Hong Kong Indie Music in Mediations:

A Study of Cultural Prosumer

FUNG Chui Bik

A Thesis Submitted in Partial fulfillment

Of the Requirement for the Degree of

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In

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A Study of Community...

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Abstract entitled: Hong Kong Indie Music in Mediations: A Study of Cultural Prosumer

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ABSTRACT

By studying a group of cultural prosumers who are active participants of the local indie music community, this paper attempts to explore the changing pattern of local indie music culture.   This paper's theoretical framework follows upon Keith Negus's theory of music mediation (1997).   Inspired by Bourdieu's notion of cultural intermediary, Negus contends that music culture should be comprehended according to three kinds of music mediations: intermediary, technological and social mediations. Following Negus's argument, this study is set out to see how different mediations can affect local indie listeners in producing and consuming indie music.   In this study, active participants of local indie community, which include indie fans and media workers, are taken as units of analysis. Through addressing the question—'How can different levels of mediations affect indie hobbyists' reception and production of local indie music?'-- this paper tries to unfold a new indie culture of Hong Kong.

Keywords: subculture, mediation, music prosumption

論文題目: 中介作用中的香港獨立音樂: 有關文化創造及消費者的研究

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<div align="center">概要</div>

透過分析本地的一群文化創造及消費者，本文嘗試探索香港獨立音樂文化的改變歷程。本文以社會音學學家 Negus (1997)提出的中介作用理論作爲主要理論框架。受到皮耶・布赫迪厄的文化中介概念之啓發，Negus 主張從三類不同的中介作用: 中介者的、科技的和社會的中介去理解音樂文化。依從 Negus 的論點，這研究希望探究出不同的中介作用是如何影響著本地的獨立音樂迷創造及消費獨立音樂。在這個案研究中，本地獨立音樂的活躍參予者包括: 獨立音樂迷以及傳媒工作者將會被用作主要的分析單位。本文希望藉論証不同的中介行爲是如何影響著獨立音樂愛好者創造及接收本地的獨立音樂，從而向讀者展示出一種新的獨立音樂文化。

關鍵詞：次文化、中介作用、音樂的創造及消費

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INTRODUCTION

Briefly, according to the latest version of Oxford Dictionary, 'indie' is an adjective *"which (is) used to describe popular music played by bands that are new and not well known, that is produced by small independent companies."* Although indie music gets its root in the early 1960s, monolithic definition of indie music is still debatable (Lee, 1995). Usually, different audiences have different definitions of indie music. A great plasticity can be seen in its usage.

The term "indie music" has only become common in Hong Kong since the mid 1990s. After a 'bandmania' in the early 1990s, indie music has come to symbolize a form of music culture and attitude associated with a specific group of local listeners. From the late 1990s, more and more Hong Kong researchers have started to study popular music culture. However, much attention has been focused on Canto-pop music with little paid to the indie sector, not to mention the analysis of indie music culture from a communications angle. The impact of Hong Kong's pop music on the music culture of China is doubtless. Nonetheless, the impact of its other side i.e. indie music, is neglected so far by most scholars. In fact, local indie icons like Beyond and MCB Magazine have long been regarded as the muses of many Chinese rockers. Therefore, to obtain a complete picture of the popular music

culture of Hong Kong it is necessary to conduct a study focusing on the local indie scene.

In analyzing the indie music scene, British music sociologist Keith Negus has contended that indie music can only be understood through its active participants and their use of mediations. In general, his ideas regarding mediation and music intermediary were developed using three principles: 1) mediation as intermediary action 2) mediation as transmission and 3) mediation of social relationships. The former refers to the cognitive process of how one's knowledge, preference, attitude and education background affect one's articulation of particular music. For example, a local indie hobbyist who has learnt guitar might possibly pay more attention to the guitar instrumentals of a piece of indie music than an indie fan that has never learnt any musical instrument. The second refers to the way music and media technologies are used in distribution and reception of sounds, words and images of music. For instance, compared with traditional record music, the prevalence of local DIY music might not be counted by how much money the song can generate but how many "clicks" the song can obtain on internet. The latter principal refers to the process of how the social meaning of a particular music can be mediation through the interaction between collective intermediary actions and technological mediation. To clarify: for example in Hong Kong, the rise of DIY musicians must be closely related to the advent of computer technology and the celebration of DIY power by the local mass media.

This study will investigate the footsteps of Negus's argument about mediation, in an attempt to grasp the changing pattern of the indie music culture of Hong Kong through the study of a group of new-rise cultural prosumers. In the Early 1970s, Marshall McLuhan and Barrington Nevitt suggested that with electric technology, a consumer would become a producer. In 1980, futurologist Alvin Toffler expanded on McLuhan and Nevitt's ideas further in his book *The Third Wave* and coined a new term 'Prosumer' to illustrate the increasingly proactive operation of market goods. In the book, he uses the term prosumer to describe the possible type of future consumer that is highly involved in design and manufacture of goods, so as to point out that in the future the act of consuming is no longer purely a passive acceptance of a given product but a creative process[1] which aims at specialization and customization. It was with the recent decade of the digital big bang that Alvin Toffler's prediction of prosumer culture (the boundary between producers and consumers blurring and merging) came into being in the local indie community. Unlike previous hardcore indie fans in 1990s, the existing active participants of the local indie community, with the aid of innovative music technology, usually have dual roles (music consumers as well as producers/professionals). Because of the blurring of roles, new cultural practices have evolved within the local indie community. Among the new-rise indie prosumers, The Pancakes, a one-girl DIY (Do It Yourself) band, is generally viewed as the first success of this kind. The nuance of The Pancakes' combined using of different mediations (which include DIY music technology, niche marketing and middle-way media strategies) has set a

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[1] http://www.worldwidewords.org/turnsofphrase/tp-pro4.htm

new formula of success for many indie late comers like Garlum, Chet Lam and at 17. From the indie movement in the 1990s to the craze of DIY music in the early 2000s, we can see significant changes in the mediations of local indie music. This paper will examine that argument that the burst of indie prosuming culture is closely related to the changing of intermediary, technological and societal mediations.

The goal of this study is to trace the interactive dynamics among intermediary, technological and societal mediations that are being undertaken among indie prosumers. To identify the mechanism of how different mediations contribute to the new indie prosuming practices, this research takes three groups of indie active participants: Producer-consumer, Professional-consumer and Media worker as units of analysis.

In this study, two research questions are asked:

1) How do local indie hobbyists prosume (produce and consume) indie music culture or simply how can different levels of mediations affect indie hobbyists' reception and production of local indie culture?

2) And thus, after explicating such mediation process, can any pattern or mode of presuming be found?

Finally, the paper will conclude with a brief discussion on the threats and opportunities that such a new prosuming culture has brought to the local indie music world.

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CHAPTER ONE

LITERATURE REVIEW

Popular music as social studies

According to Shuker (2001) the term popular music first appeared in William Chapple's piece *Popular Music of the Olden Times* in 1855. From historical studies it is commonly believed that the term popular music did not gain wide acceptance until the 1930s (Gammond 1991; Williams 1983, cited by Shuker 2001). As Williams has suggested, popular music is music of and for the people. In conventional thinking, the roles of musician and fan are always separate. The former is always regarded as the producer whiles the latter as consumer. With such classic grouping, some early sociologists started to be aware of the importance of the social interaction between musicians and their listeners. In talking about popular music as "a genre for reference to musicians, fans and marketers", one must mention Theodor Adorno's influential piece *On Popular Music* (1941). Whilst witnessing the rise of jazz and Tin Pan Alley in the late 1930s, Adorno wrote the piece to criticize the standardization and commoditification of music. Although for the time being his point of view is generally subjected to strong criticism for being too elitist and failing to see the aesthetics of popular music (Wong 2003). His epochal view has no doubt opened a new way to study popular music. The intellectualizing of popular music by such Frankfurt school scholars as Herbert Marcuse and Max Horkheimer

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provided ordinary people with a new insight into the study of music. Rather than the pattern of its scores, popular music can possibly be studied through its social and cultural value.

Since popular music is "music of ordinary people" (Williams 1983), it in essence opposes elitism, and implies interpretations that are open to common people. It is this fluidity in popular music that opens new paths for discussion, from a sociological and cultural perspective rather than only from the traditionally musicological one. Indie music, which is a sub-genre of popular music (Shuker 2001), is certainly open for people's interpretations. Therefore, it is not surprising to see that now we have various definitions of indie music.

Definition(s) of indie music

The origin of 'indie music' has been difficult to trace. Scholars generally agree that the definition of indie music keeps changing all the time. Conventionally speaking, indie music never points to a specific genre of music type. Rather, in many circles (e.g. Shuker 2001; Harris 2000; Frith 1978; Wong 1997...etc.) indie music is understood to be a source of creative innovation for the popular music industry (Peterson & Berger 1972, Lee 1995). Developing upon the idea that indie music implies music innovation, some studies (e.g. Grossberg' study of rock and youth in 1992) take 'authenticity' as their focus for analysis. Amongst, Frith's abundant studies of rock n' roll (1978, 1981, 1983 and 1990) are certainly the classics. While studies of indie music can be an analysis of various types of music

(e.g. Frith studies Anglo-American rock (1978), Lee studies Euro dance (1995) and Harris studies Brazilian heavy metal (2000)), Lee (1995) points out that the essence of studying indie music lies in measuring the "differences." In other words, indie music study as Negus (1997) has suggested, "... was to do with the way a particular form of music articulated social, economic and cultural changes" (1997). To further explore this idea it is necessary to see historically how such changes have shaped the existing ideology of indie music in the west.

History of indie music and the era of rock

As Negus (1997) mentioned in the chapter titled *Histories*, a particular period of history from 1950s to 1970s is often mentioned in numerous music books, magazines and journals. Whilst some scholars and critics specifically name it as 'the rise of rock' (Grossberg 1992; Frith 1978), some just loosely mark it as the beginning of "popular music as cultural industry" (Shuker 2001; Alexander 1996). According to Shuker, "the rise of independents" starts from this era of rock.

1) 1950s: the breed of rock, the root of indies

In general the 1950s is considered an age of western rock. To a great extent the rising of rock music culture in this period of time nurtured a number of "little labels", which were later regarded as the root of indies. According to Shuker's analysis (2001), the expansion of the aesthetic range of records played on air in the mid-1950s was due to a list of cultural upshots. While the baby boom after WWII is generally considered as providing music consumers for new types of music, numerous industrial and technological factors like the perfection of law, copyright and royalties and the popularization of radio sets in households and the invention of 45rpm, LP records (Peterson & Berger 1990) are also regarded as the catalyst for a trend of audience segmentation (i.e. a specific group of music consumers would consume particular types of music according to specific purposes). For instance, as Grossberg (1992) has suggested, the baby boomers' fondness for rock and roll is largely due to their feeling helpless in changing the social reality of the USA. As the majors[2] were slow to change from established crooners and aesthetics in the mid 1950s, numerous little record companies[3], with their alternative style music production, began emerging to fulfill the new needs of music consumers. Following with their successful promotion of non-mainstream music types and new talents (a major example would surely be Elvis Presley of Sun) to the market, these young and

[2] i.e. the big four in 1948—RCA, CBS, Capitol and MCA
[3] In the article, it mentioned Sun Records, Stax, Chess, Vee Jay, Dot, Coral and Imperial

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'little labels'[4] gradually adopted the newly coined term 'independent labels' so as to show the positives of music outside the mainstream.

2) 1960s: the merging of indies and majors

In the1960s, indie labels faced a severe shift in both ideology and operation largely due to a wave of concentration led by majors. With the strike of the Vietnam War the popular music market in 1960s was fuelled with the innovation of Beatlemania and California sound. Ideologically, non-mainstream music or namely indie music became a sign of musical innovation. By acknowledging that rock was not a passing fad some majors started to produce their own rock talents and also some strong indie labels became majors[5]. While the symbolization of indie music as music innovation was well received by most young listeners, a 'secondary consolidation' (Peterson & Berger 1975; Shuker 2001) gradually took place due to the success of certain independent labels. However, from a production angle, such continuous consolidation acts led to a convergence of majors and indies which actually made the sharp differentiation between mainstream music and non mainstream music to become less and less genuine and thus overshadowed the original resistance meaning of indie music.

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[4] For the term 'little label', please refer to the historical study of popular music between 20s -70s by Kennedy and McNutt (1999)
[5] e.g. Motown and Atlantics

3) 1970s: the debate of the authenticity of indie music

After the popularity of punk music in the mid 1970s, some music critics started to bring up the notion that rock was dead. The debate surrounding the idea of indie music as authentic became more heated than ever. In the 1970s, the ideology about indie music as authenticity continued to gain strength among youngsters and was further celebrated by numerous cultural scholars. For instance, the advent of punk music was regarded as a renovation of rock music's authenticity (Firth 1978, Grossberg 1986). Yet, such a notion of indie music as being a symbol of authenticity and resistance is not subject to criticism. In the report written by Peterson and Berger (1975), they simply point out that while the diversity of music really seemed to be increasing with the increasing number of independent labels in the early 1960s, the absorption of indie labels by majors in the late 1960s had the effect of reasserting the dominance of the big majors throughout the next decade. By comparing the four and eight-firm concentration ratios respectively in the 1960s and the 1970s, Peterson and Berger saw that the share of majors once again accounted for 70 percent of the entire market in the 1970s. From that, they offer the notion of 'market cycles' as an explanation, "Since they (majors) have a wide range of artists under contract with one and another of their various subsidiary labels, they can take advantage of every nuance of consumer taste". In fact, according to a similar study later which was conducted by Rothenbuhler and Dimmick (1982), the advent of punk music in many senses is no more than marking the start of a new cycle, rather than an authentic change of the operation of the music industry. Therefore, just as

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Shuker has suggested, "Indeed, frequently they (indie music) themselves copied styles already popularized by their major competitors." While most ordinary indie listeners were still being impressed by the hardcore ideology of indies, some academics started to argue that indie music is not necessarily resistant to mainstream music (Wong 1997; Lee 1995; Lee 1999). Since then, the debate about the idea of indie music as an austenitic symbol of music becomes even more heated. It is under such social and cultural circumstances that the various sociological studies of indie music grow.

