be understood as distinct socio-geographical imaginaries.

These imaginaries gained traction during the New Order period, when a middle class sensibility crystallised, partly through invoking the masses as politically disempowered or culturally unknowing - an invocation served well by the term *kampung*. In the years immediately following Soeharto's fall, similar notions of *kampung* endured as they were transposed onto the scale of media consumers employed by the US firm, Nielson Audience Measurement. This method of tracking consumption practices (?) has gained prominence in the context of the deregulated and considerably proliferated media environment over the last decade. During research on Jakarta's pop Indonesia industry in 2004, I found that, in fact, the lower reaches of the Nielson scale, which tracked sales among the nation's underclasses barely registered on the radar of Jakarta-based pop music institutions, which rushed to sell their products to urban, educated youth, denoted by the categories AB. Consequently, pop producers spoke of the masses as if they were a minority whose media consumption habits could only emulate those of the well-to-do. In recent years, however, the social function of *kampung* has begun to shift, and the Kangen Band phenomenon may be seen as a watershed moment signifying this. Jakarta-based pop Indonesia producers have begun to herald and address, rather than ignore the masses, and now attempt to interpolate their 'specialness' as a distinct public with certain tastes and life trajectories.

New means to appeal to the masses coincide with the acknowledgment of lower classes as pop music target markets of undeniable importance. In a time in which the recording industry is suffering a crisis globally (due to plummeting sales, largely resulting from the availability of free digital downloads), those Indonesian masses residing in the nation's peripheries, beyond the metropolis, have emerged as astoundingly enthusiastic consumers of pop music in the a new recording format that now accounts for the greatest profits (Solihun, 2010): Ring Back Tones (RBT). This format delivers music in the form of pre-selected song segments to mobile phones for a weekly or monthly fee. The song segment then replaces the ringtone a caller would hear while waiting to connect. The work of producing music for a profit, therefore, to a large extent requires heralding those masses who, according to the regimes of audience measurement that exist, buy most of it.

Histories and genealogies

In the chapter of *Modernity at Large* from which the epigraph opening this article is drawn, Appadurai conceptualizes logics of consumption as overlapping both local particularities and various world communications processes (1996: 73). Much of that chapter is devoted to developing conceptual tools that might allow us to capture such criss-crossings in any study of consumerism. To this aim, Appadurai distinguishes between history, which 'leads you outward, to link patterns of changes to increasingly larger universes of interaction', and genealogy, which 'leads you inward, toward cultural dispositions and styles that might be stubbornly embedded in both

local institutions and the history of the local habitus' (Appadurai, 1996: 74).

Appadurai posits a simultaneous exploration, a 'double historicizing'.

In the current study of the particularities of Indonesian consumerism, it is productive to doubly historicise Kangen Band in the manner Appadurai suggests. When we do so, we find that the marking of Indonesian pop as distinctively local (either *Indonesia* or *Melayu*) is both infused with globally circulating ideas and linked to more situated histories of capitalism. The use of Kangen Band to address the 'masses' (Segment C and below, according to the Nelson Scale) may be seen to have both a history and a complex genealogy. Drawing an historical line, we might compare it with Jing Wang's observations of China, where Beijing-based advertising executives consider outlying provincial cities (segment C and below) to be the most lucrative markets (Wang, 2008: 57). But an analysis oriented toward genealogy would pay special attention to how the depiction of Kangen Band's upward mobility links to mythologies of the metropolis and its others (*gedongan* and *kampungan*) that predate the rise in Nielson Audience Measurement's importance within the Indonesian media environment. The historical line suggests a view of the masses that is coterminous with the view from the suites of advertising executives worldwide. The genealogical line suggests changes in the ways *kampungan-gedongan* play out in the realm of pop.

Such changes may well be expected in a context in which the masses are reasserting their political rights, following the fall of the New Order in 1998. However, this cannot be solely attributed to the post-authoritarian polity.

