

HYBRIDITY AND MEDIA IN DANGDUT MUSIC: ORIGINS, EVOLUTION, AND ITS ROLE IN INDONESIAN AND INTERCULTURAL POPULAR CULTURE

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Abstract

Dangdut music, a cultural hybrid of Indonesia, has evolved over half a century from its origins in poor communities as a resistance to the influx of Western rock music. Combining Malay rhythm elements of Indian, Arabic, and Western music, dangdut has now grown into a global popular culture. This study explores (1) the origins and development of dangdut music in Indonesia and globally; (2) the role of media in the Indonesian dangdut music industry; and (3) the characteristics of dangdut as a hybrid of local and global values. Using a qualitative approach and ethnographic methods, the researcher conducted participatory observation within dangdut communities, complemented by interviews, literature reviews, and analysis of online media. The findings reveal that dangdut's dynamic evolution is impacted by social, economic, political, cultural, and religious aspects. The significant roles of mass and digital media, the dangdut community, the recording industry, and government support have been crucial in sustaining its existence and global reach.

Keywords:

Dangdut Music, cultural hybridity, mass and digital media, intercultural, popular culture

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, dangdut is a type of music originating from the lower social class. In the past, the rhythm and lyrics of the song, as well as the singer's chants, could only be enjoyed by marginalized people who lived in slums, narrow alleys, villages, and those with low tastes, even identical to a life of poverty. However, over time, this began to shift, and the middle social class accepted dangdut until it slowly penetrated the minds of some of the elite. Its emergence is similar to that of rap, jazz, R&B, blues, and hip-hop music, originating from poor African-American communities in the United States. The presence of dangdut has become part of Indonesian popular culture after initially being classified as low culture.

Talking about dangdut cannot be separated from the figure of Rhoma Irama, an artist from Tasikmalaya, West Java, Indonesia, who proclaimed dangdut in 1973. The beginning of dangdut's emergence as a subculture marked a period of struggle. It became a counterculture against the onslaught of rock music that entered Indonesia (such as the music groups Deep Purple, The Rolling Stones, and Led Zeppelin) in the 1970s and the local Indonesian rock group Giant Step (Rubiyanto, 2022; Weintraub, 2010). Dangdut is a legitimate part of contemporary Indonesian culture. As a cultural hybridity, dangdut is a valuable, sensitive prism for viewing Indonesian society (Lockard, 1998). However, dangdut has not yet fully become a national culture (Quroatun'Uyun, 2020).

Initially found in villages and open fields, the dangdut can then be witnessed through programs broadcast by various radio and television media or social media content. Media companies process dangdut as a commodity to get audience ratings and profits from advertisers. They commodify dangdut

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through quiz programs, music shows, soap operas, infotainment, awards, and talent scouting (Kurniawan & Nopus, 2020; Rianto, 2013; Rubiyanto, 2020; Susanti, Suryana, and Nugraha 2020). Through various media, dangdut transformed from folk culture to pop culture.

Even though it has penetrated almost all levels of society, most Indonesian people still see dangdut as a lower-class music genre, less interesting, and less stylish (Kholis & Prabayanti, 2021; Rubiyanto, 2022). Maybe because most of the lyrics are always in dialectic with the social world of people with low incomes and follow the rhythm of their lives, if observed further between the rhythm and lyrics in each song, they strengthen each other in reflecting social reality as a manifestation and aspiration of society, especially those who are marginalized, excluded, and thrown away from the social, economic, political, and cultural structures themselves.

As an original Indonesian music genre characterized by gendang (drums) and suling bambu (bamboo flutes), its distinctive rhythm can shake the hearts of listeners. It can sometimes clear the hearts and minds of its fans with a happy atmosphere, which makes them forget about life's problems for a moment. The singer is swaying when singing a song, such as moving the hips, waist, and buttocks, which are sometimes erotic. It is a natural reaction that someone is not aware of when listening to the rhythm of the drums and can hypnotize the listener to sway along (Weintraub, 2010).

The current dangdut music is not only the original, which was first created by Rhoma Irama and was influenced by Malay, Indian, Arabic, and Western music. However, recently, many sub-genres of dangdut have emerged, such as 'campursari' dangdut, Disco dangdut, Remix dangdut, House dangdut, and koplo dangdut (Rubiyanto, 2022; Ulya et al., 2021). The sub-genre's existence combines technological developments; the tastes of musicians, composers, creators, and singers; and fan preferences. As a result, the digital technology used can potentially change society's social, economic, and cultural patterns (Raditya, 2022). Moreover, in today's digital era, dangdut music has experienced a shift in instrumentation and features (Hananta, 2023).

Initially, dangdut was considered deviant and lowly. Still, its uniqueness allowed it to adapt, absorb, and accept the influence of culture, technology, and other music genres outside dangdut until the wider community could receive it. Researchers observed cultural hybridity in dangdut, resulting in several unique identities not possessed by other music genres worldwide. Therefore, dangdut needs to be supported by all stakeholders: the community, musicians, creators, singers, composers, arrangers, fans, mass media, and digital media.

Lately, the government's role has been seen to be increasingly severe in supporting the existence of dangdut by issuing a certificate through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia to make dangdut an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Indonesia. This government legalization will then be proposed to UNESCO to gain recognition so that dangdut can be recorded as Indonesia's national cultural (music) treasure (Maulana, 2023). Based on the data, not a single type of music has been recorded and recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Indonesia, and only traditional Indonesian musical instruments have been recognized along with others (UNESCO, 2025).

