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**GLOCALIZING K-POP: PINOY POP AND THAI POP MUSIC AS
GLOCAL EXPRESSIONS OF EVOLVING CULTURAL
IDENTITIES IN THE ASEAN**

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE

This thesis titled **GLOCALIZING K-POP: PINOY POP AND THAI POP MUSIC AS GLOCAL EXPRESSIONS OF EVOLVING CULTURAL IDENTITIES IN THE ASEAN** is hereby accepted by the Faculty of Management and Development Studies, U.P. Open University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of ASEAN Studies.

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Pamela Mae Salipot Engaño works as a security officer/analyst for Philippine Airlines. Committed to provide the flying public with pleasant, efficient, and safe travel experience, the author spearheads the conduct of threat assessment and risk management covering all stations where said airline operates. Aside from understanding geopolitical concerns that affect Southeast Asia's security landscape critical in the operations of the country's flag carrier, it was also her exposure to pressing issues in and about the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) during her five-year stint as a defense research analyst at the Department of National Defense that motivated her to pursue Master of ASEAN Studies at the University of the Philippines Open University in 2019.

Born in Agoo, La Union on July 13, 1991, yet spent most of her childhood years in Tagum, Davao del Norte, the author grew up in a decade that witnessed the popularity of beepers, denim fashion, hair-parted-in-the-middle look, and alternative rock bands singing anthems of youth. These pop-culture trends had been the author's go-to topic in her feature stories when she joined their school paper at the age of eight (8). Her exposure to campus journalism then inspired her to pursue Communication Major in Journalism at the University of the Philippines Baguio where she earned said degree in 2012.

During her college days, the author got hooked with Korean pop (K-Pop) culture to the extent that she always tapped K-Pop craze as a topic in most of her outputs in her journalism classes and even in her deliverables as a student writer in a local newspaper outfit. Her love for everything K-Pop has not at all wavered even after graduation and despite finding herself in an unfamiliar field far from the busy newsroom where she imagined herself working in. For years, listening to K-Pop music, attending concerts, buying K-Pop merchandise, and even joining fandoms have been her sources of sanity amid the pressures of work, school deadlines, and adulting. Now that K-Pop music emerges as a global cultural product that facilitates Koreanization in the ASEAN region, the author is determined to more explore K-Pop as a phenomenon worthy of academic consideration more than just its entertainment value.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

University Permission	ii
Thesis Acceptance	iii
About the Author.....	iv
Acknowledgement.....	v
Dedication.....	vi
Table of Contents.....	vii
Abstract.....	viii

CHAPTERS

I. Introduction

A. Background of the Study.....	1
B. Statement of the Problem.....	6
C. Objectives.....	6
D. Rationale.....	7
E. Significance of the Study.....	9
F. Scope and Delimitation	10
G. Research Methodology.....	12

II. Research Framework

A. Review of Related Literature.....	15
B. Synthesis of Literature Review.....	57
C. Conceptual Framework.....	61

III. K-Pop Glocalization thru Snippets of P-Pop and T-Pop Groups’

Idol Creation and Music-Making Experiences.....	65
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IV. Historical, Sociocultural, and Political Drivers behind K-Pop Glocalization in the Philippines and Thailand.....

87

V. Cultural Identities in the ASEAN thru P-Pop and T-Pop Music as Glocal Expressions.....

108

VI. Conclusions and Recommendations.....

123

Bibliography.....

133

Appendices

ABSTRACT

This study examines how today's in-demand K-Pop-inspired *Pinoy Pop* (P-Pop) groups *Alamat* and *SB19*, *Thai-Pop* (T-Pop) groups *4MIX* and *Vyra*, and their talent companies approach K-Pop glocalization to reinvent their own doses of pop music that represent glocal cultural identities different from that of K-Pop music idols. Framed after music glocalization, music-and-identity construction, and regionalization concepts, this study uses an ethnographic research design to analyze how P-Pop and T-Pop groups and their talent companies glocalize the K-Pop idol formula in producing their selected hit singles; employs contextual analysis to understand how historical, sociocultural, and political drivers shape their glocalization techniques; and, triangulates said drivers with subjects' music-making experiences to paint a picture of their cultural identities as reflected in their selected P-Pop and T-Pop songs. Findings show that P-Pop and T-Pop groups and their talent companies differently approach K-Pop glocalization from the moment would-be idols were scouted, trained, and groomed down to their debut and participation in the music-making process. Moreover, the experiences and words put together to create subjects' hit singles speak of the historical, sociocultural, and political shifts the Filipino and Thai societies and their local music industries have gone through. More than just affirming the cultural diverseness of the Philippines and Thailand, subjects' varying glocalization techniques reinforce P-Pop and T-Pop music as modern-day expressions of local genius rather than mere imitation. With K-Pop glocalization advancing decolonization and regionalization in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), P-Pop and T-Pop music along with other ASEAN member-states' doses of pop music, if provided with thriving space outside their countries, can serve as catalysts that further facilitate *Aseanization* and community building in the region.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

“We breathe K-Pop!” Go ask a *Koreanophile*¹ on how much he loves every single thing about Korean popular (K-Pop) culture and I bet you would most likely get this same exact answer. With *Hallyu*² or Korean Wave spreading like wildfire across the globe, it is not surprising why almost everyone, whether they are some of K-Wave’s millions of followers or not, consumes a dose of Korean culture everyday. Afterall, who has not tried braving long queues just to get a taste of unlimited *samgyeopsal* topped with long-fermented *kimchi*? Who has not attempted to google the famous 10-step skin care regimen hoping to get that perfect porcelain skin? Who has not at all got intrigued by the talk of the town survival game named after a favorite seafood and binge-watched the series just in one sitting?

Relatedly, there is no denying that Hallyu Wave’s popularity has been driven by the successful export of K-Pop music. Defying geographical, cultural, and language barriers; flashy costumes, catchy lyrics, synchronized and cutesy dance steps, and attractive glass-skinned artists have made it possible for K-Pop music to dominate global music charts. From once being exported to South Korea’s adjacent countries in Asia, K-Pop music and its artists have globally become household names. Thanks to the advent and rise of social media platforms, it only takes one click to stream

¹ An individual who is obsessed with everything Korean.

² Also known as *“Hanliu”* in Chinese, the term was first used by the Chinese press in the late 1990s to describe the growing popularity of Korean popular culture in China (Kim, 2015).

fresh-released K-Pop hits, get a glimpse of Korean idols' dance practices, and get in touch and spazz³ with fellow fanatics from the same fandom.

As South Korea's brand of pop music continues to conquer the global stage, it comes as no surprise why most people would think of K-Pop when discussing Asian pop music (Gray, 2021). The success of K-Pop in the global music scene has cemented it as an iconic global industry which performers from Southeast Asia have been drawing inspiration from. With high hopes to debut like their Korean idols, Southeast Asian artists have tried their luck to get into South Korea's biggest talent entertainment agencies and endured nth years of rigorous training. Although the K-Pop industry has opened its doors for more Asian representation as it has welcomed Southeast Asian performers in the K-Pop stage; these non-Korean artists are trained to embrace the Korean language, groomed to fit into the strict idol beauty norm and the character they need to personify behind their given stage names, and conditioned to get used to K-idols' gym-studio-bedroom daily routine (Chong, 2020, Soheili, 2019, and CNA Insider, 2019).

While debuting as K-Pop artists remains to be a tough challenge for non-Korean performers in South Korea, talent companies from Southeast Asia have employed K-Pop's winning idol formula in advancing their unique local brand of music in the global pop market. Adopting Korean-style idol culture, the region boasts a pool of K-Pop-inspired homegrown groups who have been getting recognition both in the local and international music scene. In fact, the Philippines and Thailand are home to

³ A K-pop slang meaning to do some serious fangirling or fanboying.

some of the most in demand pop groups in the region who have been recently making waves internationally.

Looking into the Philippine experience, the rise of boy groups such as *SB19* and *Alamat* has breathed new life to *Pinoy Pop* (P-Pop) which for decades has evolved from the *Original Pilipino Music* (OPM). Formed following the tried-and-tested K-Pop idol formula that underscores the value of intensive training, use of audiovisual elements with focus on choreography and visuals, and packaging of artists based on Korean idols' beauty norm to boost commercial appeal, aforesaid Pinoy groups have stepped up their game in promoting P-Pop which is hoped to parallel K-Pop music's popularity.

Outbesting the track record of their predecessor boy groups, today's P-Pop groups have made a mark on Western music scene with SB19 being the first Filipino and Southeast Asian act to be nominated for a Billboard Music Award (Raj, 2021) while Alamat becoming the fastest rising P-Pop act on the Billboard Next Big Sound Chart (Lllemnit, 2021). Unlike former short-lived P-Pop groups whose demise was attributed to K-Pop copycat accusations and lukewarm reception from the local audience, SB19 and Alamat have gradually gained traction that eventually translated into solid local fandoms – a feat not just attributed to their sustained social media presence and engagement but also to how their musical acts provide the audiences a glimpse of Filipino cultural values. They may have acknowledged that they treat South Korean music idols as their role models, yet, said P-Pop groups prefer not to be branded as mere offshoots of prevailing *Koreanization* in the region. While they

have outrightly admitted that they emulate Koreans' idol culture hoping to achieve the same level of global fame Hallyu artists enjoy, SB19 and Alamat have vowed to assert their cultural identity and exude what is "P" in P-Pop.

In mainland Southeast Asia, there's no stopping Thailand's K-Pop-inspired homegrown artists from going global as they seek to introduce *Thai Pop* (T-Pop) music across the world. While Thai-blooded idols have been globally recognized as members of today's biggest K-Pop acts in South Korea, emerging pop groups 4MIX and Vyra have been aiming to reach the same level of popularity but this time in letting the world hear Thailand's new sound of pop music. Unlike their Korean counterparts who were trained as idols at an early age, members of 4MIX and Vyra were former part of K-Pop dance cover groups⁴ and sub-units⁵ of existing pop girl groups, respectively. Tapping K-Pop idols' trademark looks, choreography, and musical style, these pop groups have been promoting T-Pop songs with themes ranging from self-esteem down to gender equality.

While the T-Pop groups have been gradually amassing considerable following in their own country few months after their debut, it is worth mentioning that they have been turning heads in their neighboring countries and even outside Southeast Asia. For instance, girl group Vyra, after releasing its four (4) hit singles, managed to bag a nomination as Asia's Girl Group at regional music award-giving body Music Rank Extra Awards in 2021 alongside other Southeast Asian pop groups and South

⁴ Group of dancers who reenact the choreography of K-Pop idols in their music videos with painstaking attention to detail while lip-syncing songs' Korean lyrics.

⁵ Smaller groups within a big idol group.

Korea's biggest K-Pop idols (Music Rank, 2021). Meanwhile, hailed as Thailand's first LGBTQ+ group, 4MIX also secured a nomination under the People's Choice category at South Korea's annual The Golden Disc Awards in 2021 (WorkPointToday, 2021). Not only it has made its presence felt in Asia, 4MIX has also brought the T-Pop craze in Latin America with its unique and stylish music sweeping Brazil, Mexico, Spain, and Portugal (News Directory, 2021). Significantly, while the T-Pop groups' musicality and branding sound and reflect K-Pop's signature idol formula, Thailand's rising pop idols set themselves apart from their Korean counterparts through the concepts and message being echoed by their music.

As both the Filipino and Thai music industries look forward to expanding their local brands of pop music's global reach, the success of these new breed of Pinoy and Thai idol groups lies not just on making it to global music hit charts and gaining international fandoms but most especially on staying true to their commitment of radiating their *Pinoyness* and *Thainess* without purely channeling and sounding like their K-Pop counterparts. With K-Pop music's unperturbed growing supremacy in a once Western-dominated music scene, how the likes of SB19, Alamat, 4MIX, and Vyra *glocalize*⁶ K-Pop music influences while living up to their names as idols celebrating their cultural values in carving out their own niche in the global music scene is a pop culture concern said pop groups' fanbases and a K-Pop enthusiast like me find worth exploring.

⁶ Per sociologist Victor Roudometof, it is the process in which something global is being localized.

Statement of the Problem

This research shed light on how creative industries in the two (2) Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member-states namely the Philippines and Thailand approach K-Pop glocalization by embracing and bringing K-Pop music influences into a new cultural context to reinvent their own doses of pop music that represent *glocal*⁷ cultural identities different from that of K-Pop music idols. To obtain knowledge on this matter, this research took into consideration the following guide questions:

1. How P-Pop and T-Pop groups and their talent companies have glocalized the K-Pop idol formula to transform and repackage their local brands of pop music and introduce these in the global pop market?
2. How do historical, sociocultural, and political factors shaping the Philippines and Thailand affect the glocalization of the K-Pop idol formula by P-Pop and T-Pop groups and their talent companies?
3. How P-Pop and T-Pop groups and their talent companies have cultivated their cultural identities through their music despite drawing inspiration from the K-Pop idol formula?

Objectives

This research sought to satisfy the following:

1. Analyze how P-Pop groups SB19 and Alamat, T-Pop groups 4MIX and Vyra, and their talent companies internalize, localize, and refine elements of K-Pop's tried-

⁷ State or characteristic reached following interactions between something global and local.

and-tested idol formula as a global cultural product as manifested by their experiences in producing their hit singles.

2. Understand how historical, sociocultural, and political themes reflected in the subject P-Pop and T-Pop groups' hit singles' cognitive parameters, including topic, language, and context, shape said idol groups and their talent companies in glocalizing K-Pop music influences.

3. Understand how P-Pop and T-Pop music serve as glocal expressions of diverse cultural identities in the ASEAN in the face of globalization given subject pop groups' and their talent companies' interactions with K-Pop music creators and their K-Pop glocalization experiences.

Rationale

How K-Pop music has taken the world by storm has sparked the interest of many scholars on Korean studies. Most research studies revolve on how this cultural phenomenon, tagged as a deliberate tool of soft power, has changed people's once Western-centric preference in music and has projected Asia as a global powerhouse of pop culture. Generally, researchers have been keen on identifying factors which have driven the K-Pop craze and how said global cultural trend has impacted its consumers especially the youth.

In Asia, while most studies delve on how South Korean producers have successfully glocalized K-Pop music to suit the taste and preference of their target audience abroad, how non-East Asian consumers respond to K-Pop contents they receive is an interesting topic that has yet to be fully explored. For instance, although

studies like Meiching Sun's (2020) take on Chinese K-Pop fan culture partly touches on how fan labor⁸ serves as an avenue for fans to engage in creative expression and achieve self-actualization, said research more analyzes how overseas fandom transforms South Korea's pop music industry into an alternative creative industry as it "contributes to the commercial and cultural vibrancies to (sic) the K-Pop industry" (p. 403).

Relatedly, the same is true when it comes to the rise of K-Pop-inspired pop groups in Southeast Asia, a topic that rarely makes it to the spotlight partly because the existence of said homegrown artists is often dismissed as a mere by-product of increased Koreanization in the region (Kwak, 2018) and a reflection of subject countries' "copycat culture" which Melba Mackenzie (2021) stressed in her study that evaluates traces of K-Pop in Indonesian pop music. While available research materials mostly justify how the emergence and success of K-Pop-inspired groups from Southeast Asia have contributed to the development of K-Pop in East Asia, readers barely get a glimpse of how these groups – the receiving end of K-Pop idol culture – make use of these Korean music influences to reinvent their local pop music.

Significantly, the Philippines and Thailand have the same experience with the success of Pinoy and Thai idols in the K-Pop scene perceived as a product of K-Pop entertainment agencies' market expansion outside East Asia. The K-Pop craze in the two (2) ASEAN member-states has been so strong and influential that the rise of

⁸ K-pop fan labor is an unpaid immaterial labor characterized by constantly producing K-Pop-related immaterial products that help maintain the popularity of K-Pop idols (Sun, 2020, p. 391).

new brands of P-Pop and T-Pop music and idol groups could not go unnoticed without being compared to said East Asian music and their Korean idol counterparts. Not just K-Pop copycat accusations led to the demise and disbandment of K-Pop-inspired groups in the late 2000s, this also overshadowed possibilities of further exploring the evolution of P-Pop and T-Pop music taking into consideration influences from the K-Pop music culture. Significantly, the rise of today's P-Pop groups SB19 and Alamat and T-Pop groups 4MIX and Vyra amid the coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) health crisis offers an opportunity to explore K-Pop glocalization being carried out by these pop groups and their talent companies to come up with their own brands of music with global appeal that still echo their cultural roots – a topic which has yet to catch the interest of the research community.

Significance of the Study

Considering that most of the existing studies about K-Pop glocalization in Southeast Asia are written by East Asian and non-Asian actors, pursuing this study gave readers an insider point of view on the process of glocalization by looking into how receptive Filipino and Thai performers are to Korean cultural products particularly K-Pop music that is greatly shaped by globalization. By delving into how these performers have glocalized K-Pop idol culture to suit their needs and preferences and refined these traces of foreign influences into something that represents their cultural identities in a globalized world, this study helped reinforce Filipino and Thai agency when it comes to subject creative industries' musical experimentation. Thus, this study affirmed how today's brands of P-Pop and T-Pop

music can be regarded as modern-day expressions of local genius rather than mere borrowing from East Asian music culture.

More than just shunning misconceptions on the region's K-Pop-inspired pop groups as mere replicas of South Korea's successful music artists, this study helped fill research gaps attributed to the lack of local studies designed to touch on the ever-evolving dynamics and nature of P-Pop and T-Pop music. By not totally framing today's brands of P-Pop and T-Pop music through the lens of K-Pop, this study helped explain that the heterogenous character of Southeast Asian pop music speaks of the historical, sociocultural, and political shifts the region's local music industries had to ride out in the past years and its rising artists' experimental approach to pop music making aimed at satisfying listeners' changing needs while staying true to their cultural roots.

Significantly, with the ASEAN's recent pronouncement to make the region's musical culture and thriving local music scenes globally visible, this research served as a jump off point to future studies in exploring the potential of other local pop music industries flourishing in neighboring Southeast Asian states in bringing and promoting a slice of pop music from the ASEAN region in the global stage.

Scope and Delimitation

Notwithstanding the contributions of the Philippine and Thai governments and fandoms in catapulting subject pop groups to fame amid the pandemic, this research

was designed to highlight the music-making experiences of P-Pop and T-Pop groups and their talent companies as primary actors in the process of K-Pop glocalization. This research revolved on how P-Pop groups SB19 and Alamat, T-Pop groups 4MIX and Vyra, and their talent companies have glocalized K-Pop's globally renowned idol formula as manifested by four (4) of the most famous songs they released in 2021. The research focused on comparing subject pop groups' and their talent companies' various K-Pop glocalization experiences and strategies to reinvent their local pop music and repackage it to introduce to the global pop market. Recognizing that the K-Pop glocalization process is driven by various factors, the research further delved on understanding ideas and concepts behind the idol groups' selected hit singles that speak of historical, sociocultural, and political themes that have shaped subject idols' and their talent companies' music-making motivation while adopting the K-Pop idol formula.

Significantly, the analysis of subject pop groups' hits in this research did not cover thorough examination of the technical aspects of chosen hits such as their song structures, sequencing of notes, and chord progressions. Afterall, there is no specific and singular technical music formula that defines what P-Pop or T-Pop music is and what set them apart from other brand of pop music.

Meanwhile, recognizing the difficulty in measuring and assessing the concept of identity in the age of globalization, the notion of identity explored in this research went beyond the idea of national identity as it further explored the cultivation of subject P-Pop and T-Pop groups' cultural roots while absorbing a slice of said East

Asian music culture. With this, the concepts of Pinoyness and Thainess in this study are associated with the subjects' cultural identities which are expressed and shaped by cultural identifiers like ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, geographic and regional background, language, traditions, beliefs, and values.

Research Methodology

Framed after the concepts of music globalization and music-and-identity construction, this qualitative study used the ethnographic research design to capture how today's breed of P-Pop and T-Pop groups and their talent companies through their selected hit singles have localized a global cultural product like the K-Pop idol formula to develop and reinvent the Philippines' and Thailand's brands of pop music into something that represents their cultural identities in the global music industry. Anchored on Simon Frith's (1996) notion that identity is ever-changing and that it is through experiencing music that one gets to construct, negotiate, and reiterate his/her identity, the research explored personal accounts of subject idol groups and their talent companies and behind-the-scene stories of their hit singles under review.

To get a picture of the subject idol groups' and their talent companies' music-making experiences in producing four (4) of their famous hits which include "*What?*" for SB19, "*Kasmala*" for Alamat, "*Y U Come Back?*" for 4MIX, and "*Lyra*" for Vyra, I revisited previously released articles, interviews, documentaries, reality shows, and personal vlogs featuring subject P-Pop and T-Pop groups to obtain their personal accounts about their idol journey from their trainee days, to their debut in the local music scene, to their launching as pop idols projected to conquer the global stage,

down to their experiences in producing their respective famous hits. I further conducted documentary research to get the accounts of the talent companies of subject P-Pop and T-Pop groups about how their talents were scouted, trained, groomed, and formed as well as determine said idols' contribution and involvement in the songwriting, music production, and conceptualization of their respective pop hits. Meanwhile, aside from documentary research, I originally intended to conduct interviews with selected P-Pop and T-Pop idols and representatives of their talent companies but unfortunately did not receive any feedback from them regarding the interview invite.

Recognizing the existence of multiple realities, I triangulated empirical data obtained from various data sources to gain multiple perspectives in understanding K-Pop glocalization and P-Pop and T-Pop music as glocal expressions which reflect idol groups' cultural identities. This allowed me to gain more in-depth knowledge on the music glocalization process in the two (2) ASEAN member-states.

I further subjected the four (4) identified hit songs of said P-Pop and T-Pop groups to contextual analysis employing a historical, sociocultural, and political approach in examining the hits' cognitive parameters. I looked into the identified songs' parameters such as topic, language, and context to explore historical, sociocultural, and political themes which explain how receptive idol groups and their talent companies have been towards K-Pop music influences and how these drivers have influenced subjects' music-making activities.

Significantly, the results of this contextual analysis were then compared to the information acquired from the accounts of P-Pop and T-Pop idols and their talent companies about their music-making activities through review and analysis of previously released materials. This aided me in identifying common and prominent themes on how subject Filipino and Thai idols and their talent companies have glocalized K-Pop music influences to create new waves of pop music and what cultural identities their songs celebrate and embody as these reach the international music shores.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This review of related literature discusses topics, studies, and insights which give a glimpse of how today's breed of P-Pop and T-Pop groups and their talent companies approach the process of K-Pop glocalization.

This review starts with an overview on the process of glocalization, existing studies on music glocalization, and Frith's music-and-identity construction notion. It then briefly touches on the rise of the Hallyu Wave in East Asia and how this cultural phenomenon swept Southeast Asia by storm. It then explores the nature of K-Pop music as a global cultural product and highlights how idol culture, which may be a borrowed concept from Japan, has catapulted South Korea's brand of pop music into the global spotlight. Relatedly, after walking its readers through the nitty gritty of K-Pop's idol creation system, this review presents a slice of the experiences of homegrown idol groups from Southeast Asia in glocalizing the K-Pop idol culture to enrich and repackage their own music, to align it with their religious and cultural norms, and to advance a social cause.

Looking into the Philippine and Thai experiences, this review briefly discusses the evolution of P-Pop and T-Pop culture's contents, tone, and style as reflected by local cultural expressions being produced by creative industries from the 1950s to present. Then focusing on music as a carrier of pop culture, this review digs into the

roots of P-Pop and T-Pop music and explains how K-Pop music's arrival in the Philippines and Thailand has changed the dynamics and image of said countries' local brands of pop music. To elucidate the research problem, it presents four (4) of today's rising P-Pop and T-Pop groups namely SB19, Alamat, 4MIX, and Vyra and describes how their musical works reflect the refining of K-Pop idol culture to reinvent and repackage their doses of local pop music which they intend to introduce to the global pop market.

Glocalization and Identity Construction through Music

The concept of glocalization, which is a portmanteau of globalization and localization, is popularized in the academic circles by sociologists Roland Robertson, George Ritzer, and Victor Roudometof.

Popularizing the terms glocal and glocalization in the sociology field in the 1990s, Robertson borrowed definitions from The Oxford Dictionary of New Words in explaining how aforementioned terms were tailored after Japan's agricultural principle of *dochakuka* ('living on one's own land') that involves adapting one's farming techniques to local conditions and was then adopted in Japanese business model for global localization (Robertson, 1994, p. 36). Debunking concerns regarding the homogenization tendencies associated with the term globalization, Robertson (1994) raised the need to project how said phenomenon should be perceived as an enabler of locality, thus, drawing a connection between the global and local levels (p. 43). Stressing that the global-local issue should not be a matter of polarity as the two (2) levels complement each other, he pointed out the

simultaneity of globalizing and localizing processes (Blatter, 2006, p.358). To reinforce the intertwined nature of the global and the local, Robertson recommended that it would be better to use the business jargon glocalization instead of globalization to emphasize the notion of cultural heterogeneity challenging the cultural homogenization claims often associated with the globalization term. He underscored that glocalization affirms the heterogenizing aspects of globalization that highlight diversity, multi-directional global flows that do not exclude local cultures in the picture, and the “existence of world processes that are independent and sovereign of other nation-states” (Hassi & Storti, 2012). Glocalization then underscores the agency of local communities in creating a pluralistic world as they are capable of adapting and innovating within their new glocalized world (Robertson, 2001).

Relatedly, Robertson’s seminal glocalization theory caught the attention of globalization theorists like Ritzer who eventually started talking about the then new concept. While the American sociologist, who also authored the McDonaldization concept that would be discussed in the next section of this chapter, agreed on the global-local relationship and the heterogenizing effects of glocalization against globalization’s homogenizing force that is labelled to be Westernizing, Ritzer asserted that the role of Westernization and Americanization in the global processes should not be completely discounted. He then introduced the concept of *grobalization* which complements glocalization of nations, corporations, and other entities with imperialistic ambitions “to increase their power, influence, and profits all around the world - indeed, to see them grow (from here comes the word ‘grobalization’)” (Ritzer, 2003, p. 194). Compared to Robertson’s conceptualization of

glocalization as a synonym of globalization, Ritzer considered glocalization along with grobalization as processes through which globalization unfolds (Laregina, 2019, p. 13). He linked grobalization to the concept of “Nothing” defined as “a social form that is generally centrally conceived, controlled, and comparatively devoid of substantive content” while glocalization to the concept of “Something” or “a social form that is generally indigenously conceived, controlled, and comparatively rich in distinctive substantive content” (Ritzer, 2003, p. 195). Thus, unlike Robertson’s emphasis on global-local relations, Ritzer’s approach centers only on globalization while seemingly putting the local level outside of the picture (Laregina, 2019, p. 11).

Subsequently, sociologist Roudometof provided a distinct theorizing of glocalization, underscoring how globalization and glocalization should be treated as two (2) interdependent yet distinct processes. For instance, he suggested to use the term globalization when “a locally instigated wave spreads throughout the globe or close to it” (Roudometof, 2016, p. 398). On the other hand, Roudometof (2016) borrowed the scientific concept of refraction, defining glocalization as “globalization refracted to the local”; citing that depending on their wave resistance capacities, localities may either reflect ‘waves of globalization’ or instead refract these (p. 399). Therefore, Roudometof considered the two (2) processes as interdependent yet autonomous in nature with globalization describing a state in which localities are globalized whereas glocalization depicts how something global is localized.

Significantly, the concept of music glocalization is an under-researched topic in academic literature with related resources mainly composed of musicology case

studies (Laregina, 2019, p. 14). An academic book I came across with is the *Music Glocalization: Heritage and Innovation in a Digital Age* edited by music professor David Hebert and musicologist Mikolaj Rykowski which presents a collection of essays on music glocalization. While these accounts project music glocalization in different perspectives, these essays revolve on the central idea that glocalization entails “re-emphasis on local traditions and tastes as a translational response to the pervasive forces of globalization” (Hebert & Rykowski, 2018, p. XXIII) and affirm how music allows localities to bolster their local heritage and identities through active global engagement (Hebert, 2018, p. 4).

Similarly, the same view of music glocalization is also established on musicologist Adam Krims’ (2000) book *Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity* which supports Roudometof’s take on the glocalization process. Krims (2000) explained that glocalization happens when “a globalized music from localized (and ethnically centered) traditions is imagined as a universalizable style, and then it is relocalized as a specifically [local] music” (p. 174). More importantly, aside from defining music glocalization, Krims also provided a model to set glocalized music forms apart from their globalized models. Relatedly, to assess how global music influences are localized, he raised that one must ponder on two (2) elements including 1) sonic parameters, which include musical style and rhythmic elements, and 2) cognitive parameters covering topics, language, and context (Krims, 2000 as cited in Laregina, 2019, p. 16).

Meanwhile, other than looking into music globalization techniques, it is also equally important to examine the process' glocal end-product and the characteristics and identities this embodies after the fusion of global and local musical influences. This can be made possible by taking a culturalist approach in understanding how music serves as an active agent of identity. With sociomusicologist Simon Frith's premise on the creation of identity and a place in society as one of the four (4) social functions of popular music (Bennett, 2005, p. 333), music is then perceived as both a reflection of artists' identities and a means for them to continuously reiterate and cultivate their cultural identities. It is worth mentioning that more than just reflecting pre-existing identities of artists, Frith (1996) highlighted music's role in the construction of people's "sense of identity through the direct experiences it offers the body, time, and sociability", enabling them to place themselves in "imaginary cultural narratives" (p. 124). With this, while we treat music as artists' way of expressing themselves, it cannot be discounted that the experiences people gain from activities like music making and music listening also mold their identities. Not just music offers a way to experience the *self-in-process* or what Frith explained as the state of becoming (Hafez, n.d.), experiencing music also draws listeners into "emotional alliances" with performers and with other fans, thus, forming part of a collective experience (Gholami, 2015, p. 173). Moreover, the premise that music is a social process and experience affirms Frith's (1996) take on how identity "is mobile, a process not a thing, a becoming not a being" (p. 123). Therefore, music then plays a formative role not just in the construction but also in the negotiation and transformation of cultural identities.

Koreanized Southeast Asia

Dethroning known pop culture superpowers Japan and the United States, South Korea's Hallyu Wave has rewritten the East Asian country's reputation from a long-time cultural importer into today's biggest source of pop cultural contents. With the Asian Financial Crisis in late 1990s prompting Asian consumers to rely on South Korea's cheaper programming versus Japan's and further backed by the Korean government's resolve to strengthen the country's export-oriented industry to rebuild its economy, Hallyu entertainment products gradually secured more television airtime and bagged considerable market share in East Asian countries (Shim, 2011). Accepting the challenge to respond to Taiwan's own wave of cultural outputs known as *Tairyu*, Hallyu brought the two (2) East Asian countries' cultural export showdown to an end as South Korean pop boy groups started creeping into the hearts of several audiences from Southeast Asia in mid-2000s (Sinsomboonthong, 2020, p. 70).

Capitalizing on the emergence of various social media platforms allowing audiences to access K-Pop music beyond the traditional radio broadcasts, Hallyu has managed to expand its sphere of influence in the culturally diverse Southeast Asia. The ASEAN region emerged as the second largest market for Korean content exports next to East Asia, which was five (5) times bigger than the North American market and 10 times that of Europe (Handayani, 2019). Significantly, Southeast Asia has transformed into a lucrative stage for K-Pop music with the region in 2019 branded as the third-biggest market for Korean music following Japan and greater China, with South Korea exporting millions worth of music to the ASEAN region with

a 60 percent growth just in a span of two (2) years (K-Popped, 2021). With K-Pop music and other Korean cultural products facilitating diffusion of South Korean culture to the region's daily culture, it comes as no surprise why it is impossible to find someone or something in every corner of Southeast Asian streets that is not Koreanized.

K-Pop's Tried-and-Tested Idol Formula

While the Asian economic crisis, globalization, advancement of the internet, and South Korean government's move to invest in cultural exchanges to boost its economy while advancing its diplomatic agenda have often taken the credit on K-Pop music's popularity, it is the Korean private sector particularly entertainment agencies' drive to scout and train talents and capitalize on the new technologies and online platforms to distribute and market these artists' K-Pop performances which has further catapulted South Korea's brand of pop music to fame. For instance, in the late 1990s, three (3) of the country's largest entertainment agencies today such as SM Entertainment, YG Entertainment, and JYP Entertainment replicated Japan's music industry's star-making system and introduced their local version of idol culture that altered Korean business acumen (Vincent, 2019 & Sinsomboonthong, 2020, p. 70). While Korean entertainment companies learned a lot from Japan's *jimusho* or performance management companies in creating performers who can sing and act simultaneously and control every aspect of their public image and career, the former crafted a more efficient and systematic idol management paradigm that gives more weight on stronger training system, utilization of social media, and convergence of music production (Jin, 2020, p. 49-50). No wonder, for the past three (3) decades,

these private Korean companies have served as the country's biggest talent factories which have produced several girl and boy groups who may have been uniquely packaged to cater to different audiences but have been assembled using the tried-and-tested idol formula.

Not only this has driven the K-Pop craze in its native land, but the idol formula has also given South Korean entertainment agencies a distinctive business paradigm that widens K-Pop music's global reach, thus, increasing its profits and gaining competitive edge. As underscored by Patrick Messerlin and Wonkyu Shin (2017) in their study that focuses on the "supply side" in unraveling the secret behind South Korean music's achievement, K-Pop music has enjoyed huge success in the international music scene as the country's entertainment agencies have made the "right product selection" (p. 409). While K-Pop is a well-thought package that puts dance, singing, fashion, and story together, it is worth highlighting that what Korean entertainment agencies really sell are the idols themselves (Economic Times, 2019). Afterall, it cannot be denied that one cannot spell K-Pop without even mentioning the strategic commodification and marketization of K-Pop idol groups. Relatedly, to discuss how "final products" are produced, Annisa Pratamasari (2017) in *International Business Strategy in Selling Korean Pop Music: A Case Study of SM Entertainment* walked her readers through the arduous idol system path that K-Pop idols must go through before making a name in the Korean music industry. Unlike the American and Western music industries wherein artists are being offered with cash in advance in the hope for return of investment in the future, K-Pop music manufacturers through their traineeship system provide promising talents a regimented, structured, and strict training program which they must endure prior to

their debut as K-Pop idols (Pratamasari, 2017, p. 226). The K-Pop idol manufacturing process starts after scouted talents bid goodbye to their families to live in a dormitory which they need to share with other idol hopefuls, a practice which makes it easier for talent agencies to look after their trainees and get them to schedule on time (The Korea Times, 2021). With K-Pop music industry's competitive environment, young trainees are subjected to rigorous training to hone their singing, dancing, and interview skills for nth number of years (Pratamasari, 2017, p. 226). As their progress as trainees is assessed through monthly evaluations, idol hopefuls exhaust as much as 14 hours a day to practice in addition to each three-hour long vocal, dance, and language lessons they need to take (Padget, 2017, p. 4). Given that the marketing focus of K-Pop is centered on the visual nature of the industry, trainees are expected to be physically flawless, thus, have to undergo strict dietary control programs and even go under the knife just to get that "flower boy" and *ulzzang*⁹ looks (Ames, 2016, p. 9). As a final touch, women trainees are shaped and packaged to be mild, extremely polite, and childishly innocent while male trainees are molded against the toxic masculinity concept as they are encouraged to be more sensitive, empathetic, and polite (Valge & Hinsberg, 2019). After enduring abovementioned challenges and grooming sessions, entertainment agencies seek to come up with a good mix of trainees with different characteristics, strengths, and appeal, assigning each group member a position from being a leader, main vocalist, main dancer, main rapper, main visual¹⁰, or *maknae*¹¹ (Carpio, 2021). To complete the package, entertainment agencies further employ both audio and visual inputs with K-Pop artists performing catchy songs with sharp choreography and donning

⁹ Korean term for best face and good looking.

¹⁰ Idol who is considered the most attractive member in a K-Pop group.

¹¹ Idol who is considered the youngest member in a K-Pop group.

eye candy outfits. Meanwhile, to sustain their marketability, trainees who get to debut as idols often sign restrictive and long-term contracts containing clauses banning them from using mobile phone, drinking, smoking, clubbing, driving, and dating (Ames, 2016, p. 6 & Padget, 2017, p. 6.).

Apart from taking advantage of what they are good at especially when it comes to developing human resources, K-Pop music's success also reflects entertainment companies' innovativeness to amplify the dissemination of their products by embracing new distribution technologies (Messerlin & Shin, 2017, p. 436). Capitalizing on K-Pop's fandom culture, Pratamasari (2017) pointed out that by employing the business-to-consumer (B2C) strategy, Korean entertainment agencies have built a system that keeps consumers buying products linked to their idols including official merchandise, concert memorabilia, and idol-endorsed products (p. 227). Despite Korean music industry's shift to digital music, Korean entertainment agencies have continuously reaped considerable profits from sales of physical music formats by exploiting the popularity of idol groups even putting their signatures, photobooks, postcards, and posters along with the physical CD in a box packed in a smart and luxurious manner (Jin, 2020, p. 52 & Pratamasari, 2017, 228). Moreover, entertainment companies have benefited from the rise of online music and video streaming sites as these have provided new ways of consuming K-Pop music which further drive the K-Pop production and popularity machine (Leung, 2012 as cited in Pratamasari, 2017, p. 228).

Significantly, the K-Pop music culture has been so successful that even criticisms on how its idol system was built on the back of slave contracts with idols working hard to pay their companies the amount of investment spent on them as trainees seem to fall on deaf ears. In fact, several scouted non-Korean idol hopefuls from Southeast Asia positively responded to Korean entertainment agencies' move to increase Asian representation in the K-Pop stage and braved at least two (2)-long years of trainee period until fully groomed as true-blue K-Pop artists tailored after Korea's winning idol-manufacturing formula despite their foreign blood. While they have remained a source of pride for their countries of origin given their hardwork and determination to get into a musical culture which in the first place they do not grow up with, it cannot be discounted that these Southeast Asian idols performing in a foreign stage and belting musical pieces in an unfamiliar language can attest to Korean entertainment companies' effective employment of the glocalization strategy to further expand Korean cultural products' reach to non-East Asian market.

As K-Pop music and its influential idol culture continue to conquer the global music scene, there are studies which equate K-Pop's popularity into the "McDonaldization of the music business" (Howard, 2014 as cited in Negus, 2015) as intensive marketing of K-Pop music gradually supplants its audiences' local pop culture with Korea's cultural values and system. Anchored on Ritzer's concept of McDonaldization which links the success of commercial products to elements like efficiency, predictability, calculability, and control; the K-Pop music industry's idol system and its idols are perceived as market-tested and focus-grouped entities designed and globally distributed to entertain the widest possible audience (Alter, 2021). More than just being seen as products of hyper-commodification of cultural

production, K-Pop idols are viewed as epitomes of McDonaldization of the Korean music industry considering idol culture's "serialized mass production method" characterized by deindividuation of artists (Cicchelli & Octobre, 2021, pp. 57-58). This has been supported by the study of Claudia Valge and Maari Hinsberg (2019) on the capitalist control of K-Pop, citing how the identities of idols are manufactured and controlled to "present the perfect façade of a supremely talented and gorgeous, single, heterosexual star, seemingly accessible to fans of the opposite sex". As several countries have drawn inspiration from K-Pop's winning idol culture to explore strategies to energize their own music industries and improve their global marketability, sticking to said East Asian formula also raises concerns not just on the homogenization of musical culture but also on the identity construction of artists and how said established system controls and limits local artists' creative flow.

Giving K-Pop a Local Touch

While a lot has been written on how South Korean entertainment agencies have tapped the glocalization strategy by recruiting foreign performers from other corners of Asia and creating trans-Asian idol groups in a bid to promote Hallyu's market expansion, I found it difficult to look for studies that fully describe and explain non-Korean idols' experiences in glocalizing K-Pop to produce a kind of music they can call their own.

Although a lot of Southeast Asian idol hopefuls have dreamt of making it big in the Korean music industry, local music industries in the ASEAN region have sought a breakthrough in the global music scene armed with K-Pop's winning idol formula.

Inspired by how K-Pop music has swept to massive fame in the past decades, local entertainment agencies have imbibed South Korea's idol culture which has given birth to idol groups who may have looked and packaged like their Korean counterparts but whose brand of pop music aims to put their Southeast Asian roots on the global pop culture map. The region's entertainment agencies have strived to tweak and customize the very elements that characterize South Korea's pop music and give these a local twist based on their respective local market's taste and preferences anchored on their people's historical, sociocultural, and political backgrounds.

For instance, in a socially conservative Islamic nation like Malaysia where local cultural values have frequently clashed with K-Pop's artistic expressions, the popularity of homegrown K-Pop inspired group *Dolla* comes as a surprise. Dismissing accusations that they are mere glaring copies of famous South Korean girl groups, the quartet Malaysian girl group asserts that its Malaysian Pop (M-Pop) music celebrates ethnic diversity and upholds women empowerment while defying stereotypes of virtuous Islamic females prevailing in the Islamic country (Ferrarese, 2020). *Dolla*'s musical performances are perceived to redress gender bias being echoed by some contemporary Malay pop songs which portray women as emotionally dependent, vulnerable, and passive beings (Jerome, 2013, p. 18). While *Dolla* has sustained its momentum despite copycat claims and resistance from conservative critics, the likes of M-Pop artists such as *Rabithah* can attest to Malaysian musicians' efforts to glocalize K-Pop music to make it religiously and culturally acceptable especially for social conservatives. Take for example how *Rabithah* employed *pop nasyid* – an acapella style Malaysian artists in 1990s used

to practice by infusing modern Western pop music with Islamic values and local traditional musical elements – in replacing what conservatives have claimed as naughty lyrics of K-Pop hits with wholesome and sanitized lines using a style that still appeals to the younger generation (Park, 2021).

Meanwhile, Myanmar may be the latest ASEAN member-state to get represented in the K-Pop spotlight as its first ever idol recently debuted in South Korea, yet the country has been already swept by the K-Pop craze for the past two (2) decades. In 2019, Myanmar's first K-Pop-styled seven-member group *Alfa* was launched after undergoing intensive training conducted by Korean mentors and was projected to introduce Myanmar Pop (M-Pop) music to the global music scene with the group's debut song reminding the youth not to lose their heart in achieving their dreams (Khaing, 2019). While the group has yet to make its comeback and fully prove its uniqueness compared to its Korean counterparts once the country's political turmoil comes to an end, it is the Alfa's fandom called *Alfaverse* which has for now reinforced the glocalization of K-Pop elements to assert the local identity of their fandom and idol group. Significantly, along with the K-Pop community in Myanmar, the fans of Alfa have turned into what they called as "keyboard warriors" who have been braving internet and social media restrictions and the risk of getting arrested just to draw international attention to the plight of the country's population under the reign of the military junta. From using their social media platforms to promote Alfa and its music and step up their engagement with their idols, tech-savvy Alfaverse members bring M-Pop to another level as it gives fangirling or fanboying over Alfa a different color – and that is to advance a socially relevant cause amid political instability in Myanmar.

A glimpse of local pop music scenes in the ASEAN shows that while Korea's idol formula has been a go-to choice for local entertainment agencies which yearn to follow the footsteps of the successful Korean music industry and advance their brand of pop music in the global market, entertainment companies in the region have glocalized elements of this Korean-introduced idol formula to make the music they produce more relatable and increase their appeal to the local audience. Similarly, fandoms have also facilitated the glocalization of K-Pop idol formula as how fans interact with one another and with the local artists they have been supporting redefines what it means to be an idol.

Putting the “P” in P-Pop Culture and Music

The late National Artist for Literature Dr. Bienvenido Lumbera traced Philippine popular (P-Pop) culture's roots back to the Spanish colonial period when the Spaniards popularized plays and literature like *pasyon*, *senakulo*, *korido*, *komedya*, and *awit* to pacify and win the hearts of the natives which ironically in the end were used by Filipino *intelligencias*¹² as weapons against the colonial rule (Garchitorena, n.d.). Subsequently, Garchitorena (n.d.) added that the advent of American colonialism signaled the increase in the circulation of pop culture forms given the colonial power's liberal policies covering the printing press, radio, television, and film. This is reinforced by writer Nick Joaquin's accounts linking the coming of the Americans in the country with the emergence of “pop era” characterized by Filipinos' consumption of American products and practices – from smoking cigarettes down to listening to radio (Keppy, 2013, pp. 446-447). Like how Joaquin associated pop

¹² Native-born Filipino intellectuals who studied abroad during the Spanish colonial period.

culture to mass consumption, cultural historian Doreen G. Fernandez (1989) viewed pop culture as “packaged entertainment or art” produced by “colonial administrators, native bureaucrats, and businessmen” for the consumption of the masses (p. 489). Relatedly, recognizing how hard it was to come up with a stable definition of P-Pop culture for a country which then had yet to find its identity after years of being colonized, Fernandez (1981) then attributed P-Pop culture to mass media-generated culture with films, radios, televisions, newspapers, and magazines serving as powerful carriers of culture (pp. 26 & 39). Significantly, Joaquin and Fernandez’s take on popular culture serves as a guide for this review’s quick rundown of P-Pop culture and music throughout the decades.

The decade following the Philippines’ liberation after four (4) centuries of colonial rule was considered a period of many firsts for a country which gradually started displaying a sense of national pride. Not only then Philippine President Ramon Magsaysay sported *Barong Tagalog* for the first time as the country’s national attire, the 1950s was also branded as the first golden age of Philippine cinema given the booming Filipino film industry dominated by *LVN Pictures*, *Sampaguita Pictures*, *Premiere Productions*, and *Lebran International* (Manila Bulletin, 2018). Meantime, while the flourish of the Filipino film industry also coincided with the advent of the recording industry and commercial popular music, giving birth to record labels like *Villar Records* that produced *kundiman* and folk songs interpreted by popular singers and bands (Letts, 2003, p. 60); it is worthy to note that the 50s saw the coming of new genres such as rock and roll and country music (Baes, n.d.).

With the television set becoming the best-selling appliance in 1960s, the decade witnessed the birth of two (2) of today's biggest television networks in the country – the *ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corporation* and *GMA Network* – and the success of the radio-turned-television noontime show *Student Canteen* which broadcasted quiz contests and musical performances of Western popular music (Gabrillo, 2018, pp. 49, 55 & 57). Riding the popularity of Western music during that time, said noontime show along with *Tawag ng Tanghalan* launched amateur singing contests which discovered “best imitators” of American artists like Elvis Presley and Tom Jones (Santos & Cabalza, 1998). Per Ramon Santos and Arnold Cabalza (1998), rock and roll music further gained a considerable following in the 60s as Filipinos got access to electrifying performances of said genre's exponents via jukebox, radio, cinema, and records.

