Hong Kong Cantopop

A Concise History

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1 Introduction

"Every generation has its own voice," claimed James Wong 黃霑, the late godfather of Cantopop, in his doctoral thesis on the development of Cantopop.[1] The English term "Cantopop"—Cantonese popular songs—did not come into existence until the 1970s, when *Billboard* correspondent Hans Ebert used it "to describe the locally produced popular music in Hong Kong" in 1978.[2] Per James Wong's remark—which was adapted from the well-known saying of the Qing dynasty master of Chinese culture, Wang Guowei 王國維: "Every dynasty has its own representative form of literature"[3] —Cantopop is a musical form from and the voice of contemporary Hong Kong. As the saying of the legendary John Lennon goes, "music reflects the state that [a] society is in,"[4] so, hailed as an "outlier" in Hong Kong culture by James Wong, Cantopop witnessed and reflected the rise and decline of Hong Kong culture over the past fifty years. A unique genre, with lyrics written in standard modern Chinese

1. Jum-Sum Wong 黃湛森 (a.k.a. James Wong), "The Rise and Decline of Cantopop: A Study of Hong Kong Popular Music (1949–1997)"〈粵語流行曲的發展與興衰：香港流行音樂研究 1949–1997〉(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: PhD thesis, University of Hong Kong, 2003), 182. I would like to begin with a note about Chinese sources. I decided to cite a sizable number of Chinese publications on the topic throughout the book because most of them are very important materials not previously available in English, and thus I think it is essential to address them (I have reorganized them according to the emphases of different sections). For readers conversant with Chinese references, there may seem to be too many details. But since I hope that this book may be of interest to general readers who cannot read Chinese, it is necessary at times to offer an elaborated account of what may seem obvious to some. For this I would like to ask for the indulgence of all readers.
2. According to Joanna Lee, Ebert first coined the term "Cantorock" in 1974 in an essay in *Billboard*. However, as noted by Helan Yang 楊漢倫 and Siu-Wah Yu 余少華, the term cannot be found in any *Billboard* essays published in 1974. See Joanna C. Y. Lee, "Songs on Emigration from Hong Kong," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 24 (1992): 14–23, and Helan Yang and Siu-Wah Yu, *Reading Cantonese Songs: The Voice of Hong Kong through Vicissitudes*《粵語歌曲解讀：蛻變中的香港聲音》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Infolink, 2013), 2.
3. Wang Guowei, "Preface," in *History of Drama during the Song and Yuan Dynasties*《宋元戲曲史》(in Chinese) (Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press, 1964), page number missing.
4. Quoted from an interview with John Lennon in 1971. Available at: https://rhinospike.com/script_requests/j8lila/681/; retrieved on March 15, 2016.

but pronounced in Cantonese, Cantopop was once very popular not only in Hong Kong but also in neighboring regions.

Hong Kong was a British colony for 156 years before sovereignty over the territory was handed to China in 1997. In all colonies there are distinctly drawn social lines. In Hong Kong, the lower stratum of society was understandably composed of Chinese. According to John Carroll in his study of Hong Kong history, this is clearly reflected in government-enforced racial divides: "Despite their status and wealth, the members of the Chinese bourgeois, like all Chinese in Hong Kong, continued to face racial discrimination at every turn."[5] The racial and class divides in a society have profound impacts on the cultures of a colony. For instance, colonial culture defined the taste of Hong Kong; in other words, grassroots Chinese culture was inferior to British culture, which was considered classy by local Hong Kong people. As convincingly argued by the cultural sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, "systems of domination find expression in virtually all areas of cultural practice and symbolic exchange, including such things as preferences in dress, sports, food, music, literature, art, and so on, or, in a more general sense, in taste."[6] Since Cantonese was, and arguably still is, considered an inferior dialect that is not formal enough to be used in standard Chinese writing, Cantopop has long been considered nothing more than a grassroots pastime limited to the lower class of Hong Kong people. In other words, Cantonese, spoken by more than 90 percent of the population, "was and continues to be treated as an inferior or inauthentic version of Chinese."[7] Moreover,

> [t]o *write* in simple prose, the Hong Kong school-child must memorize not only the composition of the written characters (which exists in an order independent of speech), but also the way things are *said* in standard written Chinese (the grammar of which corresponds to speech in Mandarin/Putonghua rather than to speech in Cantonese). (original emphases)[8]

When compared to English as the auxiliary "high" language, Cantopop served as an everyday "low" language in Hong Kong during its colonial years.[9] After its reversion to China the situation got worse; Cantonese became further marginalized, and now it is generally considered inferior to Putonghua. Despite this situation, language—that is, Cantonese—is considered one of the most

5. John Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 74.
6. Randal Johnson, "Editor's Introduction," in Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 2.
7. Rey Chow, *Not Like a Native Speaker: On Languaging as a Postcolonial Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 13.
8. Chow, *Not Like a Native Speaker*, 45.
9. Martha Pennington, *Forces Shaping a Dual Code Society: An Interpretive Review of the Literature on Language Use and Language Attitudes in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: City Polytechnic of Hong Kong, 1994).

important markers of the Hong Kong identity.[10] Hong Kong musicians and lyricists have been successful in creatively developing Cantopop into a unique hybrid—Chinese and Western music styles with lyrics written in Cantonese and standard Chinese.[11] Cantopop has also given a style and an accompanying lifestyle to several generations of Hong Kong people.

"Popular music" is often believed to defy a precise definition, but according to Roy Shuker, various attempts at providing a definition can be identified, one of which is based on its commercial nature.[12] In this book I would follow his definition, equating it "with the main commercially produced and marketed musical genres."[13] While Shuker's emphasis is on traditional "rock" and "pop" forms, the latter has been playing a central role in the Hong Kong context. It is commonly believed in the popular music industry that "popular" has to be defined by sales and profits.[14] "Popular" may also mean "of or relating to the people." Richard Middleton has identified two definitional synthesis related to "popular music" in his *Studying Popular Music*: positivist and essentialist. In short, while the former measures "not 'popularity' but sales," the latter places an emphasis on "quality" rather than "quantity"—either the organizing principle as "manipulation" and "standardization" from above or "authenticity," "spontaneity," and "grassroots" from below.[15] As Tony Bennett put it,

> "the people" refers neither to everyone nor to a single group within society but to a variety of social groups which, although differing from one another in other respects (their class position or the particular struggles