The missing place of indie music in popular music studies

In the existing body of sociological studies regarding popular music, most are chaptered according to an encoding/decoding framework of BCCCS i.e. *production, text and appropriation* (Shuker 2001; Frith & Goodwin 1990). However, most of these studies focus on pop music and it becomes inevitable for them to focus on certain factors while omitting some others in mapping out the specific social meaning of indie music.

1) Production—marginality of indie music

Most of the popular music studies about production involve analysis of the industry's development and industrial practice in music making. The earliest advocator of this aspect can be traced back to Theodor Adorno (1941) who firstly

challenged the commodified forms of music and criticized the degrading of music that was produced under a mode of 'cultural industry'. Since then, record companies (e.g. Peterson & Berger 1975; Alexander 1996), distributors, music retailers (e.g. Gay & Negus 1994) and popular music personnel (e.g. Hennion1983; Bennett 1980) became common units of analysis for most popular music studies. All along, in this school, wide ranging methods which include quantitative (e.g. counting the sales figures, numbers of singles in the hit chart) and qualitative ones (e.g. ethnography of record labels, interviews with music personnel) are cross-employed to locate the questions such as, 'Who controls the capital in the market?' (Adorno 1941, Peterson & Berger 1975, Buxton 1983) and 'How does the creative process operate in practice?' (Frith & Goldwin 1990; Bennett 1980) Nonetheless, as Negus (1992) has criticized, these political, economic and organizational theorists are often not flexible enough to examine the active role of the music personnel (Shuker 2001), and find it difficult to deal with the reality that the practices of the music industry are somehow anarchic and full of personal preferences (Lee 1995). Negus's particular point of view is further sustained in Lee's specific case study of WAX (1995). According to Lee, indie music production, unlike pop music production, can never be a totality of commerce and business. Although analysis of indie music is not entirely invisible in production studies (as Lee (1995) mentioned), its place is often marginal[6] due to the irrelevance of the traditional approach that is adopted by most production studies.

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[6] For the invisibility of indie, please refer to the section *History of indie and era of rock*

2) Text—little relevance for indie music

To study popular music as text, scholars would usually adopt a musicological or semiotic angle. However, as Frith and Goodwin (1990) have observed, "The majority of musicologists are happy to ignore popular music and semioticians are more confident about the study of visual and literary signs than that of the slippery world of music". The textual analysis of popular music hence is often seen as problematic by music sociologists. Despite the fact that most musicologists seem to prefer to analyze 'serious' music, the wariness of musicology (musicologists' studies are often criticized by music sociologists as too elitist[7]) also overshadows the prevalence of textual analysis of popular music (Shuker 2001). Frith once commented that Barthes's essay (1977) about classical music to a certain extent lays the groundwork to reformulate pop musicology. Nonetheless, the problematic music language adopted by most traditionalists (musicologists) (McClary & Walser 1998) and the limitation of textual analysis of lyrics have inhibited the further growth of textual analysis of popular music in the social studies field of indie music. Up till now most musicologists and semioticians still have to face the critique that their study of music text cannot completely map out the social forces behind popular music (Frith 1988, cited by Shukler 2001). As a result the textual analysis of popular music, which is often confined to the study of lyrics or music videos, works mostly as auxiliary data in various production research and (e.g. music authorship see Harris

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[7] e.g. Frith pointed out that rock music should be essentially preoccupied with sociology and considered musicology which only studied sound to be of little relevance when studying the meaning of rock and roll)

2000) audience studies (e.g. subculture see Kruse 1990). In fact, as Shukler (2001) once added, while lyrical analysis is prevailing for years in many textual studies of indie music, textual analysis of the music press and music radio programs on the other hand is surprisingly neglected by the field. In many senses the potentiality of textual analysis of indie music studies has not yet been fully utilized and should not be underestimated.

3) Appropriation— over-celebration of indie music

In contrast, reception study of popular music is well established by many music sociologists and culturalists (e.g. Hebdige 1979; Grossberg 1986; Wills 1978). Following in the footsteps of many cultural theories developed in the 1960s and 1970s, music audiences are often seen as the primary determinant of the cultural meaning of popular music. In the prescient report *Listening to Music* (1950) which is concerned with the listening habits of youth/ teenagers, the author David Riseman has already initiated a similar idea (Negus 1997; Shuker 2001). Riseman's notion of "active minority vs. majority" in grouping music listeners is later regarded as the root that draws a link between the argument of Adorno in the 1940s and subcultural theorists in the 1960s (Negus 1997). The report's insight into the reading music culture through configuring the relationships between commerce and youth listeners makes it an important groundwork for many popular music studies (e.g. works of Frith & Goodwin and Negus). When BCCS and Dick Hebdige published the significant collection *Resistance through Rituals* and *Subcultural: The meaning of Style* respectively in the 1970s, the prevalence of the sub cultural study that was

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concerned about the identity and style of music audiences, (e.g. the idea of bricolage, scene) reached an unprecedented climax. Their insistence of studying popular music through "signifying practice"—dress style, hair style and the life style of fans, youth or so-called 'social deviants' (Frith & Goodwin 1992) has definitely laid revolutionary ground for the study of active audiences. Since then, cultural empowerment and resistance becomes a new focal point in the field of popular music study. The authenticity of 'alterative' music is hence highly celebrated by numerous cultural study scholars (e.g. Grossberg 1990; Frith 1978). Followed by a breed of studies on alterative styles like motorbike boys (Willis 1983), male heavy metal lovers (Straw 1983) and rock fans (Grossberg 1986). The peripheral location of indie music within popular music studies begins to change and receives better attention. Nonetheless, the apparent neglect of music elements and the assumption underlying the idea of homology (which implies particular fans only engage in particular music practice) of these studies make numerous critics start to take a doubtful attitude towards the value of these indie music studies (Frith & Goodwin 1992). While culturalists commonly criticize political economy schools for failing to see the importance of popular music as a lifestyle, political economists argue that music style is over-celebrated as a representation of authenticity by most culturalists and that the link between the music industry and music style is missed.

In revisiting the existing popular music studies, we can see that indie music as subject matter has obviously been neglected. Largely the reason why indie music is neglected is not only due to personal preference (though it is apparent enthusiasts

like Simon Firth and Lawrence Grossberg are big rock fans and critics) and bias (e.g. Theodor Adorno, Buxton) but also the inadequacy of appropriating cultural theories to indie music. More and more critics have become aware of the importance of the integrated approach that can link up all the production, text and reception (Shukler 2001, Negus 1997) aspects together. Hence, music sociologists in newer generations in many ways attempt to provide the fourth way to explain the phenomena.

Technology, transmission and mediation

According to Shukler (2001) and Negus (1997), the evolution from 'music' to 'popular music' is never a natural process and has nothing to do with the advancement of technology. The history of music, as Shukler (2001) narrates, "is in part one of shift from oral performance to notation, then to music being recorded, stored and disseminated utilizing various mediums of sound and visual transmission". Such shifts are by all means dramatic and rapid in the sense that just two hundred years ago people could only circulate (or secularize as suggested) sounds through live performance and hand written sheet of music (Manuel 1990). In talking about the breakthrough of reproducing and disseminating sound, as many scholars have suggested one must mention the invention of the phonograph in 1877 by Thomas Edison. It is suggested since then that music started to lose its aura. The inventions of the record, the cassette, the walkman and the MP3 in twentieth century in fact are only the continuation. As Shuker stated (2001), any new medium of communication can change the way in which we experience music. In the past two decades the

amount of research about the relationship between popular music and music technology has been greatly increased. Traditionally most political economists are devoted to seeing how the economic base of society can determine the music technology (e.g. shellac 78, vinyl 45, EP, LP, cassette tape and CD) and mediatization (e.g. film, radio, TV) (Shuker 2001). In recent years however, because of the 'digital big bang', scholars have become interested to see how the medium of music delivery can determine the meaning of popular music. McLuhan's concept of "medium is the message" again returns and provokes a new tide of research specifically set out to investigate the relationship between popular music and the expansion of information technology (Friedlander 2002). In facing the trend that music reproduction and dissemination can be done freely through the internet, music sociologists who are interested in indie music naturally have to take the transmission and mediation of indie music into serious consideration. An exploration of Negus's idea of mediation and cultural intermediaries may be helpful to understand how the factor of music transmission can be integrated into the existing body of cultural theories of popular music.

Mediation and cultural intermediaries

Through drawing on Bourdieu's notion of 'cultural intermediaries', British music sociologist, Negus suggests the use of the concept of mediation (i.e. middle way strategy) to understand how ordinary people make sense of the experience of listening to music.

"By mediation I understand not simply the fact that particular people passed on songs they had taken from other sources, in form of manuscript or print, but that in the very process of so doing their own assumptions, attitudes, likes and dislikes may well have significantly determined what they looked for, accepted and rejected"

(Hacker 1985, cited by Negus 1997)

In *Popular Music in Theories* (1997), he further elaborates on his idea of mediation. It is developed upon three principles: 1) mediation as intermediary action, 2) mediation as transmission and 3) mediation of social relationships. The former's aim is seeing how one's knowledge, preference, attitude and taste of music affect one's articulation of particular music. Thus accordingly, writings about music, narration of music history or conversations about music are all viewed as people's intermediary actions of music. The second refers to the way music and media technologies are used in the distribution of sounds, words and images of music. Within six examples of such technologies: *printed word, sound carrier, radio, moving images, musical instruments* and *telecommunication technologies* are included and are considered as focus of analysis. Finally, the last aims to see how meaning can be mediated from popular music through an interaction between listeners' intermediary actions and technological mediation.

Calling our attention to the dynamic operation of the popular music industry in production of cultural forms, Negus contends to use the concept of a mediator to replace the conventional idea of a gatekeeper (which he criticizes as lacking flexibility and accuracy in describing the active role of music participants). His theorization is supported in a list of case studies about the active role of music personnel in record companies and studios (e.g. Lee 1995, Negus 1992). The subtle relationship between music creativity, music experience and public knowledge of music (Negus 1992, 2002 and 2004) are all so far largely untouched by most cultural studies of popular music and thus could be brought to light. By connecting music production to its audience, technology and context, Negus tries to relocate the traditional concept map of how the music industry works, and imagines a new vision of popular music study that requires integrating human, technological and also social factors.

However Negus's theory of mediation is not completely accepted. According to Shuker (2002), Harker is just one of the critics who comment on the concept of mediation as *"quietly absorb(s) the terminology (of the industry and Harvard Business School) and its ideological premises and implication into his discourse."* As Shuker also added in his chapter "On the cover of the *Rolling Stone*—the music press", similar studies are "so far excluded" in the field, and in fact similar studies can open alternative ways to discuss popular music which has experienced significant technological changes both in ways of distribution and reception. A study of indie music from a mediation perspective is definitely relevant

in timing, especially when new media like MP3, fan sites, electronic publication and P2P sharing is now so common. As Marshall McLuhan and Barrington Nevitt suggested in their book *Take Today* electrical technology consumers have become producers, the roles of music producers and consumers have begun to blur and merge. The classic grouping of musician as producer; fan as consumer, has gradually lost its validity. Instead, more and more academics are encouraged to integrate the concepts of producers and consumers into one. Like futurologist Alvin Toffler (1980) who coined the new term *Prosumer* to illustrate such social and technological changes. With the advent of advanced music technology, more and more common music consumers can become musicians through a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) approach to music making and because of the rising brand-new type of music consumers, popular music studies surely require new ideas and new conceptualizations. The incorporation of Negus's idea of mediation that involves personal, technological and social level of analyses can thus help us to understand the existing phenomenon of DIY music that is largely driven by information technology. Below, we see why mediation study can apply to local context.

Studies of popular and indie music in Hong Kong

Due to its unique political position in Greater China region and its British colonial history, Hong Kong has often been considered as the cultural trendsetter within the Southeast Asia region. The popularity of local

Cantopop has even gained Hong Kong a name as the 'centre of pop' in the 1970s and 1980s (Wong 1997; Wong 2003). However, as Wong (2003) has suggested, the success of the Hong Kong pop music industry is not receiving sufficient attention from academics. Other than some scattered musicological studies on traditional Chinese opera music, sociological studies of Hong Kong popular music are still relatively small in quantity. Furthermore most of these popular music studies focus mainly on the pop music sector (e.g. Wong 1992, Wong 1997 and Wong 2003) and seldom on the indie sector. Even though there are a few studies that have been found to touch on the local indie sector (e.g. case study of Blackbird (Lee 1999) and LMF (Chan 2002)), little attention is given specifically to its music consumption. This compared with the West suggests the local popular music studies in Hong Kong are behind in scope, quantity and diversity.

Though local indie music is often criticized as being unprofessional and insignificant (Wong 2003), more and more facts suggest that the local indie music industry should not be neglected especially when recently the Big Six[8] declines and internet technology rises. The sudden flourish of local DIY musicians like The Pancakes, Chet Lam, Garlum and The Ketchup in recent years strongly indicate that some indie consumers are especially blessed by the latest technological mediation and have become indie producers or professionals. The success of these brand new indie consumers/ producers who are capable of utilizing mediations (i.e.