Kangen Band's performance of upward mobility, in particular, implicates new systems for generating value from pop, only tangentially related to regime change. These new systems are more directly due to the explosive uptake of mobile telephony among the masses (Heryanto, 2010: 192). This new telecommunications consumer trend is tightly intertwined with Kangen Band's significance for heralding the masses. Through its journey to the centre of pop production, Kangen Band was employed as a narrative meant to herald the masses, - a generously imaged narrative with national reach. The masses were imagined, by virtue of global audience measurement regimes, as important target markets for new musical products exchanged via mobile phone. They were depicted as avid consumers, and upwardly mobile.

In authoritative, critical assessments, the Kangen Band phenomenon correlated with the increasing popularity of RBTs as a primary profit source within pop music markets. In my interviews with them, *Rolling Stone* journalists derisively described Kangen Band as the 'champion of the ring back tone' (Baulch, 2010: 118). For these critics RBTs signify vulgarity. Here, though, I propose a slightly different reading: The appearance of ring back tones as the primary medium for exchanging Kangen Band's songs signals a move from away from the ghostly to the identifiable, with important implications for consumer agency.

I have suggested above that Kangen Band's self-released debut album spontaneously bubbled up through the cracks in public culture, and that this bubbling up sheds light on its uncanny dimensions both ethereal and

uncertain. These qualities may be seen to emerge when cultural novelties are not yet hinged to meta-narratives. Alternatively, RBTs offer relatively fixed narratives: These preselected, 30-second song segments are issued for a monthly fee; and because they are coded and locked, they cannot be pirated. Ring back tones (more accurately known as *nada sambung pribadi* – personalized connecting tones – in Indonesian) are unlike standard ringtones – familiar beeps and crackles issued into the public soundscape. They can only be heard in lieu of the standard ring tone when callers connect to the corresponding number. For example, by purchasing a ring back tone of the Kangen Band composition ‘Selingkuh’, subscribers ensure that callers, when connecting with their number, will hear the segment of the song, in this case including the following lyrics:

Pacarku, mengertilah aku/Sperti aku ngertikan mu

[My darling, please understand me/ the way I understand you]

In this way, ring back tones function as a pre-made intimate whisper; a kind of prosthetic voice, and this instance of voicing may be contrasted with the relative looseness and openness of Kangen Band’s early appeal. This departure from the band’s earlier ghostliness becomes clearer when we consider the ring back tone’s reliance upon televisual mediation and, by extension, on generic certainty: In much the same way as sales at the *emper-emperan* conversed with radio broadcasts during the early part of Kangen Band’s career, ring back tone sales are dependent upon television

commercialisation. National-level, advertising-funded television is the primary medium for the official pop Melayu performances by which ring back tones are promoted. Televised performances feature banner advertisements listing the ring back tone code numbers to the corresponding song. When official Kangen Band performances are viewed in this light, as part of a system in which ring back tones, television and generic certainty are mutually reliant, the transition from the ghostly to the visible becomes apparent.

This is not to suggest, however, that Kangen Band's official meanings are irrevocably fixed. As mentioned in the introduction, fans' consumption practices reveal official performances' inherent polysemy. We might obtain further insights into the dynamics of consumer agency in the production and consumption of Kangen Band, then, by turning to an examination of its official fan organisation, Doy Community.

For reasons already thoroughly documented in the rich scholarship on the subject, fans are an object of interest to media scholars because they may develop intense relationships with their texts and performances of choice. Scholarship on fandom has extended the question of how readers engage texts or other communications media, and this subject has preoccupied cultural studies of media since the early 1960s. I have outlined above how Jakarta-produced Kangen Band performances generated a certain meta-text - a narrative of upward mobility. How, then, do fans engage this narrative, and bear the meanings of sub-alternity that are thrust upon them?

'Come on Auntie, we're on!'