10. According to Gordon Mathews, "[a]ffluence and the freedom that money can provide are one perceived mark of difference between Hong Kong and Chinese identities; another key marker is that of language . . . A third mark of Hong Kong identity . . . involves political ideals such as democracy, human rights, and the rule of law." Gordon Mathews, "Heunggongyahn: On the Past, Present, and Future of Hong Kong Identity," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 29, no. 3 (July–September 1997): 10–11.
11. Wong, "The Rise and Decline of Cantopop," 132–34.
12. Roy Shuker, *Popular Music: The Key Concepts*, second edition (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 203–4; see also Roy Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music Culture*, third edition (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 5–7.
13. Shuker, *Popular Music: The Key Concepts*, xiii.
14. Deanna Robinson et al., *Music at the Margins: Popular Music and Global Cultural Diversity* (Newbury Park, London, and Delhi: Sage, 1991), 10. It has to be noted that nonmainstream genres "can develop and become part of the musical 'mainstream', usually through 'crossing over into the pop and rock mainstream and charts." Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music Culture*, 128. It is noteworthy to mention Lawrence Grossberg's point here: "[T]oo much of cultural studies has continued to locate popular culture within two binary normative economies: on the one hand, the popular (as poaching, fragmented, contradictory, bodily, carnivalesque, pleasurable) versus the legitimate (as reified, hierarchical, intellectual, etc.), and on the other hand, the popular (as stylized, artificial, disruptive, marginal resisting) versus the mainstream (as naturalized, commonsensical, incorporated, etc.)." Lawrence Grossberg, *Dancing In Spite Of Myself: Essays on Popular Culture* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997), 2–3. What is more important is the articulation of the in-betweenness.
15. Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1990), 5–6.

> in which they are more immediately engaged) are distinguished from the economically, politically and culturally powerful groups within society and are hence *potentially* capable of being united.[16]

Over the past forty years or so, Cantopop has proved that it was not only a commercial success but also capable of uniting a variety of social groups. This typical hybridized genre has provided the people of Hong Kong with a strange sense of belonging over the past fifty years or so, articulating, together with other media such as film and television, a distinctive kind of Hong Kong cultural identity.[17] Having said this, it would be beneficial to readers who are not familiar with Hong Kong and Cantopop to have a brief account of terms such as "pop" and "rock" in the context of Hong Kong here. In most places, popular music was overwhelmingly concerned with love and romance, but, as argued by David Hesmondalgh, "pop and rock each articulated, reflected, and shaped two conflicting ethics of love and sex."[18] In a slightly different vein but with a slightly different emphasis, Shuker made the following remark: "The terms 'pop' and 'rock' are often used as shorthand for 'popular music,' at the same time as there is a tendency to contrast and polarize the two styles."[19] The relationship between pop and rock is different in Hong Kong. In the Anglophone world, the mainstream popular music genres are pop and rock.[20] Although the two are not synonymous, scholarly literature in English tends to equate "pop-rock" with "popular music."[21] While rock in most other societies is considered mainstream, it is not so in Hong Kong. The usual approach to defining musical genres is "to follow the distinctions made by the music industry, which, in turn

16. Tony Bennett, "The Politics of the 'Popular'," in *Popular Culture and Social Relations*, ed. Tony Bennett et al. (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), 20; original emphasis.
17. The "genre" here can be defined as "systems of orientations, expectations and conventions that bind together industry, performers, critics, and fans in making what they identify as a distortive sort of music." Jennifer Lena, *Banding Together: How Communities Create Genres in Popular Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 6.
18. David Hesmondalgh, *Why Music Matters* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2013), 62. Although "pop" and "popular" may have different meanings in popular music studies, especially in traditional musicological studies, for the sake of brevity I have no intention to distinguish the two in this book. "Pop" is an inherently dismissive term in older cultural studies tradition, whereas "popular" embodies the voice and values of the people; see Simon Frith, "The Popuar Music Industry," in *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, ed. Simon Frith, Will Straw, and John Street (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 26–52. Chris Rojek has also offered a full-length discussion on their differences; see Chris Rojek, *Pop Music, Pop Culture* (Cambridge and Malden: Polity, 2011), 1–8.
19. Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music Culture*, 122.
20. Hesmondalgh, *Why Music Matters*, 7.
21. Motti Regev, "Notes on Sociological Theory and Popular Music Studies," in *The SAGE Handbook of Popular Music*, ed. Andy Bennett and Steve Waksman (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore and Washington DC: Sage, 2015), 35. For a detailed discussion of the difference or similarity between rock, pop, and popular music, see Motti Regev, *Pop-Rock Music: Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism in Late Modernity* (Cambridge and Malden: Polity, 2013), 17–22.

reflect both musical history and marketing categories."[22] During the forty-some years before the handover, because of the absence of political autonomy in Hong Kong as a colony of Britain and as a Special Administrative Region of China, Hong Kong people have come to accept a so-called "compensatory logic" as argued by Rey Chow, i.e., "because the people in Hong Kong are lacking in something essential—political power—that they have to turn their energy elsewhere, economics."[23] Due to this compensatory logic and its consequent economism, Hong Kong has been shaped as a port city that places commerce and trade on the top of its priority list. The music industry in Hong Kong has been accordingly led to direct most of its resources to mainstream pop, which can be musically defined by "its general accessibility, its commercial orientation, an emphasis on memorable hooks, or choruses, and a lyrical preoccupation with romantic love as theme," and it is "increasingly identified with the wider culture of celebrity."[24] The definition borrowed from the Anglophone world can aptly describe the characteristics of Cantopop.

In a popular music market overwhelmingly dominated by pop, rock is customarily taken to be alternative music in Hong Kong, and so concepts such as "mainstream," "oppositional," and "underground" had to be understood differently. Alternative music refers to "a loose genre/style, which has been used since the late 1960s for popular music seen as less commercial and mainstream, and more authentic and 'uncompromising'."[25] In a Western context, "[a]lternative music is frequently associated with local music scenes," and "[f]or many participants in alternative local scenes, the perceived dualities associated with indie and major record labels are central to their commitment to the local."[26] In Hong Kong this has to be understood differently. Hong Kong music critic Lai-Chi Fung 馮禮慈 used the umbrella term "alternative" to cover underground, nonmainstream, independent music, and genres beyond the mainstream popular music industry.[27] To borrow Shuker's point that the term "indie" actually "denotes not just a type of economic entity, but a musical attitude,"[28] "alternative music" refers to those musics that uphold values

22. Simon Frith, "Toward an Aesthetic of Popular Music," in *Music and Society*, ed. Richard Leppert and Susan McClary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 133.
23. Rey Chow, *Ethics after Idealism: Theory—Culture—Ethnicity—Reading* (Indianapolis and Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 171.
24. Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music Culture*, 123–24.
25. Shuker, *Popular Music: The Key Concepts*, 8. "At the historical heart of alternative music was its rejection of the commercial music industry, and the emphasis it placed on rock music as art or expression rather than as a product for sale for economic profit."
26. Shuker, *Popular Music: The Key Concepts*, 9–10. "Local" refers to "college/university towns or large cities that are somehow 'alternative'."
27. Lai-Chi Fung, *On the Small Path: The Steps of Hong Kong Alternative Music*《小路上：香港另類音樂的腳步》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Music Communication, 1996). Meanwhile, Fung reminded us that the quality of alternative music could be lower than that of mainstream pop.
28. Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music Culture*, 21.