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[8] PolyGram, Warner, EMI, Sony, BMG, Universal Records and ROCK Records

technological, intermediary and societal ones) to finish their music task has supported the prediction of futurologist Alvin Toffler (1980) that a new group of Prosumers (portmanteaus contracting either the word producer or professional with the word consumer) would emerge in a post modern age. Therefore, it may be the time to pay efforts to see how changing of mediations contribute to new cultural practices.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

The methodology that this study employed is primarily qualitative, both in-depth interviews and textual analysis are used. The sampling adopts a snowballing method. Through working for a local indie production house, *Ginnovation*, I have generated a list of indie listeners who are active in regular indie events for instance band shows and workshops. Finally a total of 18 indie listeners were selected for interviews according to the following rationale.

In 1970, Alvin Toffler contended in his book *Future Shock* that cultural customization concentrates on leisure pursuits. In 1980, Toffler coined the term Prosumer in his book *The Third Wave* to further extend his prediction of the continuously increasing number of people who are evermore demanding in pursuit of their pastime. By incorporating Toffler's ideas in this indie music study, this paper considers highly involved indie listeners (i.e. either active members or promoters of local indie community) as prosumers. A total of 14 indie hobbyists and 4 music media workers were selected.

For the hobbyists' section of the study, interviewees were divided into two groups: producer-consumers and professional-consumers, according to Marshall McLuhan's and Alvin Toffler's definitions of prosumer:

*Prosumer refers to one of two possible portmanteaus formed by contracting either the word **producer** or **professional** with the word **consumer**.*

Hobbyists who have frequently commanded computer technology to produce indie information are categorized as producer-consumer. Hobbyists that have actually used computer music technology to replace studio, producing and publish their own music and records are identified as professional-consumer. Specifically, a successful hobbyist The Pancakes (see Appendix I for the detailed biography) has been interviewed twice and her case will be discussed in detail in the professional-consumer section. In this section, news and media reports about The Pancakes since the release of her debut album (2000-2004) are also collected from the electronic database *Wisenews* and taken as supplementary data for the in-depth interviews of The Pancakes. For the media workers section, 4 music journalists who are also indie listeners were selected. From this data (see appendix V for the general questions of interviews), I expect to map out how different mediations have affected indie hobbyists' prosumption of indie music and to determine what is the role of traditional mass media in shaping the new prosuming practice of the local indie community.

To further add to my understanding on the data collected, I have also participated/observed several indie bands' live shows and reviewed several songs as well as documents about the bands that various subjects mentioned during interviews. From the start I conducted this study by positioning myself (i.e. interviewer) as a beginner who has only occasionally listened to local indie music. As a result I feel that the perspective of the study leans more towards an outsider's perspective rather than that of an insider.

CHAPTER THREE

BACKGROUND

3.1   The emerging of 'indie music' in Hong Kong

According to Yuen the first appearance of 'indie music' in Hong Kong was in the early 1990s. As explored in chapter one from the quantities of studies (e.g. Peterson & Berger 1970; Frith 1978; Lee 1995), it is generally conjectured that the appearance of the term 'indie music' in the West is closely related to the flourish of "little labels" in the 1950s. In other words 'indies' (independent labels) or 'indie music' was coined for a marketing purpose. Nevertheless according to Yuen the emergence of the term 'indie music' in Hong Kong was less instrumental.

"The term 'indie music' starts to be commonly used by Hong Kong people only over the last decade. In the 1980s, we usually called it 'underground' music. The word 'indie' or 'independent' became common only after the late 1980s and early 1990s. Band players began to use this term because they thought that the so-called underground music was not really underground. The word "underground" delivered negativity, so gradually the term

was deliberately changed to 'indie music' by band music

listeners." (Interviewed with Yuen, October, 2004)

According to Yuen in order to dispel the general impression that band players were weird and degrading, most active band players at that time were anxious to acquire a new name to reinvent their 'underground' image. From this we can see the emerging of 'indie music' in Hong Kong is more than simply a marketing factor and instead we become aware of a high degree of resistance embedded in the term.

From Yuen we come to accept the idea that the early 1990s was a watershed for local indie musicians. The conventional media portrayal of band players as 'long haired druggies' was generally considered as the trigger for indie music to rebound:

> *"...late 1980s, these underground bands started to receive*
>
> *attention from the public. Say like RTHK, as I remember, also*
>
> *produced a programme about underground music[9]. However,*
>
> *its feedback turned out to be quite negative.* (Interviewed with
>
> Yuen, October, 2004)

In order to counter mass media's persistent negative portrayal, some bands' avid devotees who also worked in mass media decided to introduce the term 'indie music'

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[9] Title: Days of Playing Band (Hong Kong Connection 1993), 25 minute in length. Within, Anodize a prestigious hardcore indie band was invited to be interviewed.

which was seen to be more 'neutral' and 'musical' to replace the term 'underground music'. To a certain extent the term 'indie music' did partially serve to revise the original negative public opinion and led to a so-called indie movement in mid 1990s (Wong 1997).

Indie movement

In the 1990s in conjunction with the dynamic changes of the pop music scene, an unprecedented indie movement burst out. After the retirement of some major superstars like Alan Tam, Leslie Cheung and Anita Mui in the early 1990s, Four Heavenly Kings (四大天王) which included four solo singers: Jacky Cheung. Andy Lau, Leon Lai and Aaron Kwok suddenly took the forefront and became a local phenomenon. Fan culture in Hong Kong reached its climax and audiences' craze for pop songs was reflected in the overwhelming sales figures of their records. For instance Jacky Cheung's total sales in 1993 were record breaking throughout all Southeast Asia (over 3,000,000 copies); Andy Lau's albums also attained nearly sixty platinum discs (Wong 2003).[10] In addition some brand new female solos like Faye Wong were also rising in popularity and Canto-love ballads were becoming a very dominating music style in the pop scene. Regions near Hong Kong for instance Taiwan and mainland China also felt its impact. Such a thriving music scene attracted the international Big Six: PolyGram, Warner, EMI, SONY, BMG, Universal Records and ROCK Records, one of the leading Mandarin labels to set up

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[10] Wong (2003) took the note from Jeff Yang, Dina Can, Terry Hong & The Staff of A. Magazine: " Eastern Standard Time-A guide to Asia Influence on American Culture" (New York: Mariner Books, 1997)

their regional headquarters in Hong Kong. Among these the landing of ROCK which had signed the group Beyond and a number of Chinese rockers had stirred up an upsurge of the local indie movement

In response to the large quantity and increase of cover versions, Commercial Radio 2 decided to launch the *All-Original-Cantopop Campaign* in 1995. Thereafter cover versions dropped sharply as CR had hoped they would. On the other hand foreign and the local band sound was once again promoted. *Quote Zone,* a CR programme which was inspired by the rising of Anglo-American indie bands like Nirvana, Radiohead and Oasis was aired with the purpose of introducing both local and foreign music bands to young local audiences. Under such Mediation, Music Union, a local indie music club was formed in 1992. According to Wong (1997), the formation of the club also marked the beginning of the indie movement in the 1990s. In 1993, after the tragic death of Wong Ka Kui head of Beyond, the mass media started to pay more attention to the local band scene. A list of local indie bands like Huh?!, AMK and Anodize were thus able to capture the mass media's attention.

Big record companies successively set up indie satellites after 1994 and ROCK Records took it as a chance to promote Chinese rockers to Hong Kong listeners. Various shows and concerts for bands that included local, overseas and the mainland were launched. Indie music magazines like *Music Colony, Quotables* were also in print in the same year. The Non-mainstream music scene continued to grow, however, following the closing of *Quotables* and Music Union in 1996 various indie

departments of the major companies were closed due to financial difficulties and as a result the flourishing local band scene suddenly flopped without the supports of big companies.

3.2 New wave of DIY

As written in Wikipedia, *"Do It Yourself (DIY) approach as a means of economic self-sufficiency or simply as a way to survive on diminished income is identifiable trends and movements outside of the mainstream economy that have adopted prosumer terminology and techniques[11]"*. Since 2000 some local indie musicians who make living outside of mainstream economy started to adopt a DIY approach to producing songs. With the aid of music technology a number of local indie musicians who usually played in bands in the 1990s now can make and publish their own music independently.

After the handover in 1997 the Hong Kong market has shrunk severely due mainly to the Asian Economic Storm and the threat of CD privacy. The acquisition of indies by majors nearly came to a complete halt. The cooperation between mainstream and non-mainstream began to seek new modes. Instead of signing indie bands record companies prefer to cooperate with indie musicians in a crossover mode. To the new rising DIY musicians cooperation with advertisers can provide them new ways to survive as well.

According to Wong (2003), record sales in 1998 was only HK$ 916,000,000 which was less than a half of the sales of 1995. Mandarin records of local singers also started to decline in neighborhood regions. Hong Kong music industry's regional magnitude continued to deteriorate as record sales could no longer

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[11] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prosumer

guarantee a stable and profitable income for most record companies. After such a great fall the local music industry experienced some basic changes as some of the former Big Six amalgamated with each other (e.g. SONY and BMG, PolyGram and Universal). The Hong Kong singers as a brand name was no longer a guarantee of profitable sales in Greater China and Southeast Asia and the position of the Hong Kong singers was gradually replaced by mandarin singers like Jay Chou and David Tao. This was followed with the shrinking of the regional market and the rise of some local-base companies. EEG is one of the most prominent cases. Since the big boom of Twins (a girl group nurtured by EEG) in early 2000 teen idols have become a new antidote for the industry.

In order to look for selling points record companies began to reset their gaze on some indie music units. The crossover between indie and pop talents keeps increasing, for instance, LMF had rapped for Sammi Cheng and Miriam Yeung's song featured with At 17. The capability of young indie players or singers to produce music by themselves is once again celebrated by the media. Some DIY musicians in the indie pop or the folk style like The Pancakes and Chat Lam received a positive response from young audiences and have caught major local advertisers' attention.

Commercial alignments

At the start of the 21st Century making alignments with advertisers has become important to both the pop and indie sector. The only real differences are

the ways in which pop singers and indie musicians employ to crossover with commercial organizations and to a certain extent, indie musicians' reliance on commercial alignment is increasing to a point that it becomes an essential way for them to survive.

According to Sien, an editor of TVB Weekly, the criteria for being a Hong Kong singer has changed significantly due to the sharp drop of record sales. A new talent who is considered as *"full of potential"* by record companies is no longer judged only by traditional standards for instance, one's outlook or singing technique. It is rather the case that record companies would see potentially how many commercial alignments could be made through signing a singer. This is because forming an alignment with commercial organizations immediately stands for two things:

> *"By getting an advertising contract from a commercial organization,*
> *companies would immediately get two guarantees. First, investment*
> *of record companies will be lowered, as part of the production cost is*
> *sponsored by another party. Second, the media exposure of the talent*
> *will increase because of the commercials. Naturally, artist rather*
> *than singer management is the future direction."* (Interviewed with
> Joleigh Lo, founder of GINnovation)

In fact commercial alignment also works for indie musicians' success, for cases such as LMF, The Pancakes, Chet Lam and At 17, it was their cooperation with advertisers in composing TVC songs that makes them well known to most of Hong Kong music audiences.

> *"On one hand the company gave me money. On the other hand, I thought the TVC could help me. In addition, as it was a TVC, people could listen to my song without buying my record. Most people watch TV, as it is free. So, I would see the TVC as promotion of my song. I am certainly happy with that."* (Interviewed with Dejay, January 2005)

In many senses to indie musicians, commercial alignment brings at least *two guarantees* as well. Firstly as Dejay mentioned in his interview, they can receive a significant amount of money. Secondly and perhaps more importantly they do not have to pay for their efforts to promote their songs through a mass media that is generally regarded as less authentic by most music fans.

Such commercial alignment between indie musicians and local advertisers undoubtedly opens new ways for indie musicians to survive however it also creates restrictions. In order to make it easier for viewers to remember the songs, advertisers usually choose songs that are easy to listen to and light in melody. One-man bands and DIY musicians undoubtedly have the advantage with their simple arrangement

of music. As opposed to a band sound which is more complicated in arrangement especially in heavy and experimental styles which are still considered to be 'underground' by most local audiences.

Technology does matter

The burst of the information technology revolution in the 1990s has had a great influence over indie music making and music reception. To indie music producers, digitalization and personalization in music making have to an extent pulled down barriers between mainstream and non-mainstream production. Now bedroom or DIY production no longer stands for low quality.

> *"For the time being, nearly all production can be settled at home by computers. So, even if you are not rich, you can produce songs that are of the same quality as those produced by big companies. The quality difference between indies and majors is not as wide as before."* (Interviewed with Yuen, October 2004)

In addition DIY producers can make use of the Internet as a public platform for broadcasting their creations. Web pages like Rockcola.com, which was opened by ROCK Records as a sphere for any indie musician to free-upload their creation, is a prime example of this. Though as Yuen argued he would hesitate at how the final

result of such a 'not so humanized' trend would be while live performances are gradually being replaced by online interactions. Most of the unknown indie musicians agree that digital technology is crucial for them to keep in touch with their potential listeners living at home or aboard.

To indie receivers the advancement of digital technology not only provides them with a wider choice of music and information, but also new ways to consume music. Sharing songs with friends at hyper speeds and getting the latest songs synchronously downloaded all over the globe is now made possible by Internet. As a result the illegal downloading and uploading of pirated MP3's has become a serious concern for the global music industry. On the one hand increasing cooperation with IT has expanded the business and music fields of companies, for example, Apple's launch of the Ipod and Itunes. On the other hand traditional music companies have viewed IT cooperation as a major threat. The recent controversy over the online file-sharing case in Hollywood[12] fully illustrated such a paradox. In the meantime we can see a similar development in Hong Kong as well. The influence of local IT corporations over the music industry becomes significantly more apparent. For example in 2002 and 2003 respectively, PCCW, one of the biggest local IT corporations set up a music channel at now.com.hk and a music label Music Nation with the aim of providing music and entertainment for their broadband customers. The frequent crossover between IT service providers and

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[12] In March 2005, Hollywood large companies such as MGM, Disney, Paramount Pictures and other studios sued peer-to-peer network distributors for encouraging online piracy in US. And it is generally believed that the verdict could dictate the future of copyright law. (source: http://www.fosters.com/)

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record companies suggests technology is of great importance to the music industry and will gradually take a core place within new music culture.