As mentioned above, music critics at the Indonesian licensee of the authoritative *Rolling Stone* magazine unanimously derided Kangen Band: They viewed Kangen Band's visual manifestation as substandard, and the band's provincial origins and rise to fame via unofficial, unpolished recordings as evidence of their vulgarity. This assessment of Kangen Band - and its similar articulation in print media - correspond to a cultural politics that favours the urban, masculine and the tertiary-educated, developed throughout the New Order (see Baulch, 2010). The social position of the Doy members I encountered in 2010, however, contrasts with that of the music critics: Many fans were female high school graduates working in various retail outlets, on the fringes of the capital city, whose socio-economic positioning differs greatly from those of educated writers at a national entertainment magazine. Unlike fans communities analysed elsewhere (Jenkins, 1992), Doy Community's engagements with Kangen Band are not mediated by print fanzines or the world wide web, both comparatively rich in possibilities to contest or augment the original text. Rather, they are mediated by two other, perhaps more imposing, institutions: the band's management company, Positif Art and television.

In Indonesia, an official fan club is part and parcel for pop music production, and all the fan clubs I have encountered have been officially established by a band's management or production company and are supervised and funded by the band's management team - which in some cases is assigned by the band's recording label. In fact, this corporatized style of fandom is not unique

to Indonesia, but may be thought of as one facet of a universally manifesting media convergence: the blurring of production and consumption. In a related context, Henry Jenkins contends in an interview with Matt Hill that the world wide web facilitates direct dialogues between producers and fans, thus complicating a clear distinction between them. Deuze and Banks characterise this particular aspect of media convergence as the rise of co-creative labour, in which “practices of user-created content and user-led innovation are now significant sources of both economic and cultural value” (Deuze and Banks, 2009: 419). Emerging co-creative relations, they contend, prompt new queries about agency and identity.

The corporatised dimensions of Doy^{ix} – it was established, as are most pop music fan groups in Indonesia, as a standard practice of the group’s official production - may be understood in the context of this ‘historical’ (ie, transnationally manifesting) phenomenon, as co-creative labour. However, variance most assuredly exists between one locale and the next, with regards to the the structures in which such fan groups proceed. In such structures, some ‘genealogical’ features of consumerism may be found; features that more powerfully shape questions of agency and identity than the generalised context of co-creation. Since the band’s production company and television, rather than fanzines and the world wide web defined the contours of fan consumption and relationships, an examination of the televised event at Harapan Indah will help elucidate the nature of Doy Community.

I arrived at Harapan Indah to commence my research into Kangen Band fandom in a taxi. The taxi dropped me off at the periphery of the audience space, where the stage was barely visible in the distance. I then ploughed through a thick wall of onlookers to reach an opening in a cyclone fence, guarded by the usual meagre-framed security. I was allowed to pass, and I soon made my way to the Kangen Band tent, backstage. A couple of band members were seated before brightly lit mirrors having their make-up applied. Andhika, the vocalist, was standing in the middle of the tent, surrounded by personnel from an infotainment show. One show host was interviewing him, or rather, requesting that he recount the narrative of upward mobility in a single utterance. '*Pendidikan akhir sampai mana?*' ('What level did you reach at school?') she asked him, to which the rather wild young man acquiescently replied: '*SMP*' ('Junior high').

The show that night proceeded in a relay of single song performances by featured acts, so Kangen Band was ascending to and descending from the stage in four-act intervals. This was no place or opportunity to conduct an interview, I quickly realised, and I trudged off to watch Kangen Band's first song performance from the side of the stage, just inside the cyclone fencing. From my safe enclosure, I observed a chaotic scene on the other side of the fence: The weight of a dense crowd pressed young boys' cheeks hard against the fence's metal patterning. Periodically, giant water jets appeared from somewhere on high, and the crowd was sternly hosed down. Overhead, television cameras on booms rooted to trusses, like prehistoric creatures with impossibly long necks, swooped down on the stage and crowd, hunting for

shots. My side of the fence was also packed with people, but nothing close to the suffocating proximity of bodies observable on the other side. These people, I later realised, were the members of the fan clubs of those acts performing that night.