opposed to a stereotyped mainstream. The 1980s saw the surge of Hong Kong's independent music scene,[29] followed by a wave of bands in the mid to late 1980s (refer to Chapter Four for details). In the 1980s, Hong Kong bands, including rock bands such as Beyond and electronic duo such as Tat Ming Pair 達明一派, were considered alternative despite the fact they signed with major labels. Their songs—commonly known as band songs in Chinese—were generally considered to be voicing values significantly different from those of the mainstream. However, it is difficult, if at all possible, to draw a precise boundary between "alternative" and "mainstream." Take the legendary rock band Beyond as an example: as their debut cassette *Goodbye My Dreams*《再見理想》was self-financed (the production cost of cassette tapes being much lower than that of vinyl discs), they were seen by their fans as "independent" and/or "underground." When they signed with Kinn's Music Ltd. and later a big label Cinepoly, some of their fans thought they betrayed alternative music. But history proved that they sailed on to become a rock legend after they entered the mainstream, and were seen by several generations of Hong Kong fans as an antiestablishment symbol. "Like rock, however, alternative soon became a marketing category: in the 1990s, major record retail outlets usually feature[d] an 'alternative' section [in the West]."[30] As warned by Hesmondalgh, alternative became "a questionable term in an era where indie and alternative rock [were] big-ish business."[31] In the mid-1990s, there was also a wave of "alternative music" in Hong Kong. Major record companies launched diffusion labels (such as PolyGram's "Musician"「非池中」) to produce "alternative" music, but the craze died out very soon. Having said this, it has to be noted that although rock music has not been mainstream in Hong Kong, it has exerted a profound influence on Hong Kong bands and hence its music industry (this will be further discussed in Chapter Two).[32] For example, the Cantopop legend Samuel Hui 許冠傑 was the mainstay of the band Lotus in the 1960s.

29. "At that time, people called all forms of music that were different from the mainstream as 'underground music'. Later, the label 'alternative music' was also used. However, many musicians either resisted or rejected labelling their music as 'underground' or 'alternative'. While the term 'indie music' seemed more neutral, it has been commonly used locally since the 1990s. The history of the Hong Kong indie music – known locally as 'underground music' at the time – began in the mid-1980s, the era of vinyl records and cassette tapes. Unlike the vibrant foreign music scene where various independent record labels flourished, when Hong Kong's indie bands in the 80s wanted to record and release their works, they never expected any support from major recording companies. Since there were no independent recording labels for indie bands, they would rather choose to produce, publish and release their music at their own expense." Jockey Club Music Series, "Definition of Independent Music," http://hkstreetmusic.com/educator-toolkit/indie-music-hong-kong; retrieved on March 15, 2016.
30. Shuker, *Popular Music: The Key Concepts*, 9.
31. Hesmondalgh, *Why Music Matters*, 68.
32. The term "rock music" used here refers to its roots in "rock and roll" in the United States in the 1950s. Since the 1960s, largely due to the "British Invasion" and other factors, it has incorporated different genres, such as blues and jazz, and has become more diversified.

Rock/pop, as argued by Fabian Holt in his in-depth study of popular music genres, has become "a cultural mainstream" in recent decades, and "increasingly functions as a discourse for articulating public memory of peoples and nations at major official events."[33] Although rock may not be a cultural mainstream in Hong Kong's popular music industry, it does carry the function as a discourse for articulating public memory of peoples and nations at major official events in Hong Kong. In terms of market share, the role of rock in the territory may be less significant than pop, but as evident from the impact of band songs, such as those of Beyond, over the past three to four decades, rock music did exert significant influence on the Hong Kong society per se.

The following chapters will show that Cantopop remained at the margins, albeit being quite popular in the Hong Kong society per se, in the 1950s and 1960s. The precursor of Cantopop can be traced to songs produced in the 1930s and 1940s. However, its production remained small-scale and it did not gain popularity among audiences. The question whether there was a Hong Kong culture in the 1950s or 1960s is a vexing one. Ping-Kwan Leung's 梁秉鈞 large-scale research into Hong Kong literature and culture in the 1950s, which reexamines the momentum and vitality of Hong Kong literature and movies in the 1950s, has demonstrated that a Hong Kong culture appeared in the 1950s.[34] As I will discuss in the next chapter, Cantopop has begun to hybridize different music styles to become a popular genre in the 1950s. Notwithstanding this, Cantopop was seen as inferior to Euro-American songs in the 1950s and the 1960s, and the market of popular songs in Hong Kong during that period was dominated by songs produced in the US and Europe, including those of the Beatles and Elvis Presley. It was not surprising because Hong Kong people were dominated by a kind of refugee mentality during the 1950s and 1960s, as the British colony was not considered a permanent home by many newcomers who had fled Mainland China for political and other reasons. The generation that was born and raised in Hong Kong gradually changed this mentality. "According to the official statistics of the 1961 Census, less than half (47.7 percent) of the population was born in Hong Kong. But that figure went up to 53.8 percent in the 1966 by-census, indicating the emergence of a locally born generation in a migrant society."[35] Hugh Baker stated that "[i]n over 30 years they have perforce begun to look on Hong Kong as their permanent home, and a whole generation has grown up knowing nothing

33. Fabian Holt, *Genre in Popular Music* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 1.
34. See among others Ping-Kwan Leung (a.k.a. Ye Si 也斯), *Ye Si's 1950s: Essays on Hong Kong Literature and Culture*《也斯的五〇年代：香港文學與文化論集》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Chung Hwa, 2014).
35. Gordon Mathews, Eric Ma, and Tai-Lok Lui, *Hong Kong, China: Learning to Belong to a Nation* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2008), 29.

else."[36] Subsequently, a sense of local identity was emerging: "By the late 1960s and 1970s, however, a postwar generation, which had only known Hong Kong as a home, reached adulthood, and a sense of Hong Kongese as an autonomous cultural identity began to emerge."[37]

It was not until the early 1970s that, because of considerable social and demographic changes and transformation of Hong Kong's local media and society, Cantopop gradually acquired its long overdue status as the dominant genre of Hong Kong popular music. The year 1974 is generally agreed to be the watershed of the development of Cantopop, when the biased impression toward Cantopop was rectified by the unprecedented success of songs and singers such as Sam Hui, later known as the God of Cantopop. This generation of Hong Kong people, at long last, found its own voice in a musical genre sung in its mother tongue. The swift development of other forms of Cantonese popular culture contributed an unprecedented synergy, which in turn contributed to the increasing popularity of Cantopop: "As Hong Kong society developed in its own direction, so did its popular culture. A distinct Hong Kong local culture came into being in the mid-1970s."[38] In the television sector, the localization of free-to-air television programs nurtured a new collective sensibility in the newly emergent indigenous culture of Hong Kong.[39] Meanwhile, Hong Kong cinema also witnessed the emergence of a new Cantonese cinema after a brief domination by Mandarin movies in the early 1970s. In 1973, after a year in which no Cantonese films were produced, Shaw Brothers, which was still regarded as the king of Mandarin film studios, took the lead in the revival of Cantonese films by making and releasing *The House of 72 Tenants*《七十二家房客》. The film, a remake of a 1963 movie of the same title, was inspired by TVB television programs. This was the only Cantonese production out of the 94 Hong Kong movies released in 1973. An extremely pleasant surprise for Cantonese popular culture, the movie unexpectedly broke the box office record set by Bruce Lee's *Way of the Dragon*《猛龍過江》(1972), and subsequently it successfully brought Cantonese movies back to the Hong Kong film