After contextualizing local DIY music

After reviewing the history of Hong Kong indie music we can chart the evolution of band culture to DIY culture. It is against such a historical backdrop that a wave of DIY music has flourished since the early 21st century. New technology, new media and new opportunities from commercial alignment have all contributed to the rise of DIY musicians. In the next chapter we will explore the difference ways in which local indie music is mediated by prosumers and media workers, the tension surrounding new technology and discourses that regard band sound as a subversive culture.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MEDIATIONS & THE ACTIVE PROSUMERS

Horner suggested (1999), "Experience rather than musical score is seen as providing access to what is authentic about music..." Our experiences or our knowledge of certain music can never be simply a matter of sense or feeling but rather is shaped by a structure of feeling which is closely related to our everyday lives (Raymond Williams). While, as many scholars agree, the new global economy keeps moving from passive consumer to active prosumer, new forms of music consumption that involve high customization begin to come into fashion. Due to the changing of technological meditation, an increasing number of passive consumers have become active prosumers who are capable of customizing music products according to their own personal tastes and needs. In recent years such a phenomenon has been especially obvious in the local indie community that aims at rejecting the mass culture generated by concentrated corporate media. The emergence of the Do It Yourself approach to music making and the P2P method of sharing unknown music has greatly altered the existing indie hobbyists' comprehension of, (i.e. intermediary action) and society's acceptance of indie music (i.e. social mediation).

The central idea of this chapter is to explore how different mediations have material consequences on indie hobbyists' experiences, judgment and production of the DIY music culture. In this chapter three key actors of the local indie community: producer-consumers, professionals and media workers are interviewed to address the research question:

How do local indie hobbyists prosume indie music culture?

In the following section each group of interviewees will be examined through explicating three different mediations: technological, intermediary mediation and social mediations that are undertaken among them.

4.1   The Mediations of Producer-consumers

Horner has repeatedly reminded readers, "We are all, to put it simply products of our culture. But we are also producers of our culture" (1999). Pure indie audiences have been in fact rather rare in the local indie community. By categorizing hobbyists who have frequently used computer technology to produce local indie information and knowledge, the study has identified 11 interviewees as producer-consumers. This section is set out to generalize the mediations that are involved in their reception of local DIY music.

Technological mediation

Compared with professional-consumers, producer-consumer interviewees seem to have a lower involvement in using music technology to produce original music products. Most of these producer-consumer interviewees are blessed by the new media technology so that they are now able to customize indie activities for personal needs and tastes through a variety of interactive technologies. The sharing of unknown indie music all over the globe through the use of P2P devices, promoting of certain indie music that is produced by close friends through BBS and the searching of indie bands' information through web-surfing are all common indie experiences that are shared by these producer-consumer interviewees. Operationally the interactive-based technological mediation of indie music has greatly enlarged indie hobbyists' choice of indie music and enabled closer networking among them.

Ideologically it has also promoted and portrayed a mirage-like blue print of the local indie scene that seems to favour local indie music development.

Facilitates choices

In general interviewees have agreed that the new technological mediation of music has brought more benefit than harm, as indie hobbyists are always eager to try a variety of DIY music. Specifically the emerging of new music formats like MP3 and the Internet have undoubtedly lightened their reliance on mass media to receive information and songs from unknown musicians or bands:

"I have been cheated many times by those music reviews, and have brought quite a number of indie albums which I rarely listen to. Now, I can know more through the web before buying" (Mango 28)

"At least, we can get more information (about indie bands and indie shows) from the web. The ways of promotion that can be used by local indies themselves are more and more diverse now." (Fennie 23)

In the two decades of the 1980s and 1990s music technology has primarily affected the players rather than the fans. However for the time being most indie hobbyists can move from passive consumers to active prosumers by downloading unknown songs or uploading songs. Free trials and indie music sharing through the worldwide web has become a very common and frequent practice among producer-consumers:

> *"In the past, listeners had no other way to know whether a certain indie album was good or not. They could only find out by buying it. However, spending $80 to $90 to gamble on whether the whole album is good or not is quite expensive... Now, I usually download MP3 rather than buying albums."* (Mango 28)

> *"I think the invention of MP3 and the Internet downloads have really speeded up the delivery of music. As an audience, we can get a song much faster than before. To a certain extent, such inventions break barriers."* (Vicky 25)

In facilitating indie choices the brand-new technological mediation has not only provided a sphere as a music bank but it has also altered the passive role of indie hobbyists, enhancing a higher level of involvement and participation from indie hobbyists in the local indie community. On the whole technological mediation has basically altered the traditional passive ways of indie music consumption and increased the diversity of indie music.

Private-public indie networking

The latest technological mediation has introduced a public yet also private

place for hobbyists to gather and share their likes and dislikes of music. While indie

music has long been regarded as a niche and a minority, the advancement of Internet

technology has provided a way to link all the devotees scattered globally:

> *"For instance, my band has also tried to upload a song onto our*
>
> *website and it is surprising that after a month there are already*
>
> *over a thousand people who have browsed the song. As a*
>
> *platform to exhibit songs the Internet is really fabulous."* (Vicky
>
> 25)

> *"Usually it takes time for indie bands to publish albums. Very*
>
> *often they take years to compose enough songs for an album and*
>
> *that is very different from pop singers who publish two to three*
>
> *albums a year. Therefore in order to keep up we have to*
>
> *frequently visit indie musicians' sites to download new songs."*
>
> (Fennie 23)

According to the interviewees, in the past they would need to go to specific indie record stores like Monitor to meet other enthusiasts. Now BBS like 89268 and MCB online has become their place for exchanging what they have learnt about indie music and while technologically speaking a large quantity of indie hobbyists can network together, the possibilities of mobilizing the members of the local indie community have also increased. The traditional closed network like band shows, band unions of university has greatly diminished in magnitude. As one of the interviewees told this study, even local hobbyist stations in the UK can now easily witness a Hong Kong indie show live through the web. In this sense the Internet mediation does open an economical and fairer way for local indie hobbyists to link themselves together and that definitely has helped to broaden the size of the local indie community

Technological/ ideological mirage

As previously mentioned, operationally speaking Internet technology has provided indie audiences convenient access to indie music and to indie peers. At the same time the advancement of Internet technology has reignited the possibility for ordinary hobbyists to resist mainstream music. For the majority of audience interviewees, downloading and uploading technology is an agreeable means to satisfy their hunger for authentic music. They further believe such new technologies will practically unmask the lack of originality in mainstream music:

"The emerging of downloading technology will only accelerate the death of low quality music. I have always thought... if their music (big labels) is really good quality...why not let the audience have a free trial first? Let's say a movie is really terrific, after watching the pirated one, I would pay to watch it in the cinema. I may even buy the DVD after that! The fact is that even local movies or pop songs are free; I cannot make myself watch and listen all the way through... If the quality is good, I believe people will buy it anyway." (Siu Long 27)

While most interviewees concede that it is still a long road for them before they can fully take the Internet as their main platform for indie music consumption, Internet technology has already marked a good beginning for indie music to compete with mainstream music. Ideologically speaking we can see that new media has provided indie hobbyists a hope that absolute domination of mainstream music over indie music can be shaken through active prosumption. To a certain extent the technological vision that the Do It Yourself approach can beat mainstream music culture has encouraged hobbyists to mediate about DIY music positively.

Intermediary mediation

As Negus suggests personal background as for example education, economic status and past music experiences can affect ones' judgment and identification of

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certain music. Therefore, listeners with a similar personal background tend to have similar musical tastes. While no obvious similarities in personal background can be found among the producer-consumer interviewees, producer-consumers' identification with the local indie community has justified their support of local DIY music even though they usually regard local DIY music as amateurish, weird and choppy. By identifying themselves as music fans and members of the indie community, producer-consumer interviewees adopt an unconventional standard to experience and judge local DIY music. Due to the changing state of technological mediation and social mediation, a new version of music authenticity that is more pragmatic has gained prevalence among indie hobbyists. In order to accomplish the ultimate goal of the indie community, that indie music should be independent from mass culture, a number of local indie hobbyists however do not show much of an appreciation for local DIY music or recognize DIY musicians.

Identification with local indie community

By differentiating themselves from general mainstream listeners most of the producer-consumers interviewees are self-aware of their identity as indie listeners.

"(I know) some of the people would think that I am weird, and wonder why I listen to this type of music." (Fennie 23)

"Yes, I think I mind (being called as fan). Fans are the kind of people who are more interested in the non musical elements of

singers. They buy photos of their idols. Music fans are people

who are really interested in the music." (Jan 28)

> *"To be honest, I felt rather proud of my habit (listening to indie*
>
> *music) in the very beginning, as very few friends of mine at that*
>
> *time listened to indie music. Imagine at that time while I was*
>
> *listening to Nirvana, they were still listening to Leon Lai! That is*
>
> *really cool, right?"* (Vicky 25)

This sense of self-awareness not only makes producer-consumers feel unique in their taste but also creates a common bond among them. Their identification with the indie community, which they regard as non-mainstream, alternative and niche encourages them to adopt an unaccustomed judgment in their reception of DIY music. Therefore, during interviews, *"sincerity"*, *"genuineness"*, *"earnestness"* are found to be their key words to describe their experiences of listening to DIY music.

> *"I respect her (The Pancakes), as I think she has successfully*
>
> *created a market for her music...hey hey, did I say I appreciate*
>
> *her music? I did not. I only think I appreciate her personally. I*
>
> *appreciate her courage, gut and attitude overall..."* (Siu Long 27)

> *"I appreciate that she dares and has the gust to do so..."* (Vicky 25)

Rather than *"musical things"*, the genuine feeling of the Do It Yourself approach as a means of economic self-sufficiency has thus become an important ground for them to interpret DIY music as, in their eyes, worthy music.

A new version of authenticity

Conventional thinking suggests the more resistant indie bands and musicians are to the mass culture, the more the indie hobbyists will consider them as authentic and recognize them. Nevertheless, for the time being, with the aid of technological mediation private music can easily be converted into public music. Also because of the social mediation that concealing talent is an act of cowardice; producer-consumers comprehend the authenticity of a piece of indie music in many different ways from how it was comprehended in the past. The new thinking behind the idea of authenticity is that, one's proactiveness to reach a more mainstream audience becomes secondary to the desire to resistance the mainstream:

> *"Previously I could not understand why she (The Pancakes) did*
>
> *them (accepting media's interviews), but gradually I understood*
>
> *and appreciated what she was doing. She is just proactive and*
>
> *daring to take the initiative."* (Siu Long 27)

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To the majority of interviewees, participation in the mainstream media, which was regarded as a betrayal of indie music in the 1990s, has become a sign of an indie musician's expression of authenticity. Therefore, once a piece of DIY music can be released publicly, for example, The Pancakes' song was chosen to be the commercial song of the Kowloon Motor Bus Company, it will be celebrated by indie hobbyists and its creator can gain recognition more easily. From this we can see it is just this sort of new intermediary action in interpreting indie music that enhances indie hobbyists' general support of amateurish DIY musicians.

Social mediation

As indie prosuming aims to have a greater independence from the mainstream music economy, any changes to the mainstream music economy can in return alter the social mediation of indie music. Contemporarily while the pop music industry has declined greatly since 2000, the advent of personalized computer technology has helped many individual hobbyists polish their DIY music. The disparity between mainstream music and DIY music has thus declined. While mainstream music has been generally criticized as conventional, unified and uninteresting, DIY music is unconventional, non-mainstream and unknown to most people and it can be seen as a potential antidote to the existing *"boring mass music"* (Fennie 23). In addition the idea of DIY music celebrates youth, self-sufficiency and individuality, which are values that appeal to Hong Kong society. Therefore, the original social perception about indie music as idle, cynical and wacky has gradually

changed over the last couple of years. That, according to the interviewees has surely alleviated the social pressure of being solitary. The producer-consumers' intermediary mediation about DIY music as authentic can thus be strengthened because of such social ground.

The fall of the pop music industry

According to recent figures the overall sale of pop music in Hong Kong has dropped by over 50% since 1997 (Wong 2003), the rapid decline of Hong Kong pop music in the Chinese community has not only alarmed the industry but also the local economy. The general impression of the local pop music industry as being stiff and conventional has motivated more and more local audiences to try indie music:

> *"All the mainstream songs are love songs. Turn on the radio,*
>
> *you will see how many love songs we are forced to hear. At*
>
> *least, indie music is not all about love."* (Fennie, 23)

Compared with the 1980s and 1990s the existing social atmosphere is more favorable to indie music and because of that, an increasing amount of indie hobbyists feel encouraged to prosume and customize indie music information and products for their uses.

Social celebration of DIY approach

Despite the change in the pop music industry the greater social acceptance of local indie music in Hong Kong has also altered the social mediation of indie music. When interviewed, most of the producer-consumer interviewees contend that the wider social acceptance of indie music is reflected by the fact that an increasing amount of secondary schools encourage students to play in bands and also that students can learn basic PC music programmes in school.

"When I was a secondary student, there were still some teachers

who thought of band players as disobedient students... However,

now many of the schools have set up their own band room for

students. Schools encourage band playing as well... I think if

someone says that he thinks bands or indie music are a sign of

disobedience, he just seems old fashioned and elderly." (Vicky

25)

"I think indie music during my time was more scarce and

valuable. Now indie music is more common and there are more

17 and 18 year-old players. But indie music's impact is not as

great as before." (Mango 28)

Indie music activities are no longer considered as subversive or harmful to society but rather as an expression of self-achievement and individuality, indie hobbyists naturally feel more motivated to devote effort to prosuming the DIY music culture.

