

In Praise of Pop! Hong Kong's POP Culture

In this issue, we take a look at a few facets of Hong Kong's pop culture, and celebrate the HKU alumni who have played important roles in shaping the development of this distinctive form of cultural expression. These are individuals who have personified Hong Kong's robust, never-say-die spirit, and who have stepped into the spotlight to tell their stories their way. Few thought of leaving behind legacies; they simply felt they had something worth sharing, and they told it straight from the heart. Not surprisingly, along the way they captured our hearts as well.

幾許有共享榮華

皆有其用

天造之才

讓我也發光芒

盼可將燭光交給我

香港

漁燈

豈能及人面

鱗光

望不見歡欣

檀島灘岸

鐵塔凌雲

何時何方何模樣
俯首低眉

歌神再現

吳俊雄 (BSocSc 1980; MPhil 1983)

港大社會學系講師

(筆名：梁款)

零四年六月，歌神紅館再現，十號晚，我梳頭赴約。入場時，接過阿 Sam 私人餽贈歌迷的紅白藍膠袋，內藏港式人造大鼻一個，我知道這將會是不尋常的一晚。

跟許多現場觀眾一樣，過去三十年，我痛惜阿 Sam，九二年之後，更一直叫他做歌神。這一晚，架起大鼻，我心情興奮，想了很多，我想起我深愛歌神，原因其實有兩個：一、歌神的歌，二、歌神是神。

歌神的歌

許冠傑音域不廣，技巧不嚇人，但唱歌彈琴有種別無分店的超強感染力。阿 Sam 的歌，旋律上口、感情直接。他無師，但有才氣，所以有本事將自己喜愛的音樂元素搬牆拆屋，混集併湊，師承貓王，又鍾情柳冰，電結他背後，暗藏八弦琴，就此成了世界樂壇奇葩 Canto Pop 的開山鼻祖。

更有趣的是，在未變成神之前，阿 Sam 是一個有血有肉的城市井香港人。他喜歡打雀、追女仔、扒艇和拜關公，也從來不避身世地將自己的口氣、爛面和散落在廟街和九龍塘之間的最愛與最最愛，全部寫在歌上。他的得獎金曲有狗吠、雞啼和麻雀聲，即使在出名癡狂的 Canto Pop 界，也是百分百的後無來者。

年月下來，阿 Sam 的歌已變成了我這一輩人的民謠，聞歌自然起舞，聽到六嬋白動想起三太公。對於我，阿 Sam 的歌已經不是歌，而是一種官能刺激。

歌神是神

九二年阿 Sam 光榮引退，譚校長封他做歌神，我覺得那是校長一生人少數做對了的事之一。許冠傑作風親民，開演唱會喜歡跑上山頂跟無錢的歌迷擁抱，但他多年來獨一無二的演藝成就，令他有資格登上殿堂，讓遊人恭奉。一九九二年，本土演



Pop music has undergone a localisation process over the past three decades. Mandarin songs once dominated the market but in the early 1970s, Sam Hui 許冠傑 (BA 1971) played a critical role in making Cantonese the language of local pop music by composing and singing in Cantonese. He played in the band "Lotus" and sang his first Cantonese song – 鐵塔凌雲 comparing experiences in America with Hong Kong – in the popular TV programme "雙星報喜" hosted by himself and his brother Michael Hui 許冠文.

Not only did the song signal the start of Cantopop, it also prompted a local pop-song culture on the mainland and in Southeast Asia. His song "Games Gamblers Play" (鬼馬雙星), using colloquial Cantonese, became the first Chinese song played on BBC radio in Britain. Sam's songs and movies expressed identity with, and love for, Hong Kong, and also voiced the frustrations and social discontent of the working class.