While the 1970s highlighted the teaming up of poets and pop musicians in creating music like *Rolando Tinio* who translated American pop songs for then singer *Celeste Legaspi* (Fernandez, 1981, p. 38), the decade also showcased Filipinos' conscious efforts to develop a distinct sound by giving foreign music a Filipino touch. For instance, singer and literature scholar Teresita G. Maceda traced P-Pop music's roots back in 1970s, a time when the *Juan dela Cruz* band infused heavy Western rock and Filipino lyrics to create what the music industry would later dub as *Pinoy Rock* (Fernandez, 1981, p. 37). On the other hand, the declaration of Martial Law in the Philippines during this decade was perceived to further popularize P-Pop and rock music with then Marcos government-sponsored Memorandum Order No. 75-31 of the Broadcast Media Council in 1975 requiring all radio stations to play at least one Filipino composition every hour that was seen by critics as the administration's

means of creating a semblance of an atmosphere of freedom for artists and performers amid prevalence of summary executions, unlawful arrests, and violent measures (Maceda, 2007, p. 396). While the late 70s saw the introduction of emerging artists and performers who were products of Metro Manila Popular Music Festival (Baes, n.d.), the decade also marked the turning point in Philippine protest music as it rose “from the kundiman toward more indigenously-grounded forms” (Lontoc, 2019). Meantime, on a lighter note, the P-Pop scene in the 70s was dominated by a group called *Hotdog* which gave birth to a “teeny-bopper kind of music” reminiscent of 1950s American pop songs later labeled as *Manila Sound* which features the use of colloquial and *Taglish* lyrics (Maceda, 2007, p. 395). The popularity of Manila Sound in the mid-70s paved the way for the rise of disco fever songs with the likes of Filipino acts such as *VST & Co.* employing the disco sound to produce Tagalog songs inspired by funk, soul, and salsa (Gabrillo, 2018, p. 65).

The 1980s witnessed Filipinos flexing their creative bones and novel ideas driven by the dire need to voice out long-buried sentiments silenced during the Martial Law years and the freedom people regained after restoration of democracy in 1986 (Manila Bulletin, 2018). Marking the second golden age of the Philippine cinema, the decade highlighted the release of various movies, from the now-iconic film *Himala* that touches on blind faith and fanaticism written by then political activist Ricky Lee right after his release from prison (Rappler, 2019) down to “less artistically expressive and commercial films” like the famous *Shake, Rattle, and Roll* aimed at entertaining the public amid the financial and political crisis left by the Marcos dictatorship (Sorilla, 2019). The same is true when it comes to pop music. While the 1980s showcased iconic Pinoy musicians inspired by Manila Sound like the *APO*

Hiking Society belting satirical songs on youth's seeming colonial mentality and anti-Marcos regime sentiments (Santos & Cabalza, 1998), the decade also gave way to OPM with the most commercially successful acts including local singers such as *Sharon Cuneta*, *Basil Valdez*, and *Gary Valenciano* performing sentimental Tagalog ballads adopting the musical style of their foreign counterparts (Gabrillo, 2018, p. 65).

Known as the most colorful generation of all time, at least for 90s babies like me who could not help but flash nostalgic smiles while reminiscing said decade's trends; 1990s was associated with baggy and ripped jeans, striped sweaters, unbuttoned flannel shirts, and boys whose hair were either long or parted down the middle (ABS-CBN News, 2016). Not only these fashion and style descriptions would remind millennials of that ever famous "*Oh yes, kaibigan mo ako. Kaibigan mo lang ako!!*" scene from the 90s Marvin-Jolina loveteam's hit movie *Labs Kita...Okey Ka Lang?*, these looks and trends were also reminiscent of the 90s successful boyband *Eraserheads*. Donning simple shirts and jeans, Eraserheads, whose music is "influenced by folk, pop, and the Beatles but their sound is grittier in its use of electric guitars and drums," stirred its listeners' emotions as the four-member band walked its listeners through the highs and lows of student and teenage life and offered creative ways of tackling social issues (Santos & Cabalza, 1998 & Maceda, 2007, pp. 407 & 410). Further, a flashback to the 90s would not be complete without mentioning the King of *Filipino rap* music the late *Francis Magalona* who pioneered the country's rap scene as he resonated a kaleidoscope of social issues in a "style similar to a folk protest singer" (Rodell, 2001, p. 188).

Subsequently, the beginning of the 21st century saw the seeming complete shift in the content, tone, and style of the entertainment industry that shaped the country's pop culture scene. Unlike the 50s to early 90s' satirical, reactionary, and political-themed pop culture contents, early 2000s witnessed the production and commercialization of humorous, diverting, and unsophisticated films, television programs, and music (Gabrillo, 2018, p. 98). For instance, the iconic status and sensational success of *Eat Bulaga* greatly impacted the local music industry in early 2000s as it fueled the production of novelty songs which James Gabrillo (2018) in his dissertation about music and mass culture defined as a "genre of eccentric music that parodied Western pop music and often featured nonsensical lines, catchy puns, and double *entendres*" (pp. 96-97). The Philippine television show served as home to one of the most successful pop novelty acts particularly the *SexBomb Girls* who originally rose to fame as back-up dancers on said noontime show. Although initially shrugged off by the larger Philippine music industry as a mere "gimmick-led group," SexBomb's influence is something one cannot dismiss as manifested by their achievements like becoming multi-platinum recording artists, top-billing on a seven-year-old afternoon anthology show, staging their own sold-out concerts, and "gaining a permanent place in the Filipino culture psyche" with their *Spageti Song* sparking an infectious dance craze that defines many millennials' childhood (Gloria, 2021).

While one cannot discount the considerable influence of Western pop culture to Filipinos' everyday lives, looking into the evolution of pop culture from 1950s to early 2000s gives us a glimpse of how creative industries adopted said foreign cultural influences to fit into the country's then sociocultural and political atmosphere. Significantly, the evolution of P-Pop music based on the developments cited

underscores that despite evident traces of Anglo-American pop music, it was through local artists' use of Filipino language and production of socially relevant songs that enabled early forms of P-Pop to gain acceptance across different classes and eventually gave said brand of music its Filipino character.

Koreanization of P-Pop Music

The mid-2000s saw the increase in the importation of Asian pop culture contents giving the Filipino audience especially the younger generation Asian alternatives for Western cultural products. Relatedly, the period witnessed how Taiwanese group *F4* gave Filipino novelty artists and then rising OPM icons like *Sarah Geronimo* a stiff competition in local music charts (Gil, 2004). The popularity of the Taiwanese quartet's hit TV series *Meteor Garden* opened the Philippines' doors to other East Asian cultural products particularly Korean drama series (K-Dramas) which were the first South Korean exports marketed in the country (The Freeman, 2016 & Bersabe, 2017). The success of K-Dramas featuring famous South Korean music artists like *Bi-Rain* and the surprising debut of former local actress and singer *Sandara Park* in the girl group *2NE1* in 2009 blew up the K-Pop craze in the country as these stirred the curiosity of Filipino viewers on K-Pop music, prompting local music channels to air music videos of then flourishing K-Pop groups like *TVXQ*, *Super Junior*, and *Shinhwa* (Bersabe, 2017 & Caluag, 2021). The availability of music and video streaming platform like Youtube further increased K-Pop music consumption among the youth as this site provided them with an alternative source of K-Pop contents apart from traditional media (Domingo, 2021, p. 251). Moreover, the availability of K-

Pop hits' *Romanized*¹³ lyrics with English translations in the internet so as Korean and local music shows' move to incorporate subtitles in K-idols' music videos gradually addressed issues on language barrier which at first was seen as the reason why it took so long for K-Pop music to reach same instant popularity enjoyed by Filipino-dubbed K-Dramas. The boom of social media sites in late 2000s cultivated young Filipinos' fandom culture which convinced local concert promoters to bring K-Pop idols in the Philippine stage. Filipino K-Pop fans' increased social media engagement with their K-idols have cemented them as some of the most influential movers behind the K-Pop phenomenon, enabling the Philippines to land on the fifth spot in the list of countries with most avid K-Pop fans in 2020 (Hicap, 2020). Relatedly, as South Korea's pop music continues to pervade the Philippines' mainstream media, it comes as no surprise why even local celebrities have been performing hottest K-Pop hits in variety shows and why local radio stations have been caught up in the Hallyu Wave even playing Korean singles which may be linguistically unfamiliar but give listeners some earworms.

While K-Pop's catchy and repetitive lyrics and its idols' attractive visuals and precise singing and dancing skills have left many young Filipinos hooked on South Korea's pop music, how K-Pop music found its way into mainstream Filipino culture proves that there is a real audience and potential market for idol culture in the Philippines (Raj, 2021). It is this same driving force that has pushed local talent management companies to tap into the success of K-Pop, develop a similar system, and invest in forming similar groups with high hopes they would turn out to be as

¹³ The act of writing Korean lyrics using Roman letters to allow people who cannot speak Korean to phonetically pronounce it.

successful and as income-generating as their Korean counterparts. Riding the wave of Hallyu's popularity, local music producers, as what Prof. Ma. Crisanta Flores said in her presentation about Hallyu's impact in the Philippines, borrowed K-Pop's commodification of upbeat songs, synchronized dance moves, and youthful aesthetics as they began launching P-Pop groups sporting K-Pop inspired looks who "groove and gyrate" like K-Pop idols (Manila Bulletin, 2012). Unfortunately, early P-Pop idol groups like *1:43pm*, *Pop Girl*, and *XLR8* failed to thrive in the local music scene as audiences claimed they were just copying the styles of K-Pop artists rather than reflecting the characteristics of OPM and hybridizing pop music (Jang & Jung, 2017, p. 41). Early P-Pop idol groups' demise has not discouraged local entertainment agencies to explore ways of accommodating K-Pop idol formula in repackaging P-Pop music. These efforts finally paid off when today's breed of K-Pop-inspired idols particularly SB19 and Alamat have been drawing a lot of attention locally and internationally with their songs serving not just as a thriving addition to Filipino music but also as the country's cultural products that seek to captivate the global audience.

SB19: Make Way for the Kings of P-Pop. "*Get in the zone, BREAK! Hi! We are SB19!*" This is the trademark introduction of SB19 whose rise to fame represents a success story in applying the K-Pop idol paradigm to advance local pop music in the international music scene. Scouted by Korean entertainment and talent management company ShowBT that branched out in the Philippines and trained in South Korea based on said country's rigid industry standards; *Pablo*, *Josh*, *Stell*, *Ken*, and *Justin* are behind the rising P-Pop group whose name was derived from the initials of their talent agency and 19 representing the sum of the area codes of the Philippines (+63)

and South Korea (+82), signifying the group's vision of bridging the gap between the two (2) Asian countries (Williams, 2019 & Olarte, 2019). Relatedly, the boys came up with an alternative meaning behind their group's name using the phrase "Sound Break" to express their dream of breaking into the Philippine music industry and providing a higher standard for other Filipino talents to emulate (SB19 Official, n.d.). For three (3) years, they got to experience the ups and downs of Korea's infamous talent incubator system, surviving lengthy hours of practices, choreography lessons, vocal lessons, language lessons, body conditioning, and even weight management (Bergania, 2019). The framework of this powerhouse quintet, which officially debuted in 2018, resonates the winning K-Pop formula from the boys' stylish looks, amazing vocals, and knife-sharp choreography down to borrowing of K-Pop-inspired mention parties or *menpas*¹⁴ using their social media accounts wherein they can interact directly with their fans (Herman, 2020).

While taking some pages out of the K-Pop's famous book in establishing Filipino music in the global stage, SB19 commits to raise the bar in paying homage to their roots. Hoping audiences will recognize how distinctly Pinoy they are despite donning K-Pop-inspired looks, the boys live up to their names as P-Pop icons by putting Filipino language, culture, and everything they experience as artists into their music (Herman, 2020). Not just their songs were written in vernacular language, the group is also hailed for their skills in songwriting characterized by use of poetic lyrics and witty wordplay. Apart from presenting some of the country's famous landmarks and cultural artifacts in their music videos, they have stepped up their game in promoting Filipino culture by wearing menswear imbued with Philippine handwoven textiles

¹⁴ A K-Pop-introduced trend wherein idols chat or respond to their fans on Twitter.

(Legaspi, 2020). SB19 even collaborated with a Filipino designer in releasing a streetwear collection inspired by the group's hit singles and colors of the Philippine flag (Abad, 2021). The boys even dig deeper into their roots as their masterpieces speak of everything Filipino, from mythology and folklore, to values such as filial piety and perseverance, down to pressing social issues like bullying and abuse of power.

SB19 may be young in the music industry but this has not stopped their brand of music from attracting millions of listeners, their music videos from bagging millions of views, and the group itself from being critically acclaimed and recognized by music enthusiasts and local and international award-giving bodies. Just in time when the group was planning to part ways around 2019, their second single and a motivational song titled "*Go Up*" surprisingly went viral, propelling the newbies to stardom (Ho, 2021). As social media went abuzz over the rookie group's undeniable talent, more doors opened for SB19 to include radio and television guesting, holding of their first nationwide concert, signing under a new record label, becoming a mainstay on the Billboard's Social 50 chart predominantly controlled by K-Pop acts, and being the first Filipino and Southeast Asian group to get nominated for Top Social Artist at 2021 Billboard Music Awards (Raj, 2021). Subsequently, proving that the group is not a one-hit wonder, SB19's patriotic single "*What?!*", which features the members' grown-up vibe, garnered eight (8) million views just one (1) month after its release (Alumno, 2021). 2021 was a good year for the quintet since not only they topped local music charts and scored various endorsement offers, SB19 seized another breakthrough as it got nominated for the Best Southeast Asian Act at the MTV European Music Awards (Roque, 2021). While staying alive in an industry

dominated by foreign idols is something the group should be thankful for as it celebrated its third year in the business, gaining accolades for innovating and enriching a local brand of music once belittled as a mere imitation of foreign music influences is indeed a big feat for SB19 who serves as bearers of Filipino music and culture in the international music scene.

Spotlight on Alamat. A decade after it launched short-lived local group XLR8 whose hits were accused of being exact rip-off to South Korea's hit pop songs (Ledesma, 2021), Viva Entertainment is again up to introducing multitalented K-Pop-styled P-Pop idols destined not just to create waves in the local music scene but also to conquer the global stage. Wearing their Filipino pride on their sleeves, the boys of newly formed group Alamat is determined to prove that P-Pop music can usher in the Filipino Wave in the international stage. *Taneo, Mo, Jao, Kin, Tomas, R-Ji, Valfer, Gami* and *Alas* are products of a nationwide talent competition called *Pwede!* held across eight (8) major provinces in 2020 that was launched to scout members of Viva's next boyband project (Treñas, 2021). Not just the 19-month-old group has been honed using Korea's iconic boot-camp style of training, the boys exude K-Pop's known commercial appeal from riding on the dyed-hair trend, embracing boy-beauty standards, and emulating K-Pop group positions. Promoted and marketed akin to that of South Korea's talent companies, the group produces contents like mini videos showcasing its concept and members' personalities and releases dance practice videos and behind-the-scene cuts which are widely practiced by its Korean group counterparts (Ledesma, 2021).

Proving their fellow Filipinos that they should not be sleeping on their members' world class talents, Alamat affirms the two (2) meanings linked to their group's name – a legend whose music transcends generations and artists who aim to be masters of their own craft (Abad, 2021). The boys may have borrowed K-Pop's trademark idol formula, but the group wants to be recognized for its "counter-K-Pop" concept that marries Filipino cultural heritage with modern pop beats (Treñas, 2021). True to its words, the group has not just employed *Tagalog* lyrics in their songs but has also incorporated verses in *Ilocano*, *Kapampangan*, *Bicolano*, *Waray*, *Hiligaynon*, and *Visayan* – making them as today's multilingual P-Pop group which pushes to normalize the use of regional languages in mainstream music (Requintina, 2021). It is not just linguistic diversity that the group wants to normalize, the group has also levelled up its heritage-filled aesthetics by sporting outfits that do not just radiate the festiveness of Philippine fiestas but also debunk notions that Philippine cultural elements are just for formal attires. Furthermore, Alamat generates a distinct audiovisual brand of music from showcasing proudly Filipino sights and incorporating sounds from traditional instruments like *kulintang* and *tinikling* beats produced by tapping and sliding bamboo poles against each other on the ground (Savillo, 2021). Recognizing how young people get hooked on foreign pop music, the group is in high hopes that by presenting Filipino culture in modern entertainment, Filipino youth get to feel a sense of prestige towards their Pinoy roots.

Alamat's concept of bringing regional languages to the mainstream has been receiving praises with listeners perceiving the multilingual P-Pop group as an embodiment of Filipinos' diverse culture and stories. Prior to launching their debut single, the group has been hailed for covering famous OPM hits while adding a touch

and twist of their group's identity. These positive feedbacks translated into million views its debut single titled "*Kbye*", which speaks of ghosting using seven (7) regional tongues, garnered after a few months of release. Not just this got the nod from local music trend charts, the single catapulted the P-Pop newbies to Billboard's Next Big Sound charts as it emerged as the fastest Filipino act to have made it to the global music list almost two (2) weeks after its debut (Lllemmit, 2021). From typical P-Pop song that revolves on heartbreak, Alamat explored more serious themes like anti-Asian hate which is tackled on its upbeat dance-pop track "*Kasmala*," a play on the Tagalog word *malakas* or strong (Idris, 2021). More than just the group's sharp sense of style, the well-received single has been lauded for paying homage to the past even digging into the dark side of Philippine's culture rooted on colonialism and racism. How the Alamat boys are determined to revolutionize traditional P-Pop music to forge a style that is distinctly theirs while brave enough to touch on sensitive issues that echo the not-so-good aspect of Filipino culture make the multilingual idols as one of today's promising P-Pop groups to watch out for.

Snippets of T-Pop Music

While various studies on Thai pop culture assert that examining pop music in Thailand can be done by either looking into how said brand of music is being circulated through mass media or perceiving it as a product of mass infrastructures meant to be sold as commodities (Manuel, 1993 as cited in Wuttipong, 2011, pp. 20-21), it cannot be discounted that the term T-Pop music has been used to refer to all forms of Thai music which resonate Western music influences (Wuttipong, 2011, p. 21). Given this mindset, scholar Nalin Wuttipong (2011) divided the development of

T-Pop music into five (5) important periods including the Pre-pop Era (from the emergence of *The Impossibles* to 1982), the Pop Era (1982-1994), the Indie Phenomenon (1994-1997), the Major Return (1997-2002), and the present day (2002 to today) (p. 23). This timeline was used in briefly discussing the evolution of T-Pop music.

Thailand may be known as the Land of the Free for being the sole country in Southeast Asia that did not fall into the hands of European colonizers (Layador, 2013, p. 93), yet Western pop culture in the form of music greatly shaped what's pop in the country in the 1960s. After long dominated by traditional music played using locally-crafted instruments, Thailand's local music scene had been gradually penetrated by Western music during the Vietnam War which saw increased U.S. military presence in mainland ASEAN region (Cheng & Charupatanapongse, 2021). The earliest ideas of Thai pop came in the form of Thai popular artists imitating bands like *Cliff Richard* and *The Shadows* (Ho, 2004). As rock and roll music rocked radio waves in Bangkok, which were mostly owned by the military, *Wong Shadow* bands playing three-piece music instruments consist of guitar, bass, and drum rose to fame (Wuttipong, 2011, p. 24). Subsequently, 1960s marked the formative years of modern popular music in Thailand as local artists levelled up from imitating Western artists to infusing their own local sound with Western instruments and musical style (Barendregt, Keppy, & Nordhol, 2017, p. 50). Although this development could be attributed to young people's desire for something new, it is worth noting that it was the Thai government's regulation of Western music for fear that consumption of American culture might be exploited by the country's young population "to criticize Thai modernity trajectory" that gave birth to a new genre in

modern Thai music called *pleng string*¹⁵ (Sawangchot, 2016, pp. 3-4). Replacing Wong Shadow bands, *String Combo* bands using two (2) guitars, one (1) bass, a drum set, and a brass section which was eventually replaced with keyboards introduced said new genre to wider local audience through band competitions and live performances (Wuttipong, 2011, p. 24). Relatedly, the String Combo Band Contest organized by the Music Association of Thailand under the royal patronage of King Bhumibol produced The Impossibles which was hailed as the first Thai pop band to compose and arrange their own songs in Thai (Sawangchot, 2016, p. 4). Not just The Impossibles made waves in the local music scene, the band also made it to the global stage as they went on a successful tour in Europe and released an English-only album in mid-1970s (Cheng & Charupatanapongse, 2021). Generally, the common theme of the band's songs revolves on the daily lives and romances of ordinary people which the urban youth found relatable (Sawangchot, 2016, p. 5).

The early 80s and 90s period witnessed *pleng string* further establishing itself in the local music scene as the genre became commercially prominent with cassette tapes reaching Thailand (Ho, 2004) and the establishment of local record *labels RS Group* and *GMM Grammy* which were organized like their Western counterparts (Wuttipong, 2011, pp. 24-25). As the local music labels like their Western counterparts regarded young audiences as their ideal target market, they started looking for artists who were not only musically inclined but also attractive (Cheng & Charupatanapongse, 2021). This explains why about 80 percent of artists who released albums during this period were mostly from the entertainment celebrity sphere and were actors and actresses first before debuting as singers (Wuttipong,

¹⁵ Thailand's mainstream pop music.

2011, p. 118). This music marketing strategy catapulted the likes of *Bird Thongchai*, *Mai Charoenpura*, and *Marsha Vadhanapanich* to stardom (Cheng & Charupatanapongse, 2021). As pleng string evolved into its sub-genres including pop, rock, heavy metal, rap, and hip-hop, the years 1982 to 1994 saw how said genre outbested other forms of music in Thailand (Wuttipong, 2011, p. 25 and Cheng & Charupatanapongse, 2021). In addition, early 1990s signaled the introduction of *bubblegum pop music* trend characterized by “formulaic, memorable melodies, simple chords and harmonies, repetitive hooks, often rather unoriginal, uninspired love lyrics and a catchy dance rhythm” then popularized by young local artists like *Tata Young* (Wuttipong, 2011, p. 78).

Amid the flourish of local music labels and popularity of bubblegum music, the establishment of a new independent label named *Bakery Music* in 1994 gave birth to the three-year Indie Phenomenon as what Wuttipong (2011) called it. While the Thai music industry started drawing inspiration from Western alternative rock music, the period also witnessed the rise of independent labels whose production method, musical style, and visual presentation were obviously different from that of major record labels like RS Group and GMM Grammy given their limited marketing budgets. Aside from the fact that artists were given freedom in creating music, the *indie* era marked the dwindling perceived value of physical appearance which major record labels had been capitalizing on (Wuttipong, 2011, p. 78). As indie record labels gained considerable market share as their artists started popularizing alternative rock and rhythm and blues (R&B) (Wuttipong, 2011, pp. 94-95), major record labels which were then marketing bubblegum music found themselves collaborating with smaller labels in a bid to survive (Cheng & Charupatanapongse,

2021). The indie phenomenon indeed pushed major record labels to innovate and employ new strategies from releasing alternative rock albums down to allowing amateur bands and artists to submit their music demos which could be their key to stardom (Wuttipong, 2011, p. 78). Relatedly, this period paved the way for BritPop-inspired local bands like *Modern Dog* whose songs echo social commentary and encouragement for people to make a difference in the society (Cheng & Charupatanapongse, 2021).

Unfortunately, the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997 badly hurt Thai record labels with only the RS Group, GMM Grammy, and independent label Bakery Music enduring the economic fallout (Wuttipong, 2011, p. 27). This left many indie artists no choice but to be absorbed into bigger labels which affected how their music were produced and marketed, thus, signaling a major shift in the style of indie music (Cheng & Charupatanapongse, 2021). As stressed by Wuttipong (2011), following the crisis, the value of indie music decreased with the seeming homogenization of indie and mainstream music (p. 265). The years 1997 to 2002 marked the major return of T-Pop music to its pre-indie marketing strategy as record labels had been struggling to recover from economic losses brought by the crisis and advancement of technologies like the advent of the internet that led to downturn in revenue. As record labels sought to please the audiences and redeem themselves while making the most out of their meager budgets, they did not have enough space for experimentation that is why they had to control the whole music production process and just like before capitalized on artists' appearance instead of investing on their talents (Cheng & Charupatanapongse, 2021).

Significantly, the beginning of the 21st century saw T-Pop music industry striving to endure the downsides brought by the advancement of technologies and abundance of cultural commodities available worldwide competing for market share. T-Pop music was able to regain its popularity around 2000s with the launching of live singing competitions that did not just produce new breed of Thai pop artists but also turned T-Pop music anew into a household name with the audience given the power to transform an ordinary artist hopeful into Thailand's biggest star. The 2000s witnessed record labels embracing the celebrity culture formula by generating celebrities instead of talented stars from reality and talent shows to boost music consumption (Wuttipong, 2011, p. 304). As Wuttipong (2011) put it, by creating a "cult of celebrity" in T-Pop music business, record labels continued to survive in the competitive business as they were able to manufacture a pool of "ready-made artists" who did not require much time to promote and who they could immediately tap once the career of their existing talents flopped (pp. 321-322).

Subsequently, the late 2000s can be characterized by Thailand's increased importation of Asian cultural products from Japan. For instance, from consumption of Japanese TV dramas, computer animation (*anime*), and comic books (*manga*), young Thais eventually found themselves grooving to Japanese pop (J-Pop) beats. J-Pop became so in demand in the Thai music scene that is why it comes as no surprise why Thai artists from major record labels like GMM Grammy's *Golf-Mike* partnered with Japan's famous idol *Tomohisa Yamashita* and released an album in Japanese language (Wuttipong, 2011, p. 63). Significantly, apart from cultural proximity to Japanese culture, the success of J-Pop in penetrating the Thai music market was also attributed to the Thai government's friendly relations with Japan

which at that time was admired by most Southeast Asian countries for embracing the Asian version of modernity (Barendregt, Keppy, & Nordhol, 2017, p. 88).

T-Pop Music Riding the K-Pop Craze

As Japanese cultural products continued to flex its influence in the Thai market, Korean Wave set foot on Thailand's soil bringing K-Dramas like *Autumn in my Heart*, *Dae Jang Geum*, and *Full House* which were eventually localized and broadcasted by Thai producers on terrestrial networks (Prasopsorn & Panmanee, 2019, p. 984). Relatedly, the import of the *Full House* drama starring K-Pop star Bi-Rain was said to ignite K-Pop music's popularity in Thailand to the point that the Korean superstar himself released a special Thai version of his hit '*I Do*' along with Thai singer *Panatda Ruangwut* (Wuttipong, 2011, p. 63). K-Pop artists further amassed huge following in the country as hits of then flourishing Korean boy groups like TVXQ topped local hit charts for nth number of weeks and setting new records (Kemasingki, 2014). With the rise of digital platforms, K-Pop groups showcasing their signature electro-dance and well-coordinated choreographies became more recognizable by Thai population and gained local fandoms whose massive support convinced local producers to bring said K-Pop acts in the Thai stage. Along with the continuous import of K-Dramas in the country, the success of K-Pop music in infiltrating the local Thai music scene propelled the Korean culture to the same level as Western and Japanese cultures in Thailand (Chongkittavorn, 2019 as cited in Global Asia Blog, 2021).

Apart from K-Pop-dominated local music hit charts, sold-out concerts, and increased visibility of K-Pop dance cover groups in the streets of Bangkok, K-Pop music's popularity in Thailand can be gauged by taking a glimpse of the success of Thai artists who are making a living as K-Pop performers in South Korea. It is worthy to note that compared to its Southeast Asian neighbors, Thailand is home to many non-Korean artists who have contributed to cementing K-Pop's name on the global pop culture map. For the past decade, the likes of *Lalisa Manoban* also known as *Lisa* of *Blackpink* and *Kunpimook Bhuwakul* or *BamBam* of *GOT7* have served as both a source of pride for Thai population who perceive their popularity as means of introducing Thai culture to the world and inspiration for young Thai idol hopefuls who want to experience a slice of K-Pop's global success. While these Thai artists' debut as K-Pop idols shows their high regard for K-Pop that even language and cultural barriers and long years of strict trainings would not stop them from auditioning at South Korea's biggest talent agencies, this also attest to South Korean talent companies' success in expanding their reach to non-East Asian market like Southeast Asia.

As K-Pop has become a hype in the region starting late 2000s, Southeast Asian countries including Thailand sought to follow Korean creative industry's footsteps and strategies while using local pop expressions to promote their own version of pop music craze (Barendregt, Keppy, & Nordhol, 2017, p. 88). For instance, the rise of K-Pop dance cover groups was followed by the launching of K-Pop-inspired record labels which produced homegrown K-Pop acts drawing inspiration from the East Asian musical style. The first generation of K-Pop-inspired T-Pop groups exactly looked and sounded like their Korean counterparts from sporting the same hairstyle

and look down to using same concepts and even same song titles of K-Pop's biggest hits. The 2010s decade was highlighted by the proliferation of K-Pop-inspired Thai music contents showcased by Mono Music record label's local pop groups *Candy Mafia* and *Evo9* whose image, branding, and musicality resemble that of South Korea's iconic *2NE1* and *2PM* groups (Ruh, 2016). While the groups made a name in the local music industry, their acts did not sit well with K-Pop fans across the globe who branded them as mere copycats of their Korean idols. The disbandment of said groups signaled the shifting of record labels' target market from young girls to men with the debut of short-lived sexy K-Pop-inspired girl groups like *Girl Berry* and *Cup C* whose performances raised conservative eyebrows (Sukprasert, 2013). As the vibrant K-Pop music scene in South Korea debuted various girl and boy groups who swept many young audiences across Asia off their feet, Thai record labels again tapped the youth as their target audience and started introducing to the local market a bunch of pop groups like *Tempt*, *Trinity*, and *Daisy Daisy* with jaw-dropping visuals and fresh sound (Gray, 2021).

Significantly, as K-Pop transformed into a global phenomenon few years before we welcomed the new decade, Thailand's talent producers partnered with international music labels and formed their own idol groups embracing the K-Pop idol formula while infusing local cultural expressions in their music. The birth of today's new breed of T-Pop idol groups *4MIX* and *Vyra* marked the Thai music industry's bigger ambition of bringing T-Pop music in the international shores.

4MIX: Waving the Pride Flag in T-Pop Stage. From being the talk of the town for covering K-Pop's known dance hits, four (4) Thai young men, *Ninja*, *Magka*, *Folksong*, and *George* broke into the Thai music scene early 2021 as Thailand's first LGBTQ+ pop group 4MIX. Handled by KS Gang, a subsidiary of the country's renowned Khaosan Entertainment, the group was called 4MIX to denote the coming together of four (4) artists who may have diverse personalities and sexual orientation but jibe well with one another in performing (News Directory, 2021). The artists were scouted from various circles like modeling and cover dancing industries and just like their Korean counterparts endured two (2) years of taking singing, dancing, and personality improvement classes before their debut in May 2021 which was even delayed by the pandemic (S1 Official, 2021). As the group has graced many T-Pop music shows in Thailand sporting dyed hair, eye-catching heavy make-ups, and flashy costumes; 4MIX has showcased K-Pop's signature hip thrust and popping moves while belting catchy hooks and repetitive lyrics in Thai but with a small number of English words which reflect a musical pattern tailored after the K-Pop music-making formula.

While outrightly saying that they have been drawing inspiration from Korean idols whose dance hits they used to cover before becoming Thai idols, what makes the group unique from today's generation of K-Pop-inspired T-Pop groups is how they advance a social cause behind their songs which listeners at first glance may thought to be only revolving on the usual romantic themes. Relatedly, one way of promoting concepts about freedom, gender equality, and gender diversity is through embracing unisex fashion which the group's member *Ninja*, a self-confessed member of the LGBTQ+ community, claimed should not be an issue given that

clothes have no gender (Hallyu Center, 2021). Further deviating from K-Pop's positioning practice which entails provision of specific skill training for members depending on the position and image they need to personify and perform, 4MIX does not follow this pattern so as not to control and limit the individuality and skills of its members. Instead of assigning positions like rapper, vocalist, dancer, and visuals to its members, the group believes that they can perform well as a group without singling out who stands out in a particular field (News Directory, 2021). As 4MIX endeavors to "tear the rule of sex" in their performances, its members have equal roles in the group (Today Fox 24, 2021).

Significantly, unlike K-Pop groups which first established their names and fandoms in the local music scene before making it big internationally, the music career of 4MIX paints a different story. While it has yet to establish a considerable following in the Thai market one (1) year after its debut, the group and its music have already been making waves in Latin America, getting the nod of thousands of followers from Brazil, Mexico, Spain, and Portugal (News Directory, 2021). The popularity of 4MIX in said region can be attested by the 80 percent views and comments its debut single '*Y U Come Back?*' available on online platforms garnered from Latin American audiences (Anantasirikiat & Attasivanon, 2021). Notwithstanding the capability of 4MIX and its music to go global, the group's popularity in the region can also be linked to Thai and Latin American governments' collaboration to develop people-to-people connectivity to maximize mutual benefits. These government initiatives go well with KS Gang's marketing strategy of building an international fanbase abroad first in order for 4MIX to penetrate the local T-Pop market dominated by solo and duo artists (News Directory, 2021). From making

music contents of 4MIX more available and accessible in online platforms, KS Gang stepped up its promotion activities and partnered with the Thai Embassy in Mexico to hold 4MIX UNIX Mexico concert in December 2021 which was attended by 3,000 live audiences (Today Fox 24, 2021).

Significantly, it is worth highlighting that the popularity of 4MIX in Latin America has gradually caught the attention of the Thai local market. Not just they were invited in various local shows and Thai events, 4MIX bagged its first award, the People's Choice Awards, during Thailand's NIMO TV's J-Trends Popular Awards (T-Pop Fandom, n.d.). Moreover, the South Korean market also began recognizing 4MIX as the group recently secured a People's Choice nomination at South Korea's annual The Golden Disc Awards in 2021 (WorkPointToday, 2021). Armed with government support, its increasing fanbase in Latin America, and local Thai's growing appreciation on the LGBTQ+ K-Pop-inspired group, the future looks so bright for 4MIX in bringing T-Pop in the global music arena.

Vyra is Coming! A sub-unit of Thailand's famous J-Pop-inspired group BNK48 which is Japan's AKB48's sister group, the five-member girl group Vyra is the brainchild of Independent Artist Management (IAM) in collaboration with Universal Music Thailand (UMT) in a bid to produce original T-Pop songs meant for global consumption different from the ones released by BNK48 (Go, 2020). Formerly called as Lyra named after a constellation that consists of six (6) stars and an instrument played by an iconic musician in Greek mythology, the group changed its name to Vyra after a member left, with letter "V" changing letter "L" which stands for five (5) in

Roman numerals representing the group's current members (True Flower, 2021). Unlike their mother group BNK48 which has been producing covers of Japanese songs released by AKB48 in Thai language, the launching of *Jennis*, *Pun*, *Fond*, *New*, and *Niky* in 2020 marked the girls' quest to explore a new musical style from performing songs with high-pitched choruses to belting multi-genre hits, to shift from cheerleading-inspired dancing styles to popping, and to leave behind their school uniform-inspired outfits for more flashy and colorful ensembles. After surviving an audition participated by 80 girls and young women from BNK48, the group had to go back to the basic and train anew for months via Zoom with the management's plan of training in Los Angeles being put in the backburner due to pandemic restrictions (Bangkok Post, 2020). Just like their Korean counterparts, the group's training sessions were broadcasted through their own *Lyrality* Show (T-Pop Fandom, n.d.). After a few months of rigorous training, Vyra debuted in the local music scene clad in colorful and unique outfits and exhibiting more of a "girl crush" image that exudes fierceness and confidence which is similar to that of today's K-Pop girl groups (Go, 2020).

Although Vyra's performances clearly exhibit traces of K-Pop idols' sharp choreography and colorful outfits, there are elements that can be observed in the members' appearance and their performances that set them apart from their Korean counterparts. First, while grooming of the girls in their music videos affirms Thai's preference for fair skin, it can be noticed that Vyra's make up is way lighter compared to that of Korean girl groups' heavy make-up. Meanwhile, when it comes to the technical aspects of the T-Pop girl group's music, it can be observed that Vyra's songs feature a "strong melody and catchy phrases over light and more

minimalistic instrumental” (555 Reviews, 2021) versus K-Pop’s usual powerful beats and unique sounds with a lot of hidden elements (Lee, 2019). Relatedly, to give Vyra’s music a local touch, the group’s music production team incorporates Thai elements by adding sounds from two (2) of Thailand’s traditional music instruments (Bangkok Post, 2020). Just like other non-K-Pop group’s use of vernacular language to pay homage to their diverse cultural roots and to make their songs more relatable as they seek to reach a wider audience, Vyra’s songs show how the T-Pop group uses words derived from the country’s regional languages, like for example ตะต๋อนยอน (read as Ta-Ton-Yon) which is a phrase from the northern dialect of Thai language (555 Reviews, 2021), not often used by majority of the Thai population.

Just like the support their mother unit BNK48 has been getting for years, Vyra has received outpouring support from their newly-found Thai fans with their debut single *Lyra* earning over 6.5 million views on YouTube just two (2) months after its release online (Noor, 2020). In addition, the group got off to a good start when they welcomed 2021 bagging People’s Choice Artist award from Thailand’s annual Maya Awards (T-Pop Fandom, n.d.). While the group’s talent managements value Vyra’s local fanbase as a solid foundation in conquering the global stage, IAM and UMT prepared collab projects for the T-Pop group and international pop icons like *Gulf Kanawut* who is a Boys Love series Thai actor prominent in Southeast Asia and *Sunnee* who is regarded as a Thai Chinese superstar in East Asia who were both featured in the girl group’s *Hurry Up!* music video (New TV, 2021). These strategies seemed to pay off as Vyra, after releasing its four (4) hit singles, managed to bag a nomination as Asia’s Girl Group at regional music award-giving body Music Rank Extra Awards in 2021 alongside other Southeast Asian pop groups and South

Korea's biggest K-Pop idols (Music Rank, 2021). As a whole, although Vyra has yet to establish an imprint on the international music scene, its well-received hits so as its gradually increasing following in the local scene is indeed an extraordinary feat especially for a group which just trained for less than a year and made to embrace a musical style and formula which at first appeared to be foreign to them.

Synthesis of Literature Review

The K-Pop music industry has been so successful in producing idol groups whose popularity transcends borders that spectators sometimes forget that even South Korea's trademark idol culture is itself a product of glocalization. Available studies often project South Korea as a source of higher cultural products while dismissing countries which intend to follow its footsteps in exporting their glocalized versions of Hallyu Wave as mere copycats. This could be one of the reasons why one can barely find a study that completely gives voice to non-Korean idol groups' experiences in localizing K-Pop's tried-and-tested idol formula to give their own brand of pop music a modern touch.

Relatedly, most of the studies I came across with equate the process of glocalization to commodification of idol groups. The idea of glocalization is most of the time projected to be geared towards improving the profitability of idol groups and expanding their activities in to new and bigger markets. Although South Korean entertainment agencies would often reason out their drive to increase Asian representation behind their move of recruiting non-Korean members, it cannot be discounted that such strategy is aimed at further enhancing and sustaining K-Pop's

visibility and clout overseas. As the glocalization concept is viewed as a marketing strategy, it is the Korean entertainment agencies which are often projected as active agents of said process rather than K-Pop idol groups who are only treated as by-product of glocalization. This affirms why the likes of Messerlin and Shin (2017) and Pratamasari (2017) have highlighted why Korean entertainment agencies' "right product selection" should also take the credit for the booming K-Pop industry. Recognizing how this type of mindset appears to dismiss idol groups' active involvement in the glocalization of K-Pop cultural elements, it is not surprising why today's waves of pop music from Southeast Asia no matter how promising are just treated as mere extension and offshoot of the K-Pop genre. Similarly, it is this same commodification of idol groups perception that fuels discussions on how K-Pop idol culture is a classic example of modern-day McDonaldization.

Meanwhile, going through some snippets of current local pop music scenes in Southeast Asia gives us a glimpse of how homegrown talents have challenged McDonaldization tendencies attributed to exporting and absorbing K-Pop idol culture. Using the P-Pop and T-Pop experiences as a reference, while we have seen how advancement of the internet has made promotion and marketing of P-Pop and T-Pop songs easier, thus, ticking Ritzer's efficiency theme box; how these groups innovate their musical style in every single they release runs counter to McDonaldization's calculability and predictability elements. Seemingly responding to what Vincenzo Cicchelli and Sylvie Octobre (2021) stressed about K-Pop idol culture's mass production and deindividuation of performers, P-Pop and T-Pop groups' musical outputs highlight the values of individuality, diversity, and embracing innovation rather than sticking to a static-winning-and-selling music formula. Moreover, these

idols particularly P-Pop groups' hands-on involvement in terms of songwriting says a lot on how they remain on the driver's seat in running their music career, contradicting Ritzer's concept of control. Considering lack of study on today's booming P-Pop and T-Pop icons, it is this active involvement of said groups in the process of K-Pop glocalization and debunking McDonaldization effects that this research sought to explore.

It is also worth highlighting that like K-Pop glocalization, pop music making in the Philippines in the beginning of the 21st century as what Gabrillo (2018) claimed was characterized by the production of "unsophisticated" songs with their popularity attesting to their remarkable appeal to the public. From merely alleviating the traumas and hardships the Filipino people had to endure during the Marcos regime (Sorilla, 2019), pop music making following the Martial Law period affirms Fernandez' (1989) take on pop culture contents as products intended for profit made by "patrons" and "sponsors" for the consumption of masses (p. 489). Considering this mindset, it is not surprising that Gabrillo (2018) reminded why the structures of capitalist profit and commercial gain should be taken into consideration in understanding the pop music scene (p. 130). With the seeming commercialization of P-Pop music, it cannot be discounted that injecting doses of Filipino culture in musical masterpieces also serves as a marketing ploy for entertainment companies behind Filipino pop artists.

On the other hand, snippets of the T-Pop music scene mentioned in this review show how the Thai music industry equates good looks and fame, which Wuttipong

(2011) branded as T-Pop's "basic standards" since 1980s (p. 307), to music career success. More than just showcasing eye candy, attractive, and appealing T-Pop idol groups, what makes T-Pop talent agencies different from their Filipino counterparts is how Thai companies tap already famous Thai talents to form fresh new groups. With the belief that talents who already made a name in their respective fields are easier to market, T-Pop producers invest on idols like 4MIX members who are known in the cover dancing industry and Vyra members who are already part of a successful J-Pop-inspired group. It is also worth mentioning how Thai talent agencies have been capitalizing on K-Pop's signature practice of releasing reality shows broadcasting a slice of T-Pop groups' idol journeys to further market their talents and attract a considerable following with high hopes that this will boost the audiences' music consumption. These observations support Wuttipong's (2011) claim how the present T-Pop era appears to embrace the celebrity culture formula with T-Pop talent agencies seen as factories manufacturing celebrities rather than molding professional music artists (p. 304).

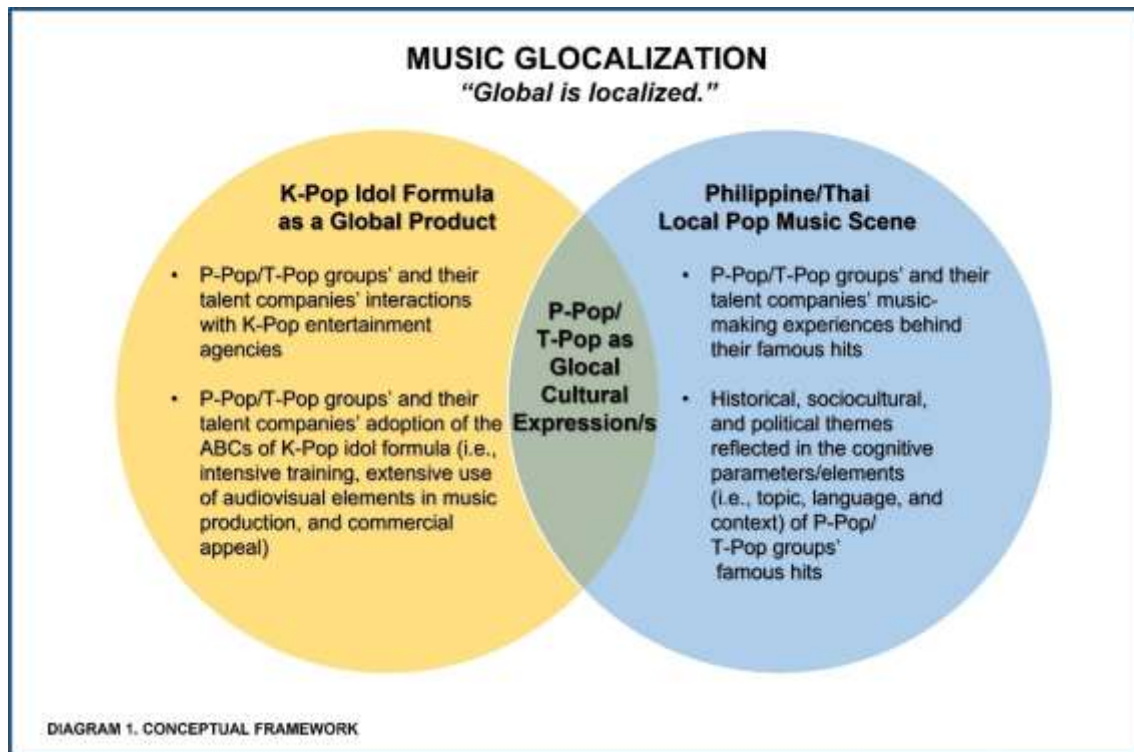
Significantly, the active involvement of today's breed of P-Pop and T-Pop groups in pop music making as stated in the news and feature articles cited in this review makes them deserving of same spotlight which available studies used to give to entertainment agencies which employ the glocalization card to successfully market pop music with considerable traces of foreign influence to the local music scene. While it cannot be discounted that pop music making is somehow equated to money-making business, it would be interesting to look at today's creation and production of P-Pop and T-Pop music as a lived experience while acknowledging its top-down cultural imposition. While acknowledging that pop music making is profit-driven, it

would be interesting to explore how P-Pop and T-Pop groups along with their talent companies indigenize K-Pop music influences and create a music they can call their own for deeper and more relevant reasons like to conform with sociocultural norms and speak up against timely pressing issues. Thus, aside from exploring how talent companies approach glocalization and pop music making, there is a need to explore how these two (2) creative processes transform music creation as a vehicle for the construction, negotiation, and reiteration of one's cultural identity.

With the lack of current studies highlighting Filipino and Thai agency in K-Pop glocalization, there is no other way of finding out how P-Pop and T-Pop groups and their companies glocalize K-Pop elements to enrich their modern-day pop music while cultivating their cultural roots but to observe how the subjects of this study drive said music glocalization process.

Conceptual Framework

Exploring music glocalization beyond the business lens, this research shed light on how something global like K-Pop is localized and being brought by P-Pop and T-Pop groups into a new cultural context to reinvent their local pop music into something that represents their cultural identities in the face of globalization. By framing this study based on Roudometof's take on glocalization and Frith's music-and-identity notion while also taking into consideration the concept of regionalization, this study brought K-Pop idol culture and P-Pop's and T-Pop's music scenes in one frame.



Based on the above framework, considering that localizing something global like K-Pop music involves interfaces wherein the global interacts with the local, this research presented regionalization as being carried out by non-state actors. This study exhibited how P-Pop and T-Pop talent companies and idol groups through their interactions with K-Pop entertainment agencies get to learn, acquire, and adopt the ABCs of K-Pop's tried-and-tested idol formula to include intensive training, extensive use of audiovisual elements in music production, and commercial appeal. By incorporating regionalization in the picture, not just we get to perceive P-Pop and T-Pop as glocal expressions which are results of various webs, levels, and modes of interactions and transborder activities of various non-state entities at the regional level but also as catalysts of regional integration with interfaces being conducted facilitating the establishment and cultivation of ties and rapport among actors.