When I encountered the members of Doy Community at the lip of the stage, I was surprised by the number and type of women fans. They contrasted to the wildly gesticulating, grinning female pop consumers I had observed on the morning television shows devoted to live-to-air pop performances. In the flesh, the public presence of these young women was compelling. I was reminded of my research experiences at live shows in the late-1990s, among underground musicians and audiences who were overwhelmingly male. Today, the public sphere is generally more feminised - a result of a boom in advertising for a female audience resulting from proliferation of media. The group of fans I met at Harapan Indah had been led there by the head of Doy's Kerawang chapter, a minuscule young working woman called Uci.

Whilst Kangen Band's many performances in small provincial cities are not likely to be televised, among Doy members of the Jakarta region, performances of exuberance at televised shows is precisely what Positif Art hopes of them (Interview, Sujana). Doy members' compliance with this hope is therefore of note, and may be thought of as an illustration of successful disciplining. Moreover, if Uci's way of inviting me to participate is any indication, Doy members do more than simply comply. They view these moments of performing exuberance for television cameras as central to the

practice of fandom. When Kangen Band struck up and the cameras dipped and dived overhead, Uci beckoned to me and shouted: '*Ayo tante, kita harus eksis!*' ('Come on, Auntie, we're on!')

The presence of television cameras directly impacts Kangen Band fandom: Firstly, it distinguishes Doy's consumption practices from the more ghostly contours of Kangen Band's earlier unofficial circulation - it turns Kangen Band into something *spectacular*. Secondly, it points to how Kangen Band's shift to spectacularity generates new kinds of subjectivities among fan viewers, who develop a sense of being witnessed, in addition to witnessing ('*kita harus eksis!*') Finally, it suggests the co-laboring of fandom: Doy members are not permitted only to take pleasure in the spectacle; spectacularity is expected of them as well. It is through television, in other words, that co-creative labour, which suggests complicity and consensus, is achieved. Television incorporates and intertwines Positif Arts' expectation of the fans with the fans' self-perceptions - their sense of self. This assessment may uncover some implications of this co-creative labour for fan identity. However, it does not directly address the question of agency: What does co-creative labouring for spectacularity mean to the fans, and what does it suggest of their relationship to the meta-text (of upward mobility) under consideration here?

Each time I asked Doy members what initially appealed to them about Kangen Band, I received a reply that regurgitated the narrative of upward mobility: '*Mereka dari bawah*' ('They came from below'). The fans' repetition of the metatext seems strange when we consider that most fans encountered

Kangen Band prior to its repackaging under the auspices of Warner Music and Positif Art, and therefore only became aware of the narrative of upward mobility after their initial interest. It could not really have been the reason for their initial attraction to Kangen Band. Had they become so identified with Positif Art that they not only laboured for Kangen Band's televisual spectacularity, but also trotted out at will the tagline it had devised for the band? What does this instance of co-creative labour suggest of agency?

This question may be considered through a discussion of some other dimensions of Kangen Band fandom, which extend beyond the televisual spectacular. Upon our meeting at Harapan Indah, Doy members immediately invited me to come the next day to their base camp at Andika's home in Cibubur. The base camp's significance was raised frequently when I asked fans what had prompted them to join Doy. One day, Uci sent me a text message to inform me of a Kangen Band performance on DeRings, one of the many live-to-air morning television shows that feature pop performances, and suggested I might like to attend. When I replied that I could not, she seemed especially keen for me to join the fans after the show in the trek to Andhika's house at Cibubur.

This territorial aspect of Kangen Band fandom is intriguing because it takes place outside the official structure of fandom that privileges televisual spectacularity.

Of further interest is the link Doy members draw between this territorial aspect and Andhika's good moral character: Uci attempted to relate this good moral

character to me by referring to the fact that he sits on the floor and shares meals with the fans who hang around his house. She contrasted his sociability with the primary reason she joined Doy, after resigned from pop Indonesia band Peterpan's fan group: fans rarely came into contact with band members of this group. Of particular note is the way in which she contrasted her descriptions of Andhika's demeanor as '*baik*' (good) with the aesthetic values attributed by media structures that privilege the spectacular. Above, I have briefly discussed how Doy members are inextricably entwined with these structures; yet, Uci offered the following comparison (Interview, Uci):

I used to be a member of Peterpan and Ungu fan clubs, but we could never get to meet the band members! Kangen Band are more humble and closer to their fans. They invite us to eat with them, invite us to their house. So when we hear people saying awful things about Andhika - that he is ugly - we respond that at least he is a good person, and humble.

