

The Era of Music in Taiwan

Intro

Nowadays, music has become a common topic on dinner tables. People have no capacity to leave it too long, or it could be seen as food staple to humans. Along with the times and modern techniques change, music has been developed numerous aspects to entertain people. In the **domain** of music, music has various effects, and people use music in different ways. For example, we listen to music to relax after an exhausting day, at the parties to make the place alive, also praise God in the church. However, music has influenced human's life for hundreds of years. During this period, there must be plenty of things have changed. For instance, the music industry, the structures of music, the daily needs from music, as well as the policies or restrictions.

In Taiwan, some specific music areas have become weaker than before; in the meantime, the Independent music has risen dramatically in the recent years. One of the differences between popular music and independent music is Independent music basically reflex on the problems or event of this society, whereas establish by a group of people with special purposes instead of major record companies. Based on these two different companies of music, we are going to understand how this tendency changes this world. Therefore, does the minority music always follow the mainstream music, or the minority is indispensable to mainstream music? By this point, I stand on the side of mainstream music cannot exist without minority music.

Popular (Mainstream) Music

First of all, I am going to discuss popular music. The initial abstract of popular music is relative to classical and traditional music. The propose is to create an acceptable and controllable musical form to the public, as well as makes them interested. Even though pop music combines various and diverse elements into a complete different form, its definitions are quite **ambiguous**. According to Shaw & Su (1999), in the researches of popular music, this issue has been one of the main arguments for a while. Moreover, popular music is not only a form to express the cultures, but at the same time it is also an “intermediary” of mass communications which conveys some messages and meanings. However, pop music does not only have one or two features, it also includes numerous characteristics.

Here are some major features of popular music (Li, 2010):

1. *The element of entertainment*: the essential purpose is to amuse the general publics.

Likely, compares to the classical music, popular music does not require skills or musical knowledge to appreciate.

2. *The element of life*: pop music has the capacity to emphasize one’s emotions or feelings. Also, the contexts and the meanings of lyrics usually attach closely to people’s daily lives.

3. *The element of commercialize*: in the form of contracts with music companies to release music, and then sell as a “**commodity**”. (Shaw & Su, 1999) For

commercialize, in the meantime, they usually beautify the singers and promote electronically to attract more buyers or listeners to purchase the music or albums.

Independent (Minority)Music (anonymous, 2009)

In addition, some might think that the Independent (Indie) music is **defined** with its types and elements. However, the professional musicians **exposed** the **core notions** of Indie music are derived from the composers' own ideals and philosophies as well as the promoting methods by themselves instead of "relying on signing major label or major indie deals." (Kruse, 2010) In general, the music produced by the independent wills which control the musical works is called Indie music.

Here are some major features of Independent music (Wu V. , 2015):

1. *The element of independence:* emphasizing the original ideas that the composer want to express to audiences, and without **manipulating** and shaping the original ideas by the major companies for commercial profits. Some also believe in their own music should be accomplished sincerely by themselves.
2. *The element of uniqueness:* According to Kruse (2010), "because indie music had been so closely identified with specific geographical and physical spaces, the way in which it was and is understood in relation to local identity is important." Therefore, they mostly reflex on the society, politics and the minority groups. They are more focus on the music dissemination to spread their ideas and identify the specific cultures instead of the profits.

3. *The element of creativity*: because Indie music is not limited by the commercialization, they have more **capacity** to create and attempt different topics and elements to express their philosophies. For this reason, they are able to refresh and change flexibly and avoid the phenomenon of mimicry.

Inseparable Relationship Between Pop & Independent Music

Compares to pop music, the market of independent music is weaker because it is lack of advertising publicly. Some supports believe that popular music and independent music cannot exist together. On the other hand, it is not a true statement. It is undeniable that we can observe some styles and elements inside Indie music. Likewise, we can develop our pop music keep learning and changing some unique and creative philosophies from Indie music. In the field of independent music, if they are losing the intentions of independence and getting close to the commercialization, they are usually treated as the fallen of non-mainstream or not have a confident and forceful personality by the advocators who insist on the spirits of independence. However, their intentions do not set up at the minority markets, they expect to their music could be accepted by the alleged mainstream business. In this case, we can understand they are unwilling to compromise their own works and ideas to be changed with the commercialization. Even though the major markets do not completely accept them, they still preserve their uniqueness and keep doing experiment to **convert**.