On the other hand, anchored on Frith's notion of experiencing music, the study also presented a slice of the Philippines' and Thailand's local pop music scenes by exploring subject pop groups' music making activities behind their identified famous hits. Aside from comparing how P-Pop and T-Pop groups and their talent companies have approached the process of glocalizing K-Pop, looking into their music-making experiences would allow readers to understand that subject idol groups are in the continuous process of negotiating and reiterating their cultural identities despite imbibing K-Pop's winning formula. Moreover, examining how idol groups and their talent companies approach K-Pop glocalization also involves identifying and understanding possible historical, sociocultural, and political motivations that shape idol groups' music-making activities. Guided by Krims' music globalization-glocalization model, aforesaid themes were explored by looking into the cognitive parameters or elements including topic, language, and context of subject groups' famous hits.

Consequently, this study projected P-Pop and T-Pop music as glocal expressions that cultivate idol groups' cultural roots despite being shaped by the K-Pop global phenomenon. It is worthy to note that given the marrying of global and local cultures, the cultural identities these glocal expressions exhibit are not the exact or same traditional nationalist identities one would often associate to becoming Pinoy or becoming Thai. Meanwhile, although this study did not touch on the role of local and international fans in contributing to the construction of P-Pop and T-Pop music, it is perceived that Southeast Asian pop music's successful penetration in the global market will reconstruct not just the dynamics of said local brands of pop music but also the cultural identities of their artists in the eyes of the global audience. Not just

this cycle justifies Frith's premise on identity construction as a never-ending social process, this also goes to show that it is not just the cultural identities of artists that are always open to change but also music which should be perceived as ever-evolving cultural expressions being shaped by various factors like globalization.

Chapter III

K-POP GLOCALIZATION THRU SNIPPETS OF P-POP AND T-POP GROUPS' IDOL CREATION AND MUSIC-MAKING EXPERIENCES

Analyzing how P-Pop groups Alamat and SB19 and T-Pop groups 4MIX and Vyra and their respective talent companies have gone through the process of K-Pop glocalization requires one to backtrack from the very day talent agencies envisioned to form these idol groups, the moment these once idol hopefuls were scouted, and the nth years these would-be artists were trained and groomed prior to their debut in the local music industry. Revisiting subject pop groups' idol journey and their talent companies' idol-creation process would be of great help in comparing how said actors from ASEAN member-states namely the Philippines and Thailand have internalized, localized, and refined elements of the K-Pop idol formula in producing their selected hit singles. These idol-creation and music-making experiences were explored using previously released articles, interviews, documentaries, reality shows, and personal vlogs of P-Pop and T-Pop groups and their talent companies as primary sources of information. These idol journey accounts and music-making experiences of subject pop groups behind their selected hit singles released in 2021 are presented in this chapter per pop group.

K-Pop Glocalization: The Filipino Way

WHAT?: The SB19 Experience

Inspired by its previous projects that promoted culture collaboration between South Korea and the Philippines, ShowBT's founder and chairman Robin Jung shared how his company leveled up from producing Korean concerts in the Philippine soil to forming the very first Filipino idol group trained using the K-Pop system. More than just Filipinos' fluency in using the English language, Jung shared that Filipinos have a lot of potential in making their own name both in the local and international pop music scene because just like in Korea, singing and dancing are deeply embedded in the Filipino culture. Motivated to produce an idol group that represents the fusion of Korean and Filipino cultures, Jung's company launched auditions to search for potential talents who would be eventually trained based on a tried-and-tested idol formula from which today's biggest South Korean pop groups are being molded.

While ShowBT recognized that the initial 30 successful idol hopefuls out of the 300 auditionees were talented enough and equipped with dancing and singing skills which are primary criteria in searching for would-be talents, Jung underscored that the long years of training for trainees are meant to test their personality and attitude. True enough, while enduring lengthy hours of vocal, dance, and language lessons and practices just like what their Korean counterparts have also encountered is indeed a tough challenge; overcoming emotional, mental, and even financial battles is a different story with trainees expected to get along well with their fellow hopefuls and ace their regular performance evaluations while struggling to make ends meet

as most of them left their jobs to pursue their idol journey. The number of trainees then decreased every year not just because they failed to pass performance evaluations but also because they felt uncertain on the outcome of their chosen career. Many trainees had to quit training to pursue more productive jobs that would help them bring food to their tables. In the end, after three (3) years of training, the quintet SB19 finally made its most sought-after debut.

From being servers or waiters during special Philippine-Korean events and back-up performers in ShowBT-produced concerts in the country, SB19 in 2018 began touring schools and malls flexing their soulful ballad “*Tilaluha*” composed by a Korean songwriter and whose music video features Korean talents, elements, and storyline. The Philippines may have been long smitten by the K-Pop craze, yet the debut of then K-Pop-inspired SB19 was met with lukewarm reception. Relatedly, the group’s debut year witnessed the boys being subjected to a stricter idol training regimen; from spending nine hours (9) for vocal and dance training six (6) days a week down to rehearsing dance choreography 30 times a day, not to mention the language lessons, body conditioning, and weight management sessions. Although they remained steadfast in trying to penetrate the local music industry one (1) year after their debut, the boys started doubting their group’s future to the point that they decided to split apart should their careers fail to progress following the release of their second single.

Fortunately, SB19 made a breakthrough after the dance practice video of its comeback single “*Go Up*” gained public attention as viewers were left in awe with the

boys' intense synchronized choreography. This milestone gradually opened more opportunities for the group ranging from local television and radio guesting down to drawing attention from international music charts with the help of its fandom *A'Tin*. While they were always compared with their Korean counterparts for their looks and musical style during their Go Up days and the training program they underwent, the idol group asserted that they were formed and trained by their Korean handlers to promote Filipino music by putting Filipino language, culture, and everything they experience as artists into their masterpieces.

Staying true to its commitment of paying homage to its Filipino roots, SB19 moved to come out of its K-Pop image and carved its own identity through its single "*What?*". Unlike its previous singles which were composed and produced by Korean songwriters and producers, *What?* marks the beginning of the boys' hands-on and active involvement in pop music making. For instance, Pablo, who served as the music composer, lyricist, and co-producer of this hit, played with words, concepts, and symbolisms to give listeners a new kind of song that makes them critically think far from typical pop songs with generic and straightforward lyrics.

The same is true with the musical arrangement of *What?* with Pablo breaking the predictable light beat, tempo, and style attributable to K-Pop music strongly evident in their first two (2) singles. Brave enough to explore and try genres barely used in usual pop songs, he incorporated various styles and changed tempos to make *What?* sound more metal and heavier instead of sounding pop. Not just Pablo wanted to make this hit progressive to get listeners understand its story, he meshed

various genres to reflect the varying personalities and musical style of each SB19 member. As the song has more aggressive take compared to the group's lighter hits, the boys went through meticulous recording to ensure that their voices matched the genre dedicated to them.

While the group's previous hits were choreographed by their Korean dance mentor, Stell took charge of the choreography for the group's What? single. Although most of the steps were similar to the movements being sported by their Korean counterparts, the dance break¹⁶ part of the music video showcases steps which according to Stell were improvised to match the mood and the meaning being relayed by the song's lyrics.

SB19's involvement in What? music making goes far as conceptualization is concerned. After listening to Pablo's thoughts and meaning behind the music and listening to the song's guitar demo, the group's aspiring director member Justin did some research, looked for ideas and inspiration from different movies and music videos especially those of K-Pop hits, and solicited other members' ideas to come up with what they thought at first to be wild and unrealistic concept for the music video. To highlight the different personalities of the boys, each member was given a unique storyline and concept aligned with the verses assigned to them. Recognizing their fans' fondness of decoding metaphors and symbolisms, Justin, as this hit's creative director, employed concepts, costumes, and settings which tickle the creative minds of their viewers.

¹⁶ Common in K-Pop songs, it is the instrumental part of a song with minimal to no lyrics which gives artists a break from singing and instead flex impressive and complex choreography.

Kasmala: The Alamat Experience

A former culture worker in Pampanga who produced projects aimed at promoting the culture and language of *Kapampangans* among the youth, Creative Director Jason Paul Laxamana elevated his drive of promoting Filipino culture into the national and bigger stage by introducing Alamat. Conditioned to personify the culturally diverse Philippines, Laxamana and Viva Entertainment launched nationwide online auditions searching for potential idols who do not only possess star qualities and talents but can also speak their regional language. The latter requirement, according to Laxamana, is crucial in the formation of Viva's new P-Pop group because the group can only embody the Philippines if its members represent the country's cultural and linguistic diversity.

The chosen nine (9) idol hopefuls then underwent a boot-camp style training tailored after K-Pop's idol training system. However, compared to their Korean counterparts' talent incubator system which takes at least two (2) years of training before a group's debut, Alamat's length of training program is undeniably shorter with the group introduced to the local music scene after nine (9) months of training. Relatedly, after remotely training for a few months online, the boys were required to live in one (1) house in Manila and together underwent dance and vocal classes and personality development sessions six (6) straight days a week. Snippets of the group's training sessions in their vlogs show how almost all members, though already equipped with dancing and singing skills, had a hard time coping up with their dance and vocal lessons as it was the first time for them to join formal talent trainings. Viva also invited guest mentors to check on the development of the boys,

identify areas that need improvement, and cascade pointers and goals that they were expected to meet in their next evaluation performance. While arming them with the right and superior performing skills is not a walk in the park, Laxamana shared that the core objective of letting nine (9) culturally diverse boys live in one (1) house to train is to build and improve their sense of camaraderie for them to realize the value of working as a team and not as soloists. This appears to be one of the challenges during the first few days of the boys in *Balay Alamat* since more than just delegating who's in charge of doing household chores, they needed to get along with each other despite varying attitudes, lifestyles, upbringing, and regional languages they grew up with.

While outrightly acknowledging the inspiration they get from K-Pop from the training program they used, to successful K-Pop artists they have been looking up to, down to riding on the K-Pop visual trend, the members of Alamat claim that they are being molded based on the “counter-K-Pop concept”. Although embracing the elements that catapulted K-Pop music to global stardom, the boys of Alamat vow to promote Filipino culture through their multilingual songs. Setting them apart from other P-Pop groups, the boys of Alamat want to inject and introduce regional languages to local mainstream music long dominated by masterpieces in foreign language which the group branded as the language of the elite. Not just they want to echo the voice of the masses through their songs, they also want to break stereotypes attached to regional and ethnic groups they belong to and to the not-so-good perception about being *probinsyanos* (settlers from rural areas).

Following the success of its debut single “*Kbye*” which speaks of heartbreak using seven (7) regional languages, Alamat released its comeback single “*Kasmala*” ~ jumbled version of the Filipino word *malakas* ~ which presents fusion of traditional culture and modern music. Unlike its debut single which was formed by the idol group during their jamming session, their comeback single was hailed as a collaborative effort between a renowned international music production outfit and a Filipino songwriter and musicians. For instance, Viva partnered with Swedish powerhouse music production company The Kennel, which in the past worked with biggest international pop artists, to produce a modern sound mixed with style that resonates Filipino aesthetics. After hearing all the outputs presented by the production company, Alamat chose a more warrior-like, intense, and upbeat sound that marries native and electro-dance music (EDM) styles often used in K-Pop music production. Viva further infused sounds created by traditional instruments such as *agong* and *hegalong* which can be clearly heard in the chorus part complementing the song’s chant-like verses. After music selection and settling of issues on musical arrangement, Viva tapped ace songwriter Thyro Alfaro for Kasmala’s lyrics. The boys of Alamat also did contribute during the songwriting process as they translated the verses assigned to them from Tagalog to their respective vernacular languages. The management was also receptive of the boys’ ideas and allowed them to compose the lyrics of the rap portion of the song.

From the *jeepney*, *banderitas*, and *samalamig* containers visible in their debut single, the concept pitched in by the management in Kasmala music video highlights blast from the past cultural symbolisms that are rarely, if not all at all featured in today’s pop culture contents. Blending something traditional with bits of modernity,

the boys of Alamat mixed modern dance moves with steps inspired from *Eskrima* also known as *Arnis* which is the Philippines' traditional martial arts that features weapon-based fighting using sticks paired with hand-to-hand combat. Stepping up their game in showcasing remnants of the country's historical past, the boys donned outfits which were designed based on the concept of indigenous futurism that emphasizes the use of indigenous Filipino textiles that represent traditional cultural values but with a more modern twist. Proving that folk symbolism can go well with modern aesthetics of pop music, the boys sported the *Mandirigma* creations of Ifugao fashion designer Victor Baguilat Jr. while grooving into the beat flexing some *tinikling* footwork.

K-Pop Glocalization in Thailand

Y U Come Back?: The 4MIX Experience

For the Thai local pop music industry which offers several J-Pop- and K-Pop-inspired groups, yet still dominated by solo pop artists, introducing another T-Pop idol group that will successfully penetrate the local music scene is one of the biggest challenges the Khaosan Entertainment took a gamble of in forming 4MIX. Giving a break to the debut of idol groups which completely embrace everything K-Pop, the managing director of the entertainment company's subsidiary KS Gang Bhurit Kunjara envisioned to form an idol group that represents freedom which has been a contentious issue in the Thai society. With KS Gang recognizing possible hurdles in introducing a pop group different from their predecessors, the company scouted for idol hopefuls from entertainment industries like modeling and K-Pop cover dancing who already have a name in their respective fields and have significant following to

ensure that the newly-formed group would quickly attract public attention during their debut. True enough, KS Gang introduced 4MIX composed of recognized dance cover artists in Thailand who were chosen based on their talents and fanbase. An epitome of freedom, the group was introduced as the country's first LGBTQ+ T-Pop idol group with one of its members being a vocal member of said community while the others stand behind him in echoing his call for equality and breaking gender norms. Proclaiming themselves as *Tom Yum* of the T-Pop industry, 4MIX waves the freedom flag by celebrating their colorful personalities which may be individually different but blend as one just like how said Thai's famous dish features a perfect combination of various tastes.

The KS Gang management tapped the same K-Pop idol training formula to hone the members' talents and build camaraderie among them. Unlike K-Pop idol hopefuls who are required to live under one (1) roof during their trainee days, 4MIX members for two (2) years had to leave their homes early in the morning to attend dance and vocal lessons which lasted for a day. As presented in the group's documentary, the first few months of their training were spent on practicing their dancing skills through coming up with dance cover videos of famous K-Pop hits which they had already been performing before signing a contract with KS Gang. It can also be observed that the members used to practice by themselves most of the time without the supervision of a dance trainer and choreographer. Subsequently, the next months highlighted how they endured nth hours of vocal lessons to enhance said skill which they admitted they were not good at as they didn't experience it when performing K-Pop dance covers which only require lip-syncing of a song. After two (2) years of

training, the group was able to improve their singing skills though admitting they still need to enhance their vocal talent.

Meantime, while acknowledging that there remains a room for improvement for 4MIX, KS Gang cleared that they are not after perfection unlike what the K-Pop idol formula is instilling to Korean idol hopefuls. Staying true to his company's vision of molding the group based on the concept of freedom, Kunjara clarified that the quartet was not trained and packaged to do synchronized dancing and perfectly hitting high notes which are famous trademarks of K-Pop acts. While recognizing the hardwork being exhausted by the members to prove their worth in the T-Pop stage, KS Gang's principle in molding 4MIX is to allow the members to celebrate their innate distinctive talents without pretending to be perfect and be someone else since at the end of the day, music is only one part of the group's contents. KS Gang wanted viewers of 4MIX to realize that while they are more than just the singing and dance routines they perform, they remain simple and relatable especially with the message they want to convey to their listeners. This is one of the reasons why despite cultural barriers, 4MIX has managed to establish a fanbase in Latin America, a following which is relatively bigger compared to their local fandom in Thailand.

Significantly, it is this special connection with their listeners which 4MIX wants to preserve that inspired KS Gang in producing "*Y U Come Back?*" as the group's debut single. From the group's prologue single that speaks of societal issues, the entertainment company wanted 4MIX to touch on more personal issues which listeners can relate to no matter who they are and regardless of what personal

battles they are struggling to overcome. Putting their listeners as the core of every hit single 4MIX releases, the lyrics and musical arrangement of the debut single were written and arranged based on the feedback of the listeners on the idol group's prologue single. As shared by Ninja, one of the members of 4MIX, the music production team had to rearrange the song for a couple of times to make it easier to listen to and to be catchier – characteristics which their listeners found it hard to find in their earlier released single. While songwriting and musical arrangement were mostly handled by their entertainment company's production team, 4MIX got to participate in their debut single's production by deciding on their song's line distribution. Familiar with each member's capabilities, the group decided on which verse fits a member's voice and personality.

Relatedly, still in an effort to make the single more relatable to the audiences, KS Gang's choreographer came up with steps that while may exude a lot of swag yet remain simple and can be easily imitated by the viewers. As stressed by the group's managing director, more than just producing songs that exhibit dancing prowess of the members, their team seeks to produce a choreography which is not too complicated so that the viewers can enjoy and dance along to the rhythm of their music. This perception is way different from the usual formula of K-Pop acts which gives premium to flawless execution of fast-paced, intense, complicated, synchronized, and clean popping choreographies.

Meanwhile, given how KS Gang has given 4MIX the leeway to research and think of concepts and themes that the group wants to represent, it comes as no surprise

why its members served as main drivers of the conceptualization of its Y U Come Back? single. For instance, the other three (3) members embraced Ninja's take on how clothes should be perceived as genderless. With this, their debut single presents the members bravely donning colorful unisex outfits with gender neutral style which one can barely see in the K-Pop scene albeit the concept of soft and metrosexual masculinity is embedded in the K-Pop idol formula. While sporting androgynous outfits, 4MIX also contributed to how dance steps were conceptualized in such a way that its choreography supports gender fluidity, breaking stereotypes that men should stick with edgy and intense dance steps. Further reinforcing the group's goal of advancing equality, the members made it sure that verses were equally distributed to each member so that everybody gets the same exposure and same share of spotlight. The same is true when it comes to distribution of choreography with 4MIX making it sure that all of them get to perform same set of dance steps while deviating from K-Pop's usual dance break equation that puts into the spotlight the group's dancing machine or its best dancer to flex complex moves. This supports the belief of 4MIX on why they, unlike their K-Pop counterparts, do not need to be an expert in a specific skill and conform with K-Pop's traditional positioning style which the T-Pop members think limits members' capabilities and individuality.

Lyra: The Vyra Experience

Known for its production of hit J-Pop contents in Thailand, the Independent Artist Management (IAM) has moved out of its comfort zone and aimed to give the country's pop music a major makeover that would satisfy the audiences' craving for a

more local, yet modern sound. After years of promoting Japanese-inspired girl group BNK48, Japan's AKB48 sister group, IAM has been in high hopes of pulling off a K-Pop-like global domination as it launched its new pop group Lyra which was eventually renamed as Vyra. Drawing inspiration from K-Pop's success story, the entertainment company partnered with Universal Music Thailand in forming an idol group whose music, unlike that of the BNK48's and its contemporary K-Pop-inspired girl groups', totally celebrates Thai cultural roots while not losing track of modern sounds. Recognizing the importance of establishing a local fanbase to achieve IAM's going-global vision, the company took advantage of its pool of popular J-Pop-inspired Thai idols who joined the audition to form a sub-unit projected to release original Thai pop songs separate from those of BNK48's which are mostly based on Japanese songs translated in Thai language. Fresh from the audition, the six (6) chosen girls underwent some rebranding and were repackaged to move away from their anime-inspired persona to embrace a fiercer and more empowered image.

Vyra's rebranding all started with subjecting the girls to another round of training which sought to equip them with a new set of skills far from those they used to showcase back in their J-Pop performances. With the pandemic setting aside IAM's plan of holding formal idol training for Vyra in the U.S., the girls initially trained remotely via Zoom for a couple of months. Subsequently, IAM recognized the shortcomings brought by remote trainings like the failure to establish a connection among the members, prompting them to put the girls in one (1) house where they had to live and train together for a month. Vyra's reality show *Lyrality* provided viewers with a peek of the girls' K-Pop-styled trainings which involved long hours of

fitness, vocal, dance, personality, and fashion lessons. Members of Vyra found themselves in an unfamiliar territory as they were taught with complex, crisp, and powerful choreography with polished and ever-changing formations which were not in their priority list during their stint as J-Pop-inspired idols whose sole goal is to have fun on stage to energize their audiences. A glimpse of Lyrality showcases the members' breakdown moments as they individually struggled to develop strong vocals, hit high notes, and hone their rapping skills which embracing the K-Pop style of training and genre requires them to do. From being used to singing verses along with the other members, the girls had to be trained in singing solo lines while ensuring that their vocal qualities are on point and in harmony when belting crucial parts of the song. Relatedly, alongside their vocal lessons, the girls also underwent songwriting lessons which their management deemed crucial in the production of their future songs that shall represent the girls and their stories. Moreover, IAM hired a fashion stylist to guide the girls as they transitioned from embracing school-girl concept dressed in uniformed frilly skirts and silk with ribbons and laces into female idols who can sport varying looks be it based on bad girl, innocent, or girl crush image depending on the concept of the album they are promoting.

The girls may have trained in less than a year but the adjustments and hardwork they exhausted yielded positive results with their debut attended by their massive supporters despite COVID-19 restrictions. The release of their self-titled debut single Lyra marked not just the girls' coming-out-of-their-shell moment but also T-Pop's attempt to break into the international pop music scene. For instance, composing a high-impact song was not at all a walk in the park for IAM which for years was used

to merely adopting J-Pop songs into Thai language. Afterall, while crafting creative and catchy lyrics with strong recall and memorable hooks is tricky enough, composing a song to reflect the stories and personalities of six (6) girls who were once groomed and marketed to resemble each other is another challenge IAM's songwriters faced. Significantly, IAM and its songwriters took inspiration from their high hopes of making T-Pop big in the international shores, thus, projecting in the lyrics Vyra's readiness to conquer the global stage.

Relatedly, while recognizing that they need to keep up with trending modern sounds if they want to penetrate global music hit charts, IAM has seen the bigger need to inject Thai elements to produce a sound that would put the "T" in T-Pop. While riding on the popularity of electropop music heavily used by K-Pop music producers, IAM's music production team added a touch of Thai roots by incorporating distinctive melodic sound of traditional Thai musical instruments *khaen* and *pin*. While modern hip hop beats increase the song's danceability, the traditional Thai instrumentation serves as the very backbone of the track's sound which one can clearly hear the moment the song drops the beat down to wrapping up the song with its cold ending¹⁷. Significantly, while the fusion of traditional and modern sounds gives T-Pop music a new face, IAM's experimental approach to instrumentation says a lot on the evolution of Thailand's traditional music. For a country which strongly values its traditional music culture, the single Vyra can attest to how Thai traditional music evolves in the modern times without shedding bits of its cultural roots. This is

¹⁷ A tactic used by music producers in ending a song in a sudden and abrupt manner.

the same perception that IAM wants Vyra to embody as the girls make their way to the international music scene.

Further celebrating Vyra's cultural roots, IAM's tapped choreographers made it sure that they craft dance steps which reflect essential elements of Thai traditional dance. While the girls showcased modern moves like popping, hip hop, and hip thrusts just like their foreign counterparts, it can be observed that the most prominent steps were those hand and arm gestures. Significantly, Thai traditional dance emphasizes movement of arms, hands, and fingers which is a language of emotional expression and a reflection of a performer's personality (Kochetkova, 2020). With this, gracefully flashing L-shaped hand signs and waving these in the air while grooving into the beat is more than just Vyra's means of advancing their brand. As Kochetkova (2020) put it, the best performers are those who can perfectly execute hand and arm gestures as doing so enables them to reflect the real character and exact emotions of the persona they are portraying.

Inspired by the girl group's name, IAM gave its viewers a Lyra constellation-themed music video presenting the members as the six (6) stars found in the celestial sphere. Apart from the music video's backdrop, the girls were dressed in pastel-colored, galaxy-inspired, and shimmering outfits in various styles shining like the luminous celestial bodies they are representing. In conceptualizing the music video, the entertainment company portrays that stars, while may look like the same when stargazing with the naked eye, are totally distinct from one another. Relatedly, this marks the company's resolve to introduce the members of Vyra, who were once

packaged as identical idols in their BNK48 days, as unique artists with varying talents, colorful personalities, and different advocacies. As a whole, the single Lyra was conceptualized to underscore how IAM's "inside-out" approach makes Vyra different from other T-Pop artists and their foreign counterparts. Although acknowledging influences from foreign pop icons like K-Pop and Western artists, Vyra, at the end of the day, crafts their own sound and style based on each member's talents, desires, and ideas.

K-Pop Glocalization in the Philippine and Thai Settings

A glimpse of the experiences of subject P-Pop and T-Pop groups and their talent companies in producing four (4) of their most successful hits reveals how these idols and their managements differently approach the process of localizing the K-Pop idol formula as a global cultural product to meet the needs and preferences of their target audiences and for them to advance and relay the message they want to send their followers. These varying approaches can be observed from how idol hopefuls are picked and eventually subjected to intensive training, to how they are groomed in accordance with the group's perceived image or concept whether it be pitched in by their managements or personally chosen by the members, down to how they and their companies go about their music-making activities. These approaches are then summarized in the table in the next page.

Table 1. K-POP GLOCALIZATION BASED ON EXPERIENCES OF P-POP & T-POP IDOLS IN PRODUCING THEIR SELECTED HITS				
	PHILIPPINES		THAILAND	
	ALAMAT	SB19	4MIX	VYRA
SONG TITLE	"Kasmala"	"What?"	"Y U Come Back?"	"Lyra"
BACKGROUNDER ON IDOL GROUPS				
BACKGROUND OF IDOLS PRIOR TO THEIR DEBUT	Talented lads from provinces	Servers/waiters & back-up performers in K-Pop events	Members of K-Pop dance cover groups	Members of J-Pop-inspired girl group
MONTHS/YEARS SUBJECTED TO K-POP-INSPIRED TRAINING SYSTEM	-Nine Months (Achieve group synchrony & harmony)	-Three (3) Years (Achieve group synchrony & harmony)	-Two (2) Years (Celebrate distinct talents & individuality)	-Nine Months (Achieve group synchrony but celebrate individuality)
GROUP CONCEPT	Multilingual idol group	Idols embodying fusion of Korean-Filipino culture	First LGBTQ+ idol group	"Girl crush" idol group
HOW THEY EXHIBIT PINOYNESS/THAINESS IN MUSIC?	-Use of regional languages -Cultural & folk symbolism	-Use of Filipino language -Cultural symbolism	-Use of Thai language -Use of Pride Flag colors & unisex clothes	-Use of Thai language -Use of traditional Thai instruments & dance elements
MUSIC-MAKING ACTIVITIES				
Who is in-charge of the following? (Company or Idols)				
SONGWRITING	Company & Idols	Idols	Company	Company
MUSIC PRODUCTION	Company & Idols	Idols	Company	Company
CONCEPTUALIZATION	Company & Idols	Idols	Idols	Company

For instance, the accounts earlier presented shows how talent companies from the Philippines and Thailand differently deal with the idol recruitment process. Unlike K-Pop entertainment agencies which scout would-be idols as young as 10 years old with raw talents and have no exposure to stardom, both P-Pop and T-Pop companies recruited talents who already have an experience in performing even in their own localities and whose skills only need some polishing through formal trainings. However, unlike P-Pop idol hopefuls who started from scratch before establishing their name in the industry, T-Pop talent companies' recruitment strategy reflects what Wuttipong (2011) branded as the traditional "good looks plus fame

equal to music career success” equation that has been shaping the Thai music industry since the 80s. Thai talent companies have continuously invested on idol hopefuls who already have a considerable following with the belief that they are easier to market since no matter what content they offer, they are assured of their followers’ support.

When it comes to conduct of formal trainings, both Filipino and Thai idols were subjected to K-Pop-styled trainings which involve dance, vocal, and personality development lessons sans the language classes with the chosen idol hopefuls already fluent in their native tongue. However, they differ on the duration and length of training depending on their target debut date and their managements’ mindset in molding them. It is worth highlighting that while P-Pop companies trained idol hopefuls to work as a team for them to perfectly move and sing in synchrony and in harmony just like their Korean counterparts, T-Pop idols are reminded not to be too preoccupied with the concept of perfection as they are expected to celebrate their distinctive talents and individuality on stage. How Thai choreographers incorporated freestyle dance steps in the T-Pop performances under review challenges K-Pop’s notion of perfection attributed to accurate execution of synchronized and tight choreography.

Meantime, both the pop groups and companies in the two (2) countries have a say on what image or concept the former will embody as idols. While the projected image of both P-Pop and T-Pop groups reiterates their national and sociocultural roots, it cannot be discounted that these elements are more pronounced in the

identified hits of Filipino idols compared to subject Thai artists' songs. For instance, aside from belting lyric phrases written in regional languages, P-Pop groups overtly display Filipino material culture. Through sporting cultural artifacts which are usually dismissed by Filipino audiences as too "*baduy*¹⁸" and "*jejemon*¹⁹" in nature, P-Pop groups prove that folk symbolism can go well with the colorful, futuristic, and Instagram-worthy aesthetics of pop music. For their part, while this observation does not make each member of T-Pop groups less of a Thai; it can be observed that other than flexing Thai song lyrics and sound of traditional Thai instruments, subject T-Pop idols and their talent companies do not obviously make use of cultural artifacts. Although some of the T-Pop groups' choreography were inspired by elements of Thai traditional dance, the visuals used in their music videos more represent the group's social cause rather than the national identities of the ones performing.

On the other hand, slices of music-making activities of idol groups and their talent companies aired in their reality shows and personal vlogs show how P-Pop and T-Pop groups have varying control and say on the production of their subject hits. By looking into the songwriting, music production, and conceptualization processes talent companies and the idol groups went through in producing the identified hits, one can conclude that unlike T-Pop idols, P-Pop groups appear to be most of the time on the driver's seat during the whole music production process. Noteworthy is how P-Pop talent companies are receptive of the inputs of idol groups and allow them to use rich-worded lyrics that keep people thinking instead of the usual easy-to-

¹⁸ Filipino word for unfashionable.

¹⁹ A breed of Filipino hipsters who have created their own language, written text, fashion, and subculture often looked down by majority of the society.

understand lines which is a known criteria for best-selling K-Pop hits. Similarly, although P-Pop companies partnered with production outfits considered to be pillars in pop music making, P-Pop groups still enjoy the liberty to revolutionize their music's sound and to move away from the overrated music quality associated to pop music. This is also true when it comes to the music conceptualization process with P-Pop groups taking part in the creative process of deciding what visual elements and concepts they will use to realistically connect with their audiences. Meanwhile, a peek on the music-making activities of T-Pop idols reveals how their companies value the feedback and preferences of their audiences in crafting songs for the T-Pop groups. While Thai entertainment agencies ensure that their idol groups' advocacies are visually incorporated in the songs they will release, these agencies always keep in mind that lyrics should be composed based on the comprehensive ability and taste of the audiences, that the sound to be chosen should make listeners instantly groove, and that the overall concept should be something viewers either can easily relate to or already used to. While not totally dismissing that this same mindset is true and applicable for P-Pop companies, it cannot be denied how T-Pop companies just like their Korean counterparts greatly value song marketability in producing pop songs which, as mentioned in the earlier part of this study, is equated by scholars to McDonaldization tendencies brought by adopting the K-Pop idol formula.

Chapter IV

HISTORICAL, SOCIOCULTURAL, AND POLITICAL DRIVERS BEHIND K-POP GLOCALIZATION IN THE PHILIPPINES AND THAILAND

While the previous chapter presents how K-Pop glocalization in the Philippines and Thailand is greatly dependent on the concept talent companies want their pop groups to embody and on how deeply involved idol groups are in the music-making process, it is worth highlighting that the glocalization of the K-Pop idol formula as a global cultural product remains heavily influenced by historical, sociocultural, and political factors either prevailing in the Filipino and Thai societies or are deeply valued by subject P-Pop and T-Pop groups. With this, I subjected the identified four (4) hit singles of SB19, Alamat, 4MIX, and Vyra to contextual analysis taking into consideration Krim's music globalization-glocalization model, looking into said songs' cognitive parameters such as topic, language, and context to identify and examine historical, sociocultural, and political drivers that differently shaped K-Pop glocalization in the two (2) ASEAN member-states. The results of the contextual analysis are presented in this chapter per pop group.

The Filipino Society thru the K-Pop Glocalization Lens

Examining SB19's *WHAT?*

Drawing inspiration from the ups and downs their group has gone through in making a name in the local music industry, SB19 members publicly acknowledged that *What?* is a song that celebrates individuality, self-love, and empowerment. Going through the song's lyrics gives listeners a glimpse of the group's idol journey

from each member battling poverty and family problems during their trainee days down to dealing with depression and self-esteem issues with bashers dismissing them as mere K-Pop copycats who won't make big in the industry. A juxtaposition on the words What and Filipino word *Watawat* (flag), Pablo wrote the song to remind listeners that just like them as artists, each of them has their own flag that sets them apart from others which they should always be proud of. This is the group's answer to critics always denouncing their "K-Poppish" image while assessing their capabilities based on K-Pop standards.

Just like them who continue to navigate their careers and establish their unique identity as a group, the boys of SB19 recognize that their listeners are in constant battle of raising their flags no matter what circumstances they are in. With these, they remind their listeners of embracing their flaws and weaknesses (*"Alam ko naman na 'di ako'ng pinaka ano? Magaling."*); of being resilient amid life's challenges (*"Daming sakuna, 'di ko ininda."*); of being optimistic (*"Maniwala, darating ang mga biyaya, higit pa sa lahat lahat ng nawala"*); of being proud on one's beginnings and staying grounded (*"Lahat ng aking basura, pupulutin, laging dala. Kahit san pa 'ko magpunta, lapat sa lupa aking mga paa."*); of thanking the divine being for his guidance (*"Ama! Salamat at ikaw ang agimat."*); and of staying true to themselves as they face their everyday personal battles (*"Bawat banat, iwagayway mo ang watawat!"*).

The group is not just moving away from the go-to romantic themes and concepts being used in majority of K-Pop songs but also from the usual pop song equation

that makes them easier to remember. Compared to K-Pop songs which employ small vocabulary as these feature repetitive phrases and catchy hook to ensure familiarity, SB19 in *What?* embraces more powerful lyricism through the use of metaphors to deliver more iconic and emotionally-charged anthems. This is evident in the lyrics of *What?* which could have used simple words like *pag-asa* (hope), *problema* (problem), and *sarili* (self) but instead employs symbolisms like *bintana* (window), *sakuna* (disaster), and *watawat* to denote brighter future, challenges, and self-love.

Knowing the use of metaphors can lead to various interpretations, it is not surprising why *What?* could pass as a social critique and political anthem. For instance, the verse of Josh unveils inequality between the rich and poor and how they see things differently.

Ika nila, ibang mundo nakikita niya
Mabuting iba, di' gaya nila
Pikit ang mata, ang tama, wala. Ahhh?
Bente – bente (20 – 20), paulit-ulit
Intelihente, subalit ngunit
Basag ang lente, pinunit punit
Hinubog ng dalagang bakal, sirit tssss

The verse raises how rich people claiming to be educated ironically have skewed view of reality while narrating how unprivileged ones, who may have suffered after being molded by iron maiden (*dalagang bakal*), managed to survive.

The turnout of events in time the release of the song gave its recurrent theme of raising one's flag with a patriotic battlecry. First, while Justin's verse "*Wag n'yong sabihin sa'kin kung ano'ng aking dapat gawin, di naman kayo natutong makinig*" may be meant for the group's detractors, yet, using the political lens in interpreting the scene wherein SB19 members were bumped into by their back-up dancers with the latter not even turning their backs may also speak of the Filipino people's unanswered pleas and needs amid the pandemic. Next, as the Philippine government during that time was bombarded with accusations of red-tagging and silencing critics, there comes SB19 in What's music video clad in *Heneral Luna*-inspired outfits performing snappy moves with red and black flags in the background. The scene showing SB19 and its back-up dancers dancing together may just be another act that can be found in some of the most successful K-Pop music videos, yet, how the actors sing in unison while drawing clenched fists like celebrating their victory gives viewers a dose of Katipunan feels. This is further reinforced by Pablo's cry of "*Pilipinas*", "*Hallelujah*", and "*sakalam*" (wordplay of *malakas*) before reaching the song's last line "*Di na magpapaawat, iwawagayway na ang watawat.*" Lastly, the flashing of the Murillo Velarde map in the closing part of the music video further makes the song an iconic anthem of love for country. Amid reports of continuous Chinese vessel incursions in the disputed West Philippine Sea in 2021, the inclusion in the music video of the 300-year-old map, which was used as an evidence in the Philippine's case against China at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, Netherlands (Silva, 2019), serves as the group's subtle yet powerful way of raising its young viewers' consciousness on the Philippines' supposed undisputed ownership of the West Philippine Sea.

Deconstructing Alamat's *Kasmala*

Capitalizing on the success of their debut single, the boys of Alamat in *Kasmala* speaks of how they inexplicably fell in love with a girl at first sight. Riding on the popularity of K-Pop's usual boy-meets-girl theme, as the song progresses, the group mentions how the girl's beauty from head to toe (*"Gandang mula ulo hanggang paa."*) – from her goddess-like beauty (*"Yeah, daw isa ka diwata akon nadangtan."*), her intelligence (*"Ne pa lagu'ing kekang utak."*), down to her body figure (*"Walang biro ang ganda ng hubog mo."*) – has blown them away. Admitting they can no longer escape from the girl's enchanting charm, they sing their hearts out committing to do whatever it takes for them to earn her big yes and be with her.

The song may be another love-at-first sight and I-will-give-you-the-moon anthem for teenagers, yet, what is worth noting is how it mixes simple and not so easy to understand words to depict Alamat's admiration of said girl. From straightforward lyrics like *"Bakit nga ba'ng lakas ng dating mo sa 'kin?"*, listeners may need the help of a Filipino dictionary to make sense of verse like *"Suminsay sa liknayan, nahulog na ako."* Kasmala's songwriter clearly deviated from the best-selling formula of pop music that utilizes common and familiar words enough to have strong recall and leave listeners with earworms.

More than just shifting from the usual pop music-making formula, what sets Alamat apart from their P-Pop contemporaries is how they reflect linguistic realities of many Filipinos through their multilingual songs. As multilingualism in the country is perceived to be unequal with some mainstream Filipino languages appear to be

more valued, the boys of Alamat debunk misconceptions associating vernacular and regional languages with backwardness and normalize the use of these languages in mainstream pop music. Significantly, how the boys give their singles a touch of their native tongue is not just purely translation but also transformation because the songs are then transformed to embody the experiences of respective ethnolinguistic groups. For instance, while the verses created by the boys in various regional languages still revolve on the central theme of attraction, hearing Kasmala in different voices such as in Ilokano, Kapampangan, Bikol, Bisaya, Waray, and Hiligaynon adds different colors and strands of emotions to the song. For instance, one can hear in Hiligaynon excitement and naughty antics after seeing in the flesh a real-life goddess (*"Yeah, daw isa ka diwata akon nadangtan, sa kalayo, gusto ka makahampang."*). One can hear a Kapampangan all hands down to a living epitome of beauty and brain (*"Makapaniglo ka lupa. 'Ne pa lagu'ing kekang utak."*). One can hear a Bisaya bravely confessing his feelings (*"Kabalo baka'ng nakadayeg ko nimo. Gikan sa tiil hangtod ulo."*). One can hear an Ilokano amazed with how the woman's beauty soothes and heals pain (*"Anian nga kinapintas, makabang-ar kasla agas."*). One can hear a clueless Waray-Waray desperately asking what to do to get the girl's nod (*"Ano tim karuyag hihimuon ko?"*). One can hear a Bicolano confessing his feelings through motion like dancing in the dark (*"Sa hiro' mo yan sabihon, oh yeah. Gare nagbabayle sa diklom."*). One can hear all the boys falling head over heels over the girl (*"Sa dibdib ko at bibig ko, ikaw lang ang laman. Daigdig ko'y nayanig nu'ng ikaw ay dumaan."*). These just go to show that while Kasmala deals with the concept of admiration as a whole, the boys process and experience it differently because of their diverse cultural roots.

However, just when we thought Kasmala's music video would feature the boys sneaking a glimpse of the girl they admire while flexing their charm trying to catch her attention, Alamat surprisingly serves its viewers with some history 101 which is a rarely touched concept in pop music making. Relatedly, what is more surprising is how the P-Pop group explores the Philippines' dark years of colonialism not to reminisce the oppression suffered by early Filipinos but to highlight the Filipino people's indomitable spirit and perseverance despite discrimination and exploitation by the Philippines' once colonial masters.

For instance, the music video brings its viewers back to 1904, a time when around 1,000 Filipinos from different ethnic groups in the country were transported to the United States (U.S.) and were exhibited during the infamous Saint Louis World Fair which is known as the largest human zoo in world history (Johnson, 2020). While the music video reimagines how said early Filipinos were cleaned up by the Americans to be civilized, being taught how to speak English, and were instructed to kill and eat dogs to entertain the audiences during the exhibit, Alamat redeems early Filipinos' image as fierce and talented individuals worthy of international attention. Moreover, the boys share the unsung stories of *Manongs*, the first generation of Filipino immigrants in the U.S. who faced discrimination while working in vast agricultural fields in said foreign land. While Alamat's farmer attires depict how the Manongs were forced to adapt to how Americans dressed, the group also showcases in the music video how said early Filipino immigrants attracted even foreign women and how their bravery made them significant actors in the farmworker movement (Arguelles, 2017). The boys further reinforce Filipino prowess after sporting Arnis moves which were gradually popularized by Filipino immigrants who,

when not working in the U.S. agricultural fields, used to gather to practice said martial arts (Lim, 2019).

Alamat's modern take on the dark sides of Philippine history came at the height of "Stop Asian Hate" movements following series of racist attacks against Asians particularly Filipinos in the U.S. Kasmala's music video shows a glimpse of racist insults and slogans used against the Filipinos like "goo-goo", "lil' brown monkey", "orange savages", and "dog eater". In front of all people clad in white carrying placards bearing these racist remarks, the boys in indigenous futurism-inspired costumes unstoppably flash symbolic visuals, groove into some snappy choreography, and destroy a racist poster; outrightly displaying Filipinos' rich culture, resilience, and endurance in beating all odds, proving that they are indeed kasmala, malakas, and strong. Unlike its debut single which presents a slice of Filipino culture's lighthearted side, Alamat lives up to its goal of celebrating its Filipino roots by educating its viewers about the dark chapters of Filipino history which the young generation may not even know of.

K-Pop Glocalization as Reflection of Thai's Changing Cultural Norms

Decoding 4MIX's *Y U Comeback?*

A slap to people who have hurt and left you hanging before but now have the guts to make a comeback in your life is the theme of 4MIX's *Y U Come Back?* single. A seeming breath of fresh air in a pop industry long dominated by songs revolving on love-at-first sight and the-one-who-got-away hymns, the group's debut single projects those who are left behind as stronger and better versions of their past

selves who no longer need other people's validation to prove their worth. Asking those who have wronged them "Why are you coming back?", 4MIX talks about empowerment and self-worth by pulling off a we-are-never-ever-getting-back-together anthem. While listeners can quickly find romantic undertone in the song, 4MIX stressed that Y U Come Back? is not only about love as it touches other aspects of life like friendship and work. These facets of life are highlighted in the music video, from Ninja who was once drunk in love turning into a fierce character who can no longer be swayed by her ex-lover, to George who plays an executive shutting his door to a former employee who left his company for supposed greener pastures, down to Folksong who rejected reconciliation pleas of his friends who used to bully him.

Complementing the seeming commanding rhythm of the song, the way the single's lyrics were written echoes the voice of a strong persona who has already made up his mind of burning bridges, telling someone to quit beating around the bush. It is not just KS Gang's objective of producing easy to recall and catchy songs that the songwriter got to achieve but also giving listeners relatable feels everytime 4MIX belts outright go-to-canned lines like "What do you need?" (*"Ter dtong gan rai?"*), "What exactly do you want?" (*"Ter ja ao ngai?"*), and "Don't waste my time!" (*"San san mai dtong sia wela!"*). Hearing these conversational lines in a pop song makes it not just easier to memorize but brings back its listeners to the exact moments when they had to face the same dilemma. Meanwhile, apart from employment of easy-to-understand verses, the song heeds to K-Pop music's equation of incorporating few English words like the single's "Get out of my way" and "4MIX wanna show you something" and meaningless, yet addictive phrases "*Na na*

na na na na na na na” and *“Dum dum dum dadidadi dum”* repeated at least 40 times in the song.

It is also worthy to note that as 4MIX continues to emerge as a new pop sensation in Latin America, KS Gang has ventured into Latin Pop by adding a special touch on the group's debut single and released a version of it showcasing Portuguese verses. Ironical as it may seem, while one can bask in and groove to the catchy melody brought by fusion of Latin music's trademark tropical rhythm and K-Pop-inspired EDM vibes, one can clearly hear 4MIX's disgust uttering “Why are you coming back?” (*“ Por que você volta?”*), the Portuguese way. Significantly, while KS Gang could have given in to the demand of the group's Latin American followers to release a completely Portuguese “Y U Come Back?” version, the company wanted to preserve the song's Thai roots which explains why majority of the lyrics remain in Thai language. Notably, this move is nothing new with KS Gang following the footsteps of its Korean counterparts whose glocalization strategy gave birth to trilingual pop songs that make waves in the international music scene.

While Y U Come Back? is clearly an empowering self-love anthem, 4MIX's cause of promoting LGBTQ+ rights is so evident in the group's single that it is impossible for viewers not to see even in the smallest details of the song and its music video the T-Pop members' efforts in advancing gender diversity, neutrality, and fluidity in music and pop culture as a whole. 4MIX's promotion of this social cause goes beyond its display of Pride flag's rainbow colors and unisex fashion that breaks norms about how clothes, hairstyles, and make-up should always be one-dimensional. It is worth

highlighting that from the very start, Y U Come Back? was produced and designed as a gender neutral single. KS Gang's music production team made several adjustments making it sure that the song's beat, rhythm, and melody will not sound too heavy and edgy for it to be associated with masculinity and not too cutesy and light to avoid reverberating solid feminine vibes. Along with the song's musical qualities' right balance of gentleness and strength, the single presents itself as a genderless song with its use of gender-neutral words like pronoun *chan* which in the Thai language is used by both men and women when dealing with persons they have intimate relations with (ASEAN Now, 2016). Further stepping up their game in blurring gender lines in music, 4MIX showcases moves challenging K-Pop's notion that sensual steps like twerking is exclusive for women with the members proving that they too can do some hip thrusting. Finally, the group tackles gender diversity by equally presenting varying stories of moving on and self-empowerment.

For a region where two (2) of its covered countries – Portugal and Spain – landing in the top 10 list of the safest countries for LGBTQ+ members in 2019 (Buder, 2019), it is not surprising why 4MIX's brand of music and its messaging have been warmly accepted by thousands of Latin Americans despite linguistic and cultural differences. Relatedly, it is not a secret that like 4MIX, there are Latin LGBTQ+ artists, not to mention the famous Ricky Martin, who capitalize on music for queer representation and as a resistance against homophobic narratives. While KS Gang's effective marketing strategy and partnership with Latin American countries' governments and the group's commercial appeal have contributed to their popularity even 11,000 miles away from T-Pop's native land, it cannot be discounted that

thousands of foreign audiences have found 4MIX's drive of promoting gender diversity and equality relatable as manifested by how they stormed the group's first international meet-and-greet activity waving Pride flags.