The stress Doy members place on Andhika's good moral character resists two powerful narratives. Firstly, it directly rejects the authoritative critics' derision of Kangen Band. Secondly, it creates a tangential narrative to that of upward mobility, suggesting that he has maintained his humility. However, not all would agree that the band members have maintained a commitment to their humble roots: In a conversation with me, Kangen Band's manager, Sujana, complained that Dodhy, the band's composer, had begun hawking his compositions to new, upcoming bands without asking Sujana's permission

first. Sujana explained Dodhy's antics as a case of a '*kacang yang (?) lupa kulitnya*' (a peanut who has forgotten its shell) (Interview, Sujana). In order to stress Andhika's good moral character, evidenced by his socialisation with fans, fans employed the same metaphor, but in the negative: Andhika is like a '*kacang tidak lupa sama kulitnya*' (a peanut who has not forgotten its skin). Doy members and Sujana offer two very different characterisations of Kangen Band's personnel - and the primary reason for their rise to fame. In Sujana's view, *he* is key to Kangen Band's success. In the Doy members' view, Sujana does not feature at all. It is *they* who provide the support that contributes directly to Kangen Band's success.

In pop artist fandom, we find a political impetus for fan commitment that exists tangentially to the corporate structures that would guide fan behaviour. This is confirmed by Uci's comments on her tasks as organiser of the Kerawang chapter of Doy. She was responsible for rallying members to attend live shows, as instructed by Positif Art. She also encouraged Doy members to perform audiencehood for television cameras. I was intrigued, however, by an alternative fan persona revealed by her use of the word '*berantem*' (to fight) to describe her encounters with security guards who guard the space below the lip of the stage, walled by the cyclone fencing separating backstage pass-holders and the massive crowd on the other side. Surely she did not mean to say that she came to blows with these guards, but her use of the term '*berantem*' is suggestive of an aggressive physicality, which she described as one of her most pressing responsibilities. At live shows, it is her job to ensure that all the Kangen Band fans club members are allowed to advance to the lip

of the stage. She must represent their interests, and ensure that they are not disappointed. It is these interests that so often brought her into confrontation with the guards, a rubbing-up against authority that Uci recounted with glee.

The aforementioned dimensions of fandom shed light on the matter of agency within Kangen Band fans' labour: Firstly, Doy's territorial orientation and its aggressive physicality not only exist outside the official structures of fandom, but they are suggestive of a visceral sensibility that runs counter to the televisual sublime. Secondly, fans' faith in Andhika's good moral character not only rejects authoritative critics' assessments of the band's quality, but also appears to be premised on an interpretation of the narrative of upward mobility that is at odds with that endorsed by Sujana. This act of reading may be productively compared to Jenkins' account of how Star Trek fans stretch and augment original texts, but are limited in their capacity to do so by certain constraining elements within it. At first glance, we might understand the narrative of upward mobility in this light: It worked on the fans as a constraining element, limiting their capacity to stretch and augment the text. However, Doy's territorial orientation and its stress on Andhika's good moral character reveals a resistant reading that accords considerable power to the Doy members, and suggests that the narrative of upward mobility was not constraining after all, but rather empowering, and replete with agency.