36. Hugh Baker, "Life in the Cities: The Emergence of Hong Kong Man," *The China Quarterly* 95 (September 1983): 478.
37. "Since the 1960s, the contextual factors, which became the material base of a new cultural identity, can be summarized under four general rubrics: 1. Anglicized educational system; 2. Social preconditions (e.g. government-subsidized housing, transportation); 3. Economic opportunities; 4. Influx of new Chinese immigrants. Hong Kong people, perhaps for the first time in the post-war decades, saw themselves as locals." Refer to Eric Ma, *Culture, Politics and Television in Hong Kong* (London: Routledge, 1999), 25.
38. Mathews, Ma, and Lui, *Hong Kong, China*, 36–37.
39. "Due to the deficiency of the Hong Kong polity as a representative structure, and also because of other social factors . . . television culture plays a central role in identity formation in post-war Hong Kong. Before the mid-1980s, the newly emergent indigenous culture of Hong Kong was closely related to the development of the local television industry." Ma, *Culture, Politics and Television in Hong Kong*, 18.

industry. In 1974, out of 101 Hong Kong movies, 21 were Cantonese productions. The highest-grossing films were Cantonese productions, including the monumental *Games Gamblers Play*《鬼馬雙星》(1974) by the Hui brothers. Based on these vigorous Cantonese popular cultures, the dialect was revived "as a younger generation came onto the scene, aware of its own identity as Hong Kong filmmakers. Cantonese would be recognized throughout the 1980s as the *lingua franca* of Hong Kong cinema."[40]

The growth of Cantopop in the early 1980s continued with a fresh impetus from transnational music production companies. Throughout the 1980s and up until the mid-1990s, Cantopop was the leader in the pan-Chinese popular music industry, having developed into a multibillion-dollar pop industry—"the Chinese cool"[41]—that attracted those who did not speak Cantonese. Cantopop was the trendsetter in Asian music industries for almost two decades, exerting a profound influence on popular music made locally in East Asian Chinese-speaking counterparts such as Taiwan, Singapore, and Mainland China. It was also very popular in Chinese diasporic communities. According to the *Baseline Study on Hong Kong's Creative Industries* conducted by the University of Hong Kong for the Central Policy Unit of the Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region,

> [t]he music industry in Hong Kong is dominated by Cantopop in production and sales. It constitutes a major part of the entertainment business of the territory in terms of employment and contribution to GDP. It is also a major part of the popular cultural phenomenon of Hong Kong, which has significant influence in the region and also a large market in every community overseas.[42]

This was true until the mid-1990s. For Cantopop, the 1990s were considered "the best of times" as well as "the worst of times"—borrowing Charles Dickens's often cited words from his *A Tale of Two Cities*. By the late 1990s, however, due to piracy and other factors, Cantopop had begun to decline in terms of its market share as well as popularity. According to statistics of the International Federation of Phonographic Industry (Hong Kong Group), Cantopop sales dropped by more than half, from HK$1.853 billion in 1995 to HK$0.916 billion in 1998.[43] This prompted James Wong to use 1997 as the end boundary for the timeline of Cantopop in his doctoral thesis entitled "The Rise and

40. Stephen Teo, "The 1970s: Movement and Transition," in *The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity*, ed. Poshek Fu and David Desser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 108.
41. Geoff Burpee, "As Sun Sets on British Empire in Hong Kong, Industry Gears for Return to China," *Billboard* 108, no. 43 (October 26, 1996): APQ-1.
42. Cultural Policy Studies Centre of the University of Hong Kong, *Baseline Study on Hong Kong's Creative Industries* (Hong Kong: Central Policy Unit, the Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, 2003), 114.
43. Wong, "The Rise and Decline of Cantopop," 169.

Decline of Cantopop." In the new millennium, the transformation of the global mediascape brought about a change that forced Cantopop into a vicious circle. Cantopop was gradually taken over by Mandapop (Mandarin popular songs), while Hong Kong's regional competitors, including Taiwan, Singapore, and South Korea, aggressively invested in and pursued cultural policies to develop their music industries. Worse still, the passing away of Cantopop superstars Leslie Cheung 張國榮 and Anita Mui 梅艷芳 and lyrics masters James Wong and Richard Lam 林振強 seemed to symbolize the end of the era of Cantopop. When sales dropped, vehement criticisms of Cantopop surfaced: "People are getting tired of mainstream Cantopop because it rehashes the formula of big ballads and cheesy dance tunes year in, year out."[44] Notwithstanding this, Cantopop, once very popular across Chinese communities, must have been doing something right. Before I go into the historical development of Cantopop from the margin in the 1950s and 1960s to its heyday from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, and its decline in the new millennium, related studies on Cantopop will be introduced.

While it focuses on Cantopop, this book also positions itself in the wider field of popular music studies, a field that is heavily slanted toward Western popular music.[45] Thanks to the stellar rise of the cultural and creative industries in East Asia (such as the wave of K-Pop), studies of Asian popular music has found itself in the limelight. Allen Chun, Ned Rossiter, and Brian Shoesmith's *Refashioning Pop Music in Asia* is an example of focusing attention on Asian popular music, and in 2013, *Popular Music* devoted a special issue to East Asian popular music, with many articles shedding light on the mapping of a new mediascape in the Asian popular music industry.[46] In this special context, Chinese popular music studies have been receiving more critical attention. Academic work on Chinese popular music, however, shows a bias toward rock music from Beijing rather than pop music from either Hong Kong or Taiwan. Cantopop studies, thus, has been doubly marginalized: popular music studies tend to ignore music outside the West, and Chinese popular music studies lean toward Mandarin pop and rock. This book could be seen as an intervention

44. Samuel Lee, "East Asia Is Crazy over Taiwanese Pop Stars Such as Jay Chou as Cantopop Fades Away," *The Strait Times* (September 20, 2002): 8.
45. It has to be stressed that this book is first and foremost intended to be a concise introduction to the genre of Cantopop. My major objective is not to have a critical intervention into popular music studies. Given the scope of this book, this would be very difficult if not impossible at all. For a succinct account of the development of popular music studies, see Andy Bennett and Steve Waksman, "Introduction," in *The SAGE Handbook of Popular Music*, ed. Andy Bennett and Steve Waksman (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, and Washington DC: Sage, 2015), 1–10.
46. Allen Chun, Ned Rossiter, and Brian Shoesmith, eds., *Refashioning Pop Music in Asia: Cosmopolitan Flows, Political Tempos, and Aesthetic Industries* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004); Hyunjoon Shin, Yoshitaka Mōri, and Tunghung Ho, eds., "Special Issue: East Asian Popular Music and Its (Dis)contents," *Popular Music* 32, no. 1 (2013).