Ironically, 4MIX has yet to receive the same level of support they are getting from Latin Americans in the local Thai music scene. This is quite surprising knowing that freedom of gender expression is projected to be warmly welcomed in Thailand with the country known for its transgender beauty pageants and reputation as a gay-friendly tourist spot and global gender-change destination. Significantly, while the visibility of the country's LGBTQ+ community in the entertainment industry gives outsiders an impression that they are widely accepted in the Thai society, how they are treated as comic relief and as subject of demeaning humor suggest otherwise (UNDP & USAID, 2014, p. 33). Behind the colorful and well-attended Pride festivities in the country lies the reality on how the Thai LGBTQ+ community continues to suffer from lack of recognition and legal challenges which have made them more vulnerable to discrimination and marginalization. Even though the LGBTQ+ community and the concept of gender diversity have been given significant spotlight in the past few years with the boom of Boys Love (BL) series which have gradually evolved into Thailand's cultural export, these shows tend to focus on romantic fantasy while falling short in echoing pressing LGBTQ+ issues (Koaysomboon, 2020). While shows romanticizing BL culture have penetrated the mainstream media, for a society whose perception of gender roles and sexuality remains embedded in religion and is equated to social construction of morality, it is understandable why only few artists like 4MIX are brave enough to assert gender

diversity in the contents they are producing. With the possibility that most Thais will continue to shy away on issues dealing with sexual orientation, KS Gang has sought to establish first an international fanbase that will help 4MIX not just in making a name in the T-Pop industry but also in seriously injecting gender identity discourses in the consciousness of the Thai people. This just goes to show how important it is for 4MIX to successfully glocalize their music to amass considerable following outside its native land in order to turn into reality the idea of Thailand as an LGBTQ+ welcoming country that is proud of its queer population which the Thai government has been capitalizing on in a bid to boost tourism.

Decrypting Vyra's *Lyra*

The songwriters of *Lyra* composed the song in such a way that it will connect with the young people by exploring their emotions and dreams. With this, the single can be viewed in two (2) perspectives. First, adding to the list of romance-themed T-Pop songs, the girls of Vyra in its debut single confess their feelings to someone they have liked for a long time. In a flashback of events, the song brings back its listeners to the day the girls and the boys they admire crossed each other's paths, with the girls at that very moment feeling certain that they are meant for each other. After a long time of hiding what they are feeling, the girls tell the boys they admire to brace themselves with the former already ready and determined to sing their hearts out. Saying they will not mind should the boys do not like them back, the girls commit that they will do and give everything until the boys realize their worth and love them back. Repeating for the nth time, Vyra members liken themselves into bright stars which will guide the boys as they go about living their lives.

On the other hand, just as when listeners thought that Lyra is purely a love confession song, IAM's songwriters subtly and metaphorically put in words Vyra's readiness to introduce T-Pop music to the world. For instance, the boys who the members are referring to represent the pop group's ambition of making it big in the T-Pop industry and going global which they have been long eyeing to. Knowing that there are bashers and critics who will doubt their capabilities, Vyra is appealing to the world to give them the opportunity to prove their worth and vows to be the best version of themselves until such time that people will love them back. Showing that they are now ready to conquer the global stage, Vyra tells the world to brace itself for the coming of T-Pop music which will bring a new brand of music and source of optimism for the people.

A careful look on how the song was written reveals how the songwriters adopted the tried-and-tested formula for pop music making as manifested by the fusion of words written in both Thai and English language. For instance, complementing the length of their melodies, the lyric phrases in Thai appear to be short like "Girl by your side, It's me" ("*Kon kiang ter, It's me.*") and "Been waiting for so long" ("*Ror ma taang naan kon nee.*") which are divided among the group's members. Given that members are given equal moments to perform, the song employs stand-alone lines which may not use rich and profound vocabulary but clearly deliver the message to its listeners. Meantime, it can be observed that unlike other T-Pop and K-Pop songs which only include a few lines in English, the single features lyric phrases written in English that are way longer compared to those written in Thai language. Take for example how the lyrics of the rap portion of Lyra are almost written in English:

*Follow me, Follow me.
No matter where I go, I know you'll follow me.
I'm your starlight in the night.
Dao thee ter ja koy mang laek rerm to cheewit mai.
Just so you know LYRA will come for you.
All that you want LYRA will give to you.
No regulations in our lives, we could do.
Just me and you we'll create the new rules.*

To further complete the package, the songwriters came up with a chorus built on addictive melody and big lyric hook as they put on repeat “This is my name Lyra. I’m gonna be your star!” Relatedly, it cannot be discounted that IAM has recognized the need to prominently use English lyric phrases more than the usual in Vyra’s debut single to effectively reach out to diverse audiences and successfully promote the T-Pop group and their music in the international music scene. It is worth highlighting that unlike K-Pop songs whose Korean lyrics seem familiar and comprehensible especially for non-Korean fans who have been long exposed to Korean contents; T-Pop music and even Thai language have yet to go mainstream, thus, justifying IAM’s employment of more English lyric phrases that can be easily understood by non-Thai followers. Nevertheless, IAM’s move is sure to redefine the nature and future sound of T-Pop music as the company seeks to expand its market reach.

Significantly, more than just marking T-Pop music’s attempt to penetrate the global pop market, the debut of Vyra came at a time when freedom of individual creative expression in the Thai society, despite being politically regulated, has become technologically inevitable with the younger generation capitalizing on the

emergence of social media and other creative industries as avenues for speaking up their minds and carving out their own identities. The girl group arrived at a time when Thai influencers including celebrities and singers especially hip-hop artists used their platforms to tackle socially relevant issues ranging from breaking problematic social stereotypes down to advancing pro-democracy calls which have drawn the ire of conservatives and Thailand's military-backed government.

For its part, the release of Vyra's debut single *Lyra* is timely as it came in a time when music labels and artists have started rewriting T-Pop songs to break discriminating stereotypes against women. For years, prejudice and discrimination against women have formed part of Thailand's cultural fabric including music with hundreds of popular songs deliberately and unknowingly perpetuating negative stereotypes on women (Campaign Asia, 2021). In fact, the T-Pop industry is no stranger to this as manifested by how the first wave of K-Pop-inspired Thai idol groups were either being sexualized or conditioned to personify images and characters that limit their capabilities and potentials. Meantime, Vyra's single subtly speaks of women empowerment which remains a contentious issue in patriarchal Thailand. First, looking at the romantic angle of the single *Lyra*, the brave confession of the girl to the boy she admires debunks Thai gender role stereotypes and cultural values that dictate that it is more acceptable for men to initiate dating relationship while the idea of women making the first move is a concept frowned upon (Pradubmook-Sherer, 2009). Next, by portraying women as unstoppable and fearless in reaching their goal of making a name overseas, Vyra's "girl crush"²⁰

²⁰ A "swaggy" K-Pop image that revolves on the concept of women empowerment and aspiration to be a role model to other women.

concept challenges old unfounded claims that women are submissive and coward to take risks. Finally, notwithstanding the marketing strategy employed by IAM, how the company has trusted a girl group to bring the Thai banner in the international music scene – unlike its foreign counterparts which have been taking advantage of considerable women fanbase in marketing boy idol groups – says a lot on how it believes on Vyra's undeniable potential to take up space in the international pop music arena.

Historical, Sociocultural, and Political Realities and K-Pop Glocalization

Subjecting the four (4) hit singles of subject P-Pop and T-Pop groups to contextual analysis reveals historical, sociocultural, and political themes which are either overtly presented in the songs' music videos or are deliberately hidden behind strong and rich-worded lyrics and visual aspects of the videos which listeners and viewers need to fathom and unravel. Guided by Krim's music globalization-glocalization model, the table in the next page presents the identified themes after I examined selected hit singles' cognitive parameters such as language, topic, and context.

Table 2. RESULTS OF CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF SELECTED HIT SINGLES OF P-POP & T-POP GROUPS				
	PHILIPPINES		THAILAND	
	ALAMAT	SB19	4MIX	VYRA
SONG TITLE	<i>“Kasmala”</i>	<i>“What?”</i>	<i>“Y U Come Back?”</i>	<i>“Lyra”</i>
COGNITIVE PARAMETERS				
LANGUAGE	-Lyrics written in 7 regional languages -Employs a combination of easy- & hard-to-understand words	-Lyrics written in Filipino language with minimal English phrases -Employs metaphors & wordplay of Filipino & English words	-Lyrics written in Thai, English & Portuguese languages -Employs straightforward conversational lines with strong recall & gender-neutral words	-Lyrics written in Thai & English languages -Employs short & easy-to-understand lines in Thai language while presenting rap lyric phrases almost purely written in English
TOPIC	Boy-Meets-Girl	Individuality	Self-love	Love Confession
CONTEXT (Historical, Political & Sociocultural Aspects either presented in the music video or have influenced the production of single)	-Historical roots (Colonialism) -Anti-Asian Hate Campaign	-Political Issues (Red-Tagging) (Territorial Dispute) -Social inequality	-Gender Diversity, Equality, Neutrality, & Fluidity	-Women Empowerment

Looking into language as one of the cognitive parameters of subject pop hits, although both P-Pop and T-Pop artists are projected and marketed to penetrate the global pop market, how T-Pop companies produce songs that feature fusion of Thai and foreign languages like English and Latin speaks of their strong resolve to reach external markets and attract a considerable following overseas – a move that is reminiscent of K-Pop’s success story in penetrating the Western pop market. Meanwhile, despite expressing their aspirations of replicating the same global success being enjoyed by their counterparts, P-Pop songs were heavily and creatively written in vernacular languages with few lines written in English. This affirms not just P-Pop groups’ hopes of establishing a local following first and cementing their names in the local music industry before going global but also their

commitment of painting a picture of P-Pop music and Filipino culture that celebrate diversity, creativity, and cultural roots of its people.

In addition, it can be observed that while romance-themed songs remain the go-to choice for both P-Pop and T-Pop groups and their companies whose target audiences are the younger generation, pop music industries from the two (2) ASEAN member-states have definitely ridden the popularity of self-care and self-empowerment songs which have been lately also the subject of famous K-Pop artists' hits making big waves globally. With the pandemic causing and exacerbating younger generation's psychological distress, anxiety, depression, and lack of self-esteem, subject P-Pop and T-Pop groups provide music that serves as an oasis for listeners looking for someone who can pat their backs and be a source of daily self-affirmation.

Meanwhile, further subjecting the identified pop songs to context analysis reveals historical, sociocultural, and political motivations either behind the creation of said hits or serve as the exact message embedded in them. In the K-Pop arena, while we heard of famous pop songs being used by the South Korean government to either project power or call for unification with its neighbor North Korea, K-Pop music itself is generally not politically charged (Vandenberg, 2020) with the K-Pop industry often viewed as an unofficial branch of the Korean state (Keating, 2020). The K-Pop glocalization experiences of Filipino and Thai idols, however, paint a different story. Proving that what you hear is not sometimes what you get; it can be observed that while P-Pop songs under review speak of issues that youth find relatable like

infatuation and boosting self-esteem, P-Pop idols and their companies surprise viewers of their music videos with blast from the past historical and cultural narratives one can often find in *Kasaysayan* textbooks. Not just they elevate pop music's reputation from being unfairly judged as a mere fluff music fun to dance to into a precious diary of every Filipino's rich roots, P-Pop groups prove that politically-charged music releases have a room across the "popsphere". While subtly throwing a shade against those in power, subject P-Pop hits signal shift in the nature of Pinoy protest songs from embracing indigenously grounded forms after the "*kundiman*" era as stressed by Lontoc (2019) into penetrating the colorful, playful, and glamorized world of mainstream pop music. Not just subject P-Pop hits normalize the sight of idols with feast-for-the-eyes visuals singing and dancing to the groove of lively love anthems with political undertones touching issues like censorship and unresolved disputes, these songs give today's brand of Filipino pop music a major rebranding from what Gabrillo (2018) tagged as once unsophisticated and highly commercialized hits into moving and socially relevant pop anthems of the 21st century.

Meantime, this also holds true for T-Pop idols who prove that love and self-worth songs can become politicized. They may not outrightly put into words their political and sociocultural outcry but how they play with visual and symbolic elements slaps viewers with the fact that one cannot tune out the sociopolitical realities piling up in everyday news. It is also worth highlighting that how T-Pop idols and their companies craft their songs based on their advocacies gives the country's pop music a new face. For instance, we have seen how subject T-Pop groups' call for gender diversity and equality translate into carefully-crafted hits that embody and echo

gender fluidity in music, further breaking gender stereotypes deeply embedded in popular songs. In a country where freedom of expression remains a hot political topic that has put many in jail and where conservatives consistently play the morality card when dealing with sexuality, T-Pop groups give music consumption a new meaning – that listening and singing along to their songs make the voices of their followers count in more ways than one.

Chapter V

CULTURAL IDENTITIES IN THE ASEAN THRU P-POP AND T-POP MUSIC AS GLOCAL EXPRESSIONS

With experiencing music serving as a vehicle for identity construction, reiteration, and negotiation as cited by Frith (1996), the music-making experiences and the historical, sociocultural, and political drivers that shaped subject P-Pop and T-Pop groups' and their talent companies' K-Pop glocalization approaches in producing their selected hit singles mirror these actors' cultural identities. By taking some pages out of the tried-and-tested K-Pop idol formula book and internalizing and indigenizing these foreign influences to suit artists' musicality and style, satisfy local audiences' preferences, and adapt to social environment, this research painted a picture of P-Pop and T-Pop music as glocal cultural expressions that reflect subject pop groups' cultural identities in the face of globalization. These cultural identities reflected in the music-making and K-Pop glocalization experiences of subject pop groups and their talent companies are presented in this chapter.

Making Traditional Culture Pop

The music-making experiences of P-Pop and T-Pop idol groups and their talent companies affirm said actors' high regard for their traditional culture. An element rarely injected in usual K-Pop music hits, P-Pop and T-Pop acts are taking things back to their cultural roots by infusing traditional cultural elements with modern addictive beats and colorful pop aesthetics which complete the K-Pop branding.

Relatedly, a careful look on the music videos of subject P-Pop groups reveals how incorporating traditional culture to modern pop music elements has revolutionized today's brand of pop music in the Philippines which for decades fully embraced and replicated Western and Korean pop music elements. While highlighting elements that set them apart from their Korean counterparts whose footsteps they are following, P-Pop idol groups' overt display of Filipino material culture as seen in subject hit singles' videos opens their young Filipino audiences' consciousness on their rich historical and traditional past often found and discussed in history books and classes. By proudly sporting traditional costumes of ethnolinguistic groups like *bahag*, flexing some *tinikling* footwork, playing *arnis*, and incorporating sounds produced by traditional instruments such as *agong* and *hegalong*, P-Pop idols and their talent companies more importantly prove that the concept of folk symbolism has a room in the mainstream pop music industry and should not just be limited to formal cultural shows and occasions. Through proudly exhibiting heritage-filled aesthetics in their music videos which audiences – who are long exposed to the colorful, glamorized, and modern world of K-Pop and Western music – often dismissed as too local, too old-fashioned, and too “*jejemon*”, P-Pop idols and their talent companies refute colonial-construct mentality that belittles traditional Filipino culture as too backward and primitive to be reimagined and celebrated in mainstream pop culture.

The same is true with subject T-Pop music videos which at first look may have completely embraced K-Pop's trademark aesthetics from idols' make-up and their colorful and bright costumes to striking visual elements and concepts of their music videos, but upon careful examination showcase Thailand's traditional culture. It may

not have obviously displayed Thai's traditional ensembles and golden headdress being donned during Thai cultural shows, subject T-Pop groups give viewers a touch of traditional Thai culture by emphasizing hand and arm movements in their dance routines which in traditional Thai dance are important in giving justice to the roles the performers are portraying and essential in establishing an emotional connection with the audiences. Moreover, given Thailand's high regard for its traditional music, it is not surprising why Thai talent companies decided to infuse melodic sound produced by their country's traditional instruments *khaen* and *pin* as backbone of subject tracks' sound while marrying it with modern hip hop beats to increase said songs' danceability. As a whole, the T-Pop groups and their talent companies' localization strategies speak of said actors' recognition on the importance of incorporating traditional elements of performing arts when creating new music to preserve Thailand's traditional cultural values while keeping themselves unique in order to make a name for themselves in a highly-Koreanized international music scene.

Celebrating Diversity thru Pop Music

While subject pop groups and their talent companies from the two (2) ASEAN member-states differently approach K-Pop glocalization, the brands of pop music resulting from the localization of said global cultural product both provide a slice of the diverseness of subject actors and the society where they grew up. This notion of diversity can be gleaned from the language used in composing the lyrics of the song down to the concepts being embraced by artists in their selected hit singles under review.

For instance, the concept of diversity has been made more pronounced by Alamat with its drive to normalize multilingualism in Filipino mainstream music long dominated by songs written in Tagalog and English. Although the local music industry is no stranger to songs written in regional languages, the popularity of these hits has been limited to their respective local provinces given language barriers and failure to secure enough airtime in radio and television music programs whose primary target audiences are young people exposed to the glamorous world of foreign pop music. Proving that multilingual songs can go head-to-head with mainstream pop hits written in foreign languages, Alamat is the first pop idol group in the country that has overtly magnified the linguistic diversity in the Philippines which according to Tupas (2020) has been sidelined and neglected due to colonialism, eventual institutionalization of bilingual education in English and Filipino, and prevailing systemic structures and ideologies that favor the use of colonial language as lingua franca (p. 3).

Relatedly, Alamat's promotion of the country's linguistic realities marks today's idol groups' baby steps towards molding P-Pop music to be reflective of the country's cultural diversity. By showcasing seven (7) Philippine languages out of the more than 100 languages being spoken across the archipelago, the P-Pop group veers away from the seeming homogenization of the Philippine culture brought by the homogenizing tendencies of the foreign music influences where P-Pop music draws inspiration from. With members clad in their respective regional attires belting out their assigned lines using their mother tongue, listeners and viewers get a glimpse of what it is like to be an Ilocano, Kapampangan, Bicolano, Waray-Waray, Ilonggo, and Bisaya – images and perceptions which the public often catches either during formal

cultural shows or through traveling to local destinations. Not just Alamat gives voice to diverse ethnolinguistic groups in the country through their music, ensuring that its culturally diverse members get the same number of lines to sing and same exposure in flexing the group they belong to has made the group's brand of P-Pop music as an instrument of debunking perceptions on cultural superiority of a certain ethnolinguistic group versus another. By showcasing seven (7) languages in one (1) song, Alamat's drive for multilingualism carves out an evolving niche in pop music making in the country that fosters unity in diversity, emphasizing that diverse Filipinos can understand each other despite their differing ethnolinguistic roots.

For its part, T-Pop hit singles particularly the one produced by 4MIX highlight gender diversity with said first LGBTQ+ pop group and its talent company slowly infusing the concept of gender fluidity in the pop music-making agenda. It is worthy to note that while the notion of gender diversity has been extensively promoted through the airing and export of Thai BL dramas, said concept has not been fully explored in Thai music. For a country whose popular songs affirm gender binary despite its roughly more than four (4) million nationals who identify themselves as members of the LGBTQ+ community (Phoonphongphiphat, 2020), carefully crafting songs - from the language it use, to the dance steps and movements idols have to perform, down to the genderless outfits they have to wear – to break gender constructs in music is both a creative and bold move for 4MIX and its talent company in advancing their call for gender diversity.

Significantly, more than just producing hit singles that echo stories revolving on gender diversity, behind 4MIX's debut is its cause of representing the LGBTQ+ community in a music industry that remains to be greatly shaped by traditional perceptions on gender role and sexuality which in the Thai society are equated to morality. Ironically, while Thailand has been advertised as a country with higher level of tolerance for the LGBTQ+ community, 4MIX seeks to redeem and repackage LGBTQ+ community members' image as individuals who take up space and whose voices are worth listening to – away from prevailing perceptions that treat them as merely a laughingstock. In this sense, T-Pop music then presents itself as a platform for advancing gender diversity that fosters tolerance and encourages greater discussion on the LGBTQ+ community issues and promoting an equitable society for them and their supporters.

Rise of Individualist Values in Traditional Collectivist Societies

Just like its East Asian neighbors, Southeast Asia is known to be a collectivist region shaped by philosophical traditions that give primacy to family, group, and society which it inherited and absorbed from early civilizations that set foot in the region (Layador, 2013). In fact, this very collectivist mindset is evident in contemporary Southeast Asia with the ASEAN regarding the values of collectivism, tolerance, social harmony, and solidarity as building blocks towards the genuine realization of the envisioned ASEAN Community (ASEAN Secretariat, 2020). With this, it comes as no surprise why the music-making experiences and glocalization drivers discussed in the previous chapters exhibit traces of the two (2) Southeast Asian countries' collectivist cultures.

For instance, the concept of collectivism can be observed from the moment idol groups SB19, Alamat, and Vyra were required to reside in one (1) house to live and train together to establish their chemistry and camaraderie for them to realize that they must perform as a group and not as soloists. Said concept is also evident on how SB19 and Alamat had to endure nth hours of training just to ensure synchrony in their dance moves and familiarization of formations and blocking to allow performers to show off how they move as a team. Aside from assigning each member with a specific role and responsibility to ensure smooth execution of performances, how SB19, Alamat, and Vyra were groomed under one (1) concept and sometimes even packaged to be identical with one another speaks of the idol groups' and their talent companies' regard for group harmony.

Moreover, the same collectivist nature is observable on the cognitive parameters of hit singles under review. While marketability is one factor that influenced how subject songs of 4MIX and Vyra were composed, ensuring that the lyrics of said T-Pop songs can be easily understood by their listeners says a lot on how the T-Pop talent companies value the voice of the listening public in the songs they are producing. Meanwhile, when it comes to topic and context as parameters, how P-Pop idol groups and their talent companies touched on collective history to stand against racial discrimination and colonial mentality is perceived to increase the audiences' sense of nationalism and their consciousness that they belong to a bigger community which needs their support to serve the interests of the majority.

While abovementioned observations affirm the collectivist nature of the Philippine and Thai societies just like the Korean culture, a closer look on the music-making experiences and motivations of subject pop groups behind the creation of their selected hit singles exhibits said actors' gradual recognition of individualism. It is worth noting that like famous K-Pop idol groups who have been little by little releasing hits highlighting individualist values as they expand their market in highly individualistic nations in the West, P-Pop and T-Pop groups and their talent companies have also been molding their music as a platform that encourages listeners to embrace their individuality. Relatedly, although how the subject Southeast Asian actors followed the footsteps of their Korean counterparts in forming idol groups instead of debuting solo artists reflects their collectivist tendencies, it is worth highlighting that T-Pop group 4MIX was formed to promote individuality while P-Pop group SB19 committed to celebrate self-empowerment and uniqueness.

For instance, although its members' prowess in dancing and their established fanbase even before their debut as an idol group were the primary recruitment criteria for 4MIX, their varying sexual orientation convinced the group's talent company to explore individualist values as concepts of the T-Pop group and the songs they will be releasing. Before the T-Pop group's debut, members were trained and conditioned not to chase perfection in performing dance routines with their talent company reminding them to just be themselves and enjoy their performance. They also shied away from the usual K-Pop positioning tradition with the belief that such practice would just limit the capabilities of each member and would shape his image into someone he is not. More than just debuting and performing as a group, members were groomed based on the mindset that each of them has something

unique to offer to the Thai entertainment industry even outside 4MIX and as individual artists.

For their part, while SB19 was initially formed to embody the fusion of Korean-Philippine culture, the group members realized that they had to move away from their K-Poppish image, be unique, and produce anthems that would revolve on individualist values which their young listeners exposed to Western culture would be happy to hear. They may have trained and practiced for long hours to perfect group choreographies and vocal blending, still, SB19 recognizes each member's distinct talent and capability and injects these unique features in the production of their hit singles. For example, they went beyond their comfort zones by not sticking to the what-sells formula and allowed their creative juices to flow in composing their selected hit single as manifested by the meaningful, rich-worded lyrics and witty wordplay far from the easy-to-comprehend lines of mainstream pop songs. To further highlight each member's uniqueness, the group explored and mashed up various genres based on the voice quality and musical style of each member and came up with different storylines to match the mood of each part of the song and the personality of every idol.

Significantly, a careful look on the cognitive parameters of songs under review reveals individualist themes explored by SB19, Alamat, 4MIX and, Vyra in producing some of their most successful hits. Not just these were written using singular and first-person point of view, these songs serve as anthems of individualist values leaving their listeners and viewers with "You do you!" mantra. Take for instance,

SB19's single speaks of self-love, self-empowerment, and raising one's flag – or celebrating one's unique self – despite people belittling and pulling you down. Meantime, while the concept of Alamat's music video deals with the Philippines' dark historical past, the lyrics of the group's single were written in such a way that these highlight every Filipino's distinct ability and strength, thus, promoting self-esteem and self-worth. On the other hand, 4MIX's and Vyra's subtle call for gender diversity and equality as observed in the lyrics of their respective hits resonates individualist undertones as the T-Pop groups advocate individualist values like autonomy and self-determination. For instance, along with donning androgynous outfits that highlight the group members' assertion of their freedom to choose who they want to be, the 4MIX's single under review talks about being independent with the song's persona proudly saying he has taken control of his life and now living by his own rules. For its part, Vyra's declaration of its readiness to conquer the stage upholds women empowerment anchored on acknowledging women's right for self-determination and their individual capacities in pursuing their passion and living their lives outside traditional gender stereotypes.

Based on the foregoing, the fact that no pop group purely exudes collectivist ideals with all subject idol groups' music-making experiences exhibiting traces of individualist values suggests subject P-Pop and T-Pop groups' drive to strike a balance between preserving their traditional collectivist culture while staying receptive of individualist themes prevailing in modern society heavily influenced by Western values. This then shapes P-Pop and T-Pop music's image as glocal expressions that celebrate fusion of individualist and collectivist cultures.

K-Pop Glocalization as an Agent of Decolonization and Regionalization

The results of this research suggest that music glocalization is more than just a marketing strategy which initial resources presented in the literature review purely equate to business and money-making schemes. While it is true that pop entertainment agencies in the Philippines and Thailand draw inspiration from K-Pop music's success story to make it big in their highly-competitive local music industries, these talent companies and their pop idol groups – through their motivations and localization practices as reflected in their music-making experiences – give glocalization a bigger and deeper purpose that shapes how said actors reiterate and renegotiate their cultural identities both in the local and international music scenes.

For instance, this study emphasized how music glocalization is an agent of decolonization. Going through the music-making experiences of subject pop idol groups, we have learned how the likes of Alamat molded its subject hit single into an anthem that debunks colonial constructs like cultural inferiority and racism and instead redeems early Filipinos' image as capable, resilient, and a force to be reckoned with. Not just today's dose of pop music echoes decolonization theme, it is also worth highlighting that even how subject hit singles were conceptualized, crafted, and produced challenges the Western formula of pop music making that influences K-Pop music creation. The mere use of native tongue and even regional languages that often do not make the cut in mainstream pop music says a lot about subject actors' either deliberate or unconscious move to decolonize their culture and identity through their songs. The same is true with the display of material culture through folk symbolism from flashing cultural artifacts, sporting moves with traces of

traditional elements of dance, and incorporating indigenous sounds produced by traditional musical instruments. Aside from reclaiming and pronouncing their indigenous cultures and identities, aforesaid glocalization techniques run counter to Western pop music's preference for modern and aesthetic-filled visual contents which has also been absorbed by K-Pop music creators.

Creative expressions exhibited by subject P-Pop and T-Pop groups and their talent companies in the hit singles under review also reflect decolonization moves through music. Although it is true that creativity is often measured based on Western concepts of originality and individuality, how subject actors capitalize on their creative juices from songwriting, to conceptualization, down to music production affirms how collectivist cultures value creativity's social functions and usefulness more than just novelty. While it is true that the way the four (4) hit singles under review were written to highlight every member's uniqueness and individuality, the concepts portrayed in their music videos do not give the spotlight to a specific member who stands out but instead showcase how acceptance and acknowledgment of diversity contributes to advancing pressing societal issues like cultural empowerment in the case of P-Pop idols and gender equality when it comes to T-Pop groups. This affirms the notion on how the Asians' concept of creativity focuses more on the social and moral contributions an individual can impart to the society (Rudowicz and Yue, 2000 and Niu and Sternberg, 2006 as cited in Shao et al., 2019) rather than achieving one's own success.

Significantly, abovementioned creative processes reflect how K-Pop glocalization in this study facilitates decolonization as P-Pop and T-Pop actors move away from the homogenization tendencies associated to Western pop music that is now also observed in K-Pop idol and music production. Although adoption of the renowned K-Pop idol formula by non-Korean actors purportedly leads to McDonaldization of local music industries as entertainment companies tend to also copy the we-sell-what-sells formula, the subjects localized and refined K-Pop as a global cultural product in such a way that it creates a brand of pop music that exudes global appeal while celebrating the diverseness of Filipino and Thai culture. As mentioned in the earlier part of the study, it is the diverseness of Southeast Asia as a region that makes the idea of homogenization of Southeast Asian pop music farfetched as it gives both P-Pop and T-Pop music a heterogenous character. Relatedly, from drawing inspiration from a brand of East Asian music that is itself a product of glocalization of Western pop music culture, Filipino and Thai people's openness to K-Pop phenomenon and their resolve to indigenize this foreign music influence to innovate their local music affirms Filipino and Thai agency and upholds diverseness of the region, thus, advancing *Asianization*.

On the other hand, the interfaces between K-Pop idol and music producers and their counterparts from Southeast Asia make the process of glocalization in this study as an agent of regionalization. Notwithstanding the roles played by the governments of subject P-Pop and T-Pop actors so as that of their Korean counterparts and subject idol groups' fandoms which this study did not cover, we have learned how interaction between non-state actors such as Korean entertainment agencies and talent companies and idol groups from Southeast Asia

has helped in the rebranding and promotion of today's new wave of P-Pop and T-Pop music. A glimpse of the music-making experiences of subject pop groups provides us a picture of Korean talent companies not just as consultants of Filipino and Thai talent agencies but also as primary drivers of music glocalization in the region; take for example how SB19's Korean handlers subjected the P-Pop group to K-Pop's trademark incubator training system to produce a pop group that embodies Phil-Korean cultural relations. How subject idol groups were trained, groomed, and promoted to local and international audiences the way their K-Pop counterparts were molded, packaged, and promoted is indeed a product of various level and modes of interactions among Korean talent companies and entertainment agencies and pop idol groups from Southeast Asia.

Beyond the creation of P-Pop and T-Pop music as glocal cultural expressions, the sharing of expertise and resources of K-Pop music and idol creators with their counterparts from Southeast Asia and the gradual flow of P-Pop and T-Pop music in the ASEAN region as these new breed of pop groups continue to make a name in the international shores facilitate regionalization. Notwithstanding the business aspect of K-Pop glocalization, the study painted a picture of ASEAN regionalization beyond the economic, political, and security lenses which the regionalization concept has been most of the time framed after. These interfaces take the form of intra-nation state to intra-nation state strata of interactions if we are going to use Dr. Sylvano Mahiwo's meta-nation state model with regionalization being spearheaded and driven by non-state actors who carry with them the DNAs of their respective countries. While contributing to the success of today's new brand of pop music, glocalization in this study establishes rapport and further forges extra-regional

integration through cultural and social interfaces among K-Pop music producers and the region's talent companies, idol groups, and pop music consumers. While it is true that regionalization in this sense aids the promotion of P-Pop and T-Pop music to reach the same popularity being enjoyed by K-Pop music both in the regional and global music scene, music glocalization transforms P-Pop and T-Pop music as catalysts of regional integration that foster appreciation of ASEAN diversity despite a highly Koreanized music industry in the region.

K-Pop glocalization then in this study emphasizes two (2) significant processes which are vital in ASEAN community-building. Notably, a flashback of ASEAN's humble beginnings highlights that while post-colonial Southeast Asia's decolonization paved the way for the rise of independent nations, said development along with the volatile Cold War environment made the need for regional cooperation more pronounced. For its part, this study affirmed the correlation between decolonization and regionalization in contemporary Southeast Asia. While music glocalization highlights subject groups' efforts to decolonize the mind through their songs, localizing something global like K-Pop to preserve their local culture while moving away from colonial constructs advances regionalization. After all, not just P-Pop and T-Pop actors get to produce new waves of pop music that resonate ASEAN diversity, but it is also worthy to note that the very pop music creation process invites and facilitates sociocultural interfaces which can enhance regional relations between ASEAN member-states and extra-regional actors and in the long run may further open or give birth to new avenues for regionalization.

Chapter VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A closer look on the various music-making experiences of P-Pop groups Alamat and SB19, T-Pop groups 4MIX and Vyra, and their talent companies in producing their selected hit singles reveals valid reasons why they should not be dismissed as mere replicas of their K-Pop counterparts. While the review of the evolution of P-Pop and T-Pop music suggests how these brands of music trace their roots to local artists imitating Western acts in the 1960s based on the accounts of Wuttipong (2011) and Gabrillo (2018), today's breed of K-Pop-inspired pop groups and their talent companies from the Philippines and Thailand recognize the dire need to be different and unique to survive in a more highly-competitive music industry now compared to six (6) decades ago. As a K-Pop fanatic for 12 long years, who witnessed the demise of many K-Pop-inspired Filipino acts in the local scene, this research made me figured out that what makes P-Pop music different from T-Pop music, what set these two (2) apart from K-Pop music, and what keeps these new brands of pop music thriving in a highly-Koreanized music industry is not just the new and unique sound they offer to their audiences but also lies on how the idol groups and their talent companies keep their music relatable by indigenizing the K-Pop idol formula while upholding historical, sociocultural, and political realities as reflected by their K-Pop glocalization techniques in music making.

For instance, although P-Pop and T-Pop groups were trained based on the ABCs of the tried-and-tested K-Pop idol formula, one can easily spot differences on how the four (4) groups and their talent companies approached K-Pop glocalization by looking into how members of the pop groups were recruited, trained, and groomed as idols. Relatedly, while P-Pop idols were recruited based on skills and fluency in their native tongue, which are crucial criteria in producing idol groups that signify the Philippines' diverse cultural roots; the recruitment of T-Pop idols based on popularity and skills affirms Wuttipong's (2011) observation on Thai entertainment agencies' continuous patronage of "celebrity culture" in producing easier-to-market pop artists. These differences are further reinforced by the mindset instilled to then idol hopefuls when subjected to months of rigorous training. While Filipino idol hopefuls were trained to perfectly execute complex choreographies and sing in harmony just like their K-Pop counterparts, expectations for Thai idols to flawlessly perform on stage as a group is not that high as they were groomed to offer various contents not only limited to musical performances. While P-Pop idol groups were molded and motivated to become flawless versatile performers, the debut of T-Pop groups was seemingly viewed by their members and talent companies as tickets to stardom. Meanwhile, when it comes to group concept and packaging, it is worth highlighting that while K-Pop companies dictate the character each K-Pop group member has to personify to perfectly embody the group's envisioned concept, their Filipino and Thai counterparts value each member's individuality and uniqueness, thus, packaging P-Pop and T-Pop groups as idols who celebrate diversity.

When it comes to pop music making, snippets of how subject pop groups produced their respective hit singles present their varying levels of involvement in the

music-making process which affect how messages of their songs reach their intended audiences. For instance, the liberty enjoyed by P-Pop idols in composing and producing their hit singles says a lot on how their songs reflect their creative juices, first-hand experiences, and personal take on issues being raised in their hit singles. On the other hand, how T-Pop companies seemingly took full control of the whole production process of identified T-Pop songs just like their Korean counterparts says a lot on how subject T-Pop songs, though reflecting the image and concept embraced by the performers, were packaged and relayed to idol groups' listeners based on the direction of entertainment agencies highly dependent on the preferences of their target audiences. This explains why P-Pop groups are more likely to offer thought-provoking music videos unlike T-Pop groups whose talent companies' resolve of sticking to a winning-and-selling formula leaves them with not enough space for experimentation. This just supports Messerlin and Shin's (2017) argument that one cannot explore the process of K-Pop glocalization without looking at the process using the business lens.

On the other hand, while it is true that subject pop groups and their talent companies carry out glocalization of K-Pop elements based on the concept idol groups embody, a careful examination of the music videos and cognitive parameters of P-Pop and T-Pop groups' selected hit singles unveils diverse historical, sociocultural, and political roots which have shaped the consciousness of the pop idols and their talent companies. Although their singles revolve on relatable themes like romance and self-love, idol groups and their talent companies surprisingly pulled off who-would-have-thought concepts as their music videos were presented to reflect deeper and serious messages rooted from historical, sociocultural, and political

realities either they have grown up to or have been currently facing. Take for example how P-Pop hit singles under review showcase folk symbolism with the overt use of material culture, flexing of Philippine languages, and clear reference of monumental yet barely remembered historical events as well as social commentaries consistent with the P-Pop groups' aim of celebrating Filipino cultural roots through their music. For a country which may have already gained independence after four (4) centuries of colonialism but whose people are continuously haunted by unwanted remnants of the past like racial discrimination as they remain to be judged based on the standards of their country's once colonial masters, it is understandable why anthems of P-Pop groups echo love for one's cultural roots and a tribute to Filipinos' indomitable spirit despite all odds. For their part, along with incorporating markers of Thai culture like elements of Thai traditional music and dance, T-Pop groups and their companies subtly embed in their songs their call for gender diversity, equality, and inclusivity using visuals that flash colors of the Pride flag, sporting unisex and androgynous outfits, and grooving into gender neutral dance moves. Relatedly, T-Pop idols and their talent companies capitalize on contemporary sociocultural and political issues besetting Thailand particularly about hurdles towards advancing LGBTQ+ rights and women empowerment. While T-Pop idols have been amassing followers from other countries which warmly welcome these social issues, how these socially-relevant themes are not that pronounced in the lyrics and story plot of subject T-Pop songs can be attributed to how freedom of expression in Thailand remains a hot political topic and how their society – despite projected by its government to be welcoming to members of the LGBTQ+ community and actively promotes gender equality – remains to equate one's morality based on sexuality. As a whole, how subject P-Pop and T-Pop idol groups glocalize K-Pop music influences

to produce socially relevant songs that possess more than just entertainment value clearly contradicts how the K-Pop idol formula paints pop music's image as generally apolitical as stressed by Keating (2020) and Vandenberg (2020).

Making sense of the music-making experiences of subject pop groups and the drivers that influence their K-Pop glocalization techniques, I came up with the realization that beyond P-Pop and T-Pop music's showcase of their respective traditional cultures and celebration of diversity lies the fusion of individualist and collectivist values of P-Pop and T-Pop groups and their talent companies. How they deal with issues about their traditional culture and collective history resonates how they continue to embrace collectivist notions of "We", social harmony, and solidarity while their call to celebrate uniqueness and self-worth echoes Western-introduced individualist concepts of "Me, myself, and I", freedom, and self-determination. Recognizing the success of individuality-themed hit singles of subject pop groups in said traditional collectivist countries, it cannot be discounted that P-Pop and T-Pop music as glocal cultural expressions mirror how contemporary Philippine and Thai societies reiterate and renegotiate their identities through continuous preservation of their traditional collectivist culture while being receptive of individualist values prevailing in the modern times.

With all the established music glocalization trends and drivers mentioned, I believe this research was able to draw a clearer picture of how creative industries in Southeast Asia particularly in the Philippines and Thailand bring K-Pop music influences into a new cultural context that revolutionizes not just their own brands of

pop music but also allows P-Pop and T-Pop groups and their talent companies to reiterate and renegotiate their cultural identities. Putting in mind Frith's (1996) music-and-identity notion that regards identity construction as a continuous process of "becoming", the music-making experiences narrated in this research affirm the subject pop groups' and their talent companies' diverse and ever-evolving cultural identities which explain why K-Pop glocalization trends differ from one setting to another. Notwithstanding the varying marketing strategies of these pop groups' talent companies, the experiences, the words, and letters put together to create the four (4) hit singles of P-Pop and T-Pop idol groups walked the readers through the historical, sociocultural, and political shifts the Filipino and Thai societies and their local music industries have gone through ever since the 1500s which have continuously shaped how subject actors glocalize the best-selling K-Pop idol formula today.

Significantly, not just the varying K-Pop glocalization trends in the Philippines and Thailand affirm the diverseness of said countries, these different pop music-making approaches also reinforce Filipino and Thai agency in a highly-Koreanized Asian music industry. Debunking claims that the adoption of the K-Pop idol formula by non-Korean talent companies leads to the McDonaldization of their local music industries (Howard, 2014 as cited in Negus, 2015), the brands of today's P-Pop and T-Pop music present themselves as modern-day expressions of local genius rather than mere imitation and pure offshoot of the K-Pop global phenomenon. For instance, while absorbing some of the ABCs of the tried-and-tested K-Pop idol formula, P-Pop and T-Pop groups and their talent companies cast away doubts on the possible homogenization and deindividuation of idol groups as they instead encourage creativity while staying true to their local values and cultural roots in pop music

making. With historian H.G. Quattrich Wales (1951) saying, ““Local genius gives direction to evolution” (cited in Acharya, 2016, p. 11), the idea of local genius in this research helped me account for differences in K-Pop glocalization processes so as the evolution of brands of pop music in the subject countries.

Aside from painting P-Pop and T-Pop music as a testament to Filipino and Thai creative industries’ resolve to embrace what’s pop while retaining a touch of localness in their music, my research also shed light on music glocalization as an agent of decolonization that advances Asianization. While it cannot be discounted that infusing something local and traditional to their hit singles could be part of subject pop groups and their talent companies’ gimmick and strategy to be relevant in their respective local music industries and create noise as they penetrate the international music scene, how they carried out glocalization of East Asian music culture to free their identities from the clutches of colonial constructs and stereotypes is a significant finding that could add up to existing literature on decolonization in modern-day Asia being spearheaded by creative industries. Although it is understandable why this decolonization theme is more pronounced in P-Pop music with the Philippines’ colonial history, T-Pop music also affirms the drive of Thailand, despite not falling into the hands of Western powers decades ago, to always promote and preserve national culture in creating new music that is acceptable by both classical and popular audiences. Just like how Korean music creators gave Western music influences a Korean flavor and packaged it into what it is known today as K-Pop music, my research highlighted how music presents itself as a non-violent tool in decolonizing the mind and celebrating local culture while promoting innovation. Afterall, what our previous lessons on Indianization of Southeast Asia

taught us, which is also applicable to today's Koreanization phenomenon, is that deep cultural penetration happens when being pursued through peaceful and non-political means.

On the other hand, more than just touching on Asianization of pop music culture, my research also contributed to Aseanology as this could add up to existing literature on ASEAN regionalism but this time with a focus on the role being played by non-state actors in regionalization. Not just my research depicted the music making and glocalization experiences of P-Pop and T-Pop groups, it also showcased how said brands of pop music are results of interfaces among K-Pop music and idol creators so as their counterparts and subject pop groups from the two (2) ASEAN member-states. Although the interactions did not happen in nation-state level and were not carried out by state actors, these artistic and cultural exchanges remain instrumental in advancing regionalization as these do not only enable subject creative industries to learn from the successes of K-Pop music and strive to replicate same level of popularity said East Asian music enjoyed globally but also help foster a deeper sense of understanding between ASEAN and its extra-regional partner South Korea in a bigger picture.

Relatedly, along with these webs of interactions and relations between subject ASEAN member-states and ASEAN extra-regional partner, the gradual flow of P-Pop and T-Pop music in the ASEAN region following the growing popularity of these brands of pop music in the international music scene opens more doors for *Aseanization* through pop music that may contribute to the full realization of an

envisioned ASEAN Community. It is worth noting here that Aseanization in this sense does not equate to simplification of the various doses of pop music from the 10 ASEAN member-states into a single brand and sound of pop music which may run counter to ASEAN's vow of respecting and celebrating diversity in the region. Aseanization in this research is instead anchored on how ASEAN member-states' people's love for pop music and the significant role played by this form of art in their daily lives can bring them together, facilitating people-to-people connectivity while transcending language and cultural barriers.

Significantly, while I showcased how subject pop groups have been wearing their national pride on their sleeves, my research raised the opportunity for ASEAN member-states to capitalize on their vibrant pop music scenes in advancing Aseanization which can help in turning the vision of a creative and innovative ASEAN – as cited in the ASEAN Sociocultural Community Blueprint 2025 – into a reality. For instance, there is an opportunity for ASEAN member-states' governments to support and provide their local music industries with a thriving space outside their countries, making them more visible in the ASEAN pop market and even beyond the region. Notwithstanding the contributions of the annual ASEAN Music Showcase Festivals featuring the region's traditional and contemporary music and other artistic treasures in showcasing thriving pop music scenes from ASEAN member-states, there is a greater need to open more avenues that can further foster people-to-people linkages aimed at instilling in the region's people a deeper sense of belonging and community while celebrating diversity through music. Today's vibrant fandom generation and the endless possibilities being offered by the digital space can provide alternative platforms for ASEAN to put the spotlight on today's breed of pop

music artists in the region, increasing people's awareness not just on these pop artists' potentials in going global but also on the diverse doses of pop music culture in the ASEAN as can be gleaned from their unique music-making experiences. To be able to paint a clearer picture of today's pop music culture in the ASEAN in other platforms and for these possibilities to materialize and serve their purpose of facilitating Aseanization and community building, it cannot be discounted that a lot of research works has to be done in exploring the region's pop music scenes grounded on each ASEAN member-state's local roots and away from the K-Pop lens.

I am then in high hopes that this research on K-Pop glocalization has been able to provide snippets of the ever-evolving pop music scenes in the Philippines and Thailand, present a slice of the two (2) countries' culturally diverse pop culture in the face of globalization not to mention Koreanization, showcase decolonization efforts spearheaded by creative industries that facilitate Asianization, and emphasize how thriving pop music scenes from ASEAN member-states can serve as platforms and catalysts of further regionalization and Aseanization which are vital in the fulfillment of ASEAN community-building endeavors.

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APPENDIX A

“WHAT?”

SB19



Source: SB19 Official. (2021, March 09). SB19 'What?' Official MV [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAWw-qrSnPs>

LYRICS

Nagsimula na pero wala na 'kong balak na tapusin
'Di ibig sabihin 'pag 'di tinapos, ako'y hihinto na rin
Alam ko naman na 'di ako'ng pinaka ano? Magaling
Got no Biz with all of you please. Destiny's I'll be better and...

Lahat ng aking basura
Pupulutin, laging dala
Kahit san pa 'ko magpunta
Lapat sa lupa aking mga paa
Mahiwaga, bawat nakasarang bintana
Sakin dati, lahat ngayo'y nagbubukas
(Oh whoa oh oh)
Daming sakuna, 'di ko ininda
Andito na 'ko, sa wakas!
What?