This study aims to answer the following three questions:

1. What are the origins and dynamics of the development of dangdut music in Indonesia and globally?
2. What is the role of the media in the Indonesian dangdut music industry?
3. What are the characteristics of dangdut music as a cultural hybrid with local and global values?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term dangdut is an onomatopoeia or imitation of the sound of drum beats (dang) and twists (dut). It first appeared around 1973, accompanied by various derogatory statements from the upper classes toward lower-class music lovers (Frederick, 1982; Weintraub, 2010). The spirit of dangdut began in the early colonial period when a potpourri of Indonesian, Arabic, and Western instruments played together in *Tanjidor* (a traveling orchestra typical of the Betawi tribe in the capital city of Jakarta)

(Kesumah, Purna, and Sukiyah 1995). Around the 1920s, a Betawi Chinese ensemble known as *Gambang Kromong* emerged, which was a mixture of Chinese, Sundanese, Maluku, and Portuguese musical instruments and melodies. After that, *Keroncong* music was introduced in the early 20th century. *Keroncong* singers and musicians usually toured cities on the island of Java, such as *Tanjidor*. *Keroncong* music began to be known as *Orkes Melayu* (Malay Orchestra or O.M) in the 1940s and also the beginning of the emergence of *Gambus* music with original Malay rhythms (Frederick, 1982; Kesumah et al., 1995; Lockard, 1998). O.M. later became the identity of the *dangdut* music group, and *Rhoma Irama* also used the term *Orkes Melayu* for the *dangdut* music group he formed on October 13, 1973, under the name O.M. *Soneta* before it became the *Soneta* group.

In the 1960s, *dangdut*, popularly known as Malay rhythmic music, became the national music of the Sultanate of *Tanah Deli* (now known as *Medan City*) in North Sumatra. Even before *Rhoma Irama* popularized *dangdut* abroad, singer *Rubiah* had brought the music to Malaysia and Singapore. (Kesumah et al. 1995). Therefore, it seems less appropriate to say that *dangdut* is the music of the marginalized. Moreover, *dangdut* is the only music genre in the country that received full support from the New Order government, which wanted to make *dangdut* the national music. (Arjaya, 2016; Rubiyanto, 2022).

Dangdut has become an Indonesian cultural identity (Arjaya, Afianto, & Nurullita, 2021). According to Carey, as a process, culture is associated with the general characteristics of a group of people (e.g., physical environment, equipment, religion, customs, or way of life). Culture can also refer to texts or symbolic objects (e.g., works of art and architecture) that have special meaning for people in a particular culture (McQuail, 2010). Culture is the whole of values that may differ and develop according to the values adopted by society (Çöteli, 2019).

The culture referred to in this study is *dangdut*, a musical art and original work of the Indonesian people. While the birth process of *dangdut* in Indonesia began with the embryo of Malay rhythm, in practice, it experienced hybridity and developed into pop culture. Then, several subgenres emerged (e.g., *Minang dangdut*, *Javanese dangdut*, *Banjar dangdut*, *Koplo dangdut*, *Disco dangdut*, *Jaipong dangdut*, *Remix dangdut*, *Pop dangdut*, and others) until it spread abroad. The existence of *dangdut* today cannot be separated from the support of interested parties and the significant role of the mass media. Homi K. Bhabha proposed the term hybridity to identify the cultural crossover that emerges in post-colonial societies (Furqon & Busro, 2020). Cultural hybridity combines two art forms to produce a new, distinctive cultural identity (Firdaus et al., 2023). There is a process of imitation of the mixing of different cultures (Ramadhan & Wulandari, 2023). Hybridity requires traces of other cultures in each culture, thus offering transcultural opportunities for external media and marketers to build effective relationships between their commodities and local communities (Kraidy, 2005). To thrive, cultural hybridity is facilitated by positive collective memory and policies that support the freedom of interaction between cultural groups (Triatmodjo et al., 2023). Lockard (1998) defines *dangdut* as an original Indonesian music genre with cultural hybridity.

METHODS

Researchers use ethnographic methods to study cultural groups to obtain cultural interpretations (Sanjatkiko & Hardiah, 2021). In qualitative research, ethnography requires researchers to conduct participatory observations by involving themselves, observing and recording cultural dynamics over a long time, and contributing to solving practical community problems (Sari et al., 2023).

Therefore, researchers conducted participatory observations of the *dangdut* community (singers, composers, creators, music arrangers, musicians, and fans) since the researcher worked at a television and radio station that produces *dangdut* programs (1991–2010) until now. Researchers also obtained data through direct involvement and observation of their environment since childhood, where most people like *dangdut*. In addition, researchers will get data from interviews with (1) the coordinator of the television *dangdut* program, (2) the director of the *dangdut* radio, and (3) the leader of the Malay

Orchestra (*dangdut* group), as well as some related literature to complement the observation. The researcher then interpreted the various data obtained to determine the cultural values of Indonesian society and to find answers to the objectives of this research.

ANALYSIS AND RESULT

DEVELOPMENT OF DANGDUT IN INDONESIA

Dangdut is a music genre with a complex and controversial history (Wallach, 2008). Perhaps that is why there is no complete and detailed narrative record of the journey of Dangdut from the past to the present. However, researchers try to divide the development of this music into two eras, namely, before and after dangdut was proclaimed by Rhoma Irama (1973) in his many oral statements as follows.