into the wider field of Chinese popular music studies, in which Cantopop is too often neglected owing to the stereotype of it being "cheesy love songs." To this end, it would be helpful to underscore the significance of the topic by positioning it in the context of the field of Chinese popular music studies. Earlier works on contemporary Chinese popular music discuss such important issues, among others, as nationalism, and ideology and genre.[47] Mainland China's popular music industry took shape much later than Hong Kong's, but with Cantopop having been overtaken by Mandopop in recent years, more research on Chinese popular music has appeared in the past few years. The alleged rise of China's cultural industries and soft power since the late 1990s has also drawn the attention of many academics to Chinese popular music, and the bias toward Chinese, especially Beijing, rock in popular music studies has become even more pronounced in this context. In the new millennium, there have been numerous studies on Chinese rock and pop, including, among others, Andrew Jones' *Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age*, Nimrod Baranovitch's *China's New Voices: Popular Music, Ethnicity, Gender, and Politics, 1978–1997*, Matthew Niederhauser's *Sound Kapital*, Jeroen de Kloet's *China with a Cut: Globalisation, Urban Youth and Popular Music*, Jeroen Groenewegen's *Tongue: Making Sense of Underground Rock, Beijing 1997–2004*, Jonathan Campbell's *Red Rock: The Long, Strange March of Chinese Rock & Roll*, and Andreas Steen's *Between Entertainment and Revolution: Gramophones, Records and the Beginning of Shanghai Music Industry, 1878–1937*.[48]

Rock and roll, given its rebellious nature, is often seen as incongruent with contemporary Chinese society. Therefore, Chinese rock, especially Beijing rock, has attracted attention to explore the reception and cultural translations of this Western import in a country with its own unique characteristics. Campbell's general account of the "long, strange march" of Chinese rock music

47. For examples, Andrew Jones, *Like a Knife: Ideology and Genre in Contemporary Chinese Popular Music* (Ithaca: Cornell University East Asia Program, 1992) and Gregory Lee, *Troubadours, Trumpeters, Troubled Makers: Lyricism, Nationalism, and Hybridity in China and Its Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).

48. Andrew Jones, *Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), Nimrod Baranovitch, *China's New Voices: Popular Music, Ethnicity, Gender, and Politics, 1978–1997* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), Matthew Niederhauser, *Sound Kapital: Beijing's Music Underground* (New York: powerHouse Books, 2009), Jeroen de Kloet, *China with a Cut: Globalisation, Urban Youth and Popular Music* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), Jeroen Groenewegen, *Tongue: Making Sense of Underground Rock, Beijing 1997–2004* (New York: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2011), Jonathan Campbell, *Red Rock: The Long, Strange March of Chinese Rock & Roll* (Hong Kong: Earnshaw Books, 2011), Andreas Steen, *Between Entertainment and Revolution: Gramophones, Records and the Beginning of Shanghai Music Industry, 1878–1937*《在娱樂與革命之間：留聲機唱片和上海音樂工業的初期，1878–1937》(in Chinese) (Shanghai: Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House, 2015).

in *Red Rock* surveys the development of rock and roll in China from the Mao years to the new millennium. Through interviews with musicians, journalists, and industry experts, the author examines how the music rocks China. Groenewegen's *Tongue* also focuses on Beijing's underground rock, showing that musicians have been using politics to engage audiences in postsocialist China. Niederhauser's *Sound Kapital* zooms in on revolutionary Beijing nightclubs, such as D-22 and MAO Livehouse, to investigate the underground scene in Beijing, exploring the (im)possibility to push the boundaries of independent thought and musical expression. Also focusing on Beijing, Baranovitch's *China's New Voices* offers a more comprehensive study of the popular music scene in the period between 1978 and 1997, touching on the ethnicity, gender, and politics of new Chinese popular music. The book argues how rock and pop became a medium through which the underprivileged could acquire a new public voice not dependent of the state. From a different angle, De Kloet's *China with a Cut* offers an inspiring account of the impact of Western music on China through illegally imported compact discs, detailing how it influenced the younger generation in the age of globalization. Based on extensive fieldwork in Beijing, Shanghai, and Hong Kong, places of Chinese popular music in the context of globalization, this book examines how illegally imported compact discs in the 1990s inspired the young generation in China to strive to break free from the Maoist past by experimenting with new sounds and new lifestyles. Unlike previous studies with their main focus on politics and/or institutions, *Yellow Music* and *Between Entertainment and Revolution* are both historical accounts of Chinese popular music; the former studies the emergence of Chinese popular music in early twentieth century China, whereas the latter traces the development of Shanghai music industry from 1878 to 1937. While both adopt an interdisciplinary (history, sociology, media studies) and cross-cultural (China-West, colonial modernity) approach, they focus on early Chinese popular music. As convincingly noted by Marc Moskowitz in the introduction of his *Cries of Joy, Songs of Sorrow: Chinese Pop Music and Its Cultural Connotations*:

> There is already some excellent academic work on Chinese popular music, yet most of this scholarship concentrates on Beijing rock and for the most part excludes Mandopop [Mandapop] produced in Taiwan. This focus has more to do with the People's Republic of China economic and political might, and perhaps with western academics' musical preferences, than with actual Chinese musical tastes, however.[49]

49. Marc Moskowitz, *Cries of Joy, Songs of Sorrow: Chinese Pop Music and Its Cultural Connotations* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010), 1–2.

To fill this lacuna, *Cries of Joy, Songs of Sorrow* offers a full-length study of contemporary Mandapop with particular emphasis on Taiwan. Although the book focuses more on the construction of male and female identities in Mandapop, it does provide a rare account of the historical background necessary to understand the contemporary Mandapop scene. The citation above, especially the second sentence, can well be applied to the studies of Cantopop. Till today there is no comprehensive historical account of the genre of Cantopop, despite its strong cultural influence over the past decades. In popular music studies in Western academies, Cantopop is often not distinguished from Chinese popular songs, and thus it is "poorly served in surveys of non-Western music."[50] While academic interest has shifted to Mainland China, Yiu-Fai Chow and Jeroen de Kloet's *Sonic Multiplicities: Hong Kong Pop and the Global Circulation of Sound and Image* is an exceptional attempt at understanding and studying Hong Kong popular music despite its shift. As stressed by the authors, they wanted to sustain Hong Kong and its popular culture "in the research agenda of scholars concerned with Hong Kong, Chinese, Asian and global popular culture."[51] I would emphasize that it is necessary to distinguish Cantopop from Chinese pop. Too often the two are conflated, but clearly they are not the same. Despite its not being considered seriously by scholars outside Hong Kong, Cantopop once received great attention from audiences around the world. I do not deny that possible interactions among different popular songs can generate an energetic music culture for a cosmopolitan city like Hong Kong, but the point of concern is that this special genre sung in the Cantonese dialect has its own inherent hybridity that is not available elsewhere.[52]