In Taiwan, Taiwanese Dance music is not considered as popular music but mostly

is independent music. For example, on Taiwan's Golden Melody Awards, those singers who sing dancing or party music cannot get any award easily. However, in recent years, one Taiwanese female dancing singer, Jolin Tsai, depends on her efforts and learns many experiences of making music from western professional **sectors**. In the meantime, she kept challenging and creating different music elements to Taiwanese dance music **sphere**, and she finally became a famous singer in Taiwan. Because of her, more and more people from foreign countries such as America and Korea, where have made many professional dance music, have known her name and her unique music styles which include Taiwanese music spirits. Compares to other dancing singers in Taiwan, Jolin Tsai is the only dancing singer who has earned numerous awards in different countries. One of the problems of this phenomenon is because other Taiwanese dancing singers **confine** their possibilities, whereas do not have too many concepts of creativity. Relatively, those musicians who commit to independent music in Taiwan are like dancing singers, even though the tendencies are rising gradually, it is still difficult to them to earn any music awards on the general events. Meanwhile, because they cannot make big profits to the record companies, they are usually treated unequally.

Developmental Tendency

In Taiwan, the music always has strong connection with love issues. Compares to other countries, for example, in the United States, Hip-hop and rap usually use sex, love and money to convey the ideas. Likewise, in Japan, they are popular with animations, so

their music is always nonsensical or funny, and those have significant characteristics.

Therefore, it goes without saying that sometimes we can distinguish the American or

Japanese music easily. However, Taiwanese music does not actually have specific

features to let people know this song is exact from Taiwan. Meanwhile, we can observe

something interesting from the evolution of Taiwanese music, Taiwanese believes music

is always the best way to show your loves if you are too shy to say. It is obvious that

love has been our music topics for many years because we had experienced many wars

in a few decades ago. According to Shaw & Su (1999), people can see the love values

through the pop music; at the same time, we can also investigate the relationship

between the music and the social cultures.

Nowadays, the independent music is getting popular in Taiwan because there are

more and more society problems happened recently. In this case, the Indie music

conductors try to reflex the problems and share the same ideas with the Taiwanese

audiences. We can tell that the types of Taiwanese music have somehow different from

previous values. Besides, another reason that the independent music has been rising is

because people think listening to Indie music is possible to distinguish their different

tastes and levels. They listen to this kind of music to either seek out their differences or

figure the connections with Indie music. In other words, they are trying to highlight that

they are not in the same place as others in order to prove the existence in this society for

each individual, as well as to demonstrate that they are not just a face in the crowd in the

giant populations.

Reflection

However, for the mainstream music in Taiwan, in my opinion, they are not able to be separated with independent music. Originally, the elements of independent music are the basics of popular music (Li, 2010), and they even made popular music more **diverse**. In the point of view of the commercialization, since most independent music are taking the way of experimental, it is usually difficult to the record companies to accept high-risk music style if they only want to earn a giant amount of money. Nevertheless, if Taiwanese music market wants to get stronger, or to become more specific, we should start to **adjust** to a new style. If we cannot accept high-risk and experimental independent music, our music market will decline and weaken **consequently**. Then we will start to imitate foreign styles, and lose the chances to **retain** our own spirits and uniqueness.

Therefore, we should be more open mind to accept the fact of the existence of music diversity, and should not exclude someone who is walking on the different paths. All types of music should be respected, thereby would be the real “rock and roll spirit.” (Wu, 2015) Although government subsidies for musicians are very important, we should not have the mind of reliance. We ought to learn how Jolin Tsai achieved, walking on our own trails, and figuring out what kinds of styles adapt us. Even though just independent music, I believe it can possibly become mainstream music and favored by

publics as long as we make significant efforts.

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