Conclusion

An aspect of mass mediated consumption a number of writers, including Appadurai (1996: 68) have noted, and that resonated within the context of

Indonesian consumerism, is that it contains the possibility of both novelty and repetition.^x To consume, then, is not just to bathe in a pool of desire; the pleasure of consuming can be found in the to and fro of embodiment and self-abstraction - the unique self and the mass public, the micro- and the macro-narratives. Writing of advertising in India, for example, William Mazzarella contends that commodities are seductive not just because they suppress 'embodied idiosyncrasies'; commodification needs 'the tangibility of objects and people... to lend credibility to its abstract claims' (2002: 20). In a similar vein, Michael Warner suggests that mass-(mediated) subjectivity might be understood as an interchange between 'embodiment and self-abstraction' (2002: 181).

The case of Kangen Band illustrates two characterisations of commodification. Official fandom, a particularly intense mode of consuming commodities, manifests as both a bathing in the televisual sublime and an urge for a more visceral sensibility, as implied in Uci's use of the term *berantem* (to fight) to describe her relationships with the security guards at live television performances. Ring back tones may also facilitate a dialogue between embodiment and self abstraction: they are not just ephemeral commodities; they are also micro-narratives (song segments) that twirl around the macro-narrative of upward mobility (as written in to the myth of the masses that the technology signifies). Furthermore, they are somewhat privatized; they only 'speak' in the intimate (relatively speaking), one-way register of an attempted telephone connection, and are in this way a form of embodiment, a kind of prosthetic voice. They are regulated, though, by both

audience measurement, a globally circulating ideology, and a more genealogical macronarrative that recounts shifts in the relation between *kampungan* and *gedongan*. Hence, ring back tones are micro-narratives that twirl around macro-narratives. Within a discussion of the possibility for improvisation in acts of consumption, questions about the processes by which these micro-narratives are authored and authorised, and the extent of their manipulability, are critical.

Endnotes

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ⁱⁱ Among those who publicly denounced Kangen Band were: composer Erwin Gutawa and musician Ridho Hafiedz of Slank (Cahyono, 2009a, 2009b), musicians Giring Ganesha, vocalist of Nidji and David Bayu Danangjaya, vocalist of Naif (<http://music.detikhot.com/read/2007/05/08/082522/777565/228/david-naif-kangen-bandplease-deh>). Among elite critics, denunciations were controversial. Composer Yovie Widianto (Sulaksono, 2009); and former manager of Superman is Dead, Rudolf Dethu (suicide glam mailing list, June 19, 2008) judged Kangen Band's original compositions superior to other pop Indonesia bands' plagiarisms

ⁱⁱⁱ Kangen Band members drew no financial reward from such airplay and roadside exchanges. 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). I prefer the terms 'official' and 'unofficial' over 'legal' and 'pirated'. 'Pirated' implies theft, but members of Kangen Band did not take issue with the widespread reproduction and exchange of their performances at the level of the *emper-emperan*.

^{iv} See Weintraub (2010b) for a discussion of the plural, shifting meaning of Melayu in popular music between 1950-65. Of note in the context of this paper is Melayu's 'Eastern' connotations and its close relation to dangdut, a stereotypically lower class form (Weintraub, 2010a), while pop Indonesia gestures toward an Anglo-American core (Yampolsky 1986).

^v This rendering suggests pop Indonesia's availability for (provincial) subaltern excorporation. Such availability may be seen to result from pop Indonesia's expanded presence in the public sphere, resulting in its dispersal. 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 metropolis and Western derivation. For young people all over the archipelago, pop Indonesia is more and more part of the mundane, its ties to an 'ordinary' EuroAmerica has been rendered fragile, and it has become more available for interpretation by subaltern youth in peripheral areas.

^{vi} It is not that the unofficial Kangen Band was absent from the web, but this was not the primary medium of its circulation.

^{vii} As revealed in discussions with fans during field work, 2010

^{viii} A precise translation of *kampungan* is elusive. *Kampung* evokes the masses' ephemeral urban dwellings and their rural homelands. Such imprecision has the effect of relegating all but a *gedongan* centre to marginal status.

^{ix} Doy is used when referring to one's sweetheart in the third person

^x Pierre Bourdieu's term, "regulated improvisations of the habitus", Appadurai contends (1996: 68-9), aptly describes the paradox of consumption.

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