As I have discussed elsewhere, the widely used discourse of hybridity constitutes a disputed terrain of cultural theory and criticism.[53] One of the most disputed terms that has dominated conceptual discussions of mixed identities in postcolonial studies, it is commonly defined as "the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization."[54] According to Homi Bhabha, the vocal theoretician to advocate hybridity as a kind of tactic to subvert hegemonic discourse, holds that hybridity can point toward a new cosmopolitanism that can engage different possibilities of cultural agency.[55]

50. Lawrence Witzleben, "Cantopop and Mandapop in Pre-post-colonial Hong Kong: Identity Negotiation in the Performances of Anita Mui," *Popular Music* 18, no. 2 (1999): 242–43.
51. Yiu-Fai Chow and Jeroen de Kloet, *Sonic Multiplicities: Hong Kong Pop and the Global Circulation of Sound and Image* (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect Books, 2013), 154.
52. Yiu-Wai Chu, *Lost in Transition: Hong Kong Culture in the Age of China* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2013), 135.
53. Yiu-Wai Chu, "Introduction," *Contemporary Asian Modernities: Transnationality, Interculturality and Hybridity*, ed. Yiu-Wai Chu and Eva K. W. Man (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), 22–23.
54. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (London: Routledge, 1998), 118.
55. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994).

While Néstor García Canclini celebrates hybridity in his *Hybrid Cultures*, he still worries that hybridization might also reinforce the already existing asymmetrical relationships of domination and subordination.[56] Meanwhile, different challenges to the concept of hybridity can also be found. "The importance of hybridity is that it problematizes boundaries," but hybridity is "inauthentic" and "multiculturalism lite" according to anti-hybridity arguments.[57] This brings us to the potential problem resulting from the uncritical celebration of hybridity. In short, the interaction of different cultures seems to have provided chances for them to hybridize, but whether it is merely a mixture or true hybridity is not easy to tell. For my present purpose I would just concentrate on Bhabha's differentiation of diversity and hybridity: "it is insufficient to record signifiers of cultural diversity which merely acknowledge a range of separate and distinct systems of behavior, attitudes and values."[58] Cultural diversity may sound exotic to many ears, but what matters is "the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*" but not "the *diversity* of cultures."[59] In the context of this book, diversity refers in a more neutral sense to the existence of different genres, styles, subject matters, and the like in the Cantopop industry, whereas "hybridity" articulates the theoretical possibilities of engendering new conceptions. Meanwhile, media scholars have employed the notion of hybridity to investigate cultural mixture in the age of globalization.[60] K-Pop, among others, is considered "hybrid music," which is "a careful negotiation of Korean and Japanese traits, under the influence of Western music trends."[61] The important point to note is that the hybridization of Korean, Japanese, and Western musics has generated a new form of K-Pop, which is not just a mixture of these elements.

Cantopop, once the leading pop genre of Chinese popular music across the world, has a history that needs to be written, which is especially important for the present and the future of Hong Kong, a city whose citizens have been witnessing the decline of not only its popular cultures but also core values. This book aims to show how the rise of Cantopop is related to an upsurge of Hong Kong culture in general, and how its decline since the 1990s is connected to changes in the music industry as well as, and more importantly, geopolitical

56. Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1995).
57. Jan Nederveen Pieterse, "Hybridity, So What? The Anti-Hybridity Backlash and the Riddles of Recognition," *Theory, Culture & Society* 18, nos. 2–3 (2001): 219–45.
58. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, 60.
59. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 38.
60. Marwan Kraidy, *Hybridity, or the Cultural Logic of Globalization* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005).
61. Ju Oak Kim, "Despite Not Being Johnny's: The Cultural Impact of TVXQ in the Japanese Music Industry," in *K-Pop: The International Rise of the Korean Music Industry*, ed. JungBong Choi and Roald Maliangkay (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 76.

changes. As such, this book is not only a concise history of Cantopop but also of Hong Kong culture. It could also be read as "a story about localization and how a group of urban youth successfully created a culture that was grounded in the social, cultural and political reality defined by institutionalized colonialism."[62] I also hope that this book, against the backdrop of Hong Kong's reversion to China, would be meaningful by bringing awareness to the field of Hong Kong studies. Despite the important role of Cantopop in Hong Kong culture and society, academic Cantopop research is a relatively new but important field of scholarship. Cantopop, compared to film and other genres of popular culture, has received very little critical attention from academia. When Cantopop enthralled Chinese audiences across the globe in the 1980s, its discussions remained akin to *bricolage*, as it was scattered in newspaper columns, music magazines, and periodicals published by organizations such as the Composers and Authors Society of Hong Kong (CASH) and the Amateur Lyric Writers' Association of Hong Kong. Although some studies on Hong Kong popular culture in general did touch upon Cantopop,[63] Cantopop was treated merely as a subtopic of the studies on Hong Kong popular culture in general. The situation did not change much with the rise of cultural studies in Hong Kong in the late 1980s. In the beginning, the growing interest in Hong Kong popular culture did not stimulate extensive research on Hong Kong popular songs. The study of Cantopop per se did not gather momentum until the mid-1990s. The *bricolage* situation of Cantopop studies began to change when a renowned Hong Kong music critic, Chi-Wah Wong 黃志華, published his historical survey of Cantopop in 1990.[64] The book, titled *Forty Years of Cantopop*《粵語流行曲四十年》, is a collection of Wong's Chinese columns published in *Wen Wei Po* in the 1980s. These columns, unlike other columns of impressionist talks on Hong Kong popular songs in general, systematically sketched the development of Cantopop and offered a detailed analysis of Cantopop lyricists. However, due to market considerations, the original manuscript was significantly shortened and some very important materials were left out. The book thus lost some

62. I am indebted to an anonymnous reviewer for this point.
63. Examples include the following: Wah-Shan Chau 周華山, *Consumer Culture: Images, Words, Music*《消費文化：影像、文字、音樂》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Youth Bookstore, 1990); Ping-Kwan Leung 梁秉鈞, ed., *Hong Kong Popular Culture*《香港的流行文化》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 1993); Lok Fung (a.k.a. Natalia Sui-Hung Chan) 洛楓, *Fin de Siècle City: Hong Kong Popular Culture*《世紀末城市：香港的流行文化》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1995); Elizabeth Sinn 冼玉儀, ed., *Hong Kong Culture and Society*《香港文化與社會》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, the University of Hong Kong, 1995); and Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Indianapolis and Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).
64. Chi-Wah Wong, *Forty Years of Cantopop* (in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 1990). Kei-Chi Wong 黃奇智 published a book entitled *On Popular Songs*《時代曲綜論》(in Chinese) in 1979 (Hong Kong: School of Continuing Studies, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1979), but it focuses mainly on Mandarin popular songs.

of the impact it could have made. Chi-Wah Wong published another book in 2000 to complete his survey of Cantopop. In that book, he traced the development of Cantopop from the 1950s to the mid-1970s, providing rare and valuable information about early Cantopop in Hong Kong.[65] Chi-Wah Wong also provided insightful analyses and detailed reference materials related to Hong Kong lyricists, but only up to the mid-1990s.[66] Sharing the view that although the legitimation of cultural products involves complex discursive and organizational practices and the basic first step must be to produce serious intellectual and critical writing on the products,[67] Yiu-Wai Chu 朱耀偉 started to research Cantopop lyrics in the mid-1990s, trying to defend the artistic value of Cantopop lyrics in a comprehensive review of historical studies.[68] The study of Cantopop lyrics could be considered a first step toward the institutionalization of the study of Cantopop per se.