4.2 The Mediations of Professional-consumers

By categorizing hobbyists who have used computer technology to replace the studio, producing and publishing their own music and records as professional-consumers this study recognizes 3 interviewees (Ah Kit the guitarist of a local indie band 22 Cats and Ah Shun vocalist of Numerous People and Dejay, The Pancakes) as professional-consumers. In order to illustrate how professional-consumers can make use of different mediations to succeed the findings of this section rely largely on the in-depth interviews with the first local successful case, The Pancakes, i.e. Dejay and news clippings about her and for a supplementary purpose, interviews with Ah Kit and Ah Shun will be interwoven to reinforce the relevant information.

Technological mediation

Toffler suggested in his book (1980) that customization often focuses on the pursuit of leisure in the new age. Hobbyists have become evermore demanding in the pursuit of their hobbies, often rising above the level of amateurs to the point of commanding skills equal to that of professionals. With the help of the latest music technology, indie professional-consumers are finding it easier to obtain and command professional music skills. The class problem, (in the 1970s, only youngsters from wealthy families were able to afford a formal music education and attain better music instruments with which to play music) has also been alleviated. Rather than economic capital, music making in the meantime, especially DIY indie music making requires more of ones own technological and cultural capital.

According to the professional-consumer interviewees, personalization of music technology has helped them to break away from both skill and interpersonal problems. Through the advancement of technology their amateurish music skill can be well polished without others' help. In addition the Do-It-All-Yourself mode of computerization also saves them from the possible disputes with other band members. One-man bands have become more and more common in local indie communities and the traditional way of playing indie music in bands has also changed. Because of rarely practicing before live performances an increasing amount of professional-consumers become skillful in making music but poor in actually playing music. The core of indie culture is based on the notion that you have to play live well to succeed has apparently been shaken by the rapid development of the technological mediation of music.

Bring flexibilities

With the advent of the advanced music technology most professional-consumer interviewees generally agree that now is the easiest time ever for them to produce their own records and get media exposures. Dejay is an example, according to her, she has been able to produce songs by herself using her computer since she was nineteen:

> When I was a year one student, I took a course called Music
> Technology in University. Since then I discovered that I am able to
> make music all by myself. Also through making music using the DIY

approach I can more easily control stuff like time management and

the music's direction. Hence I was able to make music all by

myself.[13] (quotation from published interview with Dejay, original in

Chinese, translated by author)

"More and more indie musicians can publish their own discs, as

the cost of making music has become much cheaper than before.

Indie bands don't have to go to the studio to make their albums.

They can do everything at home now." (Ah Kit 27)

With the help of the latest music technology even the most amateurish young

hobbyists can produce songs all by themselves after receiving a short period of

training. The budget is so low that it can no longer be called a "big project" (Yuen

Chi Chung). In fact personalization of technological mediation not only brings DIY

musicians like The Pancakes flexibility in making music, but also provides them

with ways of remaining free from rigid bonding with specific band members,

"...her band is a one girl band so she can make all the decisions

herself. In the case of a band that consists of 4 members, making

decisions or reaching consensus is a tough task." (Ah Shun 28)

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[13] http://www.hkedcity.net/

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Through personalization of music making professional-consumers are having more economic and personal flexibility to customize their own ideal music. Thus the existing indie professionals are, to certain extent, freer and more independent than ever before.

Changing of the way to indie

It can be argued that live performances are the core of local indie culture. While the latest technological mediation of music does facilitate the growth in numbers of amateurish DIY musicians, it also presents challenges for DIY musicians:

"... live performances are another challenge... as in live performances one cannot stop whenever one likes and rewind until the musician plays the song well." (Dejay 26)

Now that most indie hobbyists are able to publish records and grasp more mainstream audiences' attention the mode of their performance has also changed.

Unlike most indie musicians in the 1980s and 1990s (e.g. Beyond, LMF), professional-consumers do not have to first perform live and accumulate a fan base before publishing their debut album. Compared with traditional indie professionals the existing professional-consumers, who are more used to making music in their bedrooms, are more professional in their self-sufficient production yet more amateur

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in playing live. The huge success of The Pancakes has marked such a new mode of playing indie music in Hong Kong.

Intermediary mediation

According to Toffler, due to hobbyists' ever more demanding pursuit of their hobbies, most professional-consumers become especially skillful in revising and customization. Besides making use of technological mediation to customize music, indie professional-consumers have to keep revising the hardcore indie values so as to rationalize their prosuming of indie music. With their familiarity with the local indie community and resistance to mass media most professional-consumer interviewees exhibit a greater knowledge of positioning. By internalizing unconventional indie values, indie professional-consumers are able to break away from the hardcore ideology of indie music and position themselves strategically in between mainstream and non-mainstream and so thus are able to reach a larger audience.

Less resistance to mainstream

In discussing their understanding of the ideology behind indie music, all professional-consumer interviewees agree that indie and mainstream music may not necessarily be each others opposite:

"...to me, it (indie music) simply means bands playing without

signing to any big record company. In this sense big record

companies do not control musicians. You can decide what to do

yourself. You are your own boss. You are not made to do

something that you don't want to do... History tells us that most

of the bands that have signed to big companies usually have to

listen to their companies. Therefore they can hardly be indie.

They can continue to make some good music, but they still have

to do what the company wants... And so they can no longer be

called indie." (Dejay 26)

In professional-consumers' minds making music themselves is not done to reject or

compete with the mainstream but to reach as many music lovers as possible who

enjoy their music:

"Indie is different from mainstream. The mainstream musician is

making music which has the potential to please mass market

whereas the indie musician is making music not for a market but

for the music's sake and which audience itself need to seek out."

(Dejay 26)

Participation in the mainstream, for example singing for advertisers and touring

around shopping malls becomes acceptable and preferable to most indie

professional-consumers who believe that they are genuinely promoting their music. Professional-consumers rationalize that their limited participation in the mainstream media, which in the past has been condemned as betrayal of the indie community, is in fact an act of authenticity.

Familiarity of mainstream and non-mainstream

Their openness to the mass media undoubtedly enhances professional-consumers chances of promoting their music. Besides understanding how new media operates, most professional-consumer interviewees show a sophisticated train of thought in the practice of traditional media, particularly in how the mass media would like to portray indie musicians:

> *"I think my experience in cooperating with foreign labels interests the media most in the sense that my experience can provide them with raw materials to write about. They can use those raw materials to write a magnificent headline."* (Dejay 26)

> *"In fact, magazines have reported me in many ways. I don't think it is a problem. I think now it is hard to find a specific column that is talking about music all the way through. In fact how much can one talk about music? ... (If so) the pieces would become quite boring. Even for the most musical people, music*

will not be the only thing they want to know...Even if questions

have nothing to do with me... I will answer." (Dejay 26)

Compared with other indie hobbyists professional-consumers are more capable of using mass media to finish their tasks and to reach their target audiences. For instance, The Pancakes revealed that she has developed her own strategy to acquire media exposure:

> *"I don't appear in TV shows...except, say like some cultural*
>
> *programmes or some financial programmes. I once did an*
>
> *interview for a financial programme that analyzed my case from*
>
> *an economic perspective. "* (Dejay 26)

With the familiarity of the local indie community and mass media, professional-consumers become knowledgeable and gain enough experience to buffer the tension between mainstream and non-mainstream and are able to please both indie hobbyists and mass audience.

Pragmatic indie values

Local indie hobbyists have already built up their own indie values for their community since the emerging of local indie music in the early 1990s. While a traditionally materialistic pursuit is often not acceptable in the local indie community's valorization, professional-consumers who are DIY practitioners have

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added the idea of economic self-sufficiency into their ideology. Compared with some hardcore indie fans professional-consumers are more willing to talk about money:

> *"I think money is necessary for all sectors in a modern society.*
> *You cannot live without money...it is practical. Nothing is*
> *money-free...You get to be pragmatic. If you only have a little*
> *money, then you need to make music on a smaller scale not over*
> *budget. It is important for one to make music according to one's*
> *resource."* (Dejay 26)

Because of this pragmatic way of thinking professional-consumers can rationalize and justify their liaising with mainstream commercial sectors without feeling they have violated the code of the local indie community. For instance, both Ah Kit and Ah Shun agree that The Pancakes' cooperation with Kowloon Motor Bus and her appearance in fashion magazines are acts of authenticity.

Social mediations

After the economic recession in Hong Kong in the late 1990s, the original, highly commercialized core value of the society was strongly challenged. The dignity attributed to being economically self-sufficient, personally diligent and creative is once again praised by Hong Kong society. Contemporary indie

professional-consumers who adopt a Do It Yourself approach as a way to create music on a diminished income apparently become worthy of such praise. Also with the sudden hits of new media these new home musicians easily attract media attention

> "...the luckiest thing is that I published my DIY record earlier
>
> than others. If I had released the album in 2004, I am sure that
>
> no one would have bothered as so many other people have
>
> published their records." (Dejay 26)

As the Pancakes suggested earlier, due to society's recognition and celebration of indie music the new wave of professional-consumers is simply coming in with the tide of fashion.

4.3   Mediation of media workers

Mass media can serve to connect or block the communication between the mainstream and indie community. In this section 4 music journalists who have been working in either print or TV media have been interviewed in order to further understand the role traditional media workers play in shaping the existing indie prosumer culture.

Technological mediation

While indie hobbyists see the latest technological mediation of music bringing greater independence from the mainstream economy, the business sector sees it as a means of offering a wider range of music products and services. Due to the advancement of DIY music making, media workers have an abundance of highly customized and qualified music choices to report. In addition, with Internet technology, media workers can have access to more music sources and information. While traditional media demands more mass customization to cater for different readers' taste, the latest technological mediation has assisted media workers in providing a greater variety of music information to readers and viewers. The increased media coverage of DIY music has definitely encouraged an increasing amount of indie fans to be active prosumers.

More acceptable music choices

During the interviews all the music journalists agreed that DIY music technology has greatly upgraded the sound quality of local indie music and with the

upgrading of indie sound, music journalists can introduce to their readers to a higher standard of music. According to a media worker interviewee, in the 1990s they could have hardly imagined that the sound of DIY records could reach the quality of studio production that is now common. Though in general DIY music productions like the debut album of The Pancakes, *Les Bonbons* can hardly be regarded as high quality, to most of general audience and media workers, the sound is highly acceptable While the increased number of highly customized music products has benefited media workers and given them a wider variety of subject matter to report on, local audiences also have easier access to alternative music through traditional mass media.

Assistance to perform their duties

Although the advancement of information technology provides the local audience with a new platform and a new source of indie information, a few music journalists still feel that mass media is under threat from the rise of new media.

> "...*This trend will go even further in the future...Yes, they have an*
> *extra channel to promote their songs. And, they get to let others*
> *know their homepage. Still, mass media is more influential"*
> (Helen 34)

Instead music journalists commonly view Internet technology as a useful tool for the increasingly diversified taste of the Hong Kong audience.

"In order to satisfy different types of readers, the content has to be

very informative and the Internet can provide us with more juicy

stories about a piece of music or a particular musician." (Joleigh

28)

So in the meantime traditional media workers still consider themselves to have

benefited more than been harmed by new information technology. While music

journalists can generate reports on indie music more frequently, more and more indie

musicians, indie music and indie news can, at the same time, reach the local public.

Intermediary mediation

In conversation with music journalist interviewees, all show a strong market

oriented mentality. They are in touch with the taste of mainstream viewers and are

able to edit niche subjects to fit the mass market. Being aware that hardcore

ideology of indie music may prohibit the mass audience from understanding indie

music, music journalists shift their focus to report on either fashion or the

consumption of indie music. Compared with other types of indie music such as

heavy metal, DIY music is usually filled with personal and life experiences and this

fits perfectly into the music journalist's idea of what is newsworthy. From this we

can see that the rapid rise of indie music prosuming is apparent not only due to

personal judgment, which is simply arbitrary, but also due to a chain of complex intermediary actions.

Unromanticize indie community

Unlike many indie hobbyists music journalists tend to take an unromantic view of the indie community. Instead of authentic attitudes, spirits and principles they usually define indie music by its market value:

> *"I think indie music is just music that is not too commercial.*
>
> *They produce the music they like and can sometimes reach a*
>
> *specific segment of the audience."* (Helen 34)

> *"It is no different from a music store; you get to categorize the*
>
> *music that the store is selling... I think this term (indies) is more*
>
> *for marketing purpose."* (Yuen Chi Chung)

In many ways music journalists regard themselves as objective observers of the indie community who are better informed by industrial and market news than both ordinary audiences and indie hobbyists:

> *"they tend to have a sort of romantic view about indie labels...*
>
> *only they don't know that many prominent global indie labels are*
>
> *in fact affiliations of mega-majors like SONY, Virgin and*
>
> *Universal"* (Joleigh 28)

Because of a sensitivity of *"markets"* (Sien 31), media workers tend to be more capable of alleviating the tension between the mass and niche markets. However on the other hand, being knowledgeable about *"markets"*, they are able to be the catalyst for the opposition between mainstream and non-mainstream. For instance, as Yuen has mentioned in the interviews, the coining of the term "music of flinging head" (rave music) by most mass media workers is in fact one of the classic examples that has heightened the hostility between indie musicians and mass audiences. As media workers' intermediary mediation about indie music is always unstable, not all forms of local indie music can receive equal media attention, and DIY music in many ways can fulfill reporters' requirement by being newsworthy.