Thank You
for the
Music



藝正值黃金收成期，它值得擁有一個圖騰。一九九二年，香港社會本身經歷轉折，六四回響未停，九七警鐘在敲，最有成就的中產階級，正在紛紛用腳投票，移民外國，做二等公民。香港需要一個「神」，給六百萬個不願離開的香港人投放感覺，聚焦盤點。那時候，「黃毓民」和「余若薇」（作為港人的符號）還未出世，這個重擔落在阿 Sam 身上。

對於我，阿 Sam 是名副其實的歌神，因為他夠膽挑起這個歷史重擔，以他的歌，履行做神的責任。九二年告別歌壇演唱會上，我見到阿 Sam 跟平民擁抱，以歌聲和說話向我們細訴別離的心事，更將大眾憂鬱的集體情緒，扣連香港歷史、歌頌香港精神，呼喚同舟共濟、寄語鐵塔凌雲，如他臨別所言：「唱出大時代嘅音樂」。

我記得那一次演唱會，我跟著阿 Sam 唱了很多歌，流了很多淚。

再見歌神 欲言又止

歌神跟我，有這麼一段令人會心微笑的歷史。零四年歌神在紅館再現，我充滿期望。

四小時之後，站在紅砌的星空底下，我心反側。演唱會給我歡樂，因為歌神始終是歌神。演唱會令我悵惘，因為我發覺許冠傑、我和香港社會，其實已經變了。

六月十號晚的演唱會，我唱了很多歌。我很高興阿 Sam 精神奕奕、打狗有殺氣，泛舟見溫情。扮貓王似貓王、唱日本歌有港式日本味。我確認了陳少寶所言非虛：作為一個音樂人，阿 Sam 其實是很有實力的。去年我出席了不止名牌演唱會，我敢說阿 Sam 的演出，比 David Bowie 的還要貨真價實。

但六月十號晚的演唱會，我沒有流淚。到演唱會的中段，我甚至覺得有點疲倦、迷惘。起初我以為因為 Sam's angels，慢慢我知道，是因為阿 Sam。

對於我，阿 Sam 演唱會的絕招是「放」——唱歌、跳舞、握手、講個人笑話、和時代使命，通通開放。在此，九二年的告別演唱會是個巔峰。零四年演唱會給我的感覺卻是似放還收，在情緒上有個大瓶頸。

這個月阿 Sam 不斷在台前幕後祝福大家，說要讓歌迷開開心心過一晚。演唱會當晚，他坐言起行，大癲大肺、大唱

「秣歌」，連自己曾經「想死」都變成一個笑話。我想這是一個缺憾。阿 Sam 是歌神。我渴望跟阿 Sam「攬攬錫錫」，但我其實更喜歡阿 Sam 跟我月旦社會，細說心事，唱出一些在香港做人的道理。這些事情，當晚阿 Sam 有講，但欲言又止，甚至自覺壓抑。我想知道更多他變成二百二十磅大肥佬的背景和心情；我想知道張國榮過身那一晚，他在想什麼、幹什麼？我想聽他再唱《洋紫荊》、《同舟共濟》、《那裏是吾家》，然後分享對港人七一遊行的感受。阿 Sam 給我的卻是隱喻、佯狂，以及比打雷還要響的寂靜。

我覺得阿 Sam 曾經痛過。他的零四演唱會，多唱往日溫馨，少講個人傷痛與時代命運，我可以理解，但覺得可惜。演唱會尾聲時，阿 Sam 身繫區旗，外穿紅白藍膠袋禮服，高唱一代港歌《鐵塔凌雲》，意象無比豐富，但九二年唱同一首歌時那種實實在在的集體激情以及架在刀鋒上的張力，已經淡化。面對複雜傷痛的現實他只能硬著頭皮，繼續微笑。那一刻，我擔心阿 Sam 已由邊緣退後，收起刀鋒，將「歌神」急凍成一個純粹懷舊的印象。這個印象依然有單眼、靚女和大牌，但它已無力幫歌迷揭開在香港做人處世的新一頁。

繼續微笑

因為這個情緒的瓶頸，深夜回家後，心情忐忑。打開電腦，收到張炳良的電郵，再連上「維護香港核心價值」的網頁。它告訴我，零四年的香港精神已由九二年內向的「同舟共濟」轉型

到「跟全球現代化」接軌的「人權法治、公平公義、和平仁愛」的新價值。香港變了。或許阿 Sam 說得對，「歌神可以幫你頂住一晚，但頂不到一世」。我可能真的需要更多、更新、更複雜的神，幫我衝開前面的瓶頸。

不變的是，我依然深愛阿 Sam，願你在零四以至這一生都繼續微笑。



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He made history in 1983 by holding the first solo pop concert in the Hong Kong Coliseum. He retired in 1992, having earned the venerable title of "God of Cantopop" (歌神). Had he not retired, Sam's role as the voice of the working class (打工仔) would have provided a much needed emotional outlet in the present economic climate for the depressed working class.