Since the mid-1990s, there have been more studies on Cantopop, but most of them are either historical or cultural studies. In the 1990s, there were some books on popular music published in Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, thanks to the rise of cultural studies. They used mostly the cultural studies approach, analyzing, for instance, gender politics or the center-margin dialectic in popular music, and they considered popular lyrics a product of the culture industry. There have also been attempts to study Cantopop from a sociological and communication studies point of view. For instance, Hong Kong Policy Viewers offered a statistical survey and content analysis of Hong Kong Gold Songs from 1984 to 1993.[69] Only a few (such as Stephen C. K. Chan 陳清僑, ed., *The Practice of Affect: A Study of Hong Kong Popular Lyrics*《情感的實踐：香港流行歌詞研究》), however, placed a sole emphasis on Hong Kong Cantopop, giving attention to the politics of cultural production and reception, the relation of affect to the meaning of music, and the study of cultural issues (e.g., identity politics and gender issues) through the textual and contextual study of song lyrics.[70] For example, the content analysis of song lyrics has been carried out with consideration of how cultures are received and circulated.

65. Chi-Wah Wong, *Early Hong Kong Cantopop*《早期香港粵語流行曲》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 2000).
66. Chi-Wah Wong, *Hong Kong Lyricists and Lyric Talks*《香港詞人詞話》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 2003).
67. Priscilla Ferguson, "A Cultural Field in the Making: Gastronomy in the 19th Century France," *American Journal of Sociology* 104, no. 3 (1998): 597–641.
68. Yiu-Wai Chu, *A Study of Hong Kong Popular Lyrics: From the Mid 70s to the Mid 90s*《香港流行歌詞研究：七十年代中期到九十年代中期》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 1998).
69. Hong Kong Policy Viewers, *Popular Culture under Hegemony: A Study of Hong Kong "Gold" Songs*《霸權主義下的流行文化：剖析中文金曲的內容及意義研究》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Policy Viewers, 1994).
70. Stephen C. K. Chan, ed., *The Practice of Affect: A Study of Hong Kong Popular Lyrics*《情感的實踐：香港流行歌詞研究》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Yiu-Wai Chu's *Age of Glory: A Study of Hong Kong Popular Bands/Groups 1985–1990*《光輝歲月：香港流行樂隊／組合研究》adopted a similar approach, but Chu shifted the target of analysis to Hong Kong popular bands and groups from 1985 to 1990.[71] Bands and groups in the 1980s made a significant impact on local Hong Kong Cantopop in terms of both music and lyrics. While Chu's book regards content analysis of lyrics as an integral part of the study, it also examines the politics of the music industry, the larger political and social backdrop of pop music, and how pop music is circulated and received. Chu also studied the relationship between cultural policy and the development of local Cantopop through the "Chinese Songs Campaign" and the "Original Songs Campaign" launched by Hong Kong Commercial Radio in 1988 and 1995, respectively.[72] Some used cultural studies as a theoretical framework to analyze popular idols.[73] While there has been an increasing determination to move toward cross-disciplinary among these intellectual endeavors, more studies have been focused on Cantopop per se. Anthony Fung 馮應謙, among others, edited a volume entitled *Riding a Melodic Tide: The Development of Cantopop in Hong Kong*《歌潮・汐韻・香港粵語流行曲發展》based on a conference and exhibition hosted by the Hong Kong Heritage Museum.[74] Fung also coauthored a book on the development of the Hong Kong music industry entitled *Melodic Memories*.[75] Elvin Wong's 黃志淙 *Flowing Melody*《流聲》was another attempt at examining Hong Kong popular music from the industry's perspective.[76] While Chi-Wah Wong and Yiu-Wai Chu continued to focus on Cantopop lyrics in their works,[77] Helan Yang and Siu-Wah Yu

71. Yiu-Wai Chu, *Age of Glory: A Study of Hong Kong Popular Bands/Groups 1985–1990*《光輝歲月：香港流行樂隊／組合研究》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Infolink, 2000).
72. Yiu-Wai Chu, *A Study of the "Chinese Songs Campaign" in Hong Kong*《音樂敢言：香港「中文歌運動」研究》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Infolink, 2001); Yiu-Wai Chu, "Developing Local Popular Songs in Hong Kong: A Study of the 'All Cantonese Pop Music Station' Format," *Media International Australia Incorporating Culture & Policy* 105 (November 2002): 147–62; Yiu-Wai Chu, A *Study of the "Original Songs Campaign" in Hong Kong*《音樂敢言之二：香港「原創歌運動」研究》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Bestever, 2004).
73. Anthony Fung, *Hong Kong Popular Music Culture: A Reader in Cultural Studies*《香港流行音樂文化：文化研究讀本》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Wheatear, 2004).
74. Anthony Fung, *Riding a Melodic Tide: The Development of Cantopop in Hong Kong*《歌潮・汐韻・香港粵語流行曲的發展》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Subculture Press, 2009).
75. Anthony Fung and Shen Si, *Melodic Memories: History of the Development of Hong Kong Music Industry*《悠揚・憶記：香港音樂工業發展史》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Subculture Press, 2012).
76. Elvin Wong, *Flowing Melody*《流聲》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Civil Affairs Bureau, 2007).
77. Here are some examples: Chi-Wah Wong and Yiu-Wai Chu, *Guided Interpretation of Hong Kong Popular Lyrics*《香港流行歌詞導賞》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Infolink, 2009); Chi-Wah Wong and Yiu-Wai Chu, *Eighty Talks on Hong Kong Popular Lyrics*《香港歌詞八十談》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Infolink, 2011); Chi-Wah Wong, Yiu-Wai Chu, and Wai-Sze Leung, *The Way of Hong Kong Lyricists: Interviews with 16 Hong Kong Lyricists*《詞家有道：香港 16 詞人訪談錄》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Infolink, 2010); Yiu-Wai Chu and Wai-Sze Leung, *A Study of Post-1997 Cantopop Lyrics*《後九七香港流行歌詞研究》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Enlighten & Fish, 2011); Chi-Wah Wong, *Forgotten Treasures: The Chinese-Style Melodies in Hong Kong Popular Songs*《被遺忘的瑰寶：香港流行曲裡的中國風格旋律》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Jim and Hall Publication,

broke new ground in their *Reading Cantonese Songs: The Voice of Hong Kong through Vicissitudes* by introducing a musicologist approach to the study of Cantopop.[78] Music historian Ching-Chih Liu 劉靖之 also included Cantopop in his *A History of Hong Kong Music*《香港音樂史論》.[79] Sociologist Chun-Hung Ng 吳俊雄 published a book on Sam Hui and launched a website on James Wong.[80] To sum up, critical studies on popular music in Hong Kong have mainly focused on discussions in roughly three notable directions: (1) textual and contextual studies; (2) sociological and communication studies; and (3) music history, musicology, and cultural studies. Besides books published in Chinese, which cater mainly to the Chinese audience, there have also been essays published in international journals, which has sparked the possibility of cross-cultural inquiries. These include: Eric Ma's "Emotional Energies and Subcultural Politics: Alternative Bands in Post-97 Hong Kong," Wai-Chung Ho's "Between Globalisation and Localisation: A Study of Hong Kong Popular Music," Yiu-Wai Chu's "The Transformation of Local Identity in Hong Kong Cantopop," and Yiu-Wai Chu and Eve Leung's "Remapping Hong Kong Popular Music: Covers, Localisation and the Waning Hybridity of Cantopop."[81]