The newsworthiness of DIY music

Similar to business sectors, media sectors have their own valorization. Put simply the head of a media company assumes that each of his journalist employees knows their subject and the best way to present it to fit the taste of his target readers and viewers. Music journalists who write for leisure columns concede that they have specific codes to define whether a particular sort of music is newsworthy or not. To be considered newsworthy indie music or musicians should fit the following criterions at least:

1) Easy access

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"From our point of view, we would introduce those local bands

which are willing to be interviewed and perform on our

channel..." (Helen 34)

Traditionally indie hobbyists' do not favour mainstream media, most are

unwilling to be photographed and it is difficult for music journalists to interview

them. In the past music journalists could only contact them if they had a personal

contact. Now, with the emerging of DIY musicians who are more open to mass

media, music journalists naturally welcome them and have started to report more

about DIY music.

2) Rich and juicy stories

"Yes, that's sure, as we finally get to make the whole thing into a

story to present to the audience. We are not used to making the story

too serious so side-stories that are softer are most suitable." (Helen

34)

As previously mentioned music journalists generally agree that the hardcore

ideology of indie music drives away a mass audience. As a result music

journalists turn to present indie music as a lifestyle which involves fashion,

current trends and personal stories. DIY music is usually closely tied in with

personal adventures and a specific way of living thus becomes an excellent

subject matter for music journalists to write about. Besides the cooperative

attitude of most DIY musicians, music journalists prefer to write about DIY music as they can generate different features about DIY musicians that are not necessarily related to music.

3) Novelty

"Theoretically, yes. We aim to teach mass audiences a new way

of thinking about music." (Joleigh 28)

By positioning themselves as informal music educators, music journalists are required to search out novelty regarding musical matters. DIY music making and DIY musicians are all new and unknown products of the latest technological mediation and can certainly fulfill the music journalists' evermore demanding pursuit of novelty in music.

On the whole the high frequency of news about DIY music and the media celebration of DIY musicians (but not specifically other indie musicians) is in fact not simply an arbitrary decision but rather a complex calculation.

Social mediation

With the celebration of free market economy local traditional media has focused more on infotainment reporting since the late 1990s. Because of Hong Kong

audiences' greater demand for consumerist information, consumerist style reporting has become increasingly more dominant in leisure columns. In such social mediation music is no longer being viewed as art culture but rather as fashion and lifestyle. The DIY approach to music making which is a combination of latest technology, fashion and virtual lifestyle ideally can fulfill Hong Kong youngsters' fondness for eccentricity, trendiness and alternative lifestyles. So with the repetition of reporting on DIY musicians, the Do It Yourself approach, as a means of making music or simply indie prosuming thus becomes a remarkable symbol of local indie culture.

CHAPTER FIVE

DIFFERENT MODES OF CULTURAL PROSUMING

After exploring in detail how different mediations can affect indie hobbyists'
prosumption of indie music this section will attempt to generalize distinctive modes
of cultural prosuming that the contemporary indie hobbyists is practicing. While
indie hobbyists keep on prosuming music products, information and knowledge, they
have also built up a set of new cultural practices for the local indie community. By
using the term "cultural prosuming", I will make the point that contemporary indie
prosumers have acted as cultural prosumers who continue to revise the culture of the
local community. As mentioned in the beginning of the study, Negus's idea of
music mediation draws much on Bourdieu's notion of a cultural intermediary to
revise the traditional class distinction that ones' economic capital is more
determinative. In this study it is my aim to annex another factor (i.e. IT competence)
to the context of the Hong Kong indie community as further revision of Negus's
theory. By ranking the interviewees according to their technological capital 3 modes
of cultural prosuming are concluded below:

1) *Mode of Dilettante*: In this mode the indie hobbyists still largely practice the
   traditional consumption mode of indie music. In other words hobbyists who

adopt this mode still consume rather than produce indie culture with less competence in handling technology to customize their own music, indie hobbyists turn to prosuming indie information. As dilettante they show eagerness to receive and forward information about indie music. In this mode most of hobbyists obsessively construct and surf websites and BBS to exchange news regarding local indie musicians. Compared with the two other modes this mode involves the lowest degree of active prosuming.

2) *Mode of Practitioner*: In this mode hobbyists attempt to produce their own music. By utilizing the latest music making technology, they are able to adopt a Do It Yourself approach as a means of economic self-sufficiency to customize music. Rather than publishing albums they usually upload single music creations for public sharing. Generally this mode involves a 50/50 degree of actively producing and consuming.

3) *Mode of Critical Prosumer*: In this mode a hobbyists' role as producer begins to overtake their role as a consumer. With a skillful command of music technology that is equal to that of a professional most of these hobbyists try to publish their own DIY records or use the mass media as a means to foster local indie culture. Because of their familiarity with mass media and the indie community they are able to make use of different

mediations to finish their tasks. On the whole this mode involves the highest degree of active prosuming and as a result these hobbyists' are also the most critical of any construction of new cultural practices from the local indie community.

In the following sections each mode will be examined one by one in more detail so as to see which indie hobbyists will adopt the modes of Dilettante, Practitioner and Critical Prosumer and correspondingly what kind of new cultural practices these mode of prosuming bring to the local indie community.

5.1 Dilettante

Among all the interviewees there are a total of 4 who could be categorized as dilettantes. Their history of listening to indie music is comparatively the shortest. Overall most dilettantes appear to be the least assertive in answering questions regarding indie music. Throughout the interviews most of them are aware and stress that they are only beginners of indie prosuming.

Less knowledgeable about local indie music

Compared with practitioners and critical prosumers dilettantes have an undeveloped vocabulary regarding indie music and this shows their relatively short history in participating with the local indie community. In general they show a greater curiosity than the practitioners and critical prosumers about the culture of the indie community.

> *"I feel curious about live shows. Just like when I watched the show of LMF I was expecting to see whether they would really say coarse words to audience."* (Jacqueline 25)

In order to know more about local indie music that is not often reported about by the mass media they turn to the Internet and BBS for information. Hobbyists that adopt the mode of dilettantes usually regard themselves as novices of the indie community and may still try to look for eccentricity from the local indie culture. Using the

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Internet to share news about indie music becomes their most convenient and economical way to prosume indie culture.

Viewing indie music as fashion

As previously stated in this mode hobbyists look to the local indie community for eccentricity and the act of listening to indie music can provide them the gratification of feeling trendy and unique in their musical taste. To dilettantes their mode of prosuming indie music is no more than the new trials of any fashion or trend. In this sense what dilettantes want to get from participating in local indie music is a sense of fashion rather than simply music. To dilettantes their indie presuming (mainly sharing news through internet) not only confirms to themselves that they are fashionable and trendy in their lifestyle but also links them to other peers who believe in a similar lifestyle.

> *"In fact, all (indie albums) are from my friend. He is keen to dig new things out from the web and all of my friends have benefited from him"* (Jacqueline 25)

> *"My peers all regularly visit certain BBS for update. Once we know if there are any indie shows we will immediately contact each other and see if we can go together."* (Fennie 23)

On the whole in this mode hobbyists do not prosume indie music according to any specific ideologies. Most hobbyists who adopt this mode are not significantly different from active consumers.

Impacts on indie community

Heavy reliance on virtual music consumption

In discussing music consumption hobbyists in the dilettante mode are the ones who spend the least money on indie music compared to practitioners and critical prosumers. While practitioners and critical prosumers may still spend a certain amount in buying albums, the main expense of dilettantes on indie music is mostly on live shows. With the help of P2P sharing technology, dilettantes are used to sending and receiving music files through the Internet and thus become heavily reliant on virtual music consumption.

> *"If I have the record, I will change it into a digital file and send it*
> *to them. Or, I will send them a demo and ask them how do you*
> *feel about this one."* (Fennie 23)

> *"Yes, we can share music through this platform."* (Ka Ming)

Because of the heavy reliance on the virtual platform as the source of indie information and activities the indie community has become more and more

virtualized. Latent indie hobbyists who only listen to indie music through the Internet have greatly increased. The number of local live shows has as a result diminished. The traditional way of organizing and joining indie activities hence requires great alternation.

5.2 Practitioner

It is usually an old professional indie listener who adopts the mode of practitioner. With a longer history in the indie community, most of them start to make use of technology to customize their own music. Practitioners usually have amateur bands or have worked in the music business. Instead of playing covers they try to produce their own music creations. Among all the interviewees, a total of 10 are identified as practitioners. On the whole most practitioners have listened to indie music for over 10 years and witnessed the local indie movement in 1994.

Holding a hardcore ideology of indie music

Compared with dilettantes practitioners have clearer ideas of what local indie music should be:

> *"In fact, indie music only means music which is published without labels. Once a band or musician signs to any company, he should not be regarded as indie. Not every indie musician has the so-called spirit of indie and I don't see that there is a relation between indie musicians and indie spirit."* (Ah Shun)

> *"I think indie music is a bigger sub-category of music. To me, underground music is music that is hard to get hold of. The word alternative describes more the style of music. It is a term like rock*

and roll or blues. In fact indie music is sometimes not at all alternative in style." (Vicky 25)

To practitioners, indie music is not only a market categorization but also a set of assumptions of what authentic music should be:

"In fact technically speaking indie music is not creative, what is creative is the attitude behind the concept." (Siu Long 27)

"The first criteria would be the creativity. By which, I mean not only means looking creative! The music must be creative. The audience knows what the band is doing. " (Jan 28)

In this mode hobbyists may not necessarily be cynical towards mainstream music; however they do reject and do not consume mainstream music. Indie music has in essence become their largest major consumption of music:

"Listening to indie is the same as like your preference for drinking a certain type of tea. Some like to drink dragon-well, while others like to drink pu'er." (Hong 29)

"I think it is unexplainable. I think there are some people born-like this. It is destiny...ha-ha....in fact, even before 1994, I had already listened to Beyond." (Siu Long)

Compared with dilettantes hobbyists in a practitioner mode consume different types of indie music. At the same time they also tend to fantasize about indie values and their pursuit of these values (i.e. having greater independence from the mainstream and being self-sufficient through making indie music) and this motivates them to use the Do-It-Yourself way to make music.

In pursuit of hobbies

Due to having a longer history in participating in the local indie music community, practitioners have more motivation to appropriate their cultural and technological capital in indie music production. With familiarity, musical knowledge and technology of music making, practitioners are ever more demanding of themselves in pursuit of their hobby:

"I would suggest that a person has to try his best to find an appropriate position in the music industry. Maybe one is not good at composing or music makin, but still his craze about music quality can still make him a qualified music worker. He can be a produce, or a sound engineer. I think these positions at least do not relate to...like

how talented ones are in composing or song writing, but whether or

not ones spend enough time listening to different types of music."

(Siu Long 27)

In many ways the mode of practitioner is important for hobbyists to turn into professional-consumers. Therefore those indie hobbyists who are eager to rise above the level of dilettante to the point of commanding skills equal to that of professionals usually adopt this mode of prosuming indie music.

Impacts on indie community

1) Great increase of DIY music

For indie hobbyists the great leaps forward in music technology mean that music production is no longer such a large and unmanageable project as before. The collective sentiment that is common among hardcore indie followers in the 1990s, that indie musicians are often bitter and tragic in their music careers, has also been significantly receding since the breakthrough of DIY music technology.

"...As we can see the technology in the meantime is that advanced,

why not DIY an album? Be proactive. Why always rely on others to

publish their own album." (Siu Long 27)

"As it becomes so easy for students to play certain kinds of music with the help of the computer...it is unnecessary to invest much time in music. They may be able to compose songs with three months of lessons." (Ah Shun 28)

Since indie hobbyists are ever more demanding in their pursuit of their hobbies and are now able to make music themselves, an increasing number of hardcore indie practitioners who played in bands in the past are turning to DIY music. The convenience of the mode of the practitioner enhances DIY music greatly and has shown a growth in quantity since 2000. In the local indie community DIY music and indie music has become synonym.

2) Easing up cynicism and resistance

The blurring and merging between the roles of the producer and the consumer in the mode of the practitioner has eased the local indie community's cynicism and resistance toward the mainstream:

"Definitely no such thing can be a called betrayal of indie music. Please tell those people who say so to relax. Mind their business first before blaming others! Why always blame others?" (Siu Long 27)

"Ye, I also listen to mainstream music... In the recent years, I... start to think that not all mainstream music is bad and I also understand

that no matter how mainstream or indie music is, music is music. The

nature should be the same... " (Vicky 25)

With the possibility of customizing their own music plus the sheer experience of making music alone, many die hard indie hobbyists feel that there is hope in getting away from standardized music products through personal effort. Their dissatisfaction towards the domination of mainstream music has thus been greatly released. From this we can in fact see the mode of the practitioner has accommodated many of negative emotions like anger, frustration and mischief within the local indie community.

5.3   Critical Prosumer

Critical prosumers are acknowledged as the opinion leaders of the local indie community. With knowledge and working experience of both non-mainstream and the mainstream media respectively, critical prosumers' cultural prosuming actions focus mainly on mass media. Among all the interviewees a total of 4 were categorized as critical prosumers. In general critical prosumers have spent substantial time participating in local indie activities and have taken part in various indie events. As a matter of fact most critical prosumers are usually well-experienced indie hobbyists.

Skillful appropriation of mediations for indie culture

An ever-growing percentage of members from the local indie community are becoming skillful mediators and critical indie prosumers are often those skillful mediators who can get their tasks done by a combined use of new media creations, new technologies and mass media. With an in depth knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of different mediations critical prosumers are more capable of fostering independent culture:

> *"From university, I learnt that I can make my own music the cheapest way with the aid of PC"* (Dejay)

"The web is for insiders. Mass media is in fact for all people."