'Di na bala para iangat ang bandera
Bara na sa puso nyo na ang tatama
Ama! Salamat at ikaw ang agimat
Bawat banat, iwagayway mo ang watawat
Wha-wha-wha-wha-what? Watawat
Wha-wha-wha-wha-what? Watawat
'Di na magpapa-what? Paawat
Iwawagayway ang watawat

Pare-parehas lang tayong may pagkakaiba diba?
Ika nila, ibang mundo nakikita niya
Mabuting iba, di' gaya nila
Pikit ang mata, ang tama, wala. Ahhh?
20 – 20, paulit-ulit
Intelihente, subalit ngunit
Basag ang lente, pinunit punit
Hinubog ng dalagang bakal, sirit tssss

Lahat ng aking basura
Pupulutin, laging dala
Kahit san pa 'ko magpunta
Lapat sa lupa aking... alam mo na

Maniwala, darating ang mga biyaya
Higit pa sa lahat lahat ng nawala
(Oh whoa oh oh)
Daming sakuna, 'di ko ininda
'Di titigil hanggang sa wakas
What?

'Di na bala para iangat ang bandera
Bara na sa puso nyo na ang tatama
Ama! Salamat at ikaw ang agimat
Bawat banat, iwagayway mo ang watawat
Wha-wha-wha-wha-what? Watawat
Wha-wha-wha-wha-what? Watawat
'Di na magpapa-what? Paawat
Iwawagayway ang watawat

'Wag n'yong sabihin sa'kin
Kung ano'ng aking dapat gawin
'Di naman kayo natutong makinig
(Oh whoa oh oh)
San man dalhin ng hangin
Ang aking yagit suot parin
Di mag papanggap na ako pero hindi

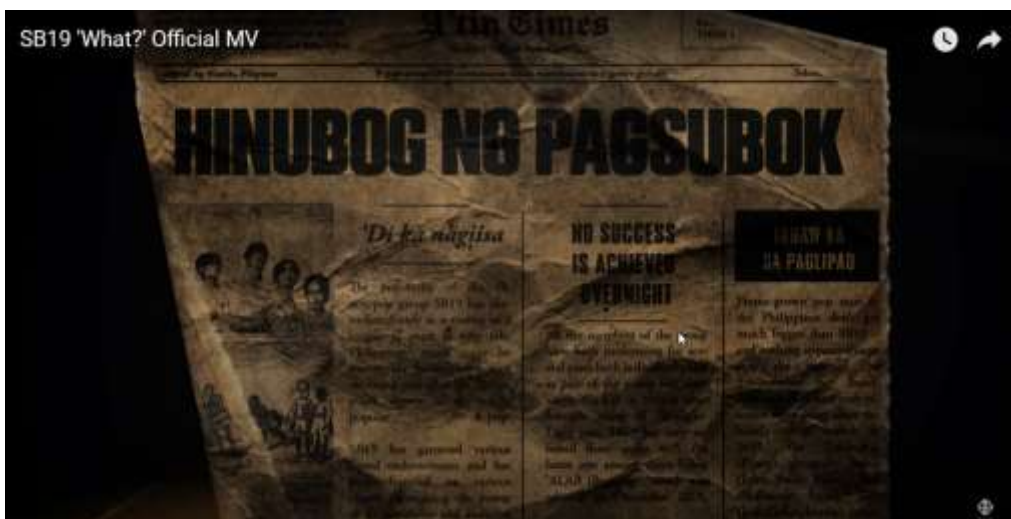
(Oh whoa oh oh)
Daming sakuna,'di ko ininda
Andito na 'ko sa wakas

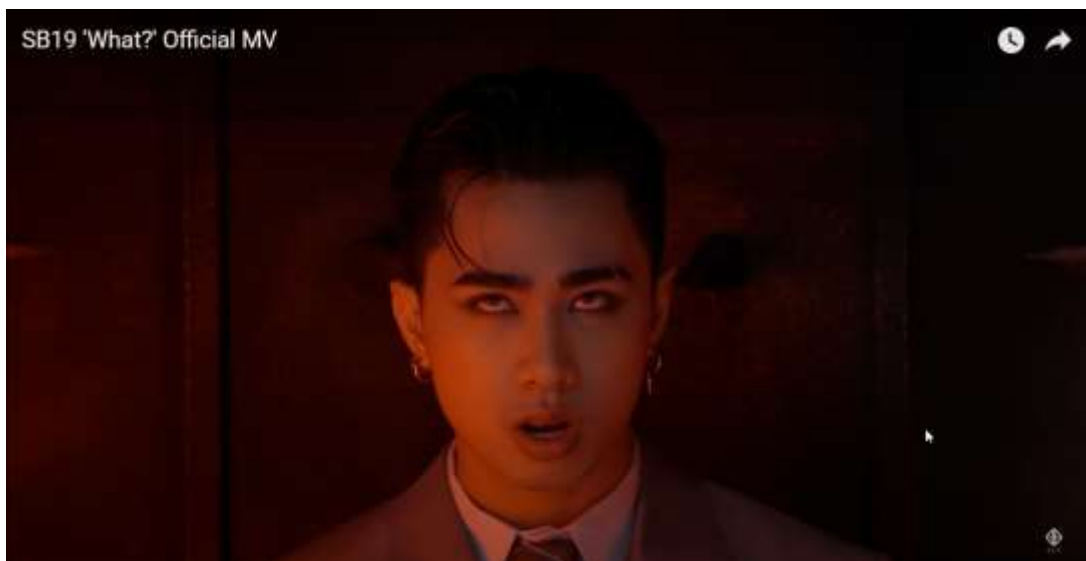
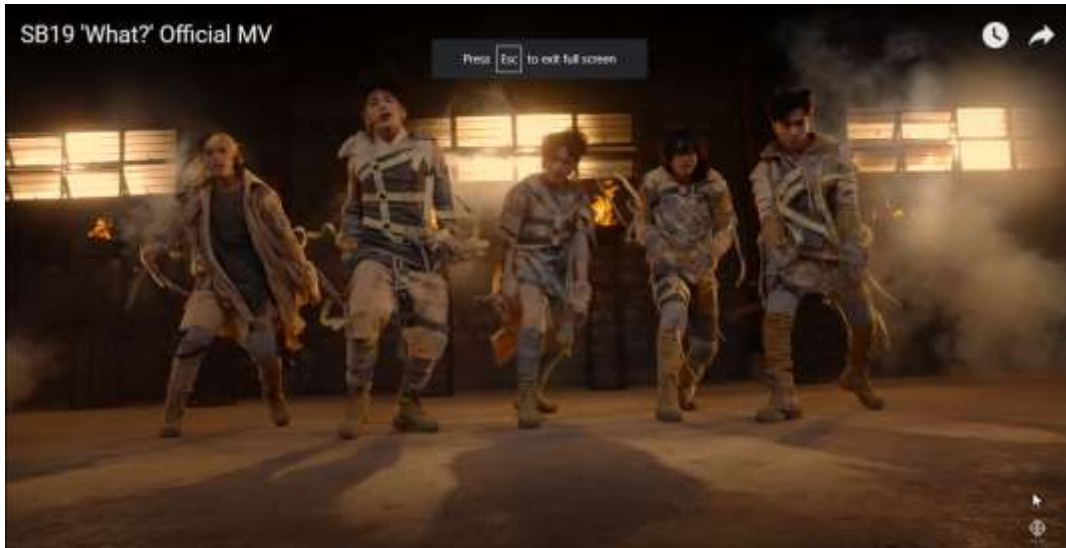
(Tapusin mo na, tapusin mo na)
'Di na bala para iangat ang bandera
Bara na sa puso nyo na ang tatama
'Di na bala para iangat ang bandera
Bara na sa puso nyo na ang tatama
Ama! Salamat at ikaw ang agimat
Bawat banat, iwagayway mo ang watawat
(Pilipinas!)

'Di na bala para iangat ang bandera
Bara na sa puso nyo na ang tatama
(Hallelujah!)
Ama! Salamat at ikaw ang agimat
Bawat banat, iwagayway mo ang watawat
(Sakalam!)

Wha-wha-wha-wha-what? Watawat
Wha-wha-wha-wha-what? Watawat
'Di na magpapa-what? Paawat
Iwawagayway ang watawat
(What?)

“WHAT?” MUSIC VIDEO STILLS





SB19 'What?' Official MV



SB19 'What?' Official MV



SB19 'What?' Official MV





Source: SB19 Official. (2021, March 09). SB19 'What?' Official MV [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAwW-qrSnPs>

TRANSCRIPTION OF VIDEOS

SHOWBT PHILIPPINES CEO CHARLES KIM SPECIAL MESSAGE

(00:04) Hello my name is Charles Kim and I'm the CEO of ShowBT Philippines. First, on behalf of ShowBT Philippines, I hope you are all healthy and safe. I would also like to thank all the people who continue to support us. In this video, please allow me to share with you our story and some of our current endeavors.

(00:37) ShowBT Philippines 2015. We are part of ShowBT Group headquartered in Korea and headed by our founder and chairman Robin Jung also known as Tatang Robin here in the Philippines. We started as an event management company back in 2015. Since then, we have been producing various events such as K-Pop concert and events where we promote culture collaboration between Korea and the Philippines.

(01:09) [Music]

(01:14) In 2016, we decided to venture into the entertainment business. In the same year, we launched an audition to search for potential talents who would then be the first idol groups in the Philippines trained using the K-Pop system.

(01:34) [Music]

(02:02) There were more than 300 people who auditioned and we have selected 30 talented Filipino boys and girls to be included in the training program. They were called Nara which in Korean means country and it's the national tree of the Philippines. Our initial goal was to produce and launch a boy group and a girl group at the same time.

(02:43) [Music]

(02:45) However due to some difficulties, we opted to start with the boy group first.

(02:53) [Music]

(03:02) We have selected three boys from the training program who we felt will be the next big talent in the Philippines. They were Sejun, Stell, and Josh. We then added Justin and Ken as we felt that they will complete the group and create the perfect singers.

(03:34) [Music]

(03:43) They do not even have a name by that time so Robin and I thought of how we should call them. We wanted a name to be simple, easy to remember, and something that would represent what we believe in – power to transform culture so we thought of using SB from our company name ShowBT and being in the IT telco business. Before, I

thought of incorporating both the country codes of Korea and the Philippines which is 82 and 63 and by adding the individual numbers 8 plus 2 plus 6 plus 3, we get the sum of 19. We then form the name SB19 which we know now.

(04:34) [Music]

(04:41) SB19 went through a lot of hardships in their initial years from their training up to their debut.

(04:51) [Music]

(05:03) There was a time that they started to have doubts about their future as a group. But with much patience and perseverance to pursue their passion and dreams, they were able to go through these difficult challenges and now they are one of the ambassadors of Pinoy pop or P-Pop to the world stage. Of course, this would not be possible without their fans and supporters. We thank you A'Tins. ShowBT Philippines is also the producer of the first and only Filipino Korean variety show "Aja Tayo." This is where we feature Filipino and Korean personalities, cultural exchanges, and a lot of fun and exciting challenges. We aired the seasons 1 and 2 in 2018 and 2019 respectively on TV 5. If you haven't seen it, we invite you to watch it on our official YouTube channel ShowBT Entertainment. This year, we will be releasing the third season of Aja Tayo on a new channel with a brand new cast including Robi Domingo, Donnie Pangilinan, Kristel Fulgar and Shine Kook. We will also be featuring lots of guests from Korea, of course SB19 will also be there. While we prepare for the comeback of SB19, release of the latest season of "Aja Aja Tayo" and produce the next big idol group this month, we will be launching the ShowBT Network to expand our ShowBT ecosystem. As we move to the digital world, we will feature passionate content creators covering various topics from Hallyu, Korean Wave, Pinoy pop culture, and more. We aim to provide inspiring and entertaining contents to a wider range of digital audiences. If you are a content creator and would like to share your passion to the world, we invite you to join our network. This is a new venture that we are excited to share with you and hope for your continued support.

(08:14) This concludes my message thank you for listening. Stay safe and healthy. Maraming salamat po.

(08:24) [Music]

Source: ShowBT Entertainment Philippines. (2021). SHOWBT Philippines CEO Charles Kim Special Message. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6e59MGWfnw0>

TITO ROBIN OF SB19 || ONE UP EXTRA

(00:01) [Music]

(00:12) Korean comedian turned entertainment star machine Song Han Geong is making waves once again. The CEO of ShowBT and producer of the first Filipino Korean celebrity variety game show “Aja Aja Tayo” is here to talk about what it takes to bring out the flavor of Pinoy Pop using his own experiences and bringing out the local unique style from his boys SB19.

(00:41) Hello, ladies and gentlemen. I really appreciate this as a very good opportunity to see you. My name is Song Han Geong. My English name is Robin and I am the producer of SB19 idol group and representative to ShowBT Korea and ShowBT Group CEO.

(01:05) Question: “Is there a special meaning to your name?”

(01:07) Robin John. That’s why I first time hear in the Philippines is a very famous talent Robin Padilla. That is why I chose Robin.

(01:19) Question: “Can you tell us more about ShowBT Corp?”

(01:20) ShowBT is already 16 years. Five years ago, I established in the Philippines the branch ShowBT Philippines. We you use TV5 to air our show titled “Aja Aja Tayo” while another is focusing is to make idol in the Philippines. SB19 is my first idol group.

(01:49) Who else do you idolize in the Philippines?

(01:50) My idol is Vice Ganda. Someday, I really really want to meet Vice Ganda. Boom Panis! I respect her talent!

(02:09) Question: “Why did you choose to branch out here in the Philippines?”

(02:11) This is a very important question to me. I really like Philippines. Philippine Army helped us. Really really thank you. Someday I have power, I will really really help them. You know in Korea, there are so many Filipinos working and have business. You know why the K-Pop now is very booming, because 500 years ago, 1,000 years ago, Koreans like to sing and dance. This is Korean tradition and I think so the Philippines is same. They have many talents, they always like to sing songs.

(03:01) Question: “What attributes of Filipinos made you want to work with them?”

(03:05) Only the Filipinos speak English in Asia. This is very big potential. Filipinos and Filipinas are very flexible. This is very good.

(03:14) Question: “What is your favorite Filipino food?”

(03:17) My favorite Filipino food is crispy pata. Very masarap. I love Halo-Halo since it has many ingredients.

(03:35) Question: “Do you find Filipinas beautiful?”

(03:39) Maganda, sobrang maganda. Pero sayang, I am already married.

(03:42) Question: “Can you share what was your strategy in choosing SB19?”

(03:44) They were still trainees, so our strategy was to bring Korean artists here so when they need some back up dancer or some collaboration. That time, we put SB19 members there. Main reason why Korean companies has some long periods of training, they want to check their personality and attitude first. So that time, we have to choose the right person. He believes that the main reason why SB19 now really get well known is they got long training period and through that period, they really try to get enough skill.

(05:02) Question: “What are the Filipino words you know?”

(05:04) Diretso, kaliwa, kanan...Isa, dalawa, tatlo...Noong una kitang nakita, nagustuhan na kita.

(05:15) Question: “Describe the characteristics of each member.”

(05:22) In Korean expressions “there is no finger that does not hurt after being bitten.” So I love every member. I have to respect each member and their character. Sejun, the leader, he really likes to make lyrics. Stell, he wants dancing and he practices a lot. He is focused. Ken, he tries his best to be a good dancer. Josh and Justin, too.

(06:40) Question: “What was your reaction when SB19 went viral?”

(06:49) So when it went viral, that time I was in Korea. Actually, I couldn’t sleep. I’m doubting if this is a dream or a reality.

(07:04) Question: “What is your response to people who criticize SB19?”

(07:06) SB19 is not enough still. From the dust, they haven’t shown their full potential yet. If they show their potential, maybe someday you’ll find a reaction to love and like them. So yes, support SB19, subscribe, and share, and like. Anything’s okay. Until we can have a concert in Philippine Arena. Okay? Please help me, help us, help our people, help SB19. Thank you very much. Maraming, maraming salamat po.

(08:10) [Music]

Source: One UP TV. (2020). Tito Robin of SB19 || ONE UP EXTRA. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_xNc05Kjb8

SB19 TALKS ABOUT 'WHAT?' | GMA DIGITAL SPECIALS

(00:00) PABLO: We want to celebrate the individuality of each person. Whoever you are, be proud of yourself. You'll do great if you become proud of yourself.

(00:09) All SB19 Members: Get in the zone, break! Hi, we are SB19!

(00:16) P: We really get nervous every time we step on stage. Especially whenever we release something new, like our single "What?" We're so excited to perform this in public. We never get complacent and think, "Oh, this song is going to make it." No. That's not our mindset. Our mindset is always, "How are we going to make this better?" "How are we going to make this the best?" To make sure we're always satisfied with what we've done. Our hope is always that people would like it. Our past releases, thankfully, people do like them. Our fans, and gradually, even our casual listeners really end up listening to our song.

(01:07): Question: How did you feel when you first heard the song "What?"

(01:08) STELL: Of course, we've gotten to hear Pablo's demo now and then but he would always tell us, "That's not it yet, I'm still gonna make some adjustments. Still need to have some parts edited, add a little bit here and there." But when the final mastered and mixed version finally came, when I heard it, I messaged Pablo right away. I told him, "Wow, I got goosebumps." Just listening to the song took my mind to different places. The first thing I thought was that there are so many people who would be able to appreciate and relate to this song.

(01:47) JUSTIN: I immediately imagined A'TIN's reaction. My first thought was, "How would they feel when they hear this music?" Because the intro alone made my hairs stand up. What more for the fans who have waited so long for this? That's the first thing I imagined. It's like I saw myself with them, listening and singing along to the song.

(02:14) P: I would always say, "When we've recorded this with your voice, the sound's gonna have a different vibe, different flavor." It's a different feeling. I feel like we're the Power Rangers. We become empowered, and we volt in. We're each a different flavor, and then we volt in, like Voltes V. That's how it felt for me. It's like, "Oh, the song is now complete." This is what I envisioned while writing the song.

(02:47) Question: How did you come up with the concept of the music video of "What?"

(02:50) Ju: We're the ones who have fully produced "What? Sejun wrote the song, and he was involved in the music production. We were also fully involved with the music video. The music video, I started working on it to conceptualize and come up with ideas as soon as Pablo sent his acoustic guitar demo of "What?" I would ask him, "What does this really mean?" I would ask him to explain since he wrote the song. From there, I took some ideas. Like that the song is about individuality. We each have our own flag as a person. I was soon doing more research, listening to other music, watching different shows, and I realized, not everything has to be said directly. You also need to sprinkle

in some flavor, to make people think. Make them wonder, "What's this about?" and at the same time you'd get creative. I consumed a lot of media for ideas and took inspiration from different movies, music videos. When it came to the music video, I asked the other members, "Is this okay with you? This is what's gonna happen." And they added input and ideas.

(04:02) Question: What were the challenges you faced when you were shooting the music video of "What?"

(04:06) JOSH: Some of our earlier ideas were just unrealistic. "How would we pull this off?" That was on our minds off the bat.

(04:13) Ju: ("Is this really doable?")

(04:14) Jo: "How do we execute this?" As we know, in the Philippines, we're not that technically advanced, unlike in other countries, of course they have a lot of equipment and resources.

They know how to do it, they've tried things over there. But here, few have tried producing this type of music video. Throughout our experiences as performers and among the people we've worked with, we handpicked people who we felt we could work with in the future. Like CHAPTERS, Mark (Ranque). We thought, in the future, we'd be able to collaborate with them on a big project. It started off as a joke at first, but at the back of our heads, we were thinking we could really make it happen. It was really challenging, shooting and planning the music video.

The weather rarely cooperated with us, too.

(05:06) Ju: Especially the part when we were dancing together with our dancers. We were dancing on lahar and it was really dusty. Whenever we danced, the dust would just be flying up. It was so hot too. It's a good thing we were able to see it through without any untoward incidents.

(05:25) Jo: We were aiming to shoot before sunset. As much as possible, we wanted to finish the dance break in the afternoon but we couldn't make it. We had too many sequences to shoot. We had quite a hard time with all the adjustments. Because not everything all the time will work in our favor, of course. There will always have to be adjustments. We were quite surprised, actually. We were so bothered by that, insects would end up flying into our mouths, getting into everything: our ears, our noses. As in we were really bothered. But we got through it. We needed to get it done no matter what.

(06:05) Question: If there's one lesson you want the fans to learn from the song, what would it be?

(06:09) P: It's not just ear candy, not just visually appealing. The best part is it gets people thinking. That's what's nice. When it gets people's imagination running. It's really nice when there's some thought put into the art you put out there. Anyone can write

about anything. That's the power of music. With every person's individuality, each of us is strong if we believe in ourselves. So when you listen to the song, it's a bit like "Bohemian Rhapsody." The genre changes many times throughout the track. It takes you through, for example, my part, and then it takes you through Ken's story, then the song changes. It's like that. We wanna show that that the motif of the music, or its flow, its structure, are as such because they tell a story. We want to celebrate the individuality of each person. Whoever you are, be proud of yourself. You'll do great if you become proud of yourself.

(07:17) Question: What is your message to your fans?

(07:19) KEN: To our fans, we're so thankful because we're being recognized, not just here in the Philippines. More people are listening to us. Casual listeners who didn't know us before take notice of us now. Our music video, our song, and they appreciate it. It's such a great feeling, having people appreciate the music that you've labored over.

(07:47) P: We wanna come out with so much stuff for you all. We wish we could do a live performance of "What?" for you but we can't because of what's happening around us and none of us likes it. But don't worry, because our songs and performances won't go away. Even if they get delayed, we will release them and we're preparing so many things for you. So please watch for it.

Only "What?" is out so far. We're coming out with so much more. So please look forward to it.

We're excited for everything to get so that we could all meet. So we could watch together, listen together, sing "What?" together.

(08:27) Ju: It's now available on Spotify, the music video is on YouTube other music platforms.

We hope you can listen to it because this song is about individuality. It will give you inner strength as an individual and whatever you're going through, you'd be able to relate to it. So we hope you listen to it and share it with people you know who may be struggling. Thank you very much.

Source: GMA News. (2021). SB19 talks about 'WHAT?' | GMA Digital Specials [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKE4VHpWj0s>

SB19 WHAT?: THE MAKING FILM | EP. 1

(00:27): "Don't need bullets just to raise my flag. From now on these bars will hit all of your hearts."

(00:32) PABLO: So, here in this song it's all about raising your flag, being proud of yourself, and loving yourself. Because if you don't love your craft, and if you don't love yourself...You will not realize your true potential and excellence.

(00:49) KEN: This song will teach you, when you hear this song,as what I've said, it will teach you to be proud of yourself. No matter what your status in life is.

(00:59) STELL: When I heard the song and when I was able to read the lyrics, I suddenly had high hopes to reach the dreams that I want to achieve in life.

(01:10) JOSH: This song, it's like...This will be the song that will represent who we really are. This is where we will introduce our true selves.

(01:19) JUSTIN: It's similar to the meaning of the song, our own flags...since the song is about being proud of yourself. You have your own flag. This time, this will be the song that will show our flag, our individuality, and our identity as a group.

(01:45) (Pablo vocalizing) Jo: Then everything will turn to black.

(01:47) P: I will put...

(01:50) Ju: You know what? What I thought of...

(01:53) Jo: No, what I thought is "boom!", just like that.

(01:56) Ju: In Pablo's part, the transition could be like Blackpink's teaser video, the one that goes like this. Then there will be floating papers around you. You're the only one that is moving fast while all the papers are still.

(02:11) K:Ahhh, I get it.

(02:12) Ju: It's like...Then the papers are maps. Papers... Maps... KEN: That's hard, Justin.

It can be a map or a newspaper. JOSH: Yes, yes, that's possible, like the...

(02:19) K: Are you thinking of the camera that is constantly moving? That's a robot. It's a robot that is already programmed.

(02:25) STAFF: We only have our arms.

(02:27) Ju: She's already practicing!

(02:29) STAFF: Start working now!

(02:32) P: For that, your arms should be steady.

(02:33) S: It's beautiful, the sound is beautiful.

(02:37) Jo: In this part, I feel like something is lacking. Super. As in.

(02:39) Ju: Yeah, the military feels...

(02:40) Jo: I don't feel like it's a chorus part of a song.

(02:45) P: Anyway, I added a lot of things here.

(02:49) K: You should make the guitar heavier on this part.

(02:53) P: Yeah, the guitar here is quite soft. And just like what you said, I told them not to make the distortion sound like pop. But instead, make it sound more metal so that it would sound heavy. That's why there are scratches because I don't want the tone to be heavy all throughout the song. I want the ending to have a happy feeling to it.

(03:17) Jo: Yeah, okay. I'm okay with that.

(03:20) P: Then on its last chorus... (singing the song). Then there will be scratches. Then the vibe will change to a happy with a hiphop-ish and bouncy sound.

(03:32) K: Old school.

(03:33) P: (humming) ..like that. KEN: Will it sound like old school?

(03:35) Jo: But our intro will be like we're preparing for a war.

(03:38) P: Yes, yes, that's the idea.

(03:42) Jo: You know that already. Something progressive. We want the people to get chills.

(03:48) Ju: Even the intro, just the sound of it, the trumpets, gives me chills.

(03:52) P: When I was writing this, I was thinking more of people in general. I was also talking about SB19 as a group. Who we are and what our music is like. Because in our previous releases, the songs were composed by Koreans. What we contributed to those were the lyrics and some minor changes on its melodies. This time, SB19 solely contributed in composing the song. And I think, I believe, that we were able to put our soul into the song as a person and not just a Filipino.

(04:49) Ju: We are here in...

(04:51) S: You're so tall.

(04:52) P: I'm imagining the music video and it already looks cool.

(04:57) Ju: We are here in... I can't start.

(05:01) S: We are here in... So, we are here in....

(05:05) Ju: So we are here in Sejun's (Pablo) place for demo recording number 2. Demo, second demo. While the other one, is busy on his phone. Just using his phone. Always on his phone. Always on his phone! That's good! That's good! That was great. Very enchanted. I'm excited. I can already imagine the difference between the parts. Like this one, it's heavy...then on our parts it sounds soft, then it's like...oh my God.

(06:17) P: I went back to where we came from, to our roots. The songs will all be connected and will point out. That we have somewhere that we came from, and this is us. Then from that, that's where "What?" started. What is it really? What is our origin? Oh, that was it. It's the end.

(06:53) Ju: The "woah-oh-oh" part, is it yours?

(06:53) P: No, you'll record it. Actually all of us will do it.

(06:57) Ju and P: "Woah-oh-oh, "Di na magpapa-awat"

(06:57) P: Then what more? You have four parts to record, I think. No. One more.

(07:36) S: Every time that we're recording, I enjoy the moment when I am the one inside the recording studio. When I am the one in front of the mic, I always just enjoy the moment. But this time, I added a different attitude of Stell. Something like that. Because this song is aggressive, unlike our songs like "Go Up", and "Alab". So in our recording, and practices, I always put on a little swag, I think as if I have a strong aura. So that my character will show not just in the MV, but just with my voice alone. I could portray the character that I want for this song.

(08:23) Jo: Honestly, me, I trained... No, I can't say that I really trained myself because I lacked time. But I really try to include practice time for myself so that I can improve on the things that I am lacking. That's really one of the things that I focused on. I do vocalization by myself even if I'm just at home. At the same time... And I also internalized this song by heart.

(08:58) P: Me, I'm very nervous. I don't know why, even though I wrote and composed the song, it still feels like a brand new track for me. Maybe because I really want this to turn out good. That's why I'm very nervous but at the same time so excited and very

happy because finally we will be able to release a song that we composed and made. We are the ones who wrote it. SB19 made it. Me, I always say this to the members, I want them to be proud of themselves. I want them to, you know, step up, to be proud of what they do. Because if you don't love what you are doing, or you don't love yourself you will not be able to project the best you. So, me, as much as possible, I always tell the members to be proud of themselves. Give it your all. Though, even though it's ironic because I like to bring myself down. I always have this, what you can call, I always have self-hate. I feel like what I am doing is always not enough. But what I want to do for other people is to push them to become proud of themselves so that they can reach their potential. Raise your own flag. Be proud and love yourself.

(10:41) S: The rehearsal, it's really different. We now understand the other side of the dance. That's why it's very different. And I feel like we are growing as a performer.

Source: SB19 Official. (2021). SB19 What?: The Making Film | Ep. 1 [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDsBOT5sPGw>

SB19 WHAT?: THE MAKING FILM | EP. 2

(00:27): "Wherever I go, my feet will stay steady on the ground."

(01:17) TANK, [Coach]: 5,6,7, and 7 and... One... Let go... And then...Let's do the deep one first. Go deep.... One more. 7, and...deep... go deep...

(01:56) STELL: "Basag ang lente, pinunit" It's like this, then "boom" "Intelihente, subalit-ngunit..." "Bente, bente, paulit-ulit..." "Intelihente, subalit-ngunit..." Actually, for "What?", or flag.... I just listened to it repeatedly, then I ate the lyrics. I internalized what the lyrics really says, how to attack it....What message does it want to bring to the listeners. All that I can say is... I thought of (the choreography) when I repeatedly listened to the song. Then I thought of the character that SB19 needs to portray in this comeback. I think the choreography focuses more on feelings. Who we are, and what the song and the lyrics want to deliver. I will try to build (some steps). Let's just put the phone on the ground.

(03:45) KEN: For that part I want a pair to do this motion really closed. Then "boom!", then back to its place. Just simply do the grabbing, because there are a lot of us at a cross.

(04:03) S: 1, 2, 3....

(04:04) K: You know, I want to lengthen the moment of this part.

(04:10) S: This part is already okay.

(04:10) K: That's already good. That part is just quick, anyway. It would be beautiful if there two people more inside... 1, 2... What do you think? What if there's like a pentagon, or a triangle (formation).

(04:31) S: We can try. There are lots of practice days anyway. We can see if it'll work. Can "What?" just become an acoustic version then we'll just enter with the dance break?

(05:10) JOSH: He's tired!

(05:14) S: Everyone's move looks good.

(05:16) T: It's great, all of you are synchronized.

(05:19) S: This is our most proper dance break.

(05:21) T: Yeah, it seems like.

(05:27) JUSTIN: It just feels like I'll have a fever.

(05:28) Jo: You should rest. That's over fatigue already.

(05:28) PABLO: Yes, go and rest.

(05:36) Jo: I feel like I can still do it but....

(05:53) P: I think I'm nervous (to go next)!

(05:56) T: Nice, Ken!

(05:59) K: It's tiring!

(06:39) T: You did not just do it, you worked smartly on that feeling. Because you played it, he did not just go "Oh, okay bro." That's right, because you looked mature. You made it valley-peak, valley-peak. There were no dull moments. Because, I get it, for example, Josh. Bro, there are times when his moves are accelerating... But then you'd also feel the parts when he's slowing down. You're like that too (Pablo). Maybe, it's because Stell memorized it well, and he choreographed most of it. That's what we need extra effort on knowing how Stell feels. 'Cause, what he did is the standard. That is where we will base.

(07:52) P: I think I feel like...It's like there's a lot of people with me, I'm not the only one who's dancing. That feeling that even though I'm the only one who's dancing, the people still accompany me.

(08:08) T: So you're like in a dome, and all of the people there knows the song?

(08:11) S: It's hard to speak when I'm trying to hold back tears.

(08:15) T: It's okay, just let it all out. So that we can feel (where you're coming from).

(08:23) S: I feel like...I can't do it.
Like...

(08:28) T: Like, you can't pull it off?

(08:30) S: Yeah, like that. Because I know my limits. Even before building it, I already had lots of...I had a time where I lost the will to do things. I was just waiting for a sign to give up, before. Then when I heard the song, I wanted to do it, but it was 60-40. 40% I wanted to do it, 60% I did not. Before building it, I had decided to just search for a choreographer who will be able to help us. But they said to me that I should do it because they believed in me.

(09:32) T: So you felt pressured?

(09:34) S: Then when I heard Sejun (Pablo) explain the meaning of the song. It's like you still need to be brave even if you're not the best. Be proud of what you have. that's

where I had the courage to do it... It's like, I really have something to be of service to others. Because that's the true meaning of the song. Even if you're not the best, just believe in yourself that you can do it. You will be able to provide something. That's how I felt earlier when we were listening to the song. Because I really lost motivation before. But they were the ones who pushed me to do what I am capable of. That's all. Sorry.

(10:25) P: There are times when you will really doubt yourself. But if you don't believe that you will be great, you will really not become great, You will not be motivated by what you do. If you think that you're just at that level.

(10:42) T: It's like, you think you're not deserving... Is that what you meant?

(10:45) Ju: On what Stell said, That there are times when he's down... It's like, he feels like he's having a hard time to do the choreo. I feel it's because of the pressure from the people around him. Even if it's not the intention of the people, he felt like "oh, you're not that good." "You're not a professional." But since Sejun (Pablo) said that he does not need to be excellent. He doesn't need to be the best, you need to be proud of yourself that you are capable of something. There are the things that you produced, you have something that you are doing. And you don't need to think about what other people think of you. Although it helps but you don't need to be largely affected by that.

(11:45) S: During the rehearsal, it's really different. The feeling is different because we know there are people that hypes us. We understand the other side of the dance more. Because what we only know is that we just need to dance and do the steps. But it was explained to us, to not just show the dance. It's more on expressing ourselves and how we interpret the song. That's why it's really different. Also now I feel that we're growing as performers during the practice. And it has been a long time since we did a piece like this. That's why it feels great.

(13:50) Jo: For me it's exciting, that's how I really felt earlier. I really enjoyed it. This is it.

Source: SB19 Official. (2021). SB19 What?: The Making Film | Ep. 2 [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uaHolWwNRrw>

SB19 WHAT?: THE MAKING FILM | EP. 3

(00:27) "It's a mystery, all the windows that shut at me before are one by one opening up."

(00:40) JUSTIN: We're here, somewhere in Quezon City... to fix our hair. So, we're gonna go up.

(01:04) STELL: Hello! I'll update you with my hair... it hurts. I thought I'm already numb to pain, it seems not. Like the hairdresser, she hurt me with hair bleach. But that's okay because I wanted this. I don't know how the first bleach would look like, but maybe it's just kind of brown. But the hairdresser said that if they put one hair color to this, it might look lighter. So let's just see the results. They will start putting hair extensions on Justin now. Don't you have anything to say?

(01:38) Ju: Me? I'm nervous.

(01:40) : S: There isn't any "wawiiie"? You won't say that? Next time, Jah-jah should have extensions.

(01:51) Ju: (It's) Jahjah.

(01:51) S: Jahjah~ The hair extensions will now be glued to Justin's hair. Oh, that's the way it is glued. I hope you see it clearly.

(02:02) Ju: Ooh, I felt that.

(02:03) S: Ooohhhh~

(02:05) Ju: I'm ticklish.

(02:06) S: Now you're an official centaur.

(02:10) Ju: I will become like this, the Bee Gees.

(02:11) S: You will look like...

(02:11) Ju: This is us three.

(02:15) S: Sejun (Pablo), Ken, and you.

(02:18) Ju: Shocks, I now have long hair. HAIRDRESSER: First two days, this will hurt while you sleep. Because...Because the hair will be stretched?

(02:23) HAIRDRESSER: Yes.

(02:23) Ju: The hair will be pulled. I will have a hard time putting on a necklace because it will get caught in my hair.

(02:31) S: Guys, I will let you know my girlfriend. It's just that, I can't talk to her right now because she's busy.

(02:39) Ju: Don't touch me.

(02:39) S: No, it should be sweet. She's still fixing her...

(02:39) Ju: I'm ticklish.

(02:45) S: She's fixing her... you should mute Justin's voice. It's because she's busy fixing her hair, but, let's talk with her later. If her make-over is finished. So there. Just enjoy that, babe. 5, 6, 7, 8... And bounce, and bounce, and dougie... And one, and bounce, and (counting).

(03:22) KEN: Ah, right. No, it's just like this...

(03:24) JOSH: We need to go back into one line.

(03:29) S: So, we're going to do the 'watawat' part... And then like this. "What? Paawat" then you can interact first. Then when we go back, when we are exactly one line, this should go in perfectly.

(03:39) K: 5, 6, 7, go. "Lapat sa lupa aking..." I feel like you should do this... so you won't have a hard time. What do you think? Or are you okay doing this instead?

(03:48) PABLO: I can see...

(03:49) K: Is it better to do this instead?

(03:49) P: I'm okay with that. How about you guys?

(03:56) K: No, so that you can be seen, whichever is better.

(03:58) P: Let's just polish it.

(04:00) S: I feel like that's okay... KEN: Okay. Then we can do it wider. Okay.

(04:15) DIRECTOR: Let's go! Let's go! Let's go! Nice!

(04:18) S: We're actually done. I'm happy for what we have achieved for today Because I polished our routine. But the ones that we need to shoot is the chorus, chorus 1, chorus 2 dance break, last chorus. We really focused on working on those today. And

I'm very happy because we were able to polish it. I think we are now ready for the music video shoot.

(05:00) Ju: Hello, we're now on day 1 of our music video shoot. The other three are not yet here, Ken, Stell, and, Pablo. They're not here yet, because their shoot is at a later time. But now Josh, he's been here since morning. He's now shooting. He's close to finishing. Then I'm next. That's it, let's go!

(05:21) Jo: Can I....

(05:21) DIRECTOR: You can play with your timing. But we can do a walkthrough.

(05:26) STAFF: He will stop on the "Ha!" part, right? Just make sure that your face... It should be big because it's mid(-shot). It should really be seen. I want to have that line covered with black back.

(05:57) DIRECTOR: But is it okay? That line over there? This line over here.

(06:01) STAFF: In the tight shot, we can have it...

(06:10) DIRECTOR: Nice one! Nice one, Josh! Like that! Let's go, Josh! Nice! Good take!

(06:44) STAFF: It's beautiful, woah! Wow, you're so good, Josh!

(06:49) Jo: Super exciting, that's how I felt earlier. I really enjoyed it. This is it, our music video for What? is finally happening. Because we've done this song for a while now, and of course, the pandemic made it hard to move. We only had the opportunity now, it's just now that things are getting filled out.

(07:29) DIRECTOR: Your shot is focused in your eyes, the hands, the turn-around then front to "What?" No song, don't sing. Sorry, sorry, sorry. One more.

(07:48) STAFF: Just go on. Wow!

(08:02) Ju: We want to show what we have, we already visualized in our heads how... What we need to show, and what we want to show... Something different. And even in music video, we are really preparing ourselves. On how it should look like. We look into each other when we talk about the music video, and we're imagining how it should look like. "Oh this is supposed to look like this", "I'm excited!" So our preparation is really serious, it's not just because of the responsibility. But because of being a person who likes what they are doing.

(08:34) DIRECTOR: Just move, Ken. Just give (Staff) 3 movements. Yes, lying down... 5,6,7, go ahead. Nice one! Nice one! Let's go, Ken! Nice one. Nice! Ken, let's refrain from singing. More bossy attitude. Happy Ken, happy. Nice one.

(09:28) Ju: In the secret film, every one of us has letters. Yours is “T”, there’s a T-square buried in there.

(09:44) DIRECTOR: 5,6,7... go. You guys will open. 5,6,7... go! Let’s go, let’s go. Make it cooler, make it cooler! Nice one! Give it, give it. More, more. Nice one.

(10:31) Ju: Wow. Creative Director. Wow. I’m so delighted because you all know that one of my dreams is to direct, produce a movie, [something] like that. Now, to be able to do that for our music video, I ’m delighted and excited for the output. Because I will be able to see my plans and ideas in actuality. Because before I’m just imagining it, and now it will be produced. It just feels good. What I want to happen for the music video is to not just satisfy myself as a Creative Director but I want to satisfy everyone, the production team, and everyone who will watch it. I hope that they like it, they’ll be happy with it. I hope they understand the meanings that I placed in the music video. I have so many deep [symbolisms] there, I hope you guys can figure it out.

(11:39) P: Now should have been the shooting of the battalion scene... But unfortunately, we have weather problems.

Source: SB19 Official. (2021). SB19 What?: The Making Film | Ep. 3 [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XNrDIRcudFM>

SB19 WHAT?: THE MAKING FILM | EP. 4

(00:53) DIRECTOR: Nice!

(00:59) STAFF: I'll just take a photo of you. We'll use the reflector here.

(01:06) (At a party) STELL: If you're a first timer...When... oh, it's getting dark. It means it's time to go home.

(01:14) DIRECTOR: We can still see you. You're still handsome!

(01:16) STAFF: There! We'll just take a silhouette shot of you. Do you come here often?

(01:23) S: I don't... What? What? What's your question?

(01:26) STAFF: Do you come here often?

(01:28) S: Close.

(01:29) STAFF: That's really nice!

(01:31) S: It's beautiful?

(01:32) STAFF: Yes.

(01:33) DIRECTOR: Oh my gosh, Stell!

(01:37) STAFF: Give it your all!

(01:41) STAFF 1: It's so beautiful!

(01:41) STAFF 2: Yes, give it Stell!

(01:48) DIRECTOR: Happy, Stell. Smile. Smile. Nice one. More flirty. More flirty. Let's go. Yay! Nice one, Stell! Let's go!

(02:03) JUSTIN: Similar to Ken, I don't want people to look at the farmer as a low-class being. I don't want to show that, that's why I made him (Stell) enchanted/magical themed. I want to show it that way. And then, basically it's quite direct because my idea there is that. You'll plant a seed of something, and it will grow two fruits. And it was shown in the music video. And if you'll notice, before the first chorus, "All the tragedies didn't budge me. At last, I'm here." There are a lot of things happening in the stories of farmers, like they'll experience typhoons or drought. That's hard to manage. But even then, they still manage to continue what they are doing. At the end of the day, despite the numerous problems, there will always fruit that will come out of it.

(03:08) DIRECTOR: There it is! There they are. It's so beautiful!

(03:15) STAFF: Cut! Okay! Josh, move a little more... Stell, come a little bit closer. This is our last. 5, 6, 7, go!

(03:39) DIRECTOR: Cut!

(03:43) KEN: Cut! Cut! Cut!

(03:45) STAFF: How many percent are we at? Rolling! 3, 2, 1, action! Okay. Do your pose. Other side. Other side. And then go back. Go back.

(04:00) K: Our preparation was intense. Our practices for our music video were intense. And unfortunately, I was having a high fever that time. Because of overfatigue. My body was spent from practicing. But of course, I'm just a human being. Maybe my body couldn't handle the overfatigue. That's why my body was tired from all the practice. And during the shoot, i couldn't move well. Because my head was aching, I was very dizzy. Although, all my worries went away thankfully. The other members gave their best, and our staff were there to support me. There was a nurse, there was a nurse at the shoot to help me. I saw the result that came out really beautiful.

(04:54) STAFF: I'll turn around, like this..

(04:54) Ju: Then at that mark, that's when Pablo will turn.

(04:59) STAFF: 1, 2 ,3, go! Okay!

(05:05) DIRECTOR: Nice! Nice!

(05:13) STAFF: This is really awesome! Wow! Oh my gosh! Nice! The tight shots were really solid! Intese! Intense!

(05:13) PABLO: Intense! Excellent! Excellent! The set yesterday was really amazing. It was super epic. We shot there my verse and then the intro wherein we are all together. And it's like Goblin because there were three lights, and when you pass through the light, you can't see anything. Everything is pitch black. And out of nowhere, when the five of us will go out there. It's a different feeling. Then there's smoke too. It's really like Goblin, it makes you sing... (sings Goblin theme song). But yeah. It's an awesome scene. And also my Glambot scene. The Glambot was my favorite even though it was hard for me to shoot that part. Because the Glambot needs to be setup on how fast it will go, when it will stop, when to go to the next point. So you have to be in sync and you have to complement each other, not just randomly stopping then pose. I tried my best in that part, but I still feel like it's not enough. But it seems okay now. So yeah. The Glambot was the best.

(07:04) Ju: So there...

(07:05) P: Where's Ken?

(07:05) Ju: He went outside. So now, we are going to paint the masks. But Ken suggested doing it here outside. Stell is now shooting his part, so...Do it again from here. Spread it out. Just spread it out.

(07:39) P: But those highlights looks cool.

(07:41) K: Put some more. JOSH: Won't it dry?

(07:45) Ju: We're thinking if this might have a problem because it keeps on drying. So it might not be visible. And it takes a long time to fully dry up. We decided to make it..

(07:45) P: What?

(07:56) Ju: ...to use a blower instead.

(07:58) P: No, it doesn't dry? It's not working? JOSH: A bit.

(08:01) K: Are you sure this part is not yet dry? This one, this is already dry. JOSH: But it dries up slowly when just relying on wind.

(08:10) Ju: Pablo is now drying the masks.

(08:12) P: It keeps flying away.

(08:19) Ju: We're full. We can't put another one here anymore. Let's just sleep.

(08:42) P: Today is the day that we were supposed to shoot the scene where we are with a battalion. And they'll dance with us. But unfortunately, we have weather problems. It's raining really hard. Nonstop. Which is really unfortunate. Because the location of our shoot is grounded soil, so it will get muddy. Therefore, it's not advisable to dance in such condition. I don't know what we will do in that part, so right now we are figuring out what to do. We are waiting for the rain to stop, and let's see what will happen. So there.

(09:20) Ju: ...and then chorus, and dance break with fire, with flag.

(09:24) DIRECTOR: No, no. In the dance break part, there's no fire yet. Then bridge... because in that part will be the 'rioter' or something? "Tapusin... Tapusin..."

(09:34) Ju: What will be the difference? The costume only?

(09:34) DIRECTOR: Yes, the costume.

(09:37) Ju: From chorus...

(09:37) DIRECTOR: It will suddenly reveal. Then we'll use the drones there.

(09:41) Ju: Mmm. Okay. Okay.

(09:46) DIRECTOR: Is there a chance that there might be something added? Just kidding.

(09:48) Ju: Let's go. Let's do my chorus part now. I'm just kidding. There, there:

(09:48) STAFF: Where? Where?

(09:53) Ju: So that it will be a different location. No, I'm just kidding. Alright. Let's just rehearse. Let's do that instead. Let's do what we thought of doing first so that we all won't have a hard time. So we'll just reschedule for another day, rather than we push this through...

(10:05) STAFF: Do you know Lubao, Pampanga?

(10:23) Ju: Let's just go around, or do non-stop walking.

(10:25) STAFF: Non-stop walking... JUSTIN: Then they'll roam around. Let's just do a belt going around.

(10:30) Ju: You guys will come our way. But since there is a limit here, you can't walk pass it anymore. Once you've reached the end line, go around or walk around the end line. It's like finding your blocking. That's what will happen. So we'll go this way, you'll go the other way. We'll really bump into each other.

(10:48) P: Just don't punch each other.

(10:48) Ju: Then when you reach the end line... Just go in circles. Just be cautious of your walking.

(11:02) STAFF: Good! Is your water near you? For everyone? Yes please. After this, let's take a water break.

(11:22) DIRECTOR: Do your high-five! Do your high-five! Nice! To Stell! Carefully... Hold it. Hold it. Hold it.

(11:50) STAFF: Bring down at SB19! Let's go! Bring it in closer. Bring it in closer.

(12:10) K: The feeling is surreal that we finished the music video, because it's a 3-day shoot. Because the tiredness is intense for all members, staff, and production team. The stylist, everyone. Who is involved in this music video shoot. We are really grateful, especially to God. Because it was really successful. And when it became successful, it was a good feeling. Because we saw the fruit of our labor, and we were just waiting for

us to see the result. But yeah. When the music video shoot finished, it was really amazing. I want to cry. Though, it really it is overwhelming. I can cry for that.

(13:04) S: Watch out for the upcoming releases of SB19. Because we don't end at 'WHAT?'

(13:09) Ju: I hope you enjoy and appreciate everything that we do, the staff, and everyone who helped us.