ERA BEFORE 1973

As described by researchers, dangdut was influenced by cultures from other countries such as India, Arabia, China, Europe, and Portugal. In this era, dangdut was still in its original form of Malay-Deli rhythm, often performed to people from village to village as public entertainment. The initial term Orkes Melayu (O.M) at that time colored the development of dangdut before it was launched by Rhoma Irama, including O.M *Chandralela* led by Husein Bawafie, O.M *Bukit Siguntang* led by Abdul Chalik, O.M *Sinar Kemala* led by Abdul Kadir, O.M *Kenangan* led by Husein Aidit, and O.M *Pancaran Muda* led by Zakaria. In addition to popular music groups in this era, several singers also enlivened dangdut performances (Malay rhythm), including Ellya Khadam, Emma Gangga, Hasnah Thahar, Ida Laila, A. Rafiq, Mashabi, Munif Bahaswan, Elvy Sukaesih, Juhana Sattar, Ahmad Basahil, Muchsin Alatas, Mansyur S., and Rhoma Irama (Weintraub, 2010). According to Zakaria, the leader of O.M Pancaran Muda, when interviewed by researchers on Radio Dangdut TPI, he explained:

... unfortunately, none of the music groups have survived until now. This is because there is no regeneration of musicians, creators, or singers in the group to continue and preserve the music group if one of its personnel dies or can no longer work (Zakaria & Rubiyanto, 2006).

In addition to performing from village to village, dangdut (at that time still Malay rhythm) was performed at certain events at the invitation of the event committee, such as wedding parties. One of them was O.M *Pancaran Muda*, led by Zakaria, who once received an invitation from Mrs. Fatmawati Soekarno (wife of the first president of the Republic of Indonesia) to perform at an entertainment event at the wedding of her daughter, Megawati Soekarnoputri, on June 1, 1968 (Zakaria & Rubiyanto, 2006). Megawati Soekarnoputri was the general chairwoman of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle, one of the largest parties in Indonesia today, and she was the fifth president of the Republic of Indonesia. This rare opportunity showed that Malay music (dangdut) had entered the elite. It should be noted that at that time, there was no commercial competition between singers and music groups. They only intended to entertain the community and channel artistic talents through performances from one place to another.

On average, (senior) singers have good *cengkok* (ornament of voice – twisted voice) when singing dangdut songs. These vocal ornaments are influenced by their skills in reciting the holy verses of the Qur'an, such as Ellya Khadam, Elvy Sukaesih, Munif Bahaswan, A. Rafiq, Rita Sugiarto, and Mansyur S (Weintraub, 2010). The voice quality of these senior singers remains consistent to this day. In addition to having good voices, they also strive to perform optimally in front of their fans. From a gender perspective, male singers are more comfortable singing in public than women, who must change their self-image to classical Islamic or Malay forms to present themselves more respectably (Decker, 2020; Ulya et al., 2021). Based on the researcher's observations, all singers in that era embraced Islam.

Later, around the 1990s, new singers emerged who embraced religions other than Islam (Christianity), namely, Erie Suzan, Conny Nurlita, Thomas Djorghhi, and Nella Kharisma, in the 2000s. Several things that underlie the small number of non-Muslim dangdut singers in Indonesia out of hundreds of singers include the following: (1) the majority of the Indonesian population is Muslim, (2) dangdut comes from Malay rhythms that are understood as Islam, (3) there is the impact of gambus music (Arab-Islam) on dangdut, and (4) the emergence of music groups that are primarily of Arab descent, such as Said Effendi (O.M Irama Agung), Umar Fauzi Aseran (Sinar Medan), Umar Alatas (O.M Chandraleka), Husein Bawafie (O.M Chandralela), and Husein Aidit (O.M Kenangan) (Weintraub,

2006). In addition, many popular singers of Arab descent are Muslim, such as A. Rafiq, Munif Ba-haswan, Muchsin Alatas, Intan Ali, Tommy Ali, and others, and (6) even the majority of dangdut song lyrics are written in Indonesian and have a strong Islamic theme (Lockard, 1998). In addition, (7) the lyrics of the songs by Rhoma Irama also mostly contain Islamic preaching quoted from the Al-Quran and the Hadith of the Prophet (Ar and Maskur 2021).

On that basis, it seems that there is reluctance from those who are not Muslim to learn it because dangdut is considered a culture that was born and is identical to Muslims. Over time, some senior singers and musicians born in this era have passed away, and some still show their existence until now. They still appear in various performance venues and become performers on national television programs.

ERA AFTER 1973

In this era, Malay rhythm metamorphosed into dangdut music. The entertainment industry welcomed it with open arms, and record producers also glanced at dangdut because this music was considered a tempting market opportunity. Through cassette recordings, dangdut began to be known by the upper class, with the emergence of songs by Rhoma Irama and Soneta Group starting their recordings. The public also liked the appearance of Rhoma and Soneta and the recordings of the songs they sang on stage. In this case, the Indonesian music scene entered a new color with the entry of dangdut into the recording industry. Even *Tempo* magazine called 1979 the peak of dangdut because it succeeded in dominating the cassette market and was dominated by the voices of Rhoma Irama and Elvy Sukaesih (Rubiyanto, 2022; Weintraub, 2006).

Besides Rhoma Irama and Elvy Sukaesih, another successful dangdut singer in the dangdut recording industry was A. Rafiq, who recorded the songs *Pengalaman Pertama* (The First Experience) and *Pandangan Pertama* (The First Sight) in 1978. Entering the 1990s, almost 70% of dangdut songs produced by the recording industry dominated the Indonesian cassette sales market (Lockard, 1998). Some popular song titles include *Mandul* (Infertile), *Rujuk* (Remarriage), *Cincin Kawin* (Marriage Ring), *Kuda Lumpung* (Leathered Horse), *Jangan Dulu* (Hold On), *Mawar Merah* (Red Rose), *Ke Monas* (go to the National Monument-it's in Jakarta), and others. Dangdut song lyrics generally depict people's daily lives. This closeness to the lyrics' narration creates an emotional attachment in dangdut fans.