Sam has not been in the public eye for 12 years. The recent fervour he excited began with a 26-concert comeback in June, July and August. For the August run of these concerts, over 40,000 tickets were sold out within 9 hours, and fans old and young are still clamouring for more. He is famous for his happy, cheerful songs, songs for the weary labourers, the forgotten workers and people in the streets. His songs invoke the resilient spirit of Hong Kong, the passion and the pride, and encouraged people when times were tough in the 70s and 80s, and now.





By the 1980s, Cantonese songs had replaced Mandarin songs as the pop music of choice in Hong Kong. As Cantonese television drama series became popular, the songs they featured also gained popularity. Michael Kwan 關正傑 (BArch 1971), an architect, was a popular Cantonese singer at the time. The lyrics and melodies of many of his songs (天蠶變, 大地恩情, 兩忘煙水裡, 人在旅途灑淚時) represented the sensibility and language of generations of Hong Kong people.



Good lyrics are an essential ingredient of Cantonese songs and James Wong 黃湛森 (BA 1963; MPhil 1982; PhD 2003), lyricist and composer, has created more than a thousand to date. Best known to Hong Kong people as Wong Jim 黃霑, the “Father of Contemporary Pop Songs” started writing lyrics in 1960 and has earned numerous awards in Hong Kong, Taiwan and the mainland. His best-remembered songs (狂潮, 上海灘, 忘盡心中情, 萬水千山縱橫, 獅子山下, 舊夢不須記, 中國夢) recall the moods and socio-political changes of the 1970s and 1980s.



Wong Jim also writes typical Hong Kong-style “popular literature”. Nicknamed “Ghost Talent” (鬼才) for his ingenuity and “Indecent Jim” (不文霑) for his

irreverent jokes, he has written more than 30 paperbacks on a variety of subjects, ranging from sex to Cantonese opera. He has combined his literary talent with commercial viability, producing a popular mix of writing that can at times be very vulgar, and at times very highbrow.

A multi-talented icon, Wong Jim is also admired for his lyrics. He was very prolific in the 1970s and 1980s, producing popular advertising jingles and even more popular TV theme songs. He has worked in advertising, in television as a talk show host, radio and films. His PhD thesis explored the rise and decline of cantonpop. In short, Wong Jim is a household name.



Leung Wai-man 梁偉文 (BA 1984), better known as Lam Jik 林夕, is also a prolific Cantopop lyricist with more than a thousand works already. He has won many awards in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Lam Man-yee 林敏怡 (BSocSc), another award-winning local song composer, wrote numerous famous tunes (信, 幻影, 空鏡).



Other lyricists include Ip Hon-leung 葉漢良 (BA 1977) as Ka Lung 卡龍 and Purple Lee 李紫昕 (BA 1995; MPhil 1999).

Cantopop became the symbol of the modern Chinese lifestyle and was embraced by almost all Chinese communities, including those on the mainland and China towns overseas.



Seeing it their Way

Movies have long been viewed as commercial ventures in Hong Kong. Only over the last ten years have they been widely accepted as a cultural contribution, shaping local identity and consciousness. After a period of domination by Mandarin movies produced by the Shaw Brothers (邵氏), Cantonese movies began to find a place in Hong Kong as early as the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s.

In the 1960s, Nellie Jane Suanne Tchou 朱護 (BA 1957), alias Qin Yu or Qin Yifu 秦亦孚 (秦亦孚), movie actress turned screenwriter, is another example of literati's involvement in

scripts apart from Eileen Chang 張愛玲 (Studied English and Chinese 1939-1941). Her adaptation *Star, Moon and Sun* (星星、月亮、太陽) (1961) and her last script, *Wife of a Romantic Scholar* (蘇小妹) (1967) were awarded Best Picture and Best Screenplay at the 1st and 5th Taiwan Golden Horse Awards respectively. Qin Yu has written about 20 scripts for MP & GI 電懋 (later Cathay 國泰) between the 1950s and 1960s. MP & GI films developed simultaneously with Hong Kong culture as well as blending together cultures of the East and West in those days.