Source: SB19 Official. (2021). SB19 What?: The Making Film | Ep. 4 [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6ak5cbmfFI>

SB19 WHAT?: THE MAKING FILM | EP. 5

(00:27)"In every battle, swing your flag proudly."

(00:33) PABLO: 6, 7, 8...

(00:41) KEN: Nice!

(00:44) P: I should do it like this?

(00:50) JUSTIN: 5, 6, 7...

(02:39) REPORTER: The virtual music launch for SB19's single 'What?' is postponed. The members of SB19 were exposed to someone who tested positive with COVID-19.

(02:51) JOSH: It was a...A moment of... For us... We were so excited to perform during the music launch. Rather before the music launch. We were so eager to perform on stage. But it suddenly got cancelled. For us, it's both sad and disappointing that it turned out that way. Of course, it's not just us who is affected. The whole world actually. We can't just freely perform anymore. Of course, It's frightening. Still, we are just thankful that everyone were safe and healthy after what happened.

(03:37) P: It was really disappointing for us. I guess there was disappointment. I felt like it was a missed opportunity. The reason for that is... Since we worked very diligently for 'WHAT?', we wanted to perform it live on stage. So that the people would see the efforts that we put into the song. And during the moment when we were so eager to perform...Since there was not much public events during that time. It was really a let down for us. We were in the moment already. Then suddenly our momentum got interrupted. So for us, it was really a total let down initially. But of course, it's still okay. Our priority is the safety of the people around us. For sure, we'll get another chance to perform 'What?' onstage. I'm still very happy that it all went well.

(05:04) Ju: Wow. It's truly overwhelming. I mean... I don't know... I expected that I would be used to it. Since A'TIN is always there to support us. They make all of our releases trend on social media, they share it to other people. That's why it is appreciated well. And again, their support... I thought I'd get used to it... But it's still different when you've contributed so much on one thing and people would react that way. The feeling is still overwhelming. And you won't understand the feeling of so much joy...That you just want to say "No, no. It's not true". You just can't believe the things happening. I'm so thankful to A'TIN because if not for them, the impact of what we have done won't be this massive.

(06:25) Jo: Well honestly, I was frustrated during those times...Because we had expectations, of course, during the recording that I wasn't able to meet. I wasn't able to meet them. And then, I was disappointed at myself. And at the same time, I knew that there were people who were disappointed at me as well. Because of that, somehow I fell into "depression", or at least that's how I felt. Well, that's the best term to describe it

because during that time I was really frustrated. And when it came out, it trended or let's say... my part became iconic. I was also surprised. Personally I was surprised. I'm also thankful because... Even if the things that we did were hard, or even if I had a difficult time during the process... The outcome came out well, in the end.

(07:32) P: Hmm... I guess so. I guess so. Because us, as a musician, it's also a part of us to look or to know the feedback of our fans. Of the people, especially our fans. Because we know that they are the ones who listen to us. They are the ones who support our group the most. And to be able to hear, or to be able to get their feedback, which they kept saying... "You inspired us." "This song made me feel alive." Something like that. "This song made me work even harder and believe in myself" So for me, the intended purpose of the song was reached. I just hope more people would get to hear the song, or have knowledge about the song. So that whatever the other listeners have felt, if they felt motivated, they would be able to experience or feel it too.

(08:45) Ju: After this "WHAT?".... the next one is "WHO".... is SB19. No, I'm just kidding. Basically, I don't want to spoil. They should just watch out for it. I don't want to spoil. They should just watch out for it, watch out what's going to happen next.

(09:03) STAFF: Keyword. Keyword.

(09:06) Ju: It's in the music video. The clue is in the music video. That's all I can give. The clue is in the music video. For the upcoming releases, they should look forward to it. But here in "What?", the new SB19 has been introduced. More of who we really are. This is us. We contributed far more for this output. So this is just the introduction and there's more we can show. All I can say is that, the things that they can look forward to... I wouldn't say it's "unexpected" because for sure there are people who are expecting, there are many A'TIN out there who are super creative. But it is unique. We won't give something that's been done many times. We don't want that anymore. We want to show something different all the time.

(10:13) KEN: First, I want to thank you all for all the hard work even though we've said this to you many times in the past. That every little thing that you do, we appreciate so much. We are happy that you are there, despite the pandemic that's happening all over the country, all over the world. You guys were there, you stayed strong. You were our strength. We just want to let you know that we love you. We treasure you because you motivate us. You provide strength for us to continue what we have started. Because... From the beginning, this has always been our dream, and you helped us a lot for us to reach that dream... For us to reach higher dreams. Thank you. Thank you so much. We love you.

(11:13) Jo: To my members... I just want to tell you guys, thank you. Thank you for... Thank you for fighting. Of course... We won't... All of these won't happen if you guys didn't believe. And of course, if I myself didn't believe that all of us have the same dream. I just really want to say 'thank you'. I'm really grateful for everything you've done, and you've taught me also. Unconsciously, they don't notice that. But I feel grateful to

them. I would say that I've seen the world differently because of them. Like, different perspectives. But I'm thankful that they came. I'm thankful that when I invited Justin and Ken, they believed. I'm thankful they all stayed. I'm thankful that we are all fighting for our dream.

(12:39) STELL: So since this is the final episode of the 'What?' Making Film, I hope that you enjoyed that things you have seen here. I hope you were able to learn from the things we shared. And I hope you were able to reflect in yourselves. Not just from our song, but also from the things that we have said here, I hope you were able to learn from it. You were able to get something. And you can bring it wherever you may go. Thank you so much. I hope you guys liked it and I hope you'd continue to support us. Because, like we've said when we were just starting, we won't stop as long there are those who believe in SB19. It may be one or two. It doesn't matter, as long as they believe in us, we will continue. Again, thank you very much. And look forward to the upcoming releases of SB19, because we don't stop at 'What?'. Because we still have 'How?', 'When?'. 'Where?'. Just kidding. But we release upcoming contents for you. We prepared a lot of surprises for you, of course. So please look forward to them. Thank you so much, A'TIN. We love you. Bye-bye!

Source: SB19 Official. (2021). SB19 What?: The Making Film | Ep. 5 [Video]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqQ_f2trEg8

ARTICLES

Weighing in on SB19's "WHAT?"

By YANNI ROXAS
Bulatlat.com

Talk about the song "What?" and the next thing that comes to mind is "makabayan, 'dre".

Barely two months after the release of their song "What?", SB19 was nominated in Billboard's Top Social Artist award (BBMA) along with K-pop sensations BTS, BlackPink, Seventeen and US pop star Ariana Grande. A historic first for a Filipino and Southeast Asian artist, SB19's nomination was a result of their fans' (called A'tin) passion and dedication to increase SB19's social metrics in all online platforms, from streaming to fan interactions.

And to think that SB19 has the smallest fanbase (roughly 350 thousand) compared to its competitors' mega-giant ones. How A'tin carried SB19 to international spotlight is another story that has earned them the name "monster keyboard warriors" in this pop-crazed world.

Back to "What?". The song has become SB19's signature statement to come out of the K-pop image and carve their own identity as a Pinoy boyband. It brings out a new, fresh, and unique sound that has even raised the bar higher for Pinoy pop.

Meshed in various genres quite untried in the music industry, it incorporates different styles, changes in tempos, and levels of meaning wrapped in metaphors and imagery that could initially confuse a listener but all working beautifully in the end. This coupled with intense singing and dancing, and a music video that is over-the-top.

What is popularly acknowledged is that the song talks about self-love and empowerment based on the members' life experiences as they struggled and sacrificed for years before they got to where they are now. It was a painful journey for the group.

In different circumstances, the members have known poverty, family separations and expectations, failing health, domestic abuse, self-doubts and depression even as they juggle work and studies during their rigorous training. (They were trained in the Philippines by a South Korean agency.)

And when finally introduced to the public, the bashers were merciless. They were hit hard for their looks ("ampapangit") and for being "k-popish" which was said to be their doom.

But the boys persevered, and finally got their big break about a year after their debut single. There were songs before "What?" that drove fans to their side, not only because

of sheer talent, but because they, too, were relatable. Then came “What?” which turned out to be an iconic song of self-love and love of country. No mistaking their being Pinoy.

The song title What? is a word play for Watawat. Raise your flag is a recurrent theme throughout the song, ripe not just with personal but patriotic symbolisms. So much is going on, as reactors would say, but no one can argue that the song is mind-blowing.

On a personal note, it speaks of raising one’s self confidence (“alam ko naman na di ako’ng pinaka ano magaling”), of pride for one’s beginnings (“lahat ng aking basura, pupulutin laging dala”), of remaining humble (“kahit saan pa ko mapunta, lapat sa lupa aking mga paa”), of never losing hope (“nakasarang bintana... ngayo’y nagbubukas”), of perseverance during tragedies (“daming sakuna... di ko ininda”), of rewards and grace (“darating din ang biyaya, marami pa sa lahat-lahat ng nawala”). And while the chorus talks of peace and religious faith, it also declares bravery and toughness in struggle (“bawat banat, iwagayway mo ang watawat”).

But, wittingly or unwittingly, it is “What’s?” social critique and patriotic stance that is more hitting and commanding serious thought.

Ferociously, it assails a privileged class, though claiming to be educated, that only sees reality with a broken lens (“bente-bente [20-20], paulit-ulit, intelihente, subalit, ngunit, basag ang lente, pinunit-punit”). On the other side, those devoid of power or less privileged could suffer dire consequences (“hinubog ng Dalagang Bakal sirit”). The latter is a reference to the Iron Maiden which was a torture chamber during the Middle Ages. Becoming even bolder, perhaps coincidentally during this season of red-tagging, is the waving of a red flag, around which the members danced forcefully. No one is stopping SB19 for using red as a symbol of valor. And in the second half of the song this valor is turned into defense of the nation.

The allusion to Katipunan is subtle but powerful. As the song repeats its stirring chorus, SB19 delivers sharp and snappy moves as soldiers garbed in Heneral Luna outfits. They draw clenched fists before red and black flags waving proudly in the air. Their voices and that of the people who appeared as support dancers later become one, singing and dancing together, as if rejoicing in their unity and struggle.

And so as not to confuse their patriotism, the cry of “PILIPINAS” is heard loud and clear. The last line reads “di na magpapaawat, iwagayway na ang watawat,” and the song finally rests on a relic of the Murillo-Velarde map that is a testament to the country’s ownership of the West Philippine Sea.

What? spells courage and defiance, and a call not just to fight for one’s own personal battles but more so for the country’s sovereignty. It is so uplifting at a time when the Filipinos’ fight for national territory is being treated by the leader of this country as no more than a “trash of paper”. The significance is not lost to their fans and to people who are listening to their music. SB19’s music and artistry evoke Pinoy pride, and for that this P-pop group deserves to go up.

Source: Roxas, Y. (2021). Weighing in on SB19's "WHAT?" Retrieved from <https://www.bulatlat.com/2021/05/10/weighing-in-on-sb19s-what/>

SB19 begins a new era with 'What?' music video

Written by CNN Philippines Life Staff

P-pop group SB19 is back with a brand new single "What?" The song sets a another era for Pablo, Josh, Stell, Ken and Justin as the song and the accompanying music video signals a different genre and look: a heavier beat and an outlook that is more forward-thinking.

"What?" also flexes SB19's talents in making their own music. The song is written by Pablo, formerly known as Sejun. He is also a co-producer of the song. For the music video, Justin returns behind the scenes, this time as creative director. He previously directed the music video of "Hanggang sa Muli." SB19 co-produced the music video with ShowBT Philippines.

Since debuting in 2018, SB19 has been feeling more secure about their place in the local music industry and "What?" is proof that they're not just here to play games.

He says in a statement, "A lot of people still doubt us, denouncing everything that we do and everything that we're trying to achieve. We love what we do, that's why we do it respectfully. 'What?' is about self-love and empowerment. Each of us has our own flag. We should be proud of it and raise it as much as we can. As SB19 and as individuals, we know that we're not the best at everything, but that shouldn't stop us from what we want to achieve."

The song also pushes SB19 as artists, as Pablo says, "This one has a more aggressive take to it compared to our previous songs, so I really had to force out the 'oomph' in the voices of the members. I was really meticulous with the recordings, but so were they. That's why we would record 'til morning and until everyone was satisfied with their parts. The feeling had to be there."

However, the virtual launch of "What?" has been postponed as the group has been exposed to an individual who tested positive for COVID-19. They are now undergoing quarantine, said SB19's management in a statement.

Fans can also enjoy a five-minute extended version of the song on music streaming platforms.

Source: CNN Philippines. (2021, March 09). SB19 begins a new era with 'What?' music video. Retrieved from <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/life/entertainment/music/2021/3/9/sb19-new-music-video-what.html>

SB19 explains true meaning behind ‘What?’ lyrics and concept

Pinoy pop sensation SB19 recently gave their fans a new song titled “What?” along with a groundbreaking music video.

Justin, Pablo, Ken, Stell, and Josh recently sat down with GMA Digital to talk about their comeback, the true meaning behind the lyrics of “What?”, and how they all pitched in as a group to tell it through the screen.

“Gusto po naming ipakita ’yung individuality ng bawat tao na ’yan kahit sino ka pa man, maging proud ka sa sarili mo,” said group leader Pablo.

[We want to show each and everyone’s individuality, that you should be proud of yourself no matter who you are.]

Pablo wrote the lyrics for “What,” and it inspired all five of them to do the best they could to put the song out there.

“I felt like we were the Power Rangers,” he said in Filipino.

The leader said each of them had his own “flavor” and when they “volt in,” they’re like “Voltes V.”

He said he felt the song was complete as he envisioned when he wrote it.

Stell recalled that he even got goosebumps when he heard “What?” for the first time.

After listening, he said his mind wandered off with thoughts of performing it abroad and having many people understand the song.

For the music video, the members came up with their own wild and “unrealistic” ideas, which shocked even themselves.

“‘How are we going to do this?’ That was our thought process. ‘How are we going to execute this?’” said Josh in Filipino.

And so, SB19 produced a five-minute visual masterpiece which they hoped would live up to the song’s powerful message.

The boys hope to perform “What?” for their fans, lovingly known as A’TIN, one day.

According to Pablo, the group has more in store for their fans and they’re waiting for the day they can perform “What?” for them in person.

Released March 9, the music video for “What?” is approaching 7 million views as of posting. – Margaret Claire Layug/RC, GMA News

Source: Layug, M. C. (2021, March 31). SB19 explains true meaning behind ‘What?’ lyrics and concept. Retrieved from <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/lifestyle/hobbiesandactivities/781997/sb19-explains-true-meaning-behind-what-lyrics-and-concept/story/>

APPENDIX B

“KASMALA?”

ALAMAT



Source: Alamat. (2021, July 15). ALAMAT - 'kasmala' (Official M/V) [Video]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_5Y_mTfBh3o

LYRICS

[Intro: Tomas, R-Ji & Valfer]

Unang sulyap mo pa lamang

Suminsay sa liknayan, nahulog na ako (*Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah*)

Agaran, walang paliwanagan

'Di ko malabanan nadaramang ito

(Alamat, handa, 'rap!)

[Verse 1: Alas]

Walang biro ang ganda ng hubog mo

'Di katakataka na nahulog 'to

Handa akong sundan ka sa'n mang sulok

O saan pa mang tugatog ng ating mundo

[Verse: 2: Mo]

Bakit nga ba'ng lakas ng dating mo sa 'kin?

Natutuliro nang 'di ko akalain

Puso'y bumubugso

Dala ng hiwagang dinudulot mo

[Pre-Chorus: Gami & *R-J*]

Alam mo bang sa 'yo'y humahanga? (Humahanga)

Gandang mula ulo hanggang paa (Hanggang paa)

Pwede bang makisuyo sa dalagang marahuyo?

Ano mang nais mo ay gagawin

[Chorus: Jao & Taneo]

Kasmala, talagang kakaiba

At nabighani sa iyong ganda

Para bang mundo'y huminto nang dahil sa 'yo

Kasmala, talagang kakaiba

'Di na kailangan pa ng iba

Ako'y lakas-tama sa 'yo, ba't ganito?

[Verse 4: Valfer]

Yeah, daw isa ka diwata akon nadangtan (Ooh)

Sa kalayo, gusto ka makahampang (Haha)

Pasensiya lang kung medyo nagarekta (Rekta)

Game ka? Oops, wait, ha

[Verse 5: Jao & Mo]

Makapaniglo ka lupa

'Ne pa lagu'ing kekang utak

Ako'y nahulog sa patibong

At 'di na makawala

[Pre-Chorus: Gami, Taneo & R-Ji]

Kabalo baka'ng nakadayeg ko nimo (Ko nimo)

Gikan sa tiil hangtod ulo

Anian nga kinapintas, makabang-ar kasla agas

Ano tim karuyag hihimuon ko, yeah

[Chorus: Tomas & Alas]

Kasmala, talagang kakaiba

At nabighani sa iyong ganda

Para bang mundo'y huminto nang dahil sa 'yo

Kasmala, talagang kakaiba

'Di na kailangan pa ng iba

Ako'y lakas-tama sa 'yo, ba't ganito?

[Bridge: Tomas, R-Ji & Mo]

Sa hiro' mo yan sabihon, oh yeah

Gare nagbabayle sa diklom

Ikaw lang ang 'di mapan— 'di mapantayan

Kahit sino man

Ikaw lang ang 'di mapan— 'di mapantayan

Ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh, yeah

[Chorus: Taneo, Mo & Jao]

Kasmala, talagang kakaiba (Kasmala)

At nabighani sa iyong ganda

Para bang mundo'y huminto nang dahil sa 'yo (Yeah)

Kasmala, talagang kakaiba (Hey, yeah, yeah)

'Di na kailangan pa ng iba

Ako'y lakas-tama sa 'yo, ba't ganito? (Whoo)

[Verse 6: Valfer, Mo & Gami]

Sa dibdib ko at bibig ko, ikaw lang ang laman (Oh)

Daigdig ko'y nayanig nu'ng ikaw ay dumaan (Oh)

Sa aking harapan, nabighani mo, kaya

Ako'y lakas-tama sa 'yo, ba't ganito?

[Verse 7: Alas & Gami]

Tuo lang sa ako, pirmi nako gina ampo

Kasing-kasing nimo nga maako, kaw na way makalabaw

Nasa imo nang tanan maong

Ako'y lakas-tama sa 'yo, ba't ganito

[Outro]

Kasmala

Source: Lyrics. (n.d.). Kasmala – Alamat. Retrieved from
<https://www.lyrics.com/sublyric/112484/Alamat/kasmala>

“KASMALA” MUSIC VIDEO STILLS









Source: Alamat. (2021, July 15). ALAMAT - 'kasmala' (Official M/V) [Video]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_5Y_mTfBh3o

TRANSCRIPTION OF VIDEOS

ALAMAT CONCEPT TEASER | ENG SUB

They will block us and pull us down and tell us to know our place because people like us, they say, are inadequate and unworthy.

We don't deserve to soar, they say, because the color of our skin is that of the earth not the color of the clouds.

Because the language produced by the tongue is not the language of the foreigner nor the speech of the elite but the sound of the masses.

We will be forced to hide, to change our appearance, believing it's the only way for society to accept us, for the world to embrace us.

We fail to realize we're doomed to be stuck. We're doomed to be shackled in the shadow of others, endless imitating their every deed and motion.

Enough.

It's time for defiance.

Time to unshackle ourselves from the chains we bound ourselves in.

It's time, Beloved Motherland, to stand up and be proud of who we are, of what we are behind the masquerade.

Come with us to the Land Beyond to the Other Side.

There, we'll celebrate our origin while keeping up with the modern world.

Rapidly we shall sail forward until we dock to our destination.

Source: Viva Records. (2021). ALAMAT Concept Teaser | ENG SUB [Video]. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/uuRizbyfKCY>

SINO SI: ALAMAT

All members: Hello mga Magiliw, kami ang Alamat!

Taneo: (Speaks in Ilocano) Ako si Taneo. Isang Ilocano, galing sa Tabuk City, Kalinga. Ako ang leader, main dancer, sub-vocalist, at visual ng grupo.

Mo: Hello! My name is Mo. I'm a half Filipino, half black American from the city of Zambales. Ako ay isang leader then main vocal, main rapper.

Jao: (Speaks in Kapampangan) Hello, ako si Jao mula sa Magalang, Pampanga. Ako ay main dancer, sub-vocalist, at visual.

Kin: (Speaks in Tagalog) Hello po, ako si Kin, isang Tagalog mula Quezon City. Ako po ay isang visuals at lead vocalist.

Tomas: (Speaks in Bicolano) Magandang araw sa inyo! Ako po si Tomas na galing pa sa Tabaco City, Albay. Ang role ko sa grupo ay center, panganay, main vocal, at lead dancer.

R-Ji: (Speaks in Waray) Magandang araw sa inyong lahat! Ako si R-Ji, isang Waray Waray mula sa Borongan, Eastern Samar. Ako po ang visual and lead vocalist ng grupo.

Valfer: (Speaks in Ilonggo) Magandang umaga sa inyong lahat! Ako si Valfer, galing sa Bacolod City, isang Hiligaynon. Ang posisyon ko sa grupo ay leader rapper at sub-vocalist.

Gami: (Speaks in Boholano) Magandang araw sa inyong lahat. Ako si Gami, isang Bisaya, mula Tagbilaran City, Bohol. Isa ako sa main singers.

Alas: (Speaks in Visayan) Magandang araw sa inyong lahat! Ako si Alas, isang Mindanawan at isang Bisaya galing Davao City. Ang posisyon ko sa grupo ay lead rapper.

Question: What is the meaning of your group name "Alamat"?

Mo: Alamat or legend in English means two things po kasi. First, these are stories that community tell its youth as part of their cultural heritage or just part of their imagination. So ganun din po ang gusto naming sa music namin. At pangalawa, to be a legend is to become a master and idol. We Alamat members aim to be masters of our craft.

Question: Paano nabuo ang Alamat?

Jao: Nagkaroon ng nationwide search noong early 2020. At dahil nagkapandemic and all, hindi na kami nakapag-audition physically. So napagdesisyonan ng management na through online submissions na lang. At kami ang napili. Woohoo! Nagstart kami ng training nung May online at noong July, pumunta na kami dito sa Manila to train physically. Yehey!

Question: Influences

Taneo: Bale iba-iba po kasi ang influence namin bawat isa. Halimbawa si Valfer, ang influence niya is si Justin Bieber. Si Tomas, Bruno Mars and so on. Pero ang influence naman naming as a group ay mostly second generation K-Pop such as Big Bang at SHINee. But aside from them, we also have local hip-hop and RNB artists as our influences as a group.

Alas: Gusto naming sayawin at kantahin ng mga Pilipino ang mga awitin namin. Mayaman man o mahirap, kahit saang panig man sila ng mundo. Sa pamamagitan ng kanta naming, gusto namin maging proud ang mga Pilipino sa sarili nilang kultura. Sa international naman, gusto naming ipakita sa buong mundo ang uniqueness ng mga Pilipino.

Valfer: So nais naming magpasalamat sa lahat ng mga nanood sa amin ngayon. At sa mga Magiliw na walang sawang sumusuporta sa amin since Day 1. Maraming salamat sa nagstream sa aming music na Kbye, nawa ay suportahan niyo pa kami sa aming mga susunod na kanta. Available sila ngayon sa Youtube, Youtube Music, Spotify at lahat na streaming sites. Huwag niyo rin kalimutang panoorin ang music video ng Kbye sa Youtube at ifollow niyo po kami sa aming official Alamat social media sites para updated kayo palagi. Magsubscribe kayo sa aming Youtube channel.

Source: Viva Records. (2021). SINO SI: Alamat [Video]. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/GaUHAz5wdUk>

ALAMAT: A VIVA TV SPECIAL

Alas: (Speaks in Visayan) Magandang araw sa inyong lahat! Ako si Alas, isang Bisaya galing Davao City.

R-Ji: (Speaks in Waray) Magandang araw sa inyong lahat! Ako si R-Ji, isang Waray Waray mula sa Borongan, Eastern Samar.

Gami: (Speaks in Boholano) Magandang araw sa inyong lahat. Ako si Gami, isang Bisaya, mula Tagbilaran City, Bohol.

Valfer: (Speaks in Ilonggo) Magandang umaga sa inyong lahat! Ako si Valfer, isang Hiligaynon galing sa Bacolod City, Negros Occidental.

Taneo: (Speaks in Ilocano) Magandang araw. Ako si Taneo. Isang Ilocano, galing sa Tabuk City, Kalinga.

Tomas: (Speaks in Bicolano) Yo! Ako po si Tomas na galing pa sa Tabaco City, Albay.

Jao: (Speaks in Kapampangan) Hello, ako si Jao, isang Kapampangan mula sa Magalang, Pampanga.

Mo: Hello! My name is Mo. I'm a half Filipino, half black American from the city of Zambales.

Director Jason Paul Laxamana: Ako kasi bago ako pumasok sa pelikula, culture worker ako sa Pampanga. Gumagawa ako ng projects na nagpopromote ng kultura at wikang Kapampangan sa kabataan. Noong nagkaroon ako ng chance na magkaroon ng sariling kumpanya under Viva, yung naisipan kong konsepto ng kumpanya is parang ganun din sa ginagawa ko sa Pampanga dati but this time sa buong Pilipinas na, hindi na lang sa Pampanga yung kinocover.

Nagstart yung paghahanap niyan, gumawa kami ng Viva ng "Pwede" na isang boyband search. Yung qualifications na hinahanap natin is relatively bata, yung typical sa mga star search na magaling kumanta, o magrap, tapos dapat nakakasayaw. Yung first leg of auditions dito sa Quezon City, yun yung start of pandemic. Nacancel lahat ng mall audition na yun, nagrely na lang kami sa mga online audition at online submission. Tapos isa pang challenge is yung fact na naghahanap kami ng marunong sa wika nila. Eh karamihan sa mga kabataan, especially sa Pampanga, sa hometown ko, ang hirap makahanap ng marunong sa Kapampangan pero at the same time may popstar qualities na hinahanap.

Yung training nila ay rigorous, talagang nakakapagod siya. Para siyang boot camp kasi six days a week, meron talaga silang activities na ginagawa – dance class, voice class, personality development. For two years nilang gagawin yun.

R-Ji: Ako, sobra akong nahirapan sa sayaw kasi first time ko talagang umattend ng dance workshop kasi.

Mo: Nakakapagod pero yung pagod na yun, yun yung nagbibridge para mas maging better, mas maging magaling ka pa. Para mas maging magaling kami.

Tomas: Sa tingin ko, ang naaambag ko sa grupo yung pagiging makulit ko. Kunwari pagod na pagod na kaming lahat, tapos ako gusto ko silang iuplift para hindi na nila maramdaman yung pagod. Ganun ako, gusto ko maging masaya lang kahit pagod na.

Mo: Kahit nakakapagod siya, iisipin mo na, okay lang kasi nakaproseso ka. Yung training kasi, di mo iisipin yung result agad, dapat nakafocus ka sa process.

Gami: So yung training naming, alternate siya. Example today, voice tapos the next day dance. Example sa voice, meron pinapakanta yung coach namin. Merong naka-assign na song na kelangan mong kantahin. Titingnan ni coach kung ano yung kelangan iimprove. Sa mga bagay na yun, meron kaming natututunan talaga.

Director Jason Paul Laxamana: Nakapattern yung training namin sa idol training system sa K-Pop. Kahit mas maikli yung time na allowed kami magtraining o gumawa ng activities, nagpapakaprodutive kami, talagang walang sinasayang na oras pag training. Tsaka at the end of the day, hindi din naman sila nagstart from zero kasi nung dinala naming sila dito, meron ng advance sa singing, meron ng advance sa dancing. Yung training, more of paano mo icombine yung eight talented people na ito sa isang grupo. Yung mag-isip sila as a group instead as a soloist. Yun ang mas intention ng training na sama sama.

Valfer: Sa amin kasi, tulong-tulong din eh. Kapag wala yung isa, bungi din yung grupo.

Jao: For me, I love performing. It's my passion. Tapos kasama ko pa yung mga Kuya ko. So may bond pa kami. I have them by my side throughout this journey. Super fun. Mabilis sila mag-pick-up. Like lahat kami nag-improve since nagtetrain kami.

Gami: Oo, meron kaming guest mentors. Isa si Wilbert Ross.

Wilbert Ross: (While on practice) Unang-una, sobrang grabe yung choreography niyo. Pero una kong mention, itong si Tomas at itong nakaputi, ang sarap nilang tingnan kasi alam nila yung expression. Minsan, solo mo di ba, walang ibang titingnan yan kundi ikaw dahil solo mo talaga. Yung background, aesthetics lang yan para masarap tingnan yung buong performance. Siyempre yang mata natin, hindi yan nakakakita ng iba't ibang tao. Nakafocus yan sa nagsosolo. Unang-una, expression, maangas kasi yun naman talaga dapat ipakita niyo sa performance niyo na ito. Solo niyo yun eh, moment niyo yun. Kumbaga, yun yung moment mo, itodo mo na doon. Nakaka-ano lang kasi, nanonood ako ng solo, eh bakit mas napapansin ko yung sa gilid.

Committed sila sa ginagawa nila kaysa sa nagsosolo who is dapat yun yung committed na nakikita sa moment na yun. Facial expressions, maraming pwedeng gamitin sa facial expressions. Una pwedeng bumabase ka sa lyrics o yung angas mismo ng music sundan niyo. Kumbaga iclaim niyo na ito. Be committed sa ginagawa, pag solo mo, ipakita mo. Moment ko ito eh!

Sa sayaw, sobrang plantsado na.

Gami: Si Ms. Carlene. Oo, sila palang ata yung dalawang naging guest mentors namin. Meron kaming napulot na aral noong nakatrabaho namin sila. Meron silang mga sinabi kung ano ang dapat namin gawin dito kasi pinapanood nila yung mga videos namin. At nung nagmentor sila sa amin, actual siya, so kitang-kita talaga yung whole performance kung paano kami sumayaw, paano kami kumanta. At nagbigay sila ng comments.

Director Jason Paul Laxamana: Sa tingin ko, ang kaibahan ng Alamat sa ibang existing groups is number one, kami lang yung gumagawa ng mga multilingual songs. Kasi lahat, karamihan ng mga kantang nilalabas ng Alamat, pito ang mga wikang ginagamit. So Tagalog, Ilocano, Kapampangan, Bicolano, Ilonggo, Waray, Bisaya. Yung diversity ng grupo, yun yung nageset apart sa kanila kumpara sa ibang grupo.

Gami: Sa buong Pilipinas, punong-puno tayo ng kultura. Sa Luzon, Visayas, at Mindanao. Sa akin, nirerepresent ko yung Visayas, so dinadala ko yung kultura namin sa pamamagitan ng awitin namin, sa mga damit namin na may mga tanawin galing sa lugar namin, sikat na mga spots. Sa mga music din namin, sa mga instruments, makikita niyo rin yung iba't ibang kultura na nirerepresent namin.

Jao: As a Kapampangan, ngayong nandito na ako sa Alamat. Ang ganda kasi, we're from different cultures and we have diverse personalities at nirerepresent ko yung culture ko through our music, sa fashion din, sa pagsayaw, and everything. Nakakaproud.

Taneo: Matatag talaga yung mga tao sa Kalinga. They are very brave. Kumbaga pinass down sa akin ng mga parents ko, gusto ko rin mapunta yun sa Alamat. Parang ispread yung idea na yun.

R-Ji: Sabi kasi nila, yung mga Waray daw matatapang, mahilig makipag-away. Namimisinterpret lang yung mga Waray-Waray. Yung mga Waray-Waray kasi masisipag, kung sasabihin mong matapang, yun ay sa buhay kung paano nila hinaharap yung mga problema nila.

Valfer: Siyempre, kilalang-kilala yung Bacolod as City of Smiles. Yung mga tao doon kahit may problema o kahit ganun pa katindi yung struggles, nakikita mo pa ring nakangiti. Yun ang trademark ng Bacolod.

Tomas: Pinapakita ko kung paano manamit, magsalita at kung ano yung mga ugali ng mga Bicolano. Kung ano ang ugali ko, magreflect sa akin yung mga Bicolano. Kunwari, mabait akong bata, ganun din yung mga Bicolano.

Alas: Nirerepresent ko siya sa pamamagitan ng paggamit ng wika namin. Feel ko kasi, pagpasok ko dito, pagBisaya, taga probinsya ka. Siguro ito yung purpose namin kung bakit kami nandito.

Mo: Nirerepresent ko yung Zambales dito sa Alamat. Sobrang daming talentadong tao na mga taga Zambales. So gusto ko na iflex talaga na hindi lahat ng taga probinsya,

doon lang yung makakaya. Gusto ko ipakita na sa buong mundo, kaya namin. Ako ito, kaya namin.

Director Jason Paul Laxamana: Itong konsepto kasi namin, nirerepresent namin yung mga probinsya, ginagamit namin yung mga local na wika. Gagawin namin yan as long as we can. Kasi baka iniisip ng iba na yun lang ang gimmick naming para mapansin. Pero hindi po, sincere po kami sa aming pinaglalaban na sana matanggap ng mga Pilipino na hindi tayo iisang kultura lang. Marami tayo, we are a diverse country. More than 100 yung mga wika natin so imbes na itago yun, mas gusto naming ipagmalaki na kahit magkakaiba man tayo ng kultura at wika, pwede tayong magkaisa at magkasundo.

R-Ji: Ang best part sa pagiging Alamat, ayun sinabi ko na magkakaroon ka ng brother dito. Kapatid na di masasabing kadugo mong kapatid kundi kapatid na galing sa puso.

Gami: Ang best part sa pagiging member ng Alamat, dinadala ko yung bandera ng Central Visayas at Pilipinas diba. Kumbaga, yung thought na yung mga taga sa amin, tumitingala sa akin. "Taga sa amin yan. Magaling yan! Representative namin yan." So kelangan ko siyang gampanan. Kumbaga, may pressure siya, pero pwede naman siyang itake as good pressure at patunayan sa kanila na kaya ako nandito, kasi kaya ko.

Tomas: Pinakabest part ng pagiging Alamat member is napapakita namin kung sino kami. Kunwari may idea kami sa music, hinahayaan kami ng Viva na ilagay yun sa music namin.

Jao: Best part talaga is yung growth and development na we are able to do.

Taneo: Kasi sobrang unique at diverse yung grupo. Iba-iba yung mga dinadala namin sa table. So may makukuha ka talaga sa bawat isa.

Jao: We get to share our artistry and our cultural diversity.

Mo: Mas nagiging mas better ako ngayon kaysa kahapon. Best part na rin doon is nirerepresent ko yung Zambales. Yung lugar ko at yung mga Black Asians na rin kasi nirerepresent ko sila. Isang best part pa doon ay pinapakita namin sa mga tao, sa buong mundo na Pilipino kami, hindi natin kailangang ihubad yung identity natin.

Valfer: Kung magiging sino pa kami sa future. Siguro kasi yun yung nagpakilala sa amin. Pag sinabi mo yung kanta naming, yun yung Alamat na gamit ang iba't ibang languages.

Mo: Ang iiexpect niyo sa Alamat, automatic na yun, more songs. Pero kasi, kami yung gagawa ng path namin eh. Walang sapat na sagot kung saan kami mapupunta after five years. Kasi kami yung gagawa nun, kung gusto naming dito, gusto naming doon. Abangan niyo, basta lalakas yung Alamat.

Valfer: As of now, abangan niyo siyempre yung next naming album. Ngayong taon, diba?

Taneo: Sa mga sumusuporta sa amin, sobrang thankful kami. Just a little post from them, coming from the management, they send it to us, sobrang namomotivate kami habang nasa training kami. Matingnan lang namin, it brightens up our day. Sobrang appreciated namin. Thank you sa inyo.

Mo: Siguro iniisip nila na kami na nakakapagmotivate sa kanila, kami rin nabibigyan nila ng motivation.

Gami: Yun nga sabi ni Mo, hindi lang kami yung nakakapagbigay ng inspirasyon sa kanila, kumbaga sila rin. At natutulungan kaming lahat. Andyan sila para sa amin, andito kami para sa kanila.

Jao: You want to see more, check it out!

Source: Viva TV. (2021). Alamat: A TV Special [Video]. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/5fNNWvi1xks>

ALAMAT TALKS ABOUT “KASMALA” | GMA DIGITAL SPECIALS

All members: Alamat, handa, rap!

Taneo: (Speaks in Ilocano) Ako si Taneo. Isang Ilocano, galing sa Tabuk City, Kalinga. Ako ang leader and main dancer.

Gami: (Speaks in Boholano) Hello po. Ako si Gami, isang Bisaya, mula Tagbilaran City, Bohol. Ako ay isang main vocalist.

Valfer: (Speaks in Ilonggo) Hello po! Ako si Valfer, isang Hiligaynon galing sa Bacolod City, Negros Occidental. Lead rapper.

Mo: Hello! My name is Mo. I'm a half Filipino, half black American from the city of Zambales. Co-leader din, main rapper and main vocal.

Alas: (Speaks in Visayan) Hello po. Ako si Alas. Isang Bisaya mula Davao City. Lead rapper.

Jao: (Speaks in Kapampangan) Hello. I am a Kapampangan rin! Ako si Jao mula sa Magalang, Pampanga. Main dancer and the bunso.

R-Ji: (Speaks in Waray) Hello! Ako si R-Ji, isang Waray Waray mula sa Borongan, Eastern Samar. Ako po yung lead vocalist ng grupo.

Tomas: (Speaks in Bicolano) Ako po si Tomas, isang Bicolano na galing pa sa Tabaco City, Albay. Lead vocalist, center, lead dancer at panganay ng grupo.

Question: Kasmala MV Concept

Jao: It's a continuation of what our concept has always been which is the fusion of traditional and modern Filipino culture at the same time having foreign influences. It depicts yung mga challenges ng first immigrants sa California and it also tackles Filipino hate and Asian hate.

Valfer: Kami po yung mismong nagsusulat ng lyrics sa respective language namin. We play instruments po.

Jao: For Kasmala po, may mga naplay na instruments like 'hegalong' and 'agong' since it's always a fusion of traditional and modern.

Question: Faves about the fashion

Jao: Super nakakaproud working with Victor Baguilat, Jr., our designer for the first set of outfits kasi creatively elevated fashion with indigenous Filipino textiles and nirerepresent namin yung culture namin.

Tomas: Nakakatuwa po kasi pumunta po kami mismo kung saan sila gumagawa ng costumes. Parang gusto ko lahat isuot yung mga costumes, ang gaganda lahat, promise. Nakakatuwa, sana makatrabaho ulit naming siya.

Taneo: Ako, sobrang nakakaproud bilang taga Cordillera rin dahil si Victor Baguilat, Jr. ang may gawa niyan. Ang pagkakaalam ko po, parang magiging trendsetter yung Cordillera.

Victor Baguilar, Jr.: At that time, I didn't know a lot yet about P-Pop. But the design and the concept came from Director Jason Laxamana. But during this time, I was also making designs for Ifugao indigenous futurism. And then when Alamat approached me regarding the look, they gave me a briefer like si Mo for example, the representation of his look is that he's doing a sharp shooter. And I found out that Antonio Luna apparently designs as well or designed you know like the uniform of the sharpshooters before. So that's the reason why it was called Luna sharp shooter. So I mixed the concept that the Alamat wanted for every single member that they have with the previous designs that I have for indigenous futurism.

Source: GMA News. (2021). ALAMAT talks about "Kasmala" | GMA Digital Specials [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CfzVIC13R50>

ARTICLES

ALAMAT'S 'KASMALA' MUSIC VIDEO: A TRIBUTE TO FILIPINOS, WHO SUFFERED AND ENDURED HATE IN A FOREIGN LAND

By: Allan Policarpio - Reporter Philippine Daily Inquirer / 12:15 AM August 12, 2021

In Alamat's new single, "Kasmala," the pop boy group shines a light on the Filipino people's "indomitable spirit" in the face of adversity and how we persevered against hate and discrimination.

"We want to pay tribute to the strength, the endurance of Filipinos in overcoming these hardships...we want to emphasize that they're 'kasmala'—malakas," Ilocano-speaking member Taneo, who hails from Kalinga province, said in a Zoom press conference.

Also in attendance were Alamat's seven other members: singer-rapper Mo from Zambales; dancer Jao from Pampanga; vocalist R-Ji from Eastern Samar; vocalist Gami from Bohol; rapper Valfer from Negros Occidental; vocalist-dancer Tomas from Albay; and rapper Alas from Davao City.

Written by Thyro Alfaro and produced by the Swedish music team The Kennel, "Kasmala" was accompanied by a music video, which addresses colonialism, racism and dehumanization through a reimagination of the 1904 St. Louis World Fair, where 800 to 1,000 Filipinos from different ethnic groups were displayed like animals in a zoo.

Stop Asian Hate

"The 'Stop Asian Hate' movement has become more prominent as of late. And we want to tackle that, too, because that's part of our advocacy as a band," Taneo added. "I think that hate comes from not understanding each other. But if we can have that, then perhaps we can learn to be more accepting."

Prior to the single's release last month, the group also put out photosets depicting the said subjects: "Muhi" had the boys donning headpieces (created by contemporary artist Leeroy New), featuring slurs and slogans used against Filipinos throughout history. The "Migrante" photo shoot, meanwhile, depicts the members as first generation immigrants in the United States, where they experienced discrimination.

"Instead of just interpreting the flirtatious lyrics of the song for the music video, we wanted to elevate the material by educating people about this dark chapter in the lives of Filipinos," filmmaker and Alamat creative director Jason Paul Laxamana explained in a statement.

"It's our way of paying tribute to the Filipinos, who suffered and endured hate in a foreign land," he added. "Instead of looking at them as victims, we want to look up to them as brave, strong men whose stories need to be shared with the next generation."

Filipino sound

Like Alamat's debut single, "Kbye," "Kasmala" is written in seven Filipino languages: Tagalog, Ilocano, Waray-Waray, Bicolano, Kapampangan, Hiligaynon and Bisaya. "We sing in different languages as much as we can, because we want to show the whole world that it's cool to hear Filipino languages," Valfer said.

"The challenge for us is fusing modern and traditional music and culture in a good way. It doesn't have to be perfect, we just want the listeners to think, 'Oh, pwede pala 'to,'" he added. "While there are some foreign influences, the focus is always on our own culture."

Monster rookies

But unlike "Kbye," "Kasmala—as its title suggests—is more aggressive soundwise. "It's very upbeat and intense. Malakas ang dating," Valfer said. "The reactions have been overwhelming. We thought that singing in various languages was quite risky. But many people liked our music. It's heartening."

Last March, Alamat debuted in the No. 2 spot of Billboard's Next Big Thing chart—an impressive feat for an act that has been in the business for only six months. Alamat is just getting started. "There's pressure in what we do, but we aim to go higher in the future and do better in showcasing our music," Valfer said.

Source: Policarpio, A. (2021, August 12). Alamat's 'Kasmala' music video: A tribute to Filipinos, who suffered and endured hate in a foreign land. Retrieved from <https://entertainment.inquirer.net/418225/alamats-kasmala-music-video-a-tribute-to-filipinos-who-suffered-and-endured-hate-in-a-foreign-land>

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ALAMAT TAKES ON COLONIALISM AND ANTI-ASIAN HATE IN THEIR LATEST COMEBACK KASMALA

BY RAFAEL BAUTISTA
07.16.2021

ALAMAT's modern-meets-traditional take on P-Pop continues with kasmala as they continue to show why they are one of the rising P-Pop groups to watch out for.

Related: Things That OPM Made Even Cooler: Filipino Prints

Ever since their official debut on February 14, 2021, ALAMAT has stood out of the crowd for their heavy emphasis on Pinoy culture in their music. Composed of eight members from different parts of the country: Taneo from Kalinga, Mo from Zambales, Jao from Pampanga, R-Ji from Eastern Samar, Valfer from Negros Occidental, Gami from Bohol, Tomas from Albay, and Alas from Davao City, the group is meant as a representation of the different cultures of the country. Because of this, they also sing in seven local languages: Tagalog, Ilocano, Kapampangan, Cebuano, Hiligaynon, Bicolano, and Waray-Waray.

ALAMAT is proudly Pinoy and they aren't afraid to reference both the good and bad of Philippine culture. That was on full display in their first comeback, kasmala. In a press conference for their first comeback, ALAMAT talked about their latest single, the story behind the song, and what they hope to achieve in the future.

THE MUSIC VIDEO

A play on the word malakas, kasmala sees the boys present a harder and slightly edgier image and sound from kybe. The music video mainly revolves around the 1904 St. Louis World Fair, a real event in April 1904 where fair organizers brought Filipino natives and other tribespeople from different countries to the fair in America and displayed them as if they were animals in a zoo.

The first part of the music video sees the boys wearing traditional prints with modern designs (all made by Victor Baguilat Jr./Kandama Collective). They are being prepared by men in white suits to be shown off in the fair such as being cleaned or being taught how to speak English. Some of the members said that the costumes in this part were their favorite because it made them feel powerful. Next, the members are dressed in farmer's attire (designed by Mark Dela Pena), which they said they had a say in the design of their outfits. The final scene has the members wear another set of traditional prints in a modern style as they dance while a group of men in white suits bang on doors while holding disparaging signs about Filipinos as if to say that ALAMAT is finally free of their control.

TACKLING FILIPINO HATE

If you watched the music video and got the anti-Asian and Filipino hate theme, that's because that was what the members were going for. They said that they wanted the

music video to revolve around Filipino and Asian hate, the ignorance that foreigners have towards Asians, and even the attraction some Filipinos have towards colonizers. As much as kybe showed off the more lighthearted side of Filipino culture, kasmala isn't afraid to touch on a dark part of our history, one that some people may not even know of.

They stressed though that they didn't come into the project not knowing what they were doing. With the help of the video's director, Jason Paul Laxamana, the members educated themselves on that specific moment in the country's history. They don't do things just because it's trending. They actively try to get the story behind what they are doing and know the history behind it. The members emphasized that they want to understand the things they feature in their work.

KASMALA

In terms of the song itself, ALAMAT describes kasmala as more warrior-like and upbeat. They said that for their first comeback, they wanted to present a more aggressive and intense sound. The song was actually produced by The Kennel AB, the Swedish powerhouse music production company that has worked with artists like BTS, Red Velvet, and Girls Generation.

When the boys got the arrangement, they, together with Thyro Alfaro, all worked on the song to add their own spin as well as respective languages to the lyrics. The group also revealed that kasmala was actually meant to be their debut single. Kybe was originally meant to be a pre-debut single, but their company felt that kybe was better than just a pre-debut single. It became the debut, and kasmala was pushed to be their first comeback.

FROM THE PHILIPPINES TO THE WORLD

At less than six months old, ALAMAT is still very much a rookie group, but that is not stopping them from dreaming big. When asked what they hoped to achieve in the future, they said that they want their sound and OPM to be mainstream all over the world, in the same way K-Pop is popular around the world. They also are open to singing in more languages and are currently learning new ones. Aside from this, they are also continuously experimenting on their sound, trying to find that perfect balance of modern-meets-traditional P-Pop.

It's safe to say that ALAMAT proudly wears Filipino pride on their proverbial sleeves. From the name of the group to the use of local languages in their lyrics, their local aesthetics, and the use of traditional instruments, ALAMAT offers a unique Pinoy sound that pays homage to the past, but modernizes it for today's age and a global audience. Rarely do you find an act that pushes and promotes Pinoy culture as much as ALAMAT does. The fact that they are the second P-Pop group to appear on the Billboard Next Big Sound Chart and just reentered the chart recently shows that this boyband is one to watch out for.