(Joleigh 28)

They make use of technology as means to produce indie records on a diminished budget. Furthermore they use mass mediation to maximize the magnitude of their music and because of the pursuit of their hobbies has risen to a social level, critical prosumers tend to be considered as having a higher status in the local indie community by both mainstream and non-mainstream audiences. Obtaining an authoritative position they become influential in shaping the existing indie culture. Any music moves they make can inspire followers and in general critical prosumers are often regarded as the think tank of the local indie community

Great sensitivity to mass media

In contrast to practitioners critical prosumers show greater sensitivity to mass media. Taking into account the power of mass media in affecting learners' music taste and choice, critical prosumers perceive it as a possible tool for indie music education and cultivation. They agree that indie music is made for music hobbyists rather than common audiences and they believe the mass media is the best way to turn ordinary audiences into indie hobbyists:

"Imagine you are a common pop audience who has never thought

that there is niche music like that. How would you be interested

in...mass media has to keep thinking... " (Joleigh 28)

While critical prosumers pay a significant amount of attention to independent media they are also motivated to study mass media so as to use it for the good of the indie community. Therefore critical prosumers are also regarded as the media strategists of the local indie community.

Impacts on indie community

Lead in prosumer techniques

The digital big bang has brought local indie hobbyists actual prosumer technology and this is coupled with the critical prosumers who have brought the local indie community prosumer terminologies and techniques. Through mass mediation critical prosumers have demonstrated to other indie hobbyists the great possibility the Do-It-Yourself approach brings as a means of making music to attain economic self-sufficiency. The popularity of some critical prosumers like The Pancakes show that the indie goal can be achieved through simple voluntary movements. By using new media creations and distribution technologies, critical prosumers drive other indie hobbyists to set up self-sufficient indie networks and customize music. Due to their ability to put indie prosumers' ideas into practice critical prosumers have introduced prosumer ideas into local indie culture. While most existing indie hobbyists still strive for independence from the mainstream they have started to stress pragmatic values for instance, economic self-sufficiency and professionalism as a way of adding value to the pursuit of indie hobbies.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION—A NEW INDIE CULTURE

After exploring in detail the new prosuming practices of local indie hobbyists this final chapter will serve as a conclusion of those practices and ideas. This chapter is also designed to summarize the principal prosumer characters of the new local indie culture and to briefly discuss the possible opportunities and threats that arise from the new indie culture.

Indie community with prosumer characters

McLuhan and Nevitt have suggested that with technology ordinary consumers have become producers and their idea of a prosumer has instantly pointed to two contrary examples. On one hand prosuming can be a means for the mainstream sector to offer a wider range and greater diversity of products and services to users. On the other hand it proposes a means for activists to seek greater independence from the mainstream's standardized products and services. This study, which is in essence an analysis of local indie hobbyists seems to support the latter.

While Toffler's prediction of mass customization is still far from being a reality in the mainstream business sector the changing of local indie culture is closely related to its technological mediation and has clearly shown that the non-

mainstream sector of Hong Kong has already adopted massive prosumer terminologies and techniques. With the rapid emergence of highly involved indie hobbyists (or simply DIY musicians) in recent years we can see the revolution that the technological mediation of music has led to great changes in indie hobbyists' intermediary actions and the social mediation of non-mainstream music. To summarize the identifiable changes of the mediations of indie music that are related to prosumer terminology and techniques include:

Technological aspect

1) Rapid increase of indie products

Because of the continually falling prices of music production devices ordinary people can now afford to customize their own pieces of music. In addition easy access to music making technology has enabled original indie consumers to become producers. As a result the number of indie products in the marketplace greatly increases. Besides actual indie music products like albums and MP3s, indie side-products like websites, BBS and live webcasts rapidly flow into the marketplace. Playing the roles of producer and consumer local indie hobbyists can now approach their ideal (i.e. having more customized music choices or simply greater independence from mainstream choices) themselves with only the aid of music technology.

2) Independent networks gear for prosumers

With the aid of Internet technology indie hobbyists are finally able to break away from the traditional connection which is highly restricted by time and sphere. The immersive expansion of this virtual network enables hobbyists to build up independent networks for collaborating, sharing information, music and opinions. In order to satisfy the need of prosumers who want to pool the indie experience, various independent networks have emerged for this specific purpose. For instance indie fans use 89268.com to share news about live shows and Rockacola.com for uploading DIY music. Because of these independent networks the existing indie hobbyists are able to connect with each other not only locally, but also regionally and globally. With such great collaborative power independent virtual networks for indie hobbyists grow increasingly influential to the point that even the mainstream media finds them difficult to ignore.

3) Highly involved Indie hobbyists as professionals

Since high-customization has been made possible by the advent of technology some indie hobbyists have become even more demanding in seeking unconventional music. A group of highly involved hobbyists who have repeatedly practiced customization of music have emerged and become activists within the local indie community. With experience of making music by the DIY method some hobbyists have turned into professionals and with the falling prices of DIY music technology this number is increasing. The originally stiff line of classification between indie amateurs and professionals begins blur within the

local indie community and the close link between authoritatives and professionals begins to crack and to fall apart.

4) Competence of Music Technology and issue of class

In the past ones' economic capital was a relatively decisive factor for ones ability to obtain music technology. Only singers from big companies could publish discs and only affluent band players could afford professional equipment. Whereas with the popular prices of IT today the close ties among ones' economic assets, cultural capital and music competence are greatly loosened. Due to the growing numbers of young DIY musicians who become famous because of their music prosumption we can reason that technology adds to the wealth and culture of a particular class.

Intermediary aspect

1) Focused on economic self-sufficiency

Leading-in to the of the idea of prosumer, indie hobbyists start to focus on seeking ways to gain greater independence from the mainstream through being economically self-sufficient. The original hardcore ideology of indie music that emphasizes opposing mainstream culture is hence diluted. The local indie community's hostility toward mass culture has been supplanted by negotiation and collaboration. Being independent from mainstream yet having to be pragmatic becomes the core value of the local indie community. Cynicism and

resistance gradually lose their prevalence among local indie hobbyists. Instead the indie community, as a means to survive rationalizes the idea of co-production with the mainstream sector.

2) Hybridization of ideas

By embracing the idea of the prosumer indie hobbyists have become flexible and reflective in combining ideas that may be similar or even conflicting. In order to be economically self-sufficient they seek different ways to add value to their indie products. Therefore crossover, fusion and hybridization between mainstream and indie sectors have all become acceptable to most of the local indie hobbyists. Rather than real improvisation indie hobbyists in the meantime prefer calculated improvisation.

Social aspect

1) Discrepancy between mainstream and non-mainstream declines

Since a large quantity of DIY songs flow into the market because of media workers' promotion and new media's distribution the discrepancy between mainstream and non-mainstream gradually declines on a social level. Firstly, the number of DIY musicians that fill in the new media may have already outstripped the number of local pop productions. Secondly, because of the

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frequent crossover and fusion between mainstream and non-mainstream musicians, the disparity between indie and pop sectors has in fact been greatly weakened. Finally, with the advent of technology, an increasing number of students who may not be attached to local indie community are able to become indie producers. This results in, at least for the present, indie music no longer being considered as rare or weird as it was in the 1980s and 1990s. The original social impression that indie music is an underground taste for minorities has gradually been swept away.

2) Celebration of prosumer techniques

Since the economic breakdown in 1997 Hong Kong people have welcomed prosumer techniques in many different ways. First, the idea of the DIY approach as a means for economic self-sufficiency is generally interpreted as a sign of strengthening oneself. Second, people who practice customization are viewed as being flexible and creative. Third, after the blowout of high commercialization, most Hong Kong adults no longer regard indie hobbyists as being idle but being persistent towards a personal goal. Indie music and especially DIY music is generally accepted by Hong Kong adults and celebrated by Hong Kong kids.

Opportunities and threats

In many ways the existence of local indie culture has changed from the past due to the various appropriations of prosumer technology and techniques of local

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indie music production. After all from the change in indie music mediations we can see that the paradigm of the local indie music sector continue to shift. As previously mentioned earlier in this chapter this study to a great extent supports the activists' argument that the emergence of indie prosumers brings the local indie community greater independence. However, we still see threats and conflicting ideas that exist within in the indie community. In the final section of the study, I will attempt to explore the possible dilemmas that the local indie community faces and hope to draw some inspiration for further study of the local indie culture in the future.

The paradox of choice[14]

As asserted repeatedly throughout the study, that with the advent of new technology indie hobbyists, who act as both consumers and producers/professionals, can enjoy more music choice independent from what is considered to be mainstream. Nevertheless Schwartz argues having an abundance of choice does not always necessarily equal getting away from the standardization of music products. While the existing music technology is instrumental for amateurs to create music, its manual-like operation still implies regularization and uniformity of DIY music products. Therefore the ultimate goal for indie presuming, of having more customized music, still has far to go.

In addition, because new media is open for all people to access, any indie hobbyists can upload their work. In other words, the gate-keeping function of

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[14] Schwartz, Barry (2004) *The Paradox of Choice: Why More is Less*, HarperCollins, New York

traditional media is denied. On one hand new media technology has enhanced equality among listeners but on the other hand it has also created the problem of mediocre musicians and music. The abundance of DIY music choice without any quality control can certainly result in a degree of stress and dissatisfaction for both existing indie consumers and new comers.

Dancing with mainstream

With the celebration of prosumer values the local indie community advocates compromise, negotiation and crossover. Yet such advocates must inevitably dilute the hardcore ideology of indie music. In maintaining coherence with mainstream and non-mainstream sectors it faces the danger of cooption. While the ultimate goal of the local indie community is to gain the greatest independence from mainstream music products more and more customized indie music tends to be in closely tied in with mainstream music, fashion or game products. If the continuous crossover with the mainstream finally erodes the premise of the local indie community, the existence of the community itself will surely come into question.

Technology is the king

DIY music technology does offer benefits to most of indie hobbyists; however it also forces indie hobbyists to rely too much on technology. In the past most local indie setters usually focus on live performances. In contrast, a number of new DIY musicians become able to publish songs without much experience of live shows. While most of the existing indie activities can be restaged to the Internet,

live shows can hardly be replaced. Therefore in the meantime it is not uncommon to see that many young DIY musicians are often feel nervous or uneasy about playing live. Furthermore many DIY musicians usually prefer to produce music on their own principally because they are not used to playing music with others. These trends have greatly overshadowed the traditional practices of the local indie community and can jeopardize its authenticity. If indie music can only exist in a virtual sphere, the genuineness that indie hobbyists have long been proud of and have treasured will inevitably lose its shine.

Furthermore the role of technology in making music becomes a form of elimination[15]. While DIY music making is viewed as the most desirable way for common indie listeners to have a greater sense of independence it involves a process of removing listeners who are unable to access or master the latest computerized technology for practicing indie prosuming. Even if music technology continues to fall in price, still not everyone will get an equal opportunity to learn the latest technology (e.g. most old people are able to master computer music; children from poor families who may not able to afford PC at home). In this sense a local indie community which values a high level of prosumer culture can serve an ideological purpose of enabling the existing hegemonic relationship between mainstream and non-mainstream music sectors to reproduce legitimately. If everyone has an "equal opportunity" to produce quality music then failure must be a consequence of the individual rather than the fault of the system that is structured in such a way to favor

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[15] C.f. social elimination (i.e. Bourdieu's argument of the role of school)

mainstream over the indie sector. Therefore, the joining to indie community as a means to contend with mainstream culture can be at stake.

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Appendix I: Notes on The Pancakes

The Pancakes are a one-girl band with the only member being: Dejay. By using a name that means to rewind records, Dejay said shows that she was an indie fan from a young age. Inspired by AMK, a local indie pop band in early 1990s and also European chill-out music, she started to play indie pop and specifically cutie pop music since the late 1990s. Before The Pancakes, she had taken part in several local indie bands like The Postcard, Ginger Biscuits and Tricycle Riders. Her first appearance under the name of The Pancakes was in during a concert called Collected Monsters II, which took place on 8th January, 2000. In the same month she used the same name to release her debut album *Les bonbons sont bons* for which she wrote and produced all the songs by herself.

Unlike most local indie bands that stuck solely to studio production, she tried to record and produced all her songs at home with simple software and hardware and in 2000 decided to send the "surplus" copies to foreign indie labels. Finally through a mailing list she received feedback from a small Spanish indie label called Elefant Records that promised to release *Les bonbons sont bons* in Spain. At the same time her copies were circulated among local music critics due to her of personal connection to many of them and also by pure chance. Thereafter her story began to be reported by the local media and especially by some popular teen programmes and magazines, in which Dejay is framed as an indie girl with

gut who dares to chase her dream. In 2000 Kowloon Motor Bus firstly used her song *A* as its TVC song. In 2001 The Pancakes was invited to show up in China Power Light's TVC again in which her course of releasing an album in Spain was celebrated. As a result, out of many people's expectations, *Les bonbons sont bons* sold over 10,000 copies without expensive promotion. Unlike previous hardcore exemplars (e.g. Beyond and Anodize), Dejay does not strive hard to overcome shortages of money, technology and media coverage in pursuit of her success. Her nuance of combing the use of different mediations (which include DIY music technology, niche marketing, making alignment with commercial organizations through TVC and middle-way media strategies) marks her as one of the previous indie setters who can only gain their success through their support of the majors and set a new formula of success for many indie late comers like Garlum, Chet Lam and at 17. The stereotypical image of local indie music as just noisy and heavy metal music has as a result been challenged. After The Pancakes a number of DIY musicians like Chet Lam, The Ketchup and at 17, who have a similar musical style, also adopted a similar mediation strategy and altogether formed a new power within local indie scene.