THE UNIQUENESS OF DANGDUT MUSIC

There are several unique notes about dangdut as music that has experienced distinctive cultural hybridity.

(1) The presence of the figures of King and Queen attached to senior dangdut figures who played a significant role in the birth of this music genre. King of dangdut was given to Rhoma Irama, while Queen of Dangdut was given to Elvy Sukaesih (Rubiyanto, 2022). This pair had previously duetted in 1968 when Rhoma Irama was with O.M Purnama. Elvy Sukaesih was the first to develop the Malay music genre with harmonious *cengkok* vocals (Chaniago & Basri, 2012). Even though they have long been separated from their respective careers. However, the nicknames King and Queen still receive legitimacy from the Indonesian people. These two figures are considered worthy because they have good works and a strong commitment to advancing dangdut in the country's music scene. They were also reunited by the management of Indosiar television after a long time not dueting to sing dangdut songs for about 34 years.

(2) When meeting or performing on the same stage, junior singers usually greet senior singers first and call them father or mother. Juniors also often kiss their seniors' hands. This behavior is a form of respect for seniors and reflects the politeness characteristic of Indonesian culture.

(3) Most dangdut singers come from underprivileged families and are the backbone of the family. If they succeed and become professional singers, their immediate family, such as their mother, father, older brother, younger brother, or sibling, acts as managers who take care of their various needs, such as arranging performance schedules, arranging accommodation, preparing clothes to be worn during

performances, and negotiating cooperation contracts with event organizers.

(4) Famous dangdut singers mostly come from Java Island, where the Betawi, Sundanese, and Javanese live, or part of northern Sumatra, and some come from Sulawesi. To show the identity of their place of birth, some singers like to use the name of their region as their last name. In addition, on average, their stage name differs from the name listed on their population identity.

(5) When performing on stage, their costumes are very glamorous, decorated with ornaments and beads. Sometimes, the price is more expensive than the fee they receive. Senior singers usually wear these costumes, but for junior singers, clothes full of ornaments are no longer worn. They appear more casual and follow the latest fashion trends.

(6) Almost all song lyrics are themed on issues that are close and familiar to the daily lives of their fans, such as love, suffering, divorce, remarriage, gambling, drinking, sex, infidelity, poverty, religious values, and so on. However, moral messages are still implied in these themes.

(7) After performing several songs at an event and receiving compensation from the organizing committee, visitors or the general public who enjoy their performance also give some money, sometimes tucked into their hands. If the singer is a woman, the money is tucked between their breasts. This erotic cultural practice is called 'disawer' or 'saweran'.

(8) There are gerobak dorong (wheelbarrow) buskers or dangdut singer groups who carry complete musical equipment around villages or city outskirts. They play several songs to get paid by the public, who enjoy the songs they perform.

(9) They also have a firm emotional bond with fellow singers, creators, musicians, and fans, like one big, strong family (Rubiyanto, 2022).

DANGDUT GOES UP A CLASS

From slums and stuffy villages, dangdut has now penetrated luxury buildings in urban areas. This can be seen, for example, when private companies or government agencies hold meetings with their employees, colleagues, or partners. Dangdut is played to entertain and create a cheerful, warm, and intimate atmosphere among those present. This music is also fascinating when the elite hold their children's wedding parties in luxurious, magnificent, star-rated hotels.

Several lodging places, such as hotels or motels, deliberately provide pub, cafe, or karaoke room facilities for guests who stay to enjoy dangdut entertainment. These hotels or motels can be found in big cities, districts, and remote areas in Indonesia. Dangdut is increasingly penetrating almost every aspect of people's lives. This music is getting closer to the Indonesian people through performances in various locations.

Dangdut song lyrics are simple and easy to digest, expressing daily problems in people's lives. Therefore, the performances are always packed with fans from various levels of society. They can sing along to the songs and see their favorite musicians and singers up close and directly when they perform. Almost all elements of society support the existence of dangdut as a national culture, including government support that will propose dangdut to UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Indonesia.

Another thing is that only dangdut can penetrate the global market among the many types of popular Indonesian music. Dangdut singers can perform and be accepted in various countries in Asia, Europe, and America, including Brunei Darussalam, Japan, Malaysia, the southern Philippines, Singapore and Taiwan, the United States, and the Netherlands. Even Weintraub (an American dangdut researcher – ethnomusicologist) founded a dangdut music group called Dangdut Cowboys in his country in 2007. Then, in the late 1990s, a group of Japanese music fans also formed their dangdut group called O.M Ranema (Orkes Melayu Rakyat Negeri Matahari – People of the Land of the Rising Sun) (Wallach, 2008).

Dangdut Cowboys performed on the government television station (TVRI) in Medan (the origin of the Melayu-Deli rhythm). This concert commemorated the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Indonesia and America (Tribun Medan 2019). Weintraub has a mission to introduce dangdut to the international community, which is generally still unfamiliar with typical Indonesian music.

While Ranema is an abbreviation of Rakyat Negeri Matahari, which means People of the Land of the Rising Sun, this group also popularizes the J-Dangdut or Japanese Dangdut genre. This orchestra consists of Hamdan Ooki, Kasep Ohya, Ebizo, Bintan Balu Nakamura, Hide Shindoh, M. Yokota, Dorce Zab, Emily Chang, C. Endoh, Venndy, Yuki Shara, Ukulele Windii, and Erika A. They usually perform songs from famous Indonesian dangdut singers. The genre they perform can also compete with other genres in Japan, such as J-Rock and J-Pop (Editor Kapanlagi.com 2014).