Source: Bautista, R. (2021). Alamat takes on colonialism and anti-Asian hate in their latest comeback Kasmala. Retrieved from <https://nylonmanila.com/alamat-asian-hate-colonialism-latest-comeback-kasmala/>

ALAMAT'S 'KASMALA' — SNAZZY LOOK AT PINOY HISTORY

July 17, 2021 By Danny Vibas

Alamat, the eight-member Pinoy pop group that recently broke into Billboard's Next Big Thing charts, has a new single called "Kasmala."

The song — whose title is a jumbled spelling of "malakas" or strong — has a lavishly shot music video by filmmaker Jason Paul Laxamana.

It was launched on 15 July on YouTube. An hour later, the video became viral with 26,000 views.

Opening with a shot of a man in G-strings whose hands are tied like a prisoner, the video dissolves to a poster of the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair in Missouri, USA, where one thousand Filipino tribal folks were transported for display in "the largest human zoo in world history."

To recall, the Filipino natives were exhibited in a large area of the fair called the Philippine Reservation, reported in media as "an act of psychological warfare," an effort to proclaim US conquest of the Philippines after the Fil-American war.

The video then takes viewers on a snazzy interpretation of Filipino identity and the country's colonial history through symbolic visuals, snappy choreography and high fashion costumes.

"Kasmala" is the follow-up to Alamat's debut single "Kbye."

Laxamana, the video's director, also heads Ninuno Media which manages Alamat for Viva Records and Viva Artists Agency.

"Alamat was formed with the 'counter-K-Pop' concept," said Laxamana. "It uses the formula of K-pop — intensive training, audiovisual music, commercial appeal — but promotes Filipino culture and sensibilities. Crucial to this concept is its commitment to multilingualism.

"The idea is, if we seek to genuinely embody the Philippines, Alamat should reflect the country's cultural and linguistic diversity," he explained in a recent online media conference.

"It is a reminder for fellow Filipinos that we, too, have always been subject to hate, dehumanization and prejudice throughout history. But we shall not be broken down. We

shall persist and continue to thrive. We shall endure. For we are strong. We are 'kasmala.'”

Alamat’s members — Taneo, Jao, Mo, Tomas, Valfer, R-Ji, Gami and Alas — come from different provinces such as Kalinga, Zambales, Eastern Samar, Negros Occidental, Bohol, Albay and Davao City.

“Kasmala” — written by Thyro Alfaro — was produced by a Swiss music outfit called The Kennel. Viva Records tapped the Stockholm-based group, which is described as “one of the most successful independent music publishers, having written and produced more than a hundred No. 1 chart hits.”

The video’s production design is by Lars Magbanua and cinematography by Emmanuel Liwanag.

“Kasmala” is produced and released by Viva Records.

Source: Vibas, D. (2021, July 17). Alamat’s ‘Kasmala’ — snazzy look at Pinoy history. *Tribune*. Retrieved from <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2021/07/17/alamats-kasmala-snazzy-look-at-pinoy-history/>

REVIEW: ALAMAT'S 'KASMALA' IS A TIME CAPSULE

by JE CC

Coming on the heels of the success of their debut single, kbye, Kasmala continues ALAMAT's shaping up as an emerging P-Pop powerhouse.

Much like their previously-released tracks kbye, Sandigan, and Tibay 'Yan—Kasmala is well-utilized to serve as a screaming testament to ALAMAT's commitment to showcasing their talent while paying homage to their individual ethnicities.

The track's music video, which was released this week, similarly explodes in vibrant colors, as well as contagious energy that was largely created in the explosive fusion of the group's diverse vocals and grooves.

Kasmala's music video is a time capsule, that takes its spectators back to the early 1900s. Anyone who's familiar with the 1904 St.Louis World Exposition, knows that one point when a number of Philippines tribesmen were shipped to the United States to be exhibited in human zoos.

ALAMAT mimics that moment, but this time the object of the exhibit is not the mortifying experience of our ancestors. Kasmala, instead shifts the focus on the group's ancestral roots, their individual talents, and colorful individual identities, that make ALAMAT unique, from their contemporaries.

This track has very inviting tendencies. As it both features native and EDM styles. Kasmala can pretty well make your feet dance to its energy infused-beats. The track, which tells about a young man's admiration of a girl, and his quest to earn her 'yes', obligingly complies with the group's vision to mix music, dance, fashion, and iconography in their bid to help expedite P-Pop's invasion of the global music scene.

The eight-member group, as usual, is handsomely groomed in the music video, which features a fusion of the old and the new via the boys' epic.

All its members—Taneo, Mo, Tomas, R-Ji, Valfer, Alas, Gami, Jao, and Kin are fashionably dressed to represent various ethnic groups, in the country. It adds extra-angst not just to the overall appeal of the music video, but also to each member of the group, who all carry their diverse fashion styles with oozing confidence.

Last month, the group first saw its collaboration with another local act. Through Coke Studio, ALAMAT and International Pop Urban artist, Inigo Pascual delivered the empowering track, Tibay 'Yan, which may have just marked the beginning of the group's further big collaborations with other acts.

Source: Lion Heart TV. (2021). REVIEW: ALAMAT's 'Kasmala' is a Time Capsule. Retrieved from <https://www.lionheartv.net/2021/07/review-alamats-kasmala-is-a-time-capsule/>

APPENDIX C

Y U COME BACK? *4MIX*



Source: KS Gang. (2021, May 11). 4MIX - Y U COMEBACK [OFFICIAL M/V]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZlwErCvdwHw>

LYRICS

This is 4MIX

3 2 1 Let's go

★★

กลับมาทำไม

glap ma tammai

Why do you come back?

เธอต้องการไร

ter dtong gan rai

What do you need?

เธอจะเอาไง

ter ja ao ngai

What exactly do you want?

พูดจบแล้วก็ไปไป บ้ายบาย บ้ายบาย

put jop laew go bpai bpai bye bye bye bye

If you finish speaking then go away, bye bye

จะพูดอะไรก็พูดมา แต่ฉันไม่ได้ให้ราคา

ja put arai go put ma dtae chan mai dai hai raka

You might say anything, go ahead but I won't buy it

สั้นๆไม่ต้องเสียเวลา

san san mai dtong sia wela

Don't waste my time

I'm done with all the drama

น้ำ นา หน้า นา นา หน้า นา น้ำ นา

na na na na na na na na na

เธอไม่ต้องบีนน้ำตา

ter mai dtong bip namdta

You don't need to act like crying

น้ำ นา หน้า นา นา หน้า นา น้ำ นา

na na na na na na na na na

ตั้งแต่วันนั้นที่เธอลา ไปหาเขาคนที่ดีกว่า

dtang dtae wan nan ti ter la bpai ha kao kon ti dee gwa

Since the day you went away with your better one

ก็นึกว่าไม่ต้องเจอหน้า ที่เห็นก็แทบไม่เชื่อสายตา

go neuk wa mai dtong je na ti hen go taep mai cheua saidta

I thought we're not gonna meet each other again, I couldn't believe my eyes

น้ำ นา หน้า นา นา หน้า นา น้ำ นา

na na na na na na na na na

เป็นอะไรก็ว่ามา

bpen arai go wa ma

Whatever, let's say

น้ำ นา หน้า นา นา หน้า นา น้ำ นา
na na na na na na na na na

*

แต่ฉันเป็นคนที่ไม่เจ็บแล้วจำ
dtae chan bpen kon ti jep laew jam
But I'm not stupid enough to trust you again

มันดูน่าขำที่เธอกลับมา
man du na kam ti ter glap ma
It's seem ridiculous to see you come back

ถ้าเสียเวลาไปเพื่อสนทนา กับคนอย่างเธอไม่เอาดีกว่า
ta sia nam lai peua sontana, gap kon yang ter mai ao dee gwa
If I have to discuss with person like you, better not to waste my time

Get out my way 2x

ช่วยหลีกทางหน่อยได้มั๊ย
chuay lik tang noi dai mai
Please get out of my way

Get out my way 2x

ถ้าเธอยังไม่หลีกไป งั้นก็ตอบคำถามให้ฉันรู้ที
ta ter yang mai lik bpai, ngan go dtop kam tam hai chan ru ti
If you're still be here, so let me know something

**

กลับมาทำไม
glap ma tammai
Why do you come back?

เธอต้องการไร
ter dtong gan rai
What do you need?

เธอจะเอาไง
ter ja ao ngai
What exactly do you want?

พูดจบแล้วก็ไปไป บ้ายบาย บ้ายบาย
put jop laew go bpai bpai bye bye bye bye
If you finish speaking then go away, bye bye

Who said

ฉันไม่ใช่คนสำคัญ

chan mai chai kon samkan
I was nobody?

Who said

ไล่ให้ฉันไปวันนั้น

lai hai chan bpai wan nan
Let me go that day?

Who said

คิดสิ คิดสิ

kit si kit si
Think about it, let think about it

จะมากลับลำกลับคำอย่างนี้ก็พังดี

ja ma glap lam, glap kam yang ngi go pang dee
Unreliable like this gonna make it ruin

เอาล่ะ จะเตือนสติเธอซักหน่อย

ao la ja dteuan sadti ter sak noi
Ok! I'm warning you something

ให้กลับไปเริ่มใหม่คงกร่อย

hai glap bpai reum mai kong groi
To return to you should be boring

ไม่อยากเจอรูปเดิมบ่อยๆ

mai yak je lup deum boi boi
I don't want to see it over and over again

เธอปล่อยเหอะ

ter bploi he
Let me go

นับ1 ถึง 10 บอกให้เธอหยุด

nap neung teung sip bok hai ter yut
Count 1 to 10 to stop your act

แล้วกลับมามองความจริงที่เรื่องวันนั้นของเราจะยุติ

laew glap ma mong kwam cing ti reuang wan nan kong rao sadud
And look back to reality what made our story end that day

หนังสือเล่มเดิมที่อ่านมันไปจนถึงที่จุดสิ้นสุด
nangseu lem deum ti an man bpai jon teung ti jut sinsud
Like reading the same book till the end

ตอนจบมันไม่มีทางที่จะเปลี่ยนไป
dton jop man mai mi tang ti ja bplian bpai
Final part couldn't be changed

Accept the truth

*

แต่ฉันเป็นคนที่ไม่ฉลาดพอ
dtae chan bpen kon ti jep laew jam
But I'm not stupid enough to trust you again

มันดูน่าขำที่เธอกลับมา
man du na kam ti ter glap ma
It's seem ridiculous to see you come back

ถ้าเสียเวลาไปเพื่อสนทนา กับคนอย่างเธอไม่เอาดีกว่า
ta sia nam lai peua sontana, gap kon yang ter mai ao dee gwa
If I have to discuss with person like you, better not to waste my time

Get out my way 2x

ช่วยหลีกทางหน่อยได้มั๊ย
chuay lik tang noi dai mai
Please get out of my way

Get out my way 2x

ถ้าเธอยังไม่หลีกไป งั้นก็ตอบคำถามให้ฉันรู้ที
ta ter yang mai lik bpai ngan go dtop kam tam hai chan ru ti
If you're still be here, so let me know something

กลับมาทำไม
glap ma tammai
Why do you come back?

เธอต้องการไร
ter dtong gan rai
What do you need?

เธอจะเอาไง

ter ja ao ngai
What exactly do you want?

พูดจบแล้วก็ไปไป บ้ายบาย บ้ายบาย
put jop laew go bpai bpai bye bye bye bye
If you finish speaking then go away, bye bye

กลับมาทำไม
glap ma tammai
Why do you come back?

Dum dum dum dadidadi dum

เธอต้องการไร
ter dtong gan rai
What do you need?

Dum dum dum dadidadi dum

เธอจะเอาไง
ter ja ao ngai
What exactly do you want?

Dum dum dum dadidadi dum

พูดจบแล้วก็ไปไป บ้ายบาย บ้ายบาย
put jop laew go bpai bpai bye bye bye bye
If you finish speaking then go away, bye bye

ฉันไม่ได้โง่งมง่าย ให้เธอทำร้าย จะไม่มีอีกครั้ง
chan mai dai ngo ngom ngai hai ter tamrai ja mai mi ik krang
I'm not too stupid to let you lie, it's not gonna happen again

แค่นี้ก็เกินพอให้เข้าใจ ว่าเธอเป็นคนแบบไหน
kae ni go geun po hai kaojai wa ter bpen kon baeb nai
This is more than enough to realize what kind of person you are

Get out my way 6x

4MIX wanna show you something

กลับมาทำไม ทำไม ทำไม ทำไม
glap ma tammai, tammai tammai tammai
Why do you come back? Why? Why? Why?

เธอต้องการไร
ter dtong gan rai 2x
What do you need?

เธอจะเอาไง เอาไง เอาไง เอาไง
ter ja ao ngai, ao ngai ao ngai ao ngai
What exactly do you want? What? What? What?

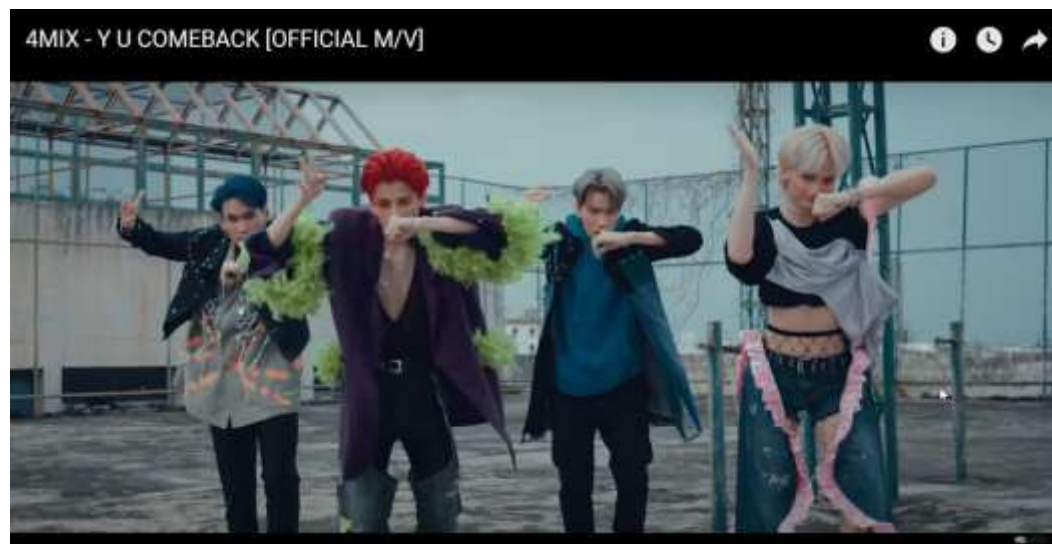
กลับมาทำไม ทำไม ทำไม ทำไม
glap ma tammai, tammai tammai tammai
Why do you come back? Why? Why? Why?

(Bye bye)

กลับมาทำไม
glap ma tammai
Why do you come back?

Source: Alif's Blog. (2021). 4MIX - Y U COMEBACK [Romanization Lyric + Eng].
Retrieved from <https://www.jetsiphaa.com/2021/12/youcomeback.html>

Y U COME BACK? MUSIC VIDEO STILLS



4MIX - Y U COMEBACK [OFFICIAL M/V]



4MIX - Y U COMEBACK [OFFICIAL M/V]



Press **Esc** to exit full screen



4MIX - Y U COMEBACK [OFFICIAL M/V]



Press **Esc** to exit full screen



4MIX - Y U COMEBACK [OFFICIAL M/V]



4MIX - Y U COMEBACK [OFFICIAL M/V]



4MIX - Y U COMEBACK [OFFICIAL M/V]





Source: KS Gang. (2021, May 11). 4MIX - Y U COMEBACK [OFFICIAL M/V]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZlwErCvdwHw>

TRANSCRIPTION OF VIDEOS

DOCUMENTARY: 4 MIX DOCUMENTARY SERIES EP 1 - A MIX OF 4MIX

(00:10) MCKA: It's like an identity of four of us, who have our own charm, to blend into 4MIX.

(00:19) NINJA: The concept is to gather all four of us and to become 4MIX. I don't want to divide that this person is a main vocal, that person is a main rapper. We must actually be able to be every position to do this together.

(00:38) FOLKSONG: 4MIX is us four together, to have an identity in different selves and become 4MIX.

(01:01): "A MIX OF 4MIX"

(01:20) N: Hello, I'm Ninja from 4MIX

(01:22) F: 4MIX's Folksong

(01:23) M: 4MIX's MCka

(01:24) N: At first I was in dancing team, and the company asked if anyone was interested in being an artist.

(01:32) F: In the beginning there were MCka, Ninja, and J2.

(01:37) M: I was in cover dancing team called KBOY.

(01:57) Kittiwat Pangprasertkul (KS Gang Senior Strategic Planner): It started during the beginning of the company. They were seeking for new generations from several industries. Either from modeling industry or from cover dancing industry. Four of them were in one group dancing for Cover Dance events. It seemed the staff found and casted them for the audition.

(02:28) M: They asked all of us to go for the audition.

(02:31) N: When they contacted me, they asked for my singing and dancing records. I sent those and they said it was okay. After that we were arranged for the meeting.

(02:43) F: First day of me was awkward, I was jittery. It was my first time, first audition challenge.

(02:51) N: I sang live and each of us sang then we danced together

(03:14) K.P.: What I see in 4MIX is potential, teamwork, and especially, charms no one can imitate. When I saw them for the first time, I felt they are interesting and they are able to create new waves for T-POP industry here. So we decided that 4MIX would be the group we're debuting.

(03:48) M: When it first started, I had to train for singing and dancing. We did some covers, we practiced and researched for references that we wanted to represent us.

(04:07) F: Singing class lasts for 1 hour, sometimes 2 hours. Everything was so new, it was no longer as easy as when I did a cover dance. I had to work harder and changed the mindset. Dancing and singing classes here are quite serious and quite hard.

(04:36) M: We did those on loop for 2 years.

(04:41) N: Today is our first training day in the new company. We're in the practice room, practicing How You Like That. Go right.

(05:16) K.P.: Let's say four of them are our trainees. They are our trainees for 2 years already.. They keep on practicing but we still have no chance to debut them.

(05:31) N: I signed the contract in December 2019. The training started in January and we discussed with the staff about the song and our scope that 4MIX would be debuted in April - May 2020.

(05:58) 4MIX Members: Hello, we are 4MIX.

(06:01) N: 4MIX's Ninja.

(06:03) F: 4MIX's Folksong

(06:05) Former Member J2: 4MIX's J2

(06:06) M: 4MIX's MCka

(06:09) N: We are 4MIX from KS GANG, the agency under Khaosan Entertainment. Our first single will be launched next month.

(06:18) N: Then, there was COVID-19 in March

(06:20) M: We waited and waited and waited, we kept waiting for 3 months. Until we finally came back to practice again. We had to start over, all we had practiced, we had to do it again. It was so long since we last did it so we needed to tune in together. The new plan was the end of last year.

(06:40) N: At that time I was doing cover dance. The team decided that our last project would be in January. Since we had done some auditions. When it was final, we wouldn't do it anymore.

For me I didn't accept any dancing offers since last January. I had to prepare to be the artist, back then I didn't have any income.

(07:00) M: Before that I could earn some to support my finance. After I signed contract here, I didn't accept any dance offer, I only practiced which meant I had no allowance.

(07:10) N: I had some thought that I'm now 23 year old but I have to rely on my parents' financial support. It was really stressful. I didn't have any income but I didn't know what to do.

(07:25) F: It hurt and was discouraged, our plan has been pushing back but I don't give up. I keep practicing, one day we're debuting.

(07:35) N: My mother knows everything because I always keep her updated that 'it's going to be the beginning of this year. When it was postponed, my mother asked why it was delayed again.

(07:43) M: I put every effort in this for my dream, my whole effort.

(07:50) N: The new plan was made, 4MIX would be debuting around January the first, in the phase 2. But in the end...

(08:00) F: We had another issue when we were about to debut, the member left.

(08:28) M: One member left the group, that time it was starting to .. not to be okay.

(08:42) F: J2 said ... I was just telling.

(08:49) N: We came to audition together...I can talk about this, right?

(08:59) "To be continued."

Source: KS Gang. (2021). DOCUMENTARY: 4 MIX DOCUMENTARY SERIES EP - A MIX OF 4MIX [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D65ePSPRJyw>

DOCUMENTARY: 4 MIX DOCUMENTARY SERIES EP 6 - A MIX OF BULLYING

(00:16) NINJA: I grew up in countryside. My mother is a teacher. The acquaintances don't support me much. They think working for government is the most stable. I got nagged quite a lot when I chose this career. I got insulted if I will make it, what I'm going to do next. It was worse when I failed in many contests.

(00:39) FOLKSONG: 'You don't have a good look', 'You're too dark', 'Your pimples', something like this. I got hurt, though, just slightly. But I've been trying to improve.

(00:49) GEORGE: When I was an amateur. They said, 'You're a newbie, there is no way you can dance well like us'. Or 'You really can't sing'

(01:00) MCKA: When I was in the academy in grade 7-8, I liked to sing. They made fun of me like 'Oh, Justin Bieber'.

(01:12): 'A MIX OF: BULLYING'

(01:27) N: Since I was young, my parents support me a lot. My mother lets me go to any contest. My father is like my personal chauffeur. I wanted to join The Star contest in Udon Thani, Khon Gaen. Or when I had to commute between provinces just to practice. Either in the morning or evening, my father never said anything. If who asks, my answer is always 'They support me well'. But one day, I didn't know what was happening. My mother wasn't there and I was in the car with father. After I failed one contest. He suddenly said. "Is it worth to entertain people for living?". I cried really hard. I didn't talk with him. Until we were home. I locked myself in the room and cried. As if everything fell down. Because the person who has been supporting me said this. But he said in a neutral tone. Because in the end he supports me wholeheartedly. He took me here and there as usual.

(02:27) F: Of course, I was looked down on. "Folksong, why you let yourself be like this." "You really don't have a good look" Like this, "Who is gonna watch you?" I pondered hard and I tried to look after myself. I didn't take it too serious. I listened to them and took those to improve. I wouldn't think about them too much.

(02:47) G: To ask about getting insulted, I have plenty. But the most important is I have to brush up my skills as many as I can. And try to beat those insults. Change them to motivate me to be better. And I won't stop improving.

(03:03) N: I remember this one well. It happened in grade 7-8. There was a school senior in a school band. I was in the band, too. I told them I'd enroll for The Star. They said, "Someone like you can sing?" "Try to beat me first." I was so speechless, we have to let it go. And talk with ourselves more. We know what we are doing, we know what lays ahead of us. But outsiders don't, they don't see that. When we're lacking, they talk bad. But when we're better, they're going to praise us. So we should pay attention to ourselves. Don't take everything to our hearts. If that doesn't cause trouble to others.

(03:40) F: Ninja is doing well, he solves situations really well. He's our leader, of course. He calms us. Fussy, picky.

(03:48) M: But he tries to maintain all of us. He's a bit to handle, I'm not saying it's bad. Because it benefits the team. He does everything. He comes up with new ideas, like a TikTok dance. He thinks of them and we do together. He's such a thoughtful member. He thinks of new things for us to do together.

(04:06) F: He's quite strict and definitely, we have to discipline. If we do something, we must do it well. No distractions. He's nice if it's not work related. But if it's about the work, he has to go hard.

(04:20) G: If talking about the bully, I think it's how unisex we are. In my opinion, the world is now more opened. People aware about the gender more. We should support this. Gender is a free issue nowadays. It's not about male and female anymore. Gender is also a human. I'm thinking human is more significant than genders

(04:45) N:

Now it's 2021, everything is beyond. If we're a singer, dancer, or artist. We should be paid attention on skills and qualities. I'm performing. I'm singing, I'm dancing. I'm not showing my ID card, or my gender preference for people to know who I am. If people like my work, if my work isn't persecuting for anyone. If it doesn't offend anyone, I don't care too much

(05:15) M: Malicious comments don't mean bad. They want to suggest us. Where to fix. To let us know, to improve.

(06:03) Production Staff: MCKa, look at the camera and move to your left. Ninja, move to center. George, show yourself to camera more.

(06:21) F: We're shooting T-POP Stage today.

(06:24) N: It's the program we want to come out since when we first heard of it.

(06:31) F: I'm planning to come to this program for once when it was launched

(06:34) P.S.: When you walk in, try not to keep your head down. Try to give the gaze of discovering where it is. Try to show attitude and to look sly. Is it okay? Okay. I'm shooting. Start walking when the song plays. 5 4 3 2 Music.

Source: KS Gang. (2021). DOCUMENTARY: 4 MIX DOCUMENTARY SERIES EP6 A MIX OF: BULLYING [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ZZ3MKnvxrl>

DOCUMENTARY: 4 MIX DOCUMENTARY SERIES EP 7 - A MIX OF TIRED

(00:07) NINJA: I don't know, I just kept dancing. I don't know, I just kept dancing. And it ripped. I won't hold my arms beyond this. But I didn't know it was ripped while dancing. It might be tangled and ripped when you danced. Hey.

(00:28) GEORGE: T-Pop Stage is the program for new face groups. Or the old ones. That have astonishing works. Or have activity during that time. It supports T-POP a lot. Most of artists who have just released new songs. Me included, we all want to come to this program

(00:45) FOLKSONG: I've been planning, if there is this kind of program. I must come to it for once.

(00:48) N: It's the program that when 4MIX heard of the launching in Thailand. We dream that one day we must make it to this.

(00:55) G: Are we really coming out to the big program?

(01:00): 'A MIX OF TIRED'

(01:04) G: Today we're recording for Workpoint's T-POP Stage. We're at Workpoint's Studio. And having our hairs and outfits done. But I'm done first. Just relax while waiting. I'm not that tired, I have enough rest. Folksong is the one who has the longest sleep. Went to bed at 6PM, woke up at 7AM. You guys think it's too much? 13 hours. And he's still sleeping. He's collecting his sleeping record. Let's check him out. It's unbelievable. The scene I'm showing to you all is indeed the sleeping collection. Ta da...Ta da. He's been sleeping since 11AM. Keeps collecting since last night. 13 hours. Now it's 14-15 hours. How long you want to sleep. He really is in a deep state. Hmm? Can't be woken up, too. He has to sleep if not he'll get sulky. "Sleepy, why woke me up?"

(02:07) F: It's the first time. I'm so excited. I'm so excited that I don't know what to do. Never have done this thing before.

(02:13) M: I'm so happy. Our group hasn't even debuted, yet. Just released the prologue single. It was honored that the program invited us. I'm impressed and excited very much

(02:23) G: When the staff contacted us we felt why it was in rush. I'm excited and slightly concerned. We have to perform and we practiced really hard.

(02:47) M: I'm so nervous, of course. It's our first stage.

(02:51) N: Excited but yeah. I want to perform it now. We're waiting for the staff to set up the stage and then we perform. Was it a fire? We're hot so fire is needed. We've been waiting for this stage quite long. Finally we made it. I'm so happy and really look forward to everyone to see. I hope you like our performance today

(03:29) Production Staff: Who first? MCka. And? George. Then? Folk. And Ninja, okay. Do you see the Center at your feet? I'd marked there, just stand over it. Ninja, stand over.. yes. You're doing freestyle? Yes. What if you don't? All of you just pose still and

let Folk does freestyle. Let he sings alone and then the others just do freestyle? Sure. Okay. It's starting. Music starts. 5 4 3 2 Music.

(05:11) N: Everything went really fast. We just did it. Yeah, I'm so delighted. But I thought I would be more anxious. But now I'm more feeling proud and want to perform

(05:23) G: I think we did quite well. I had a slight problem with finding cameras. The red light was on this camera but I couldn't turn to it in time. Or when I looked at it, there wasn't the red light.

(05:33) M: The feedback is really good. It exceeded 100,000 views in a week. I didn't expect this as well. As I said, it isn't our debut single. It's just the prologue single. And we didn't promote it. The feedback is brilliant

(05:48) F: I think it's acceptable, the views aren't too low. It's gradually higher, I'm content

(05:55) G: To be frank, it's beyond my expectation. I was expecting everyone to like it, to acknowledge it. But it's 100,000 views after a week. It's like, Wow, that's good, that's fast. They're interested in our group's characters

(06:12) F: Comments? I'm reading some, I feel great, actually. They are complimenting us

(06:19) N: There is barely a negative one. There are some, not many. But we can't control everyone's thought. I'm trying to read only the positive ones first. If there is the negative comment, they're pointing out where to improve. But for those ... malicious comments, I don't keep them in mind. If I do, they're killing us

(06:37) F: If it's true, we improve on that. If not, I don't care.

(06:42) N: According to how I look, I'm curious. If the viewers understand. Or how they're feeling. Most comments about who I am. The more I read, the more touched I become. It seems they like who I really am

(06:58) M: Kid Pid provides us comments to realize. The pressure is how do we do to switch those insults. To be experience, to push us higher, to turn weakness into strength.

(07:12) G: It's quite a big burden. Those who haven't known us before. Start to interest in the group. And they're like "This is just a prologue single." "They haven't yet debuted, I'm looking forward how they'll be after the debut." They all seem to look forward to our debut. And that concerns me.

(07:32) N: They have high hope in Kid Pid. Because they know we're releasing 4MIX's debut single in May. All the comments are "I'm looking forward to it, I really do." It becomes bigger pressure.

(07:42) M: Kid Pid has released for a long time, for years. We practice it frequently, we perform it quite often. People have already seen it. But the single we're working on, no ones have heard of it before. Never heard from anywhere. We're practicing it harder than Kid Pid. We barely have a day off. We're practicing to make it better than Kid Pid.

(08:01) G: We practice almost everyday. From morning until late night. We go to the company and leave when it's already dark. As I remember it right, there were only 2 days I stayed home. It's quite hard.

(08:13) N: While we're working on the debut song, we have Kid Pid Performing on T-Pop Stage. After Kid Pid was released, it overlaps with the debut song. We have to practice both back and forth. And we're short in practicing period with the debut song. We have only a few months. But we had plenty of time for Kid Pid practice. When we were trainees, we didn't have many things to do. We didn't have song to release, we were worn out. When we would have our song, the pressure. But now we had, we could perform at the program, we have feedbacks. I wake up, check YouTube, how it's going. We have interview, foreign interview, many presses. I'm not tired, I'm more enjoyable working on this.

(08:53) F: If it's exhausted, I have to withstand it. It's my job, my dream

(09:11) P.S.: Is my voice ready?

Source: KS Gang. (2021). DOCUMENTARY: 4 MIX DOCUMENTARY SERIES EP7: A MIX OF: TIRED [Video]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTxF9P_zQ7c&t=197s

DOCUMENTARY: 4 MIX DOCUMENTARY SERIES EP 8 - A MIX OF HOPE

(00:42) NINJA: I'm now overwhelmed by the expectation. My family has a lot of expectation on me since young age. That they want me to become the artist. Me either, put a lot of hope on myself. As I said before about my parents, I want them to live the life as they want to. I've been telling them that I want to be a singer until now, I want it to finally be successful. For the company, I'm so grateful. They encourage us, They give us whatever we ask for. They have a high hope on 4MIX and we won't let them down. The expectation for 4MIX is really high. I want 4MIX to get hit really big as a T-POP. I'm not focusing on 4MIX only in domestic. I want us to go to worldwide. Around Asia. That's the goal I've set. And I must achieve it

(01:31): "A MIX OF HOPE"

(01:36) Kittiwat Pangprasertkul (KS Gang Senior Strategic Planner): The goal of 4MIX is literally high. It's so high. That if 4MIX can't make it. Can't go to the point they should have been. We are unsure how it's going to be. Due to the prior situation, COVID-19. It affects our artists including 4MIX. To question on those they've been working on, when, for what. But they never give up.

(02:11) N: I feel like, eventually. We eventually are releasing the song. We've been practicing for years. I want to show our work to everyone now. I don't know how to say. I really don't know. Umm... please look forward to it

(02:34) N: Annyeong.

(02:36) Production Staff: How he sings?

(02:37) N: I haven't listened to it.

(02:39) P.S.: How are we gonna do this? One by one? Or part by part, or what?

(02:43) N: One by one is fine. No, if it's one by one, the first person, you go first.

(02:46) MCKA: What?

(02:46) N: Your voice is the most...When you say it explodes boom boom like this. It goes through my ears

(02:55) M: Start recording now?

(03:00) P.S.: How we're doing this? Here, you sing one sentence each. Yes, this is the first one

(03:06) M: And the second one is sung by all?

(03:09) P.S.: Yes.

(03:11) M: For the debut song, we anticipate it. You will know. I have quite a high hope. As I said, Kid Pid got a lot of good feedbacks. Then we rather expect our debut song. The production is bigger. We've put a lot to this song. We're working hard, we're preparing for it, we're anticipating it a lot.

03:31 FOLKSONG: After Kid Pid was released, we practice everyday. Until the new MV is out, 4MIX works really hard. We're practicing everyday, working hard on this song, choreographing. The choreography is so hard, so that why we have to practice everyday. My only one hope is to people to like it.

(03:49) GEORGE: For prologue single, Kid Pid, I didn't expect much from it. But it exceeded my expectation. I want the debut song to be double from that. People are waiting and looking forward to it. If it weren't reaching what people'd anticipated, I'd be a bit down. But I guarantee, it's lit.

(04:13) N: From the plan, the staff team we've been working with. We're confident that it's coming out really well and everyone won't get disappointed. We don't have much time to practice on the debut song. Only a few months. But for Kid Pid we've practiced for a very long time. It's quite hard and the performance of this song is exhausted three times more from Kid Pid. If Kid Pid makes us really tired, after we perform this song, we collapse, so exhausted.

(04:37) F: The beats of the new song are faster than Kid Pid. The beats are quite frequent and we work on every beat. Never let even one of it go. Literally we dance on every single beat, no stop, until the end of the song. The choreography is definitely harder than Kid Pid.

(04:50) G: It's quite different. About the choreography, the feeling of the song and the mood and tone. Music is also different. The storyline is more clear. The pattern and identity are different

(05:06) M: We are working really hard on this song. I want everyone of you to support and look forward to it. We've put everything into this every effort.

(05:16) N: I want to say that we really really work hard on it. We put everything we have into this song. Please look forward to it. As I said, what Kid Pid has, this song has a lot more. You'll be seeing 4MIX's efforts in the past 2 years. How they are. Please give a lot of supports on our debut song. Whether you like it or not, yeah, please love it.

(05:40) G: For our debut song, 4MIX has been training quite some times. And we're doing our best and quite hard. I hope everyone will give us a lot of supports. The wait is about to end. Our debut single is gonna be lit, is gonna be hot. The stage is on fire again

(06:14) P.S.: 3 2 1 Action

Source: KS Gang. (2021). DOCUMENTARY: 4 MIX DOCUMENTARY SERIES EP 8 - A MIX OF HOPE [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tcnqThXnlao>

DOCUMENTARY: 4 MIX DOCUMENTARY SERIES EP 9 - A MIX OF START

(00:05) Production Staff: How are we gonna do this? One by one? Or part by part, or what?

(00:09) NINJA: One by one is fine. No, if it's one by one, the first person, you go first.

(00:12) MCKA: What?

(00:12) N: Your voice is the most...When you say it explodes boom boom like this. It goes through my ears.

(00:21) M: Start recording now?

(00:21) P.S. Here, you sing one sentence each. Yes, this is the first one

(00:25) M: And the second one is sung by all?

(00:28) P.S.: Yes. Okay.

(00:31) M: With full voice.

(00:31) P.S.: Can you do that?

(00:34) M: Hello, hello. Test, test. Is my voice ready?

(00:44): 'A MIX OF START'.

(00:51) N: Y U Comeback's concept? It refers to a person's feeling who has been done wrongly. No matter in what situation, being dumped. But in the end, those who tortured us come back. After we've become a stronger version, we don't need them anymore. So we ask, "Y U Comeback?"

(01:09) GEORGE: To talk about those who left us, but they couldn't make it on their own.

So they are back to us when we're living a better life. Something like that. But we're getting rid of them. We no longer want them in our lives.

(01:23) N: Everytime I listen to music, most of songs I like are usually those similar to me. With lyrics that relate to a real person, it makes listeners or victims more related to the song or listeners can absorb better. We want to diversify our songs. The previous song is about society. This song specifies on people, in case those who have been through the same things will love this song more. For the genre, we tried to make it easier to listen, with catchy hooks. Last time the feedbacks said the chorus wasn't that catchy. The song is good but not catchy. We tried to arrange almost everything. To be more mass, to be more approachable

(02:00) M: It's quite really hard to sing this song. Ranges of voice are in between high and middle. We have to use full voice and falsetto voice together, blending them well. Which is difficult to sing. But we practiced and put efforts into it and it worked.

(02:21) M: This is 4MIX.

(02:25) N: Annyeong...Recording episode? I was greatly under pressure, more pressure than the previous one. For the key, based on me only, though it's in between the range of full voice and falsetto voice. It has to choose one and switch back and forth. It does need some practices. And I was quite nervous during the recording. I think it's better to do it in one breath.

(02:54) P.S.: Go next

(02:58) N: After this, you parts are only falsetto. No full voice, not even once. You haven't sung in full voice for once in this song. I did a lot of falsettos. If Folksong who has a stronger vocal than mine does falsetto. When we sing live the whole song will be "huh huh."

(03:09) G: Vocal practice. I had to do a lot of it. It's a very difficult song. Small details we overlook. But I have to practice harder. It's hard, quite hard.

(03:36): Shooting Day

(04:00) F: The weather was also very hot. And we all put everything in there

(04:04) N: We shot since it was dark until it was bright. And it was dark again

(04:09) P.S.: 25 Take 2. Camera. Three two one. Go.

(04:22) M: Who's next?

(04:25) N: Guys, I have to run now. Woke up at 2 in the morning. 2AM again? Last MV I also woke up at 2.

(04:30) P.S.: Three two one. Go. Cut! Cut! Got it.

(05:07) G: For my role, I'm an executive managing the office. And there is a subordinate who left before. He thought he would never go big working for us. So he quitted. But I'm still here, in the company, and I've done better. He comes back and applies to our company again, but we turned him down, ignored him. Like that.

(05:28) M: We're firing him, something like that. Y U Comeback isn't only about love. It's also about friendship, work. Where we were outcasted, but suddenly they try to get back in our lives. We don't need them. We want to present several sides for people to absorb, to invest with us and like it.

(05:47) F: For me I'm in the party and being bullied by the others. I've had enough and no longer keep it. So I explode.

(06:00) P.S.: Harder. One more time, one two three, go. Push him harder. One more time. Three two one, push...One two three, go. Taste good?

(06:18) F: He doesn't care. Hey...

(06:27) P.S.: Cut!

(06:33) N: My role is the one who is drunk in love, about relationship. The scene that I cry in front of the mirror. It's for my ex-lover. Getting sad by their old picture of who left me. But I get stronger and escape from that. Then I become fierce. Why are you back?

(06:53) P.S.: You can filp to see the picture again. It's okay to hit it many times. Keep hitting the mirror...Good. Look at your reflection in the mirror

(07:10) M: It was a tiring day. Maybe the most tired day in my life. I went to bed at 1AM. Woke up at 2. Left the house at 3. And it was around 1-2AM when I was home. So tired, but it was really fun.

(07:24) G: It was draining. But I enjoyed a lot. The location was big, too. There were many places I wanted to explore. Even though, I was resting. But I thought it was interesting. I took a look. I feel like it was a bigger shooting and more interesting

(08:05) F: I'm so happy. I was excited on MV shooting day. But the MV releasing day, a micro second before it was out, I was so delighted. "Is our debut MV releasing soon?" Thrilled.

(08:22) N: So thrilled and proud. But I thought I would be more excited, at first. Now there are many things have happened. I'm very contented. When I'm looking back, how I want to be an artist, like I said in every interview that "I want to be an artist, celebrity, singer." But now I'm not even stepping into it halfway. My entire body has already in there. Now we're literally an artist. There are people know us and listen to our songs. I'm so happy that my hard works since I was young. Like I told in previous chapters, finally come true today.

(08:54) G: We have a dream to become artists. We want to release our songs, we want to debut. I want to show everyone the talents of 4MIX. I'm gratified for the staff, too, who help pushing 4MIX.

(09:05) M: So happy that our song is finally out to the public for you guys. I like it so much. I like the directors who edited it. I like the producers who produced it. I really like it and I'm so proud. Never regret releasing our work. And of course, we want to be better.

Source: KS Gang. (2021). DOCUMENTARY: 4 MIX DOCUMENTARY SERIES EP 9 - A MIX OF START [Video File]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zK1BNc7cHbc>

DOCUMENTARY: 4 MIX DOCUMENTARY SERIES EP 10 - A MIX OF NEXT (Final EP)

(00:13) FOLKSONG: Until now, I have taken dancing class, singing class. I have done this and that, I have worked. I feel like I have grown up. To talk about all of us, we have better skills. Our foundations are stronger.

(00:49) GEORGE: It comes with bigger responsibilities. When we decided to be the artists. We have to be more responsible for our own schedules, to pay double attention to our works. We cannot neglect one little thing. To be more accountable.

(01:14) MCKA: It changed a lot. Either singing or dancing, or other talents or characters,. Lifestyle or other things. It changed so much, for me. I couldn't get laid back anymore. I need to look after myself, to practice, to have self-discipline. And I become a lot happier than before. Because I'm doing what I love

(01:46) NINJA: The changes. On behalf of the skills, they definitely changed; singing or dancing. All responsibilities. I also changed. And one important thing, more people literally acknowledge us. Like we have become semi-public figures, people recognize us, people follow us on social platforms more. For me, I have inspired new generation who are LGBT. Now we have to take more responsibilities. Doing what I love. I'm so proud and happy.

(02:30): 'A MIX OF NEXT'.

(02:52) M: I have to say that the feedback is overwhelmed. Thank you for liking the song we released. All the staff and all of us did our best we could. We tried as best as we were capable of. And the feedback is everyone likes it

(03:08) F: I keep track of comments, views, and likes. I think the comments are in the same direction that it's a lot better than Kid Pid. It's better, something like this

(03:18) N: Due to the pandemic situation in our country that it's not becoming the positive way. I was worried if there were audiences when we launched it. If it would be as good as we had expected. Since we cannot have an offline promotion, or to go to any program shows, but with the feedback, 100K views in a day, all the comments and a lot of foreigner fanclubs, I'm so content and grateful.

(03:45) M: The views weren't that high on the first day, I was quite shock a bit but, uhm. However, the next day, the views suddenly rose up a lot. Thank you everyone for sharing and liking to have international fans seen. To have others known about us, thank you very much. Hope you like the song and listen to it often

(04:08) G: I feel like I have more encourage to do it. I want to thank to all of you. For your support, we will be making better music in the future.

(04:19) N: I want you to be confident in yourself when you see me. To be more open-minded, regardless the genders and who you are. I want you to do your best. I have already shown you. I might not be that successful, yet, but it's another step to confirm that if we are talented and if we work hard, nobody cares. As you can see from the comments, none pays attention to my gender. Instead, they admire it. If we are talented and if we work hard enough

(04:45) Kittiwat Pangprasertkul (KS Gang Senior Strategic Planner): To ask if I'm content with the feedback, I'm quite satisfied thus far. But to look for the future path, it needs more. There is nothing that is "The best." There is only "To be better." Thus, as of today, it can be said that it's pretty contentable. Even if it's not yet wholesome or the greatest, but it considers propitious. The great start for the next working phase.

(05:15) N: 4MIX next plan? For me, as I mentioned before, now we are quite recognized publicly. But first, we need to be mass in Thailand. We need to be more acknowledged domestically. Everyone in Thailand has to know us has to like our songs. And the main goal is to go globally.

(05:34) G: For 4MIX's future plan, we won't repeat the same style. We're changing genres for our songs. For the albums, I expect it to have diversities for different targets.

(05:49) F: Our genres will be diversified. Like a sad song, ballad song, or a fast song with no choreography.

(06:01) M: I hope you guys look forward to those. Of course we want to try a lot of new styles that we have never shown before. Kid Pid and Y U Comeback have similar style but our new song might not be the same. You guys have to wait for it.

(06:18) K.P: At first we have to release a number of works, we have to admit that. 4MIX seems to attract a lot of attentions. But we have to keep in mind that the main content is the music, to build an identity in this industry. Their works need a support as well. So the next step is focusing on launching new works regularly and never stop improving and keep seeking for stage opportunity. To find stages to show their works. Since it helps pushing them to another level.

(07:15) N: I want to thank to all of you for staying with us until now. Since the Line Official group chat, since the first group that we had was below 100 members. We were so joyful when it reached 100. When TikTok followers hit 10K, we took a clip. "Finally ten thousand!" Extremely excited. Thanks for being together. For loving, for supporting, for liking 4MIX. For those who always leave some comments or those who support from the back, from afar. Thank you so much for supporting us. Please keep supporting us, we will never let you down.

(07:52) M: Thank you to all of you who are with us since the first time. Since when we started doing TikTok, two of us, three of us, four of us, since we had less than 100 followers. But now we have gained quite a number of it. And those who're still here, thank you for loving us since we didn't even have our own song. Thanks for supporting us. Loving us, cherishing us as if we were your family. We think of you guys as our family. I hope you all won't walk away from us and keep supporting us always.

(08:28) F: Thank you for watching this since the first episode. Or who are our first few fans, thank you for coming with us until now. Don't leave us soon. Keep walking with us, please.

(08:45) G: Thank you everyone. Either the 4MIX's staff or the fans. But who I'm most thankful to, here Khaosan Entertainment. For pushing us to release good work for you guys to hear. And thanks to everyone who cheers us. I wish you won't go anywhere and keep giving love to 4MIX. Thank you, 4MIX. Thank you, MIXER all around the world. Thanks a lot.

Source: KS Gang. (2021). DOCUMENTARY: 4 MIX DOCUMENTARY SERIES EP10 - A MIX OF NEXT (Final EP) [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJXWBJzFFdk>

4MIX - Interview | TPOP Stage | 210712 | T-MUSIC [Eng Sub]

(00:00) Host 1: Now we are with 4MIX.

(00:04) 4MIX Members: Hello We are 4MIX.

(00:08) MCKA: Hello I'm Mcka from 4MIX.

(00:10) NINJA: Hello I'm Ninja from 4MIX.

(00:13) GEORGE: Hello I'm George from 4MIX.

(00:16) FOLKSONG: Hello I'm Folksong from 4MIX.

(00:19) Host 2: Anyway, we would like to welcome you back again.

(00:26) 4MIX M: Thank you. Because the last time they came as a rookie. But today they come with debut stage.

(00:33) H1: I think many people who saw 4MIX will feel wow like me for sure. Because the last performance is very hot. As I said, this stage is on fire. But I want to know. This group is the first LGBTQ+ group in Thailand.

(00:50) 4MIX M: Yes.

(00:50) H1: I wanna really know about the concept in this group. 4MIX is first LGBTQ+ group in Thailand.

(00:58) N: Because of our outfits is unisex and Ninja is LGBTQ+ member. I really like their inner when they dance. I very like it.

(01:13) 4MIX M: Thank you.

(01:15) H1: Just now, I secretly look at each stroke, it's so perfect. Yes. While the beat is so strong that you can keep inner, it's amazing. It is considered one of the boy bands that are very attractive in Thailand.