Appendix II: *The Pancakes' discography, performances & projects*

solo albums

1. les bonbons sont bons
release date: 8th Jan 2000
second edition: 7th July 2001

2. pancakes can panick
release date: 8th August 2000

3. all already ready
release date: May 2002

4. stereo radio / left
release date: February 2003

5. stereo radio / right
release date: August 2003

DVDs

1. 尋找真愛 (1000 copies limited edition)
release date: September 2004

singles

1. demo demo no.1 (100 copies limited edition / sold out)
release date: 25th March 2000

with friends

1. ok karaoke
release date: July 2001

2. freeplay
release date: March 2004

under elefant records:

1. captain curtain (7" vinyls only)
release date: March 2001

2. elefant dosmiluno (compilation)
song: stupid star
release date: March 2001

3. flying in the blue sky on a frying pan
release date: November 2001

others (compilations)

1. collected monsters II live
release date: April 2000

2. sofa 1
song: etienne (acoustic demo)
release date: 15th October 2000

3. rocker music magazine 3, Taiwan
song: abenteuer
release date: January 2001

4. beikoku ongaku 17, Japan
song: patronage
release date: February 2001

5. my life as mcdull soundtrack
song: all things bright and beautiful
release date: December 2001

6. mondisk
song: far too fast (semi-finished version)
release date: March 2002

7. alok:wahoo!
song: fisimatenten
release date: 2002

8. mcb200
song: b (semi-finished version)
release date: 2002

9. neo acoustic movement vol.1
song: clouds
release date: 2003

10. global indie clubpop!
song: rock guitar
release date: 2003

11. 獨立女皇 (details coming soon)

12. mcdull, prince de la bun soundtrack
song: 咁咁咁
release date: July 2004

13. bear - invisible orange (book / with bonus AVCD)
song: lüngull gumlay
release date: July 2004

14. true colors TV best
songs: a, patronage
release date: August 2004

other projects

1. the film my life as mcdull (2001)
the voice of ms chan chan

2. mcmug CD-Rom series (2002)
narration of the stories (Cantonese version) and background music

3. the film mcdull, prince de la bun (2004)
the voice of the young mrs mak and the song "gum gum gum"

performances

solo concerts (all full house)

reverie concert series no.5 – concert for one second
- 6th and 7th September 2003, Theatre, Hong Kong City Hall, 3
performances

reverie concert series no.4 - the end of your summer holiday
- 6th and 7th September 2002, Shouson Theatre, HK Arts Centre, 2
performances

reverie concert series no.3 - I was born today
- 2 December 2000, City Festival Theatre, Fringe Club, 1 performance

reverie concert series no.2 - pancakes can panick

- 15 October 2000, HK Arts Centre, 1 performance

reverie concert series no.1 - les bonbons sont bons
- 25th March 2000, McAuley Studio, HK Arts Centre, 1 performance

other performances

viva indie! concert - a concert with chet lam and ketchup within the HK Arts Festival
- 5th - 7th March 2004, Concert Hall, HK City Hall, 4 performances

and over 60 local and 17 overseas small performances

TV commercials

Qoo
(background music) August 2002

San Miguel
(background music) September 2001

China Light and Power
(guest appearing and background music: 6 songs from les bonbons sonts bons) July 2001

San Miguel
(background music, 12 clips) April 2001

HSBC credit card
(song: patronage) December 2000

Kowloon Motor Bus
(song: a) July 2000

other projects

尋找真愛 DVD (Sept 2004)
- written, directed, and edited by dejay

the film "mcdull, prince de la bun" (2004)
- the voice of the young mrs mak and the song "gum gum gum"

mcmug CD-Rom series (2002)
- narration of the stories (Cantonese version) and background music

the film "my life as mcdull" (2001)
- the voice of ms chan chan

magazine column

- magazine "East Touch", columnist / march 2002 to march 2003, and July 2003 to February 2004

publications

- fanzine "Sofa 2", Apr 2001, publisher + editor + writer
- fanzine "Sofa 1", Oct 2000, publisher + editor + writer

Appendix III: Informants' profiles

	Name	Age	Years of listening	Remarks: occupation
1	Yuen Chi Chung	32	Over 10	Publisher of MCB
2	Joleigh	28	10	Music personnel
3	Jan	28	12	Translator
4	Ah Shun	28	10	Player of Numerous man
5	Helen	34	5	Editor (TV)
6	Xam	19	4	Student
7	King Ming	19	4	Student
8	Jacqueline	25	4	Flight attendant
9	Agnes Sien	31	2	Editor (Magazine)
10	Ah Kit	28	10	Player of 22 Cats
11	Hong	29	10	IT/ writer
12	Vicky	25	15	Digital designer
13	Fennie	23	5	Customer service
14	Mango	29	10	IT-related
15	Siu Long	27	10	Sound technician
16	Nic	29	7	White collar
17	Yin	2X	8	Nil
18	Dejay	26	9	The Pancakes

Appendix IV: Chronology of Hong Kong Pop Music

(Source: Wong C C (1997) Making and Using Pop Music in Hong Kong, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong)

1949   EMI(Asian base) moved from Shanghai to H.K.

1959   H.K. Commercial Radio on air, providing more choices of pop music

Diamond Records formed, signing local bands fronted by Sam Hui, Teddy Robin etc.

1960   1st Sing Tao Man Pao Singing Contest

1961   1st Talent Quest

1964   The Beatles performed in H.K.; heightened the local Beatlemania

1965   Teddy Robin & the Playboys formed

Fung Hang Records formed

1966   Sam Hui joined The Lotus

1967   TVB launched broadcasting

Sam Hui hosted Star Show; Just A Little released as single

1970   Polydor evolved from Diamond Records

1971   Sam Hui joined Polydor; April Lady released as a hit single

Sam and Michael Hui began to host the popular TV show Sheung Sing Bo Hei

Capital Artists formed

1972   Polydor and Philips merged and form the new conglomerate Polygram

1973   North Point Town Hall opened as an early important show venue

Two Canto-pop landmarks were popularised: The Tower Ballad of Sam Hui;

Bitter Sweet Marriage of Joseph Koo and Sandra

1974   The first film of Sam and Michael, Games Gamblers Play, released with the smashing theme song--the first Canto-pop played in BBC and RTHK English channel. Their LP   sold 150,000 copies

The band Wynners formed

1975   Sam and Michael launched their second comedy film The Last Message, the record sold 200,000 copies

1976   The Private Eyes of Sam Hui broke the record of box office by reaching the new   yardstick of HK$8.5 million; and the LP sold 350,000 copies

CTV established

1977   1st Gold Disc Award, Sam Hui won the Centennial Memorial Award

WEA (H.K.) formed

1978   SONY (H.K.) formed

IFPI led anti-piracy campaign

C.A.S.H. formed

1979   Sam opened six shows in A.C. Hall

1st Top Ten Gold Hits Award, presented by Radio Hong Kong

1980   Queen Elizabeth Stadium opened, providing a concert venue of 3500 people

1981   Sam hosted the first big show in QES

Ah Lam followed

1982   1st New Talent Singing Contest organised by TVB and Capital Artists; Anita Mui   won

1983 H.K.Coliseum established, became the largest indoor concert venue of

12,000 capacity

Sam Hui again took the first trial to host three shows

The band Beyond formed

1984 Alan Tam broke the record of shows of taking 6 nights in HKC

Jacky Cheung won the 1st District Singing Contest

1985 Alan Tam broke another record of having 20 shows

Bands like Island, Life Exhibition, Tat Ming Pair began to activate

1st Carlsberg Band Competition; Tai Chi won

1987 Anita Mui stole the limelight of HKC with her record-breaking 28 shows

1988 Alan Tam announced to stop accepting any music award

1989 Paula Tsui broke the show record by blocking 33 shows at HKC

Alan Tam soon broke it with 38 shows

All-Artists-for-Democracy-in-China Concert at Happy Valley Racecourse to

support

the students in Beijing

1990 Leslie Cheung announced retirement and took 33 shows at HKC

1991 Metro Radio: the third station launched

Vinyl production ceased from July 31; CD era in full swing

First democratic election of Legislative Council; Commercials of Democrats

Promotion Concert banned from electronic media

Tat Ming Pair disbanded; band scene fades out

1992 Anita Mui finished 31 farewell concerts at HKC

Sam Hui retirement concert; 41 shows at HKC; marking a new record

Paula Tsui soon broke the record with 43 shows; Tsui also signed ATV and

left TVB

Four Heavenly Kings (Jacky Cheung, Andy Lau, Leon Lai and Aaron Kwok)

being labeled by the media

Wave of H.K./China artists interflow

Music Union, the indie music club formed

1993   Wharf Cable TV launched broadcasting, with YMC as a dedicated music

channel

Rock Records moved base from Taiwan to H.K.

CD privacy serious: new gimmicks of record packaging

IFPI set up selling chart of Chinese records to avoid abuses of gold-disc

claims

Music Power, the indie band union formed after the tragic death of Wong Ka

Kui

Non-mainstream music scene grew: ....Huh?!, AMK, College Musical

Deviants from mainstream: Faye Wong, SoftHard; Unplugged fad

1994   China music privacy marked 265 million units

Polygram launched satellite labels: Go East, Musicians

Boom of international music

Concerts: Ryuichi Sakamoto, Depeche Mode, Peter Gabriel, Duran Duran,

Bob Dylan, Santana, Jethro Tull, Radiohead etc.

Quote Zone Movement from Commercial Radio: international music

magazine Quotables in print; First Indie Bandstand presented 17 bands at

HKC unprecedentedly

Indie music magazine Music Colony in print

Chinese rockers landed H.K.: Dou Wei, Tang Dynasty, Chang Chu, He Yong

He Yong aroused the controversy of Four Heavenly Kings as Clowns

HMV music giants stores arrived and launched battles with Tower

1995   Jacky Cheung released million-seller compilation throughout Asia

Capital Artists launched indie satellites, e.g. GIG, Play Music, Al-Songs

DIY licensed such bands as Anodize, Black and Blue and Virus, to SONY

Quotables stopped print

CR2 launched All-Original-Canto-pop Campaign

CR2 led the Real Good Sound Movement to fight against CD piracy

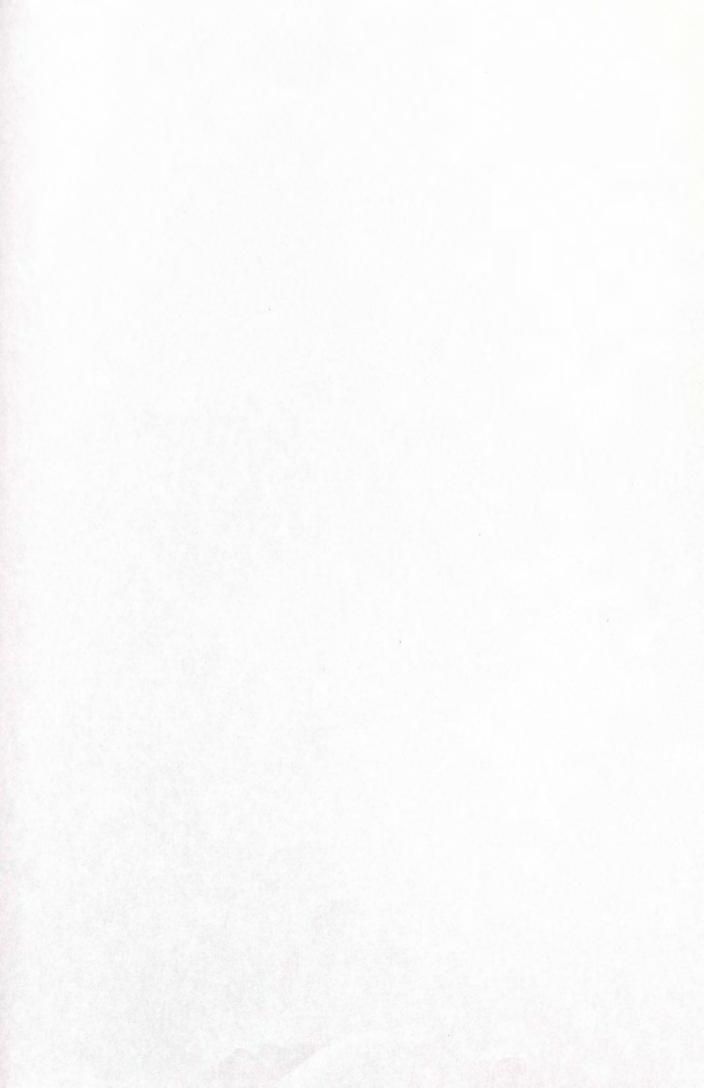1996   Capital Artists closed all indies

Music Union closed

Tat Ming reunion

The disastrous inferno of the century not only killed 40 people but also burnt

down the studio of Polygram where all the vintage master tapes of Sam Hui,

Teresa Tang etc. were destroyed

Appendix IV: General Questions for in-depth interviews

1) What is your own definition of indie music?

2) When did you start to listen to indie music? Why do you like indie music?

3) How do you think about the performance of local DIY music? Do you like it?

4) To you, what is good indie music?

5) Usually where do you get indie information? Indie songs or indie news?

6) How much do you usually spend on indie music consumption?

7) Have ever tried to produce music yourself?

8) What do you think about the amateur performance of indie musicians? Do you consider indie musicians professional? Why?

9) Are you used to listen to pop music as well?

10) Do you consider yourself as fan or music fans?

11) What are the differences you can think of between indie scene in 1990s and for the time being?

12) How do you meet with your indie peers? In what ways? Through real gathering or internet?

13) Usually, how would you use those music technologies like internet, P2P and MP3? Do you think they are helpful?

14) How would you comment on those local DIY musicians like The Pancakes who gains publicity through cooperate with advertisers?

15) Compared with tradition media, how would you comment on the distribution and reception of indie music through new media?

16) (To media workers) How do you select suitable indie bands for interviewing?

17) (To media workers) How would you usually report on those local indie
musicians?