In addition to the two dangdut groups (American and Japanese) that were born and present in their respective countries, there is also a solo singer, Arreal Tilghman from America, who launched the album *Dangdut in America* in Jakarta (Ariwibowo, 2009). Arreal Tilghman won the *Dangdut in America* audition held in Delaware, Philadelphia, for two years by promoter/producer Rissa Asnan. In addition, the dangdut music video of a dangdut singer from South Korea, named Hwang Woo Joong, went viral in Indonesia, entitled *Mama Papa* (father-mother). In the music video, Joong changed his name to Ricky Ujung. In addition to Arreal Tilghman and Hwang Woo Joong, there are three other female dangdut singers, namely, Alina Saraswati alias Alina Salimgareeva from Russia; Juminem Pierre, a model from France; and Joelina Bee, a dangdut singer from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, United States (Insertlive, 2019).

THE ROLE OF MASS MEDIA IN THE INDONESIAN DANGDUT INDUSTRY

The appearance of Rhoma Irama and Soneta in almost every performance is practically the same and monotonous. However, some singers are inspired to appear different, unlike Rhoma and Soneta. They must have their characteristics to appeal to dancing and can be used as a selling point for themselves. Dangdut is indeed identical to swaying. To boost its popularity, various dances have been created, such as Inul Daratista's goyang ngebor (fast gyrating hip), Uut Permatasari's goyang ngecor (fast gyrating hip with one leg), Anisa Bahar's goyang patah-patah (fast gyrating hip with some pauses), and Zaskia Gotik's goyang itik (fast gyrating hip that emphasizes on the butt like a walking duck). Dangdut singers have also evolved from those who previously relied on twisted voices known as cengkok to a new generation of shake-selling singers. Sway and shaking are even used to commodify their bodies (Maulana, 2020; Rubiyanto, 2022). The mass media widely cover their performances and are a strong magnet for the audience to consume mass media. However, Rhoma Irama and most senior singers rejected their presence with their respective dance labels.

This feud was considered obscene and vulgar, especially with Inul Daratista as the first singer who became popular through the goyang ngebor (fast gyrating hip = drilling drill). The polemic involved dangdut artists, several clerics (Indonesian Ulema Council), national figures, and Indonesian and international communities (BBC NEWS, 2003; Murphy, 2003; VOA, 2009). As a result of this conflict, Inul Daratista became increasingly popular and became a new wealthy person in the Indonesian dangdut music industry. Inul succeeded in using some symbolic, social, economic capital. This finding results from research conducted by researchers for a doctoral dissertation in communication science titled *Construction of Habitus and the Arena of Actors in the Cultural Industry* (Rubiyanto, 2015).

PRINT MEDIA

Conventional mass media, such as newspapers, tabloids, and magazines, often contain articles related to dangdut, especially the success stories of singers, gossip, and groups that readers liked at that time. Print media's efforts have an impact on increasing their circulation. A tabloid print media dares to use the name tabloid dangdut as its trademark. Clearly and specifically, this media dedicates itself to dangdut in Indonesia (Issuu, 2008).

RADIO

The involvement of the government-owned Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) made the spread of dangdut songs to the public very rapid and fast. Thanks to the broad reach of RRI's broadcast programs, which covered almost all of Indonesia from Sabang to Merauke, a distance of more than 5,200 kilometers, dangdut quickly became known to the Indonesian people.

RRI became an effective mass media because most Indonesians have a radio. Radio is the most popular mass media in Indonesia because it is cheap and does not require a subscription (unlike newspapers or magazines). In addition, before 1973, many Indonesians still needed to be literate, and the characteristics of radio only required the ability to listen to when the audience consumed content. Radio can also be carried and listened to anywhere and anytime. While listening to favorite songs on the radio, listeners can also do other activities.

In addition to RRI, which covers Indonesia's entire territory, private radio stations have a narrower and more local reach. Based on data released by the Indonesian National Private Broadcasting Radio Association, there are 94 dangdut format radio stations spread across several cities in Indonesia, as follows:

Number	Radio Location (Province)	Radio Name
1	North Sumatra	• Radio Citra Buana 95.50 FM
2	West Sumatra	• Radio Citra 96.20 FM
3	Jambi	• Radio Manggis 96.0 FM • Radio Metro 101.9 FM
4	Bangka Belitung	• Radio Prima Bangka 105.9 FM
5	Lampung	• Radio Batara 98.4 FM • Radio Slendro 106, 20 FM • Radio Omega 105, 10 FM • Radio SGP 97,80 FM • Radio RBK 104,30 FM • 98,00 FM Radio Duta • Radio Kharisma 105,90 FM • Radio Ramayana 98,80 FM • Radio Andalas Kece 102,70 FM • 100,80 FM Radio Dwi Amanda • Radio Mahameru 104,50 FM • Radio Saburai 106,30 FM • Radio Prima 100, 70 FM • Radio Idola 96,60 FM • Radio Maskara 89,90 FM
6	Banten	• Radio Sam 96,90 FM • Radio Akarsari 92,20 FM • Radio KISS FM 90,20 FM • Radio Mersi 93,90 FM
7	West Java	• Radio Maya Nada 98,00 FM • Radio Sela 96,90 FM • Radio Dahlia 101,50 FM • Radio Gema Sonata 101 FM • Radio Maestro 92,50 FM • Radio Swara Pratita • Radio Rama 104, 70 FM • Radio Rugeri 93,40 FM • Radio New Shinta 97,20 FM • Radio DFAS 94,60 FM • Radio Cakra 90,50 FM • Radio Rasilima 103,20 FM • Radio Bandung 95,20 FM • Radio Gema Remaja 100,20 FM • Radio RCA 102, 10 FM • Radio Bestari 93,00 FM • Radio Gaya Banjar 97,40 FM • Radio Elmitra 95,00 FM • Radio Elgangga 100,30 FM • Radio Fortune 90, 70 FM • Radio Elpas 94.1 FM • Radio Jusyan Top M 92,70 FM • Radio Pitaloka 88,30 FM • Radio Dhaya Suara 93,90 FM • Radio Actari 96,60 FM • Radio Buana Jaya 94,30 FM • Radio RJM Mania 91,50 FM • Radio Galunggung Giri Sakti 99,00FM • Radio Tjandra 100,60 FM • Radio Sukapura 98,90 FM • Radio S-Tri 100, 30 FM • Radio Galuh 89,50 FM • Radio Sindangkasih 103,60 FM • Radio Purnama 87,90 FM
8	Central Java	• Radio Radenmas 105,70 FM • Radio Harbos FM 102,60 FM • Radio Bima Sakti 96,60 FM • Radio POP FM Pekalongan 97,90 FM • Radio Sahara Tercinta 106,40 FM • Radio POP FM 103.6 FM • Radio POP FM 97,70 FM • Radio POP FM PALING PAS • Radio Merapi Indah 104,90 FM GOYANGNYA 98,2 FM
9	Special Region of Yogyakarta	• Radio MBS 92,70 FM

10	East Java	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radio Segara Suramadu 107,20 FM • Radio BASS 96,60 FM • Radio Suara Giri 98,40 FM • Radio Mahameru 92,30 FM • Radio RWS 99,00 FM • Radio Ronggo Hadi 97,80 FM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radio Moderato 107,20 FM • Radio Puspita 103,70 FM • Radio Angkasa 95,00 FM • Radio Bhasa 93,10 FM • Radio Nada FM Madura 102,90 FM • Radio Rosco 90,6 FM
11	West Kalimantan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radio Diaros FM 103,60 FM • Radio Kenari 101,00 FM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radio Mudytha Buana 88,40 FM • Radio Diaros 103,60 FM
12	South Kalimantan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radio Nusantara 102,70 FM • Radio Kumala 96,80 FM • Radio Pelangi 94,40 FM • Radio Purnama Nada 98,20 FM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radio Dirgahayu 100,20 FM • Radio Gema Kuripan 102,50 FM • Radio Swara Ruhui Rahayu 88,80 FM
13	West Nusa Tenggara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radio Gemini 101,00 FM 	
14	South Sulawesi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radio Ramayana 87,6 FM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radio Makara FM 103,60 FM

Figure 1: Table of Dangdut radio formats in Indonesia. With courtesy of Source: (PRSSNI 2025). Scheme by the author.

This table shows the largest number in West Java, which is 35 radio stations. Meanwhile, the number of radio stations in North Sumatra = 1, West Sumatra = 1, Jambi = 2, Bangka Belitung = 1, Lampung = 15, Banten = 4, Central Java = 9, Special Region of Yogyakarta = 1, and East Java = 12. In addition, several other radio stations also play dangdut songs as part of their broadcast programs, although the radio format is not dangdut (such as ethnic, religious, Indonesian pop, and family radio formats). So, the popularity of dangdut and the rise of the cassette industry in Indonesia are also getting better.



Figure 2: Parachutists carrying the flags of *Radio Dangdut TPI* and *Republik Dangdut* signifying the start of the 40-hour non-stop dangdut music show at Ancol Beach, Jakarta. Source: Personal documentation of the author.

All radio stations with a dangdut format must broadcast selected songs suitable for listeners. Generally, radio in Indonesia carries out on-air activities and various off-air activities. The goal is to get closer to its listeners so that they will be loyal to the radio station. One of them is Radio Dangdut TPI (now called Radio Dangdut Indonesia with a Music and Entertainment Radio format). This radio station once held a 40-hour nonstop dangdut event titled Republik Dangdut (Dangdut Republic) at Pantai Karnaval Ancol, Jakarta, 2006. This event attracted the public's attention, advertising agents were competing with radio stations, and other media industries. Tito Sulistio, Director of Radio Dangdut TPI, stated:

...the inspiration for this event came from the 1969 Woodstock Music and Art Fair, a three-day nonstop pop music show at Max Yasgur's farm in Bethel, New York, USA. I wanted this event to be as big as Woodstock so that many could promote and enjoy dangdut music (Sulistio and Rubiyanto, 2006).

Uniquely, in this Dangdut Republic event, there is a non-stop pair dance competition that lasts for 40 hours, following the rhythm of the songs sung by dangdut singers and accompanied by music groups in turns. The kerangkeng² dance event has two large stages and iron barricades surrounding those who sway to the song's rhythm. The researcher in charge of the creative team is tasked with organizing the performance, which lasts for three days and involves 150 singers and seven dangdut music groups (Rubiyanto, 2022).

TELEVISION

Due to the booming sales of dangdut cassettes in the community and its popularity among fans, government-owned television stations also produced dangdut music programs to be broadcast. Television of the Republic of Indonesia/TVRI (national public broadcasting) was the only television station in Indonesia that first aired in 1962. In 1989, the first private television station, Rajawali Citra Televisi Indonesia (RCTI), was established. Then, other private television stations emerged, namely, *Surya Cipta Televisi* (SCTV), Televisi Pendidikan Indonesia (TPI), Andalas Televisi (ANTV), Indosiar Televisi, and others.