(01:26) 4MIX M: Thank you very much.

(01:28) H2: We want 4MIX talk about the last perform Y U COMEBACK. How about the concept of this song?

(01:34) N: This song is our debut single. We want it to be a colorful song and having fun for suitable our character. The lyrics would be something about "Why you come back?". Something like that. It's a kind of retorting back to those who had left us in any situation, but we were able to move on and then said why did you come back.

(01:56) H2: Can you said it agian?

(01:58) N: Y U COMEBACK

(03:14) G: Thank for our fans for all around the world for supporting 4MIX and I hope you enjoy our show today.

(03:21) N: And thank you Gracias. Love you.

Source: T-Pop Music. (2021). DOCUMENTARY: 4 MIX DOCUMENTARY SERIES EP - A MIX OF 4MIX [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjQiQebXgYE>

PRIDE OF NINJA: LGBTQ+ เพราะคำว่าเพศจะไม่ใช้ตัวชี้วัดความเท่าเทียมอีกต่อไป

(00:01) NINJA: LGBTQ, male, female, or other gender identities, I want them to focus on humanity, that we are all equal. We are born equally. Thus, I want all of you to genuinely open and accept every aspect. Every work they produced, I want you to look into their selves. To look into their works, potentials, everything that makes them, them, without being determined by genders.

(00:31) N: Hello, I'm 4MIX's Ninja Jarukit Khamhongsa.

(00:48) N: As of today, I'm very proud. I'm proud of myself, for being who I am. I don't really know when it started.

(00:59) N: As I was growing up I just know this is who I am. I know what I like, how I like. So, I don't know when it started.

(01:10) N: I have never had a talk with my family. Like we never have a real talking session that. How their child is, what gender identity their child is, what reference their child prefers. They just let it be freely, and both my parents have always supported me.

(01:23) N: I want to dance, to sing, to participate in any activities. They encourage me to pursue and I think they have known since the beginning because they have been with me since then.

(01:32) N: They knew when I sneaked to do this or that but they just didn't utter about it. I have never tried to act masculinely. I'm like this, I don't know if it considers being masculine. But I never tried to speak like this "Mom, dad, I'm ..."

(01:46) N: I'm just who I am. Even when I was in school. Of course, when I was younger, with how I am, I got made fun of by friends. When I went to relatives', they didn't hate me. But everyone must have been teased before. It became my trauma, deep inside, but we have to move on, eventually.

(02:12) N: Start from yourself, we cannot tell anyone not to do it. We cannot tell others not to bully us. We cannot, right?

(02:20) N: Mom and dad comforted me, relatives and friends comforted me. But that was it, they were just words and comforts. In the end, the most important parts are the mindset and myself.

(02:29) N: You must be like "I'm not wrong, I don't exploit anyone, I don't cause any trouble to anyone." "I'm just being who I am."

(02:37) N: It's quite fascinating, though. All the time with 4MIX. We never talk about it, we never have problem with how the others are gonna do with how I am. Will they be able to accept? Which direction they team should go? Three of them never raise this issue as a problem. And neither do I.

(02:55) N: Open your mind and accept that LGBT is also a human. How the others think of me is on me. If my mindset is positive and heads to the same direction, it's nothing.

(03:07) N: There was time I liked Lady Gaga. Because I felt like she was showing who she is. Others may think she was weird. At first there was when "What's that?" But in the end she proved herself and we knew it was how she has been all the time. I love the uniqueness with quality. Not just being aimlessly unique, being weird pointlessly. We have to have quality while being ourselves. I really liked her, Lady Gaga, at that time.

(03:34) N: I can say I'm an activity student. I attended many contests since young age. Singing contests or acting contests. But everytime I went there, it wasn't quite a criticism.

(03:44) N: Singing and dancing are what I love. I love singing, I love dancing, I love doing those things. But at the contests I had to not be myself. I had to act masculinely, I had to pretend being cool. It was not myself, at all. I started to realize that "Was this what I love?" "Why I wasn't happy to do them" Sometimes I couldn't do it to my standard, to what I could really do. I was quite disappointed.

(04:17) N: There are some comments saying why I completely show who I am, I should hold back a bit. Whether or not to be successful is rely on fanclubs. Fanclubs don't like what I'm doing. When I heard it, I feel ... I can't explain it. I wasn't angry or despair but I was confused why they had a thought like that

(04:43) N: To be an artist, in my opinion...First, we must not lie to ourselves about who we are. And second, not lie to those who are supporting us in the future. Why we have to be not who we are? I want to prove that. I'm an artist, I'm here to provide my talents. Not like, I came out to public but I don't have any talent, I'm showing this and that's it. It's not. Talents must come together. I did practice on singing, dancing. I have got skills, too. I want you to focus more on skills and self. We can improve our skills, but what we were born with or how we are, they're unchangeable. We can't go back and tell our mothers to change the chromosomes right now. It's not impossible

(05:38) N: What represents myself is. Recently, I enjoy wearing clothes people define as female attires. Which is, actually, cloth has no gender. Shirt is a shirt, with sleeves. Pants have two legs, it's the same. There's no indicator. So I'm quite into wearing clothes they consider for women so much. I want everyone to have confidence in dressing. If you find the color is right, the style fits, that's enough. You don't have to overthink "I like this one but it's for women, what should I do?" Just wear it, no one will point at you. If you ask if Thai society has been more open, in my idea. It has, for several gender identities.

(06:25) N: To be honest I don't want them to focus on LGBTQ, male, female, or other gender identities. I want them to focus on humanity, that we are all equal. We are born equally. Thus, I want all of you to genuinely open and accept every aspect. Every work

they produced, I want you to look into their selves. To look into their works, potentials, everything that makes them, them, without being determined by genders.

(06:51) N: So I think we're more open to it. And I want to take part in one of the small cogs to spread this issue wider. I hope who're watching this know that even if I haven't succeeded, there are people who understand us. And today, they accept us. What you want to do, go for it.

(07:34) N: I have never felt I'm being left out. Because of my social circle and my family, I don't feel different. I'm fine.

Source: KS Gang. (2021). Pride of Ninja : LGBTQ+ เพราะว่าเพศจะไม่ใช้ตัวชี้วัดความเท่าเทียมอีกต่อไป [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcRudSQIZY>

ARTICLES

NINJA OF 4MIX TALKS ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCES WITH GENDER

As pride month comes to a close soon, Thai group 4MIX's Ninja talks about his experiences in the LGBT+ community. He talks about how he never had to come out to his parents, they just kind of always knew and let him go with the flow. Growing up, Ninja was often made fun of. Even some relatives acted tense around him, which sparked a bit of trauma within himself as he explains. But he also had the support from his friends and family. He then goes on to talk about how at the end of the day, it's his mindset about himself that matter most. He is happy being his true authentic self.

He goes on to discuss how he idolized Lady Gaga growing up. He mentioned how he liked how she was breaking barriers while being her true self: "I felt like she was showing who she is.... I love the uniqueness with quality, not just being aimlessly unique, being weird pointlessly. We have to have quality while being ourselves."

He used to attend dancing and singing contests. He loves singing and dancing but something was missing. He had to pretend to be masculine, which simply wasn't him. He started questioning if that was what he wanted to do because he felt unhappy. Being a part of 4MIX, he gets to be himself. He stated "To be an artist, in my opinion, first, we must not lie to ourselves about who we are. And second, not lie to those who are supporting us in the future."

Ninja mentioned how he enjoys wearing clothes that are typically defined by society as feminine. He believes though that clothing has no gender because a "shirt is a shirt, with sleeves, and pants have two legs, its the same".

Source: Hallyu Center. (2021). Ninja of 4MIX Talks About His Experiences with Gender. Retrieved from <https://hallyucentral.com/news/ninja-of-4MIX-talks-about-his-experiences-with-gender/>

HISTORY OF 4MIX BOYBAND UNISEX, A NEW DIMENSION OF T-POP

4MIX is a new boy band. Responding to the era of gender diversity from KS GANG, a subsidiary of Khaosan Entertainment with 4 members in the band, namely Ninja Jarukit, the only LGBTQ member of the band, Magka Nattapat, Folksong Chaninthorn and George Ramesuan by the character of the 4MIX band members, although are different But when they come together can get along well Anyone can sing, dance and rap. without separating who stands out in any particular field but will focus on teamwork that is charming, attractive and unique.

The band 4MIX has released 2 singles, "Wrong" and "YU COMEBACK", which after the release of YU COMEBACK has caused the band to become famous as far as Latin America, such as Brazil, Mexico, Spain and Portugal. There are many celebrities and YouTubers making their cover clips. The group's official fan club name is UNIX.

Recently, 4MIX performed a mini concert in Mexico. Which has received overwhelming response from fans who come to see the concert. And the fans also made a surprise by singing YU COMEBACK along with each other, causing the boys to express their joy at the same time.

Source: News Directory. (2021). History of 4MIX Boyband Unisex, a new dimension of T-POP. Retrieved from <https://newsdirectory3.com/history-of-4MIX-boyband-unisex-a-new-dimension-of-t-pop/>

T-POP TREND IS HOT!! KHAOSAN ENTERTAINMENT SENDS 4MIX FAR AND WIDE ACROSS CONTINENTS!!

The T-Pop trend is very strong. Especially in the past 2-3 years because in addition to the T-Pop band is a trend that has been talked about a lot in Thailand. can also penetrate the international market Step into the eyes of the world while building an overwhelming fan base from abroad as well. Recently, Khaosan Entertainment camp launched 4MIX, Thailand's first LGBTQ t-pop band. Until becoming a popular trend across the continent to shake the T-Pop market to the Latin American zone without a doubt.

Mr. Phurit Kunchorn Na Ayudhya, Managing Director of Khaosan Entertainment Co., Ltd., discussed the strategy of penetrating the T-Pop market by using a fan base from abroad that Do groups or girl groups are very difficult. especially a role model such as a famous band artist of Korea So we came back to look at what we can do besides boy groups and girl groups. We focus on another target that I believe is online. There is another parallel world, LGBTQ, and we think from the listener's point of view. want to consume these content resulting in a band 4MIX is an LGBTQ T-pop band of Thai blood, where the younger members of the band are not all LGBTQ, but the band is considered a representative who presents views on freedom. In some countries, the concept of gender freedom is important and open. After the release of the band 4MIX, it received a very good response. both in Thailand and abroad Especially in the Latin America zone, the fact that the 4MIX sisters are famous over there is because we do quite a lot of homework. plus the children There is a stage to show talent in various programs. make various content many on youtube channel This allows us to know the target information of people who are interested and like the band. At that time, the camp itself was still not 100 percent confident in releasing the debut song of 4MIX, but in the end, we had complete information on the back of the house. We released YU COME BACK. Thailand With believing in the database from which we create various SEOs, we know that we should focus on the group. This made us decide to invest our marketing budget to South America. Then the feedback came back very well, including the reaction and cover that foreigners made. So I look at marketing in an inside out style with content and platforms of our home to support, or in the form of outside in that I try to risk if we are surrounded by foreign countries. and the fan base from abroad that he is open and accepting of rights and freedoms and being LGBTQ will be able to feedback back to Thailand." And after the camp has sent 4MIX to work as far as Mexico with a mini concert "4MIX UNIX MEXICO, the cooperation of the Thai Embassy in Mexico with Khaosan Entertainment" On December 5th (Mexico time) caused a phenomenon for Mexican fans. More than 3,000 people flocked to see the concert beyond expectation. In addition, in Thailand, there is a trend that talks about this phenomenon on the online world. until trending on Twitter all day and become a hot trend on YouTube including pushing the total number of concert clips on the band's Tiktok channel to 3 million views within 24 hours and can't resist the trend until the online media Radio and TV media They stick to news reports until they are tight in the media area. Create a buzz and make Thai people know more about 4MIX. and talking about the T-POP trend in our country that should support and push Soft power of Thailand to go further Plus this work, the fans also demanded to see 4MIX fly to a concert in Brazil as well It can be

said that this event by Khaosan Entertainment can be easily extended to 4MIX. and make a huge income into the country for sure.

Source: News Directory. (2021). T-Pop trend is hot!! Khaosan Entertainment sends 4MIX far and wide across continents!! Retrieved from <https://www.newsdirectory3.com/t-pop-trend-is-hot-khaosan-entertainment-sends-4MIX-far-and-wide-across-continents/>

4 FACTS ABOUT 4MIX, THE THAI-POP BAND MAKING IT BIG IN LATIN AMERICA

Karatpetch Vattanapoon

Are you familiar with Thai-pop music? Here are some fun facts to learn more about 4MIX, the trendy Thai-pop group that is dominating the Thai pop music scene and gaining special attention in Latin America.

It's longer just K-pop groups who are making waves on a global entertainment stage. Although Thai-pop music has been around for quite a big while, it's the new generation of T-pop bands that are gradually drawing international attention for their styles and talents. We currently have our eyes on 4MIX, the talk-of-the-town band that brings a great deal of excitement and novelty to the Thai music industry and is a new sensation in the Latin world. They're known for their high-octane performance and charisma, which are a feast for the eyes and the ears. Get to learn more about this rookie band with these four interesting facts.

4MIX is a proud LGBTQ band

4MIX was formed by Khaosan Entertainment and consists of four members: Mcka Natphatra, Folksong Chaninthorn, George Ramet, and Ninja Jarukit, who is openly gay. Aside from their impressive capabilities and attitudes towards diverse sexual orientations, the fact that these boys have introduced a new and fresh dimension to the LGBTQ industry is absolutely something to see.

4MIX is one of the first T-pop bands to boast unisex fashion

All members of 4MIX are able to give off unique vibes thanks to their unisex fashion. They're firms believers that gender-fluid fashion isn't limited by the traditional menswear and womenswear binary. Whether it's the outfits or the hairstyles, they're by no means keeping things one-dimensional.

They have a large international fanbase

Almost a hundred reaction videos, thousands of dance covers on TikTok and millions of views on their videos on Youtube are proof of the immense popularity of 4MIX outside of Thailand. They've won the hearts of their fans in Latin America and travelled all the way to Mexico for solo concerts. What's more, the Royal Thai Embassy in Mexico has acknowledged their fame and even posted their music video on their Facebook page. With each member having over a hundred thousand followers on Instagram, we only see them acquiring more followers going forward.

They have a Spanish version of their song

'Roller Coaster' is one of the songs that shot 4MIX to fame both in and outside of Thailand. It's a fun rhythmic song with a hook that catches the ears and an easy-to-remember dance. We've seen countless dance covers of it on Tiktok. With a growing number of followers in South America, they didn't miss the chance to impress these people with the Spanish version of their smash hit. The music video quickly became a new obsession and, of course, it didn't disappoint the fans at all.

Source: Vattanapoon, K. (2022). 4 facts about 4MIX, the Thai-pop band making it big in Latin America. Retrieved from <https://www.lifestyleasia.com/bk/culture/entertainment/4-facts-about-4MIX-the-beloved-thai-pop-band/>

TRANSCENDING BOUNDARIES

Thai LGBTI group 4MIX's Mexico tour shows how music can serve as a soft power tool
Suwitcha Chaiyong

It was a pleasant surprise for the four Thai singers of 4MIX when more than 3,000 fans welcomed them at the mini-concert "4MIX Unix Mexico" in Mexico City. The venue, a stage in front of a mall, was jam-packed. Some fans had prepared signs in both Thai and English to express their appreciation for 4MIX and when the singers performed, and they sang along in Thai.

Bhurit Kunjara, managing director of Khaosan Entertainment who is marketing 4MIX in Latin America, did not expect such overwhelming enthusiasm.

"It was unexpected. We were not prepared for such a big crowd. 4MIX sang only a few songs, but the impact was huge. Mexican fans wrote messages on posters in Thai. The fans enjoyed it even though 4MIX performed a song they had never played before. Mexican news outlets also reported on the event. There were no cultural boundaries. It was true soft power and the power of music marketing," Bhurit said.

4MIX -- Ninja, Macka, Folksong and George -- debuted as an LGBTI group in May last year. Their debut music video, Y U Comeback, on YouTube currently has more than 14 million views.

4MIX has a fanbase around the world, including Brazil, Mexico, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Denmark, Germany and Spain. Among international fans, Brazilians constitute the most with 30%, while Mexican fans make up 5%.

Bhurit has been the MD of Khaosan Entertainment for six months. Before that, he was responsible for music marketing and database analysis. Besides 4MIX, Bhurit has been behind the social media success of Potato, a rock band, and Youngohm, a hip-hop singer.

Life spoke to Bhurit about his marketing strategy for 4MIX in Mexico.

How did you come up with the concept of an LGBTI group for 4MIX?

It began with Ninja, who is LGBTI and accepts himself for who he is. The other three members also accepted Ninja with no bias or prejudice. Content on social platforms of 4MIX that relates to identities or equality has been well received by fans. Since fans do not mind the way they are, we decided to develop their fanbase.

How did you select these four members to be part of 4MIX?

In the past, music labels used talent scouts to search for aspiring singers. It was centralised, but I prefer decentralisation. I let the fanbase choose their performers. Hence, we chose young performers who already had followers on social media because whatever these rookies release, the followers will interact with them. Music is only one part of their content. In fact, they are free to be who they want and their followers will support them.

Have 4MIX members undergone strict training like K-pop singers?

I do not want to compare to K-pop training. With my principle, the quartet does not have to do synchronised dancing. I want them to be a simple and down to earth group. If their choreography is too complicated, nobody will want to dance along. The group has gained a fanbase by being themselves.

What does this first step of success mean to you?

I did not expect that the number of Mexican fans that I saw as data could actually convert to physical real fans. I think it is possible to hold a large-scale concert. The project proved there are no cultural and language boundaries. People from different sides of the world can bond. I hope that executives at state agencies see how music marketing works. T-pop is not only entertainment but it can help strengthen the reputation of the country.

What is 4MIX's next approach for Latin America?

4MIX recently released a Spanish version of the song Roller Coaster to express their appreciation to fans. We have also coordinated with the Thai embassy and consulates in Brazil for an event in March.

What do you think about the future of T-pop?

What is the definition of T-pop? For me, T-pop is a brand that has diverse DNA and many music labels and songs. In the future, if we want T-pop to go further, we should consider music to be more than just music. I look at music as a tool to connect people of other languages and cultures. We should consider music as a tool and use it to expand business opportunities.

Source: Chaiyong, S. (2022). Transcending boundaries. Retrieved from <https://www.bangkokpost.com/life/social-and-lifestyle/2268019/transcending-boundaries>

APPENDIX D

“LYRA?”

VYRA



Source: Vyra. (n.d.). LYRA – “LYRA” [Official Music Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nG9sdW8BJ9g>

LYRICS

This what I’m born to be

คนเคียงข้างเธอ It’s me

(Girl by your side, It’s me)

แต่เพียงได้เจอ

(Just when we met)

I want ya

รอมานานคนนี้

(Been waiting for so long)

ตอนนี้ได้เจอสักที

(Now finally found you)

Look what you see

I need ya

แค่นี้ได้พบเธอ

(Just when I met you)

เพียงได้มองตาในใจก็รู้

(When our eyes met, in my heart knows)

I want you to be mine

Lyra, I'm gonna be your star

เตรียมหัวใจไว้ให้ดี I'm Lyra

(You'd better be prepared, I'm Lyra)

This is my name Lyra

อีกเตี้ยก็ได้รู้กัน I'm ready

(Soon you will realize, I'm ready)

วันเดียวไม่พอ

(One day is short)

Let's move it, step it, shake it off

พร้อมที่จะรัก

(Ready to love)

Cuz I don't care

ไม่รู้ใจเธอว่าไง

(Don't know what's in your heart)

I don't mind if you don't like me

ก็ให้มันรู้ไปสิ

(We gotta wait and see. Won't you love me?)

เธอจะไม่รักจริงละ But I love you

(Really? But I love you)

ให้ฉันได้รักเธอ

(Just let me love you)

อยากจะทำตามหัวใจเรียกร้อง

(Because my heart wants what it wants)

I want you to be mine

Lyra, I'm gonna be your star

เตรียมหัวใจไว้ให้ดี I'm Lyra

(You'd better be prepared, I'm Lyra)

This is my name Lyra

อีกเดี๋ยวก็ได้รู้กัน I'm ready

(Soon you will realize, I'm ready)

I'm gonna be your star

เตรียมหัวใจไว้ให้ดี I'm Lyra

(You'd better be prepared, I'm Lyra)

Follow me, Follow me

No matter where I go, I know you'll follow me

I'm your starlight in the night

ดาวที่เธอจะคอยมอง และเริ่มต้นชีวิตใหม่

(The star you look upon and start your new life)

Just so you know Lyra will come for you

All that you want Lyra will give to you

ไม่มีกฎเกณฑ์ในชีวิตแต่ละองดู

(No regulations in our lives, we could do)

Just me and you we'll create the new rules

แค่ฉันได้พบเธอ

(Just when I met you)

เพียงได้มองตาในใจก็รู้

(When our eyes met, in my heart knows)

I want you to be mine

Lyra, I'm gonna be your star

เตรียมหัวใจไว้ให้ดี I'm Lyra

(You'd better be prepared, I'm Lyra)

This is my name Lyra

อีกเดี๋ยวก็ได้รู้กัน I'm ready

(Soon you will realize, I'm ready)

เตรียมหัวใจไว้ให้ดี I'm ready

(You'd better be prepared, I'm Lyra)

อีกเดี๋ยวก็ได้รู้กัน I'm Lyra

(Soon you will realize, I'm Lyra)

Source: Genius. (n.d.). Lyra Lyrics. Retrieved from <https://genius.com/Lyra-t-pop-lyra-lyrics>

LYRA MUSIC VIDEO STILLS

LYRA – "LYRA" [Official Music Video]



LYRA – "LYRA" [Official Music Video]



LYRA – "LYRA" [Official Music Video]



LYRA – "LYRA" [Official Music Video]



LYRA – "LYRA" [Official Music Video]



LYRA – "LYRA" [Official Music Video]







Source: Vyra. (n.d.). LYRA – “LYRA” [Official Music Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nG9sdW8BJ9g>

TRANSCRIPTION OF VIDEOS

THAI T-POP GROUP LYRA SHOOTS FOR GLOBAL AUDIENCE

(00:00) Jennis: We want to introduce to bring out our T-Pop music into the eye of the world.

(00:16) Thai group Lyra is bringing T-Pop to the world.

(00:24) Pun: We made a song that enhances more Thainess in our song. For example in Lyra, we have added Thai instruments which are pin and Khaen. That is a very traditional Thai instrument so I think that it makes our music more visible for the international fans to realize that oh, this is Thai song.

(00:47) Lyra is backed by the world's biggest music label, Universal Music Group. It hopes to match the success of South Korean artists who have turned K-Pop into international phenomenon.

Source: Reuters. (2021). Thai T-Pop group Lyra shoots for global audience [Video]. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/-hTn7zXvpvk>

LYRALITY SHOW HIGHLIGHT | EP. 1&2

(00:01) All Members: LYRA!

(00:06) Music Executive Paul Sirisant: We already are aware about the COVID-19 situation which is not looking good. So we have to postpone L.A. trip. I just talked to the trainer as I think that having you guys separately is not working. We have to put you guys together and stay in the same house for like a month.

(00:33) New: No one knows where we are going to stay. They just told us that it's close to Bangkok.

(00:43) All Members: Wow so big! OMG! This is really big.

(01:01) Fond: Woahh, there is a nice view at the balcony!

(01:03) Pun: Like as soon as you take a picture here you look super high-class. So bougie!

(01:07) A room full of fashion

(01:14) A basket full of makeup!

(1:30) Jennis: Awww the stairs zone!

(01:38) Happiness in a new home.

(01:44) Pun: This room is so cute!

(01:46) Noey: There is a bathtub in the bedroom!

(01:50) *How we are going to share the rooms?*

(01:50) Pun: I want to sleep in that bathtub like sleep sleep.

(01:54) J: We have to make it fair and square...We are going to use our lucks again

(02:09) P.S.: In the next 30 days, I want you to look at this as working as a professional It's going to be really intense and I want you to give it a 100% *singing class*

(02:19) Niky: No matter how hard it's going to be! If I get pass this, I know I will be really strong in the end.

(02:25) All Members: Because we are LYRA!!!

Source: Vyra. (2020). LYRALITY SHOW Highlight | EP. 1&2 [Video]. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/vpC2pVYSP-g>

LYRALITY SHOW HIGHLIGHT | EP. 3

(00:01) All Members: LYRA!

(00:06) Start a new day with dance practicing

(00:11) Girl Hip Hop Dance Class.

(00:12) *Trainer correcting dance moves*

(00:19) Musical singing practice

(00:24) *Pun's singing*

(0:32) *New praying*

(00:36) Noey: It's so hard.

(00:52) Dance Mentor: What you're missing is the viscosity like when someone is pulling you. Plus dancing like you have its accent then it's going to be better. You guys are going to dance better. I'll see you tomorrow in the morning.

(01:01) Jennis: I'm not going to make it.

(01:02) Dance Mentor: Where are you going?

(01:03) J: I have to work tomorrow

(01:25) Ne: Pun, don't cry.

(01:29) P: I am not going to cry, just want to sleep so bad.

(01:35) J: So everyone probably knows that today is Monday and also the day we have to move our bedrooms.

(01:52) Practicing really hard for the dance exam.

(02:02) Music Mentor: Okay so in the real circumstance, you can't ask them if you can restart again right? So you have to sing it out really good from the start.

(02:18) No: I feel so pressured.

Source: Vyra. (2020). LYRALITY SHOW Highlight | EP. 3 [Video]. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/vpC2pVYSP-g>

LYRALITY SHOW HIGHLIGHT | EP. 4

(0:01) All Members: LYRA!

(00:04) R&B Lyrical Class

(00:006) Dance Mentor: And roll...Stop. Step. Step! Stop Up! 1...

(00:33) Music Workshop

(00:40) Practice how to express feelings through lyrics.

(00:53) Task on writing lyrics

(00:59) Music Mentor 1: Listening to her lyrics, I feel like this is cool and outstanding. Also it's connecting with the rhythm...Look at you guys got it all

(01:24) Pun: Really??

(01:33) Music Mentor 2: The thing that can expand the meaning of the song is emotions.

(01:39) New: Wow! it's really good. I love it.

(01:42) Music Mentor 2: This is not only happen to you guys because it happens to everyone. So every time you want to try something new you have to concentrate first.

(01:54) P: The feeling that I clicked with her is she experienced the same thing with us.

(01:59) Jennis: Sometimes the perspective of how teachers look at students is different than how the person that used to experience the same thing we're going through look at us.

(02:08) Noey: The beginning of Missx6. If we can agree on who we're going to write about this song to then it's going to be in the same way on this song

(02:18) P: I want to tell that person that "I miss you too" even though I don't say it out loud. I think writing down the lyrics is the better way to show them how really I feel.

Source: Vyra. (2020). LYRALITY SHOW Highlight | EP. 4 [Video]. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/zwmTbZ6FqnA>

LYRALITY SHOW HIGHLIGHT | EP. 5

(00:01) All Members: LYRA!

(00:08) New outfits are coming every Friday.

(0:10) Stylist P'Pook: So I want you guys to create new looks for yourself

(0:16) 1 hour later

(0:36) Stylist P: Today we're going to separate you guys out as 2 groups. I want you to help each other out to create outfits as a same story.

(0:43) 1 hour later

(0:48) Noey: So I get to try out new styles that I never got to try and everyone never got to see me in this style as well.

(00:55) Jennis: Getting a chance to come here and learn from P'Pook is like I get to try new things that I have never done before.

(01:05) Make-up and training workshop

(01:08) Stylist P: Okay, you guys get to see the example and all the techniques, so I will let you create a new look. I just want to see something new that's all.

(01:30) New: So they want us to make a silly face right? I mean I do it all the time but none of them is good because it looks really ugly hahaha. But I tried it just now and it turns out not ugly and all. I honestly think it kinda looks cute, I guess it depends on how cute you look. The person who does it looks pretty cute so of course it's going to look cute.

(01:50) Niky: I was like "Woah! Our team is so cool" even though we don't look the same but it kinda goes together like there is some power when we're together.

Source: Vyra. (2020). LYRALITY SHOW Highlight | EP. 5 [Video]. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/96cPGemOIMk>

LYRALITY SHOW HIGHLIGHT | EP. 6

(00:01) All Members: LYRA!

(00:06) Final Test, Dancing 1. Solo dance 3 songs that you learned 2. Solo freestyle 1 song.

(00:08) Singing 1. Solo slow song 1 song 2. Solo fast song 1 song 3. Duet 1 song.

(00:14) 3rd style for the test - Hip Hop.

(00:17) Fond: I feel really stressed, not because of the dance even though it's really hard. It's just I feel more down than any other day.

(00:28) Noey: I don't like it at all when I'm working and it doesn't go as I planed. Not as well as adults expected to be or to see. Because it's too soon and it's not ready, no matter what we're not ready.

(00:46) Music Producer: I see all the efforts you guys have been giving to this and I understand because you guys have been away from home for so long like 3 weeks so I will let you guys have dinner with families at LYRA's camp.

(01:03) No: I miss them so much like this big. I can't talk about my mom, don't make me cry here. I can't cry here.

(01:11) New: I want to see them both especially my dad. I want to see him really bad

(01:15) Music Producer: But, we only have one car to pick up only one family.

(01:23) Pun: I probably feel uncomfortable that only one of them members' family going to be here.

(01:27) Jennis: Like this is not that they reward us or something. It's more like Noey is going to be the one because others don't want to see them now.

(01:34) Niky: I want to talk to them but just not now because I don't really like to show much of my feeling.

(01:40) F: Because these days just really pressuring us like everyday

(01:49) Music Producer: I can see that everyone is trying harder but it can be better. I want you guys to get across your limit.

Source: Vyra. (2020). LYRALITY SHOW Highlight | EP. 6 [Video]. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/PsQIWkqP134>

LYRALITY SHOW HIGHLIGHT | EP. 7

(00:01) All Members: LYRA!

(00:05) Last day before final test.

(00:13) Jennis: Like I feel pressured without knowing that I'm pressuring myself.

(00:15) Niky: Like they want us to figure out with the situations if there's any problem under any circumstance. So we didn't really have time to practice and there's a new show that we haven't practiced together too. Hey, this is not enough of time. No matter what it's not going to be enough of time.

(00:32) New: I have a news to tell, so the group dance for 3 songs is going to be the final decision if LYRA will be debut a song or not.

(00:50) Music Executive Paul Sirisant: Hello everyone. I'm really excited as well. I'm excited to see the growing potentials from you guys. I hope you guys give it a 100% for today. Because today is the day that we will see if you're ready to be that one or not.

(01:36) Panel Member 1: Noey didn't do well on the lip-sync test when the teacher of choreograph class designed for you.

(01:43) Panel Member 2: The thing I would say that I'm disappointed is Niky because Niky is not the same Niky I used to know.

(01:52) Panel Member 3: Honestly, I actually enjoy and feel very happy with today's test but from what I saw it's not the artists or what we call LYRA that clearly.

(02:03) P.S.: I can see the personalities of each one more than before and it's a good thing but it's only the beginning.

(02:12) After the results, the situation is kinda back to normal.

(02:15) But!

(02:23) Ni: Let's just finish this real quick.

Source: Vyra. (2020). LYRALITY SHOW Highlight | EP. 7 [Video]. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/zNyGJSBue3U>

LYRALITY SHOW HIGHLIGHT | EP. 8

(00:01) All Members: LYRA!

(00:07) Final Test Showcase: To decide if LYRA is going to step into another phase or not.

(00:29) Music Executive Paul Sirisant: The way you guys danced just now, remember that it's not good enough. It doesn't reach the standard and you can't go on like this. It's going to fail

Because if we're taking another further step and let's everyone see we can only be this good. We can't redeem our names...I will give you a chance in 10 minutes to come back. Come back with focus and as a united and do better

(01:06) All Members: We are LYRA!

(01:47) P.S.: Okay, it's better than last time. Today is not the last day you're going through something. Crying is not going to make you better. You have to fight with it. On Monday, we are going to record the sound first thing at Karma Studio.

(02:04) New: We step over the wall for another step and I'm proud of myself

(02:09) Pun: At first I feel like it's going to be long but today as day 27, I feel like it's really not long at all.

(02:14) Noey: I feel like we have done a lot of things but today I feel like it's like it's already the day. I'm not ready to go home yet.

(02:26) Soon the stars, LYRA will be shine out together.

Source: Vyra. (2020). LYRALITY SHOW Highlight | EP. 8 [Video]. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/Pe9Ol8gdKAc>

LYRALITY SHOW HIGHLIGHT | EP. 9

(00:01) All Members: LYRA!

(00:06) First time LYRA gets to hear their songs*

(00:06) Music Executive Paul Sirisant: Right now the songs are still in the developing stage as you can hear it they are not done yet. Today it came as a beat like a melody without lyrics. Plus it has a word LYRA in the song.

(00:23) Fond: 6 people who have variety style can actually like the same exact song

(00:31) Niky: "LYRA", I like it. The first time I hear this I was like "Wow".

(00:43) P.S.: This is the studio where all the popular artists recorded their songs. Today do your best for the recording...Richard and Jay will let you guys hear the new song

(01:11) Noey: The style of the song is really beautiful so is the melody and when we listen to it, we can actually see the picture.

(01:26) Jennis: Everyone looks like you're having fun while I feel really sad when I listen to this

(01:32) Pun: Finally, there's a footage of Jennis crying in the documentary.

(01:41) No: At first, when I listen to this it makes me smile but after the first half it makes me blush.

(01:47) F: It's so cool.

(01:49) Ni: I'm not crying because it's sad but because it makes me blush!

(01:55) This is an experience we could never forget and it's hard to come by. It's really magical to be here.

Source: Vyra. (2020). LYRALITY SHOW Highlight | EP. 9 [Video]. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/UzuAZFR44Oc>

LYRALITY SHOW HIGHLIGHT | EP. 10

(00:01) All Members: LYRA!

(00:09) First time seeing their dance moves for the song

(00:12) Dance Mentor: And everyone gotta believe that you can do it. Not only you can dance but I wanna see the progress and the upper level of your stage performance as well as yourself.

(00:21) First time LYRA practicing their dance for the single.

(00:21) Music Executive Paul Sirisant: Our LYRA is the project that we work as inside out to get this through. Bring the image and voice that I hear in my head out.

(00:27) 3rd time LYRA practicing their dance for the debut single.

(00:36) Niky: I'm sweating like a wet dog.

(0:38) Jennis: We don't do lip-sync anymore and I'm running out of the energy to talk.

(00:40) Pun: I never thought this song would be this tiring at first

(00:45) LYRA comes to see their shooting outfits for their first MV single.

(00:50) Stylist: The design that P'Mi did for us is based on your first single which is "LYRA" song

(00:57) Fond: We already planned which one belongs to whom and I think everyone quite satisfied and it brings out characters of each one of us.

(01:08) 10 days later...

(01:11) LYRA gets to try their outfits for the first time.

(01:16) Ni: Am I pretty? Yes.

(01:26) Stylist: I think it looks better if we pin it like this.

(01:34) Last practice before MV shooting.

(01:43) Dance Mentor: You sent it out to your friends right? Next you gotta make your eye-contact to them. Very deep.

Source: Vyra. (2020). LYRALITY SHOW Highlight | EP. 10 [Video]. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/zWUdUR7zs9g>

LYRALITY SHOW HIGHLIGHT | EP. 11

(00:01) All Members: LYRA!

(00:06) It's time for LYRA to do makeover.

(00:18) Fond: I'm so happy because I have been waiting for this day for so long and it came out really nice. I love it.

(00:30) It's time for first single's cover shoot.

(00:35) Niky: We got every look done which are fierce, cool and not smiling.

(00:42) Pun: My outfit is a little bit manly, it's with pants. It's really really cool.

(00:49) Noey: I feel much sexier than usual but if you ask if I like it? Well yeah haha

(00:57) F: A girl who is a little bit sexy like really flirty

(01:04) New: It's a bit sporty kinda type and the colour I present is orange.

(01:12) Jennis: My character is a bit more like a strong woman. Pretty and confidence not teasing but more like serious.

(01:23) No: So we finished one look and this is probably for the cover from what I heard. But it's feeling like we're stars in the space.

(01:34) Music video shooting day

(01:57) Director: LYRA walk!

(01:59) All Members: Our song is LYRA!

Source: Vyra. (2020). LYRALITY SHOW Highlight | EP. 11 [Video]. Retrieved from https://youtu.be/_VbDgZ5gZ9Y

UNSEEN EXCLUSIVE: THE LAUNCH OF LYRA DEBUT STAGE EVENT

(00:19) New: I can only walk this fast. In this heels is just impossible. (Laughs).

(00:24) Staff: So Noey will be over there and Fond will be here. Jennis will be on the second floor and also New.

(00:30) Jennis: The staff is taller than us and when we stand there. Are they going to be able to see us?

(00:35) Staff: So you have to switch the position between second floor and third floor

(00:59) Ne: Are we ready to go?

(01:04) Music: "I'm gonna be your star. You'd better be prepared, I'm LYRA. This is my name LYRA.

(01:18) Niky: Please, I really wish it's not going to be rain tomorrow

(01:23) Music: I'm gonna be your star. You'd better be prepared, I'm LYRA. Ready to love.

(01:23) J: Cuz I.. Ouch. (Laughs).

(01:37) Staff: The mic just hit your head huh?

(01:38) J: Right now? I'm exhausted. Gonna head home and snooze.

(1:50) Host: Please make some noise for LYRA

(02:52) Music: LYRA. Just when I met you. When our eyes met, my heart knows. I want you to be mine. LYRA. I'm gonna be your star. You'd better be prepared, I'm LYRA. This is my name LYRA. Soon you will realize, I'm ready. You'd better be prepared, I'm ready. Soon you will realize, I'm LYRA.

(04:43) Audiences: LYRA! LYRA! LYRA! LYRA! LYRA! LYRA! LYRA! LYRA!

(04:15) J: Everyone said that just forget about the outer factors that we cannot control. Just do your part at your best. So I was relieved that everything went well.

(04:27) Noey: Actually, it is the first time we sang it live. But when we got through it, it's like we broke the wall to another step of this challenge. Let's see what wall I'm going to break down next. Thank you!

(04:40) New: Being one of the members of LYRA is very special. Because this opportunity is very rare and hard to get. The other 5 members and I will do our best at the next work and also this one. Thank you!

(04:53) Pun: Even when we were wearing in-ear, we could still hear the crowd screaming quietly. So I kinda took it off a little bit when we finished the performance and everyone around us was like LYRA! LYRA! And I felt overwhelmed that we got the chance to performed and showed everyone what we have been working on.

(05:07) Fond: I want to say thank you everyone and I want you guys to keep supporting us like this. Today probably wasn't perfect but we did our best and I'm very happy with the outcome. Please keep supporting us, thank you!

(05:21) Ni: Relieved, I feel very relieved like everything is finally done I'm very proud of myself, I didn't sing out of tune so like I'm very completed today. I don't know if you guys like it but this is my name LYRA, thank you! What did I just say?

Source: Vyra. (2020). Unseen Exclusive: The Launch of LYRA Debut Stage Event [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFwYsuC3kAE>

ARTICLES

THAILAND'S LYRA, 'GIRL CRUSH' SISTER OF JAPAN'S AKB48, SHINES IN DEBUT SINGLE

Published 1 year ago on October 14, 2020 by Micah Go

Six stars are shining bright over Thailand right now, with a debut single that — as of posting — has racked up over two millions views on YouTube. It's a feat that should make their Japanese senior sister group, the internationally-acclaimed AKB48, proud.

LYRA, the sub-unit of the idol group BNK48 created in collaboration with Universal Music Thailand, launched its self-titled debut single on Wednesday, October 7. (As widely-known, Japan's AKB48 has official sister groups in other Asian countries managed by local agencies, all carrying the 48 Group brand while adopting country-specific names.)

LYRA's conception was announced by iAM (Independent Artist Management) in 2019 as a collaboration between them and Universal Music Thailand in a bid to release original Thai pop songs separately from those of BNK48's.

BNK48, like other AKB48 sister groups, primarily adopts the Japanese group's songs into their own language. They rarely release their own original songs. LYRA attempts to divert from that.

LYRA showcases its self-titled track with a Western pop style that is both elegant and energetic — heavily-punctuated by drum-and-bass instrumentals as well as rapping, which are both uncommon in 48 Group songs. LYRA exhibits more of a “girl crush” image similar to that of contemporary Korean pop groups like BLACKPINK, (G) – IDLE, and Everglow.

Source: Go, M. (2020). Thailand's LYRA, 'Girl Crush' Sister of Japan's AKB48, Shines in Debut Single. Retrieved from <https://japan-forward.com/thailands-lyra-girl-crush-sister-of-japans-akb48-shines-in-debut-single/>

K-POP? HOW ABOUT T-POP? THAI ARTISTS SHOOT FOR GLOBAL AUDIENCE

By Chayut Setboonsarng, Jiraporn Kuhakan

BANGKOK (Reuters) - Move over K-Pop. Here comes T-Pop.

Thai female band Lyra, backed by the world's biggest music label Universal Music Group (UMG), is hoping to harness its devoted fan base and match the success of South Korean artists who have who turned 'K-Pop' into an international phenomenon.

"We have high expectations. We want to introduce ... T-Pop music to the world," said 20-year-old Lyra member Jennis Oprasert.

Last year UMG partnered with Thai firm Independent Artist Management (iAM) to launch the six-member group, after auditioning some 80 girls and young women from the popular idol group BNK48.

"It's a bet," said Paul Sirisant, who heads UMG in Thailand. But he believes originality will drive the band's success.

The group trained for months remotely via Zoom and later lived together in a house after plans to go to Los Angeles were interrupted by the coronavirus pandemic.

"We saw them transform into their individual artistic selves, which is great, but there were many tears," Sirisant told Reuters.

Navigating the shift from BNK48's musical style was not always straightforward.

"It's not an easy ride at all," said 18-year-old Natticha 'Fond' Chantaravareeleekha.

"The dancing, the music genre is different. I've never done it before, but even though it's hard, I've loved (doing) it since I was a kid, so I'm ready."

Their eponymous debut single has over 6.5 million views on YouTube after about two months online.

"We incorporated Thai elements by including sounds from two traditional instruments," another member, Punsikorn 'Pun' Tiyakorn, 20, who also came up with the group's name.

Fans at home and abroad have been supportive.

"I will support them until the end," said 23-year-old Danaiphat Singto, as he watched a video of a performance by the band in Bangkok. "I really want them to reach global audiences."

The band is part of a wave of Thai musicians gaining attention from audiences and investors abroad.

Thai-German singer Jannine Weigel was the first artist to sign with RedRecords, a venture between UMG and low-cost carrier AirAsia.

Early signs of success already have labels planning new groups

“We plan to have more bands with Universal,” chief operating officer at iAM, Nataphol Pavaravadhana, said.

“It will be different from Lyra for sure. Maybe indie. Stay tuned.”

Source: Setboonsarng, C and Kuhakan, J. (2020). K-Pop? How about T-Pop? Thai artists shoot for global audience. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-thailand-music-idUKKBN28S2CA>

UNIVERSAL MUSIC THAILAND AND IAM RECORDS PARTNER TO LAUNCH LYRA

All-star Thai Pop Phenomenon Set To Introduce The New Sound Of T-Pop To The World

Eponymous Debut Single Launches Globally Today

BANGKOK, 09 October 2020 – Universal Music Thailand, a division of Universal Music Group (UMG), the world leader in music-based entertainment, today announced the exclusive global signing and launch of all-star Thai girl group LYRA, in partnership with leading Thai music company IAMRecords, marking the beginning of a new collaborative relationship between the two companies.

In recent years T-POP has become a hugely popular genre within Thailand and increasingly on a global level, as more and more young people have access to idol groups and songs through streaming and social media. IAM is Thailand's leading artist management company and label and is home to Thailand's most popular girl idol group – BNK48, which has more than 78 featured members. IAM's official YouTube channel has more than 1.4 million subscribers and has achieved more than 1.2 Billion video views, since launching in 2013.

Formed from the ranks of the idol group BNK48 – LYRA is the culmination of a rigorous selection process lasting more than a year, a process which eventually saw six of the most talented members of the group, hand-picked to form a new and completely different act. The chosen six entered the cocoon of an intensive music camp from May to June this year, working with Thailand's best producers, choreographers and stylists, emerging from this process transformed into LYRA. The process has also seen them also work with some of Thailand's leading creatives, including; music producers Montonn Jira and Richard Cracker, Thailand's leading stylist & Vogue Fashion Editor Ms. Pook Jongkol, and renowned fashion designer, Millin.

The official line-up of members; Pun, Jennis, Noey, Fond, Niky, and New was unveiled today with the reveal of the band's eponymous debut track "LYRA", which is available to stream now across all platforms.

In making the announcement, Paul Sirisant, Managing Director of Universal Music Thailand said, "We are delighted to partner with the team at IAM to officially launch LYRA, and to bring the unique sound of T-POP and Thailand to the world. Over the past few months during lockdown, we have witnessed an incredible metamorphosis and we look forward to working closely with our UMG label partners around the world to introduce LYRA to audiences globally.

Nattapol Bawornwatana, COO, Independent Artist Management/IAM Records said, "It has been a great journey working with Universal Music Group (Thailand) on this joint venture. Both companies are respectful for each other strengths and together we are

stronger. I am also very proud to see our Artists transformed into LYRA, the hard work that they and our team has put in over the past year has paid off.”

Setting LYRA apart from other pop groups, including their alma mater BNK48, is the ‘inside-out’ approach to their transformation from T-POP idols to artists in their own right. Rather than looking to outside influences – either within Thailand or from Western pop – LYRA has instead built their sound and style based on what was already within the individual members of the group: their talent, their desires, their ideas.

Producers Jira and Cracker turned to traditional Thai instrumentation to form the backbone of the track’s sound. While what emerges from this approach is an entirely new and unique, it is clear that it has deep roots in the musical cultures of Thailand. On the surface, the track sounds like a revolutionary approach to using this instrumentation. Yet, in fact, it is an evolution of traditional Thai music. The use of the distinctive melodic range of instruments such as the khaen and the pin falls well within the scope of Thai tradition, but LYRA’s debut track supercharges the evolutionary process by fusing it with everything that is great about modern hip hop: its insistent danceability, its unyielding attitude, and its instantly memorable hooks. In doing so, they have probably just redefined the future sound of Thai pop music, transforming the traditional into the contemporary.

Moreover, it wouldn’t be at all surprising if LYRA’s sound soon spills out beyond the borders of Thailand and fills the airwaves internationally, in much the same way that Reggaeton, bhangra and K-pop sounds have crossed into the Western pop markets in recent years.

LYRA have arrived on the music scene at a time when freedom of individual creative expression is both a hot political topic and a technological inevitability. The younger generation have grown up in a world where people have been free to speak their minds on social media, with many young people carving out lucrative careers doing just that on YouTube. With every aspect of their creative process emerging from LYRA’s members – from choosing the band name to determining their choreography – LYRA’s approach represents this generation perfectly, allowing them to connect to their audience as individuals, transforming the traditional relationship between girl groups and their fans.

Source: Universal Music Group. (n.d.). Universal Music Thailand and IAM Records Partner to Launch Lyra. Retrieved from <https://www.universalmusic.com/universal-music-thailand-and-iam-records-partner-to-launch-lyra/>