Starting with dance movie acting in the late 1950s, Christine Yuen Ching-me 袁經綿 (BA 1962), better known by her stage name "毛妹" (Mao Mei), has been a major force over the last three decades behind the local dance development. In 1964, she set up her own ballet school, and since then has devoted herself to ballet and dance education.

Other alumni who have played a part in Hong Kong's film culture include Joan Teng (known as 鄧麗盈) (BSocSc 1987), Thomas Lam 林祖輝 (BA 1989), Ann Allason Bridgewater 柏安妮 (BSc 1990), Valerie Chow 周嘉玲 (LLB 1993), Crystal Kwok 郭錦恩 (MA 1995), Nicola Cheung 張樂悅 (LLB 1997) and Celia Sie 施念慈 (BA 1997).



Visionary Women

The late 1970s saw the debut of New Wave Movies which continued into the 1980s. Young directors like Ann Hui 許鞍華 (BA 1969; MA 1973) made films with a realistic social context and strong personal touch.

Ann had already won many awards when she started producing drama at RTHK. In 1979, she directed her first award-winning movie *Secret* (瘋劫) which earned her three Golden Horse Awards in Taiwan.

It was the films *The Story of Wu Viet* (胡越的故事) and *Boat People* (投奔怒海) depicting the suffering of Vietnamese refugees under political persecution that made her stand out as a director of sufficient stature to deal with stories of social



upheaval and distress. Subsequent films *Love in a Fallen City* (傾城之戀) and *Starry is the Night* (今夜星光燦爛) captured the mood of the 1930s and 1940s and the social unrest of the 1960s and firmly established her directing style.

Summer Snow (女人四十), which dealt sensitively with the subject of Alzheimer's Disease, love, and life, again earning her many awards in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Berlin. Ann has taught at HKU and also various other institutions. Although she currently has several projects in the preparation stage, she prefers to think of herself as "lying in hiatus until further notice"!



Director-cum-screenwriter Mabel Cheung 張婉婷 (BA 1973) and her producer-director-screenwriter partner Alex Law 羅啟銳 (BA 1976) have collected awards since their New York University final-year project *The Illegal Immigrant* (非法移民) which earned Mabel the Best Director prize at the Hong Kong Films Award in 1985. Alex won Best Screenplay at the Award two years later for the love story, *An Autumn's Tale* (秋天的童話). The pair also earned local and overseas awards for the movies *The Soong Sisters* (宋家皇朝) and *City of Glass* (玻璃之城), the latter set against a backdrop of HKU and its students in the 1970s. Alex also directed the movie *Painted Faces* (七小福), which won seven Golden Horse Awards and an award at the Chicago International Film Festival.



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Mabel and Alex are now working on several projects in Beijing. One is a period film called *The Legend of Ah Toy* (暫名：阿彩傳奇), which is about the first Chinese prostitute in America in the 1860s during the construction of the railroads. They are also producing and directing a costume TV drama set at the beginning of the Qing Dynasty. Next year, they will be involved in the writing and directing of a multi-media musical to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of motion pictures in China.



Clara Law 羅卓瑤 (BA 1976) took a second degree in film making at the National Film School in Britain. The movie she made in her final year of study – *They Say the Moon is Fuller Here* (愛在別鄉的季節) – won the Silver Plaque award at the 1985 Chicago Film Festival. Clara was heavily influenced by French New Wave cinema and earned herself cult status. She also won a Golden Leopard award at the 1992 Locarno International Film Festival for *Autumn Moon*.