One of TVRI's mainstay dangdut programs is *Aneka Ria Safari* (ARS). This program is one of the most significant events contributing to developing dangdut in Indonesia. ARS and TVRI were heavily influenced by Golkar, the ruling party of the New Order (pre-reform order). As a result, there was mutualism between dangdut interests and Golkar politics in attracting the masses' love for dangdut while allowing them to vote for Golkar in general elections or democratic celebrations in Indonesia. During the campaign period for the General Election (Pemilu) or Regional Head Election (Pilkada), dangdut becomes the primary means of communicating with the lower class to reach and gain their support (Madonna, 2020).

For new singers, the ARS program can be a shortcut to gaining social acceptance. The more often they appear at ARS, the faster they will be known, and the public (audience) will buy song cassettes or compact discs containing a series of songs sung by them. Eddy Sud, the coordinator of the ARS program and another Golkar cadre, stated to researchers at his residence:

...many people are willing to queue for a long time to be able to appear on the ARS TVRI program, and our house is never empty of visitors, whether singers, musicians, or record company producers (Sud & Rubiyanto, 2000).

Eddy Sud's statement was confirmed by Ishadi SK, Director of TVRI at that time, who explained that ARS was a profitable program for TVRI because it was a means of promoting new songs. Song producers and record labels had to pay to broadcast their songs on TVRI (Weintraub, 2010). Through the ARS program, dangdut was used as a political tool by Golkar. Although, at that time, there had been a transaction with the government broadcasting institution (TVRI), the ARS program also played a role in the development of dangdut in Indonesia.

Meanwhile, Moerdiono's statement as Minister of State Secretary of the Republic of Indonesia commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Independence of the Republic of Indonesia in Ancol, Jakarta, also showed the government's support for dangdut. On stage, Moerdiono stated that dangdut was Indonesia's national music. At that time, the researcher was a television producer-director (TPI) who broadcast a live performance entitled "Semarak Dangdut 50 Tahun Indonesia Emas" (Dangdut Excitement 50 Golden Years of Indonesia) throughout Indonesia and 53 other countries. This performance featured many dangdut singers and groups and was witnessed by approximately 250,000 people in an open field, Ancol (Rubiyanto, 2022; Weintraub, 2010). This activity is Indonesia's most enormous dangdut performance and has just been matched.

Dangdut is still widely broadcast on television stations and is a popular program. Various genres of programs decorate its broadcasts, such as Indosiar television, which created a global dangdut talent search program that is followed by Asian countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei Darussalam, and Timor Leste. Even NET-TV previously faced psychological obstacles be-

² Which means kērangkèng=aroundgoing, coming fro Hokkien 欄間, lōng-keng prison, jail.

cause the target audience for dangdut was not the same as its television audience segment, broadcasting dangdut to commemorate NET's fifth anniversary (Rubiyanto, 2020).

In general, dangdut performances always attract the attention of many people or the masses before the COVID-19 pandemic (Fatimah & Hayati, 2021). So, what happened in Indonesia when the COVID-19 pandemic hit? Was dangdut also affected and not broadcast on television? No. Dangdut continues to accompany the audience. Television stations moved their activities into the studio and did not invite the audience. In addition, the entire production crew systematically complies with government regulations and the National Disaster Management Agency, such as wearing masks and washing hands, to avoid transmission of the COVID-19 virus. Violating these rules would have resulted in severe sanctions from the television station and the government. This effort shows that the media is committed to preserving dangdut, especially since dangdut programs for television stations can be a strong magnet in attracting viewers and advertisers. On the one hand, through various genres of programs broadcast, the media seeks profit to expand the audience and advertiser market.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND DANGDUT

Entering the current digital era, Indonesia also brings fresh air to developing dangdut music. With the rise of social media platforms such as TikTok, Spotify, YouTube, Podcast, and others, fans can easily enjoy dangdut music. The presence of the internet has also influenced public consumption of dangdut shows. In the past, they consumed dangdut through traditional media (such as radio and television) or read news in newspapers and magazines. However, now they are actively looking for content about dangdut tailored to their tastes on various social media platforms or other applications. On the other hand, record labels, individuals, and those who care about the existence of dangdut take advantage of this opportunity to upload various content to their new media accounts.

Furthermore, the spread of dangdut through social media can reach abroad and allow people worldwide to access it regardless of space and time (borderless). Surprisingly, the King of dangdut Rhoma Irama also took part in creating talk show content on social media. Since May 2018, the YouTube channel 'Bisikan Rhoma' (Rhoma Whisper) has received a positive response from the public, with more than 2.6 million subscribers and more than 510 million viewers (Rhoma Irama Official 2024).

Many sources are invited to appear on this YouTube channel. Not only are dangdut artists invited as podcast guests, but film artists, youth figures, political figures, media figures, rock musicians, comedians, and even clerics are also invited. Various topics about dangdut, success stories of guest stars, even the career journey of the king of dangdut, and so on become interesting topics to discuss. Rhoma's role in this case is as a host (who asks questions to guest stars). However, sometimes the guest stars also have a high curiosity about Rhoma's success story in his journey in the dangdut music scene. So they switch roles in the conversation. The guest star becomes the interviewer and Rhoma becomes the source. This is one of the unique things about the 'Bisikan Rhoma' program.

Rhoma always includes moral messages from a cultural and religious perspective in Indonesia in his discussions with them. According to the researcher's observations, the question and answer atmosphere was fluid, light, and full of familiarity, showing the politeness of the dangdut king, which indirectly became an example for the current dangdut generation or a form of exemplary behavior of The King" for 'Citizens of the Kingdom' and 'Dangdut People' (the term for fans) and the audience. Thus, according to Syaflinawati (2021), the presence of social media dramatically supports the sustainability of dangdut and impacts the success of its singers who appear on social media platforms such as YouTube.

CHARACTERISTICS OF DANGDUT AS INDONESIAN CULTURE

As previously described, dangdut is an original Indonesian culture from the Melayu-Deli region, North Sumatra. Although influenced by cultures from various countries, dangdut is Indonesia's national culture. For example, the Indonesian flavor is pronounced in the lyrics of the song *135 million* by Rhoma Irama in 1976. The lyrics of this song tell about various ethnic groups in Indonesia, including Javanese, Sundanese, Acehnese, Padang, Batak, Betawi, Makassar, Bugis, Ambonese,

Dayak, and others. In Indonesia, there are not only different ethnic groups but also regional languages, religions, arts, customs, typical foods, and even music.

MAINTAINING THE EXISTENCE OF DANGDUT

Stakeholders, especially creators, musicians, arrangers, singers, and lovers of dangdut who are members of the Indonesian Dangdut Music Artists Association are actively involved in carrying out activities to maintain the existence of dangdut in Indonesia. One of the routine activities is periodically holding a ‘Dangdut Song Creation Competition’. This activity, which was first held in 1979, provides benefits for maintaining the regeneration of dangdut, singers, creators, arrangers, musicians, and dangdut songs on an ongoing basis.

Not only does creativity emerge from here but also the solidarity to advance dangdut as an original Indonesian culture is also clearly visible among them. Another harmony is always maintained through sportsmanship when creating the latest colorful dangdut songs. These activities can be said to be a form of dangdut culture, namely, giving birth to an idea, work, or creation through a learning process in a group with the same values (McQuail, 2010).

In addition, to maintain its existence, recently, a dangdut subgenre has emerged that is popular with the younger generation, such as dangdut campursari, a dangdut song with Javanese regional language lyrics popularized by Didi Kempot. Most of Didi Kempot's themed songs are themed around heart-break and lost love, which touch the listeners' emotions. As a result, Didi was given the nickname “The Godfather of Broken Heart” by Sahabat Ambyar (the name for Didi Kempot's fans, most of whom are millennials and gen-Z) (Qorib & Dewi, 2021). A sense of kinship, mutual support, and respect among fans or between fans and idols is a valuable asset for the future development of dangdut in Indonesia.

CULTURAL HYBRIDITY IN DANGDUT MUSIC

Dangdut is a blend of Malay (Indonesian) culture with cultures from other countries. This hybridity combines North Sumatran Malay musical ensembles, Indian film music, Arabic pop music, and the West (Lockard, 1998). This can be seen from the musical instruments used in dangdut, such as tabla (India), tambourine (Arabic), electric guitar, bass guitar, keyboard, piano, mandolin, and others, originating from European culture. The types of original dangdut musical instruments originating from Indonesia are gendang (drums) and suling bambu (bamboo flutes). In addition, the singers' lyrics, rhythm, and cengkok³ sounds combine Malay, Indian, and Arabic rhythms.

For example, this form of cultural hybridity can be seen in the song *Sawan Ka Mahina*, created by Anand Baksh, which first appeared in the Indian film “Milan” in 1967 (Sopiah, 2024). Then, Rhoma Irama popularized this song in Indonesia around the 1980s and duetted with Indian singer Miss Nandini. The dangdut arrangement packaged by Rhoma Irama and Soneta Group makes this song similar to the original sung by two famous Indian singers, Lata Mangeshkar and Mukesh. Rhoma Irama also released an album with Lata Mangeshkar through the record company Le Moesiek Revole by remastering and re-releasing the album and uploading it on the YouTube channel (Rhoma Irama Official 2020).

Meanwhile, the hybridity of local and global values aims to accommodate the desire to preserve cultural uniqueness so that the world community better knows it. The strength of dangdut lies in its hybridity, which distinguishes it from other types of music. As a result, dangdut has survived until now (Raditya, 2013; Syaflinawati, 2021). Seeing the dynamics of dangdut's journey from the past to the present, it is fitting that dangdut becomes Indonesia's Intangible Cultural Heritage and a treasure trove of national cultural wealth.

³ Means ‘twisted’ in Indonesian. It is said that these sounds seem twisted in melodic shape and rhythm.

CONCLUSION

Before being launched by Rhoma Irama in 1973, this music genre was known as Irama Melayu and originated from Deli, Medan, North Sumatra. Dangdut emerged from the womb of the marginalized and developed into a folk culture to counter the entry of Western rock music into Indonesia. Dangdut is a cultural hybridity formed from a blend of local and global cultures. Dangdut's journey is swift and closely related to Indonesian society's social, economic, political, religious, and cultural aspects. The existence of dangdut has always been supported by various parties, including musicians, creators, singers, songwriters, fans, record companies, the government, and even mass and digital media. Therefore, Indonesian society should maintain dangdut as a national cultural heritage. The media is vital in popularizing, maintaining, and preserving dangdut as Indonesian pop culture.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My gratitude goes to fellow lecturers at the LSPR Institute of Communication & Business, Yuniarti Rahayu, and Sri Ulya Suskarwati for their assistance in data retrieval, critical discussions, and technical assistance. Their extraordinary contributions have greatly helped in improving the quality of this research.

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