Screening the Next Generation

James Yuen 阮世生 (BA 1986) and Joe Ma 馬偉豪 (BA 1987) are two recent prolific film directors and screenwriters. James has written or co-written 27 movies in the period between 1989 and 1997 (e.g. *He's a Woman, She's a Man* 金枝玉葉, *Twenty Something* 晚九朝五). His debut as a director was 1997's *The Wedding Days* (完全結婚手冊), a romantic comedy. Many of these scripts depict younger people and their relationships in modern-day Hong Kong. Joe Ma has contributed to more than 25 scripts since 1987 and directed over a dozen films since 1992. Most of Joe's films are light romantic comedies about the twenty-something generation, and are often box office hits (e.g. *Feel 100%* 百分百感覺, *Lawyers*, *Lawyers* 算死草, *The Golden Girls* 山水有相逢).

The local film industry would not be the same without Kenneth Ip 葉健行 (BA 1977), better known as Shu Kei 舒琪, who as a critic has written extensively on films and spurred the development of a film culture.



Music of Next Generation

After having found fame for his swimming records in Hong Kong, Alex Fong 方力申 (BBA graduating in 2004) is now also known as an upcoming pop singer with a healthy image. He is representing Hong Kong as one of the deliverers of the torch for the Olympics in Greece.



You may not know who the Pancakes are, but you should have probably heard her song on the Kowloon Motor Bus TV commercial. With her passion in creative and alternative music, Dejay Choi 蔡明麗 (BA 1999) has signed with a Spanish record company. Her albums can not only be found in Hong Kong, but also in Europe.

Pioneering DJs



Chu Pui-hing 朱培慶 (BSc 1971), now Director of Broadcasting, and Raymond Ng Sek-fai 吳錫輝 (BA 1973), heading the television division, began as DJs for Radio

Television Hong Kong (RTHK) (香港電台). As a DJ, Pui-hing produced pop music programmes with Raymond, and launched the pop music channel, Radio 2.



Stephen Chan 陳志雲 (BA 1981, second right) of the Drama Lab generation, now General Manager at TVB, has hosted a variety of programmes under the name 韋家晴.



Joe Chen Yum 陳任 (BA 1995; MPhil 2001), a popular DJ in the late 1960s and now a programme host and columnist, wrote his thesis on the history of radio broadcasting. Chen is regarded as the forerunner in establishing a local DJ culture. Currently, he also operates a restaurant, "JC at 65" in Central.



Elvin Wong 黃志淙 (MPhil 1997), a DJ and columnist, is also a critic on pop-music culture.

All the World's a Stage



The 1980s saw the emergence of professional theatre groups. Though never formally trained in drama, secondary school teacher Raymond To 杜國威 (BA 1971) soon became the leading playwright in Hong Kong. He started a trend that changed stage performances from non-profit making cultural activities into popular and

profitable Broadway-style shows, and crossed over into film.

His play, *I have a Date with Spring* (我和春天有個約會), proved that theatre could and should belong to the wider public. After several successful re-runs at the government-subsidized HKRT, it was made into a film in 1994 by Springtime Productions, a commercial enterprise, winning the Hong Kong Film Award for Best Screenplay and popularising the play and the HKRT cast. It was then re-presented on stage by Spring-Time Production with a movie/pop star cast for commercial runs, luring movie-goers into the theatre. Its director, Ko Tin-lung 古天農 (CertEd 1981), is now Artistic Director of the Chung Ying Theatre Company.



The play had a run of over 80 performances and attracted 100,000 strong audience. Ko is also co-presenter of the popular television satire on current affairs "Headliners" (頭條新聞), an RTHK programme.

A *Sentimental Journey* (劍雪浮生) starring film legend Chan Po-chu 陳寶珠 drew about 140,000 in 1999, including tourists from the region and returning Hong Kong emigrants fans. He won the Golden Horse Film Award (1997) for the film *The Legend of the Mad Phoenix* (南海十三郎), which also won a second Hong Kong Film Award (1998); and received the Bronze Bauhinia (BBS) in 1999. His film directing debut was in 2001, directing *Forever and Ever* (地久天長) adapted from another HKRT play he wrote.

The work of Raymond To and Ko Tin-lung portray love in its many splendid forms, celebrate the traditional virtues of kindness and benevolence, those eternal values of dignity and integrity, help define that sensibility which we call Hong Kong.

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