The incomplete list above has already spoken adequate volumes for the growing importance of Cantopop studies. These research projects have developed the study of Cantopop into a recognized, albeit still marginal, area in the study of Hong Kong culture in academia. However, without a historical introduction, the gap between argumentation and data cannot be bridged. In their study of popular music in Asia, Allen Chun, Ned Rossiter, and Brian Shoesmith make this inspiring remark:

2005); Chi-Wah Wong, *Master of Melodies and Lyrics: A Study of the Works of Wu Man Sam*《曲詞雙絕：胡文森作品研究》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 2008); Chi-Wah Wong, *Wen-Cheng Lu, Cantonese Opera and Cantopop*《呂文成與粵曲、粵語流行曲》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 2012); Chi-Wah Wong, *Pioneers: Popular Songs Composed by Cantonese Opera Writers*《原創先鋒：粵曲人的流行曲調創作》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 2014); and Chi-Wah Wong, *Selected Lyric Criticisms by Jimmy Lo*《盧國沾詞評選》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 2015).

78. Yang and Yu, *Reading Cantonese Songs*.
79. Ching-Chih Liu, *History of Hong Kong Music*《香港音樂史論》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 2014).
80. Chun-Hung Ng, *Here and Now: Sam Hui*《此時此處許冠傑》(in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Enrich Publishing, 2007); "James Wong's Study." Available at: http://www.hkmemory.org/jameswong/wjs/web/; retrieved on March 15, 2016.
81. Eric Ma, "Emotional Energies and Subcultural Politics: Alternative Bands in Post-97 Hong Kong," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 3, no. 2 (2002): 187–200; Wai-Chung Ho, "Between Globalisation and Localisation: A Study of Hong Kong Popular Music," *Popular Music* 22, no. 2 (2003): 143–57; Yiu-Wai Chu, "The Transformation of Local Identity in Hong Kong Cantopop," *Perfect Beat: The Pacific Journal of Research into Contemporary Music and Popular Culture* 7, no. 4 (January 2006): 32–51; Yiu-Wai Chu and Eve Leung, "Remapping Hong Kong Popular Music: Covers, Localisation and the Waning Hybridity of Cantopop," *Popular Music* 32, no. 1 (2013): 65–78.

> [I]t is the local context which imbues special meanings for different audiences, in turn allowing a creative synthesis that makes pop music a unique channel through which cultural identity, political resistance, social expression and personal desire can be experienced. Popular musical expression in Asia – its meaning and its practice – cannot be reduced to the state, market, tradition or to a simple appropriation of western forms.[82]

As a general introduction to the topic, this book will hopefully pave the way for future research by contributing important empirical, local data not available in recent studies. A critical account of Cantopop can be conceptualized from different persepctives, such as its music, lyrics, industry, and/or audience. As this is the first introduction to the genre in English, it would be more effective for this "ground-laying" endeavor to cater to a wider readership by offering a balanced and chronological account, which would be easier for readers to comprehend the genre and its development. I do understand that the development of any musical genre has to rely on the interrelationships between producers and consumers and all those involved in the creative process. This book would be greatly enriched by incorporating information collected from sources such as singers' voices, audience reception, radio logs, concerts, and statistics from media broadcasts, but given the scope and objective of this book, they cannot be dealt with in adequate depth. Besides, the use of personal accounts is a common practice in pop music study methodology. Owing to my academic training and the primary purpose of this book, I have decided not to adopt these approaches. As a book about a musical genre, it would be necessary to discuss music. I will touch on renowned composers in this book, but since my objective is to offer a balanced account, I would not offer an elaborate account of one particular aspect. I have been researching lyrics for two decades, but in this book I have decided to refrain from going into details of lyrics/lyricists. If you have chosen this book for such information, you may find other sources more useful. In short, this book is desgined to provide information about the genre and fill a vacuum by offering non-Chinese readers a useful resource about the topic. If a reader could have the abovementioned theoretical reflections on the topic after reading this book, it has already fulfilled its primary purpose.

Having said that, I would conclude by stressing that this book focuses on Cantopop (and hence the potential danger of parochialism seeping through it) because it aims primarily to fill a unique niche in academic studies and cater to those who are interested in the topic. As will be argued later in this book, the rise of Cantopop could be accounted for by its diversities and hybridities, which can be seen as a result of cultural translations between different music genres and/or regions. It was exactly due to its refusal to be parochial that

82. Allen Chun, Ned Rossiter, and Brian Shoesmith, "Refashioning Pop Music in Asia," in *Refashioning Pop Music in Asia*, ii.

Cantopop became the most popular music genre in Chinese communities across the world. When the market of Cantopop began to shrink in the mid-1990s, the problem of a lack of diversity surfaced and was subsequently aggravated. Because of its promotional packaging in recent years, as warned by music critics, the audience base of Hong Kong Cantopop has shrunk significantly and the problem of homogenization and standardization (the mass reproduction of "cheesy love songs") has become more serious. Cantopop has thus become trapped in a vicious circle. When the market reduces in size, the space for diversity as well as hybridity shrinks, which in turn conjures up a myth: Cantopop as mass-produced, stereotypical love ballads. However, Cantopop, once very popular across Chinese communities, must have been doing something right. By tracing the trajectory of Cantopop over the past sixty years or so, this book aims to deconstruct this myth. Let me end this introduction by citing David Brackett's words in the "Preface" of his *Interpreting Popular Music*:

> Finally, I may write a thousand new prefaces, but I will not arrest the play of meaning in which these words participate, nor would I, despite appearances, choose to do so even if it were an option. Readers will continue to find what they want to here, and I am grateful to them for that.[83]

83. David Brackett, *Interpreting Popular Music* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2000), xiv.

Appendix

Chronology of Major Events[1]

1935

- "Lullaby"〈兒安眠〉, a song from the movie *Lifeline*《生命線》, is arguably the first Cantonese popular song.

1937

- "Triumph Song"〈凱旋歌〉and "Gut-Wrenching Lyrics"〈斷腸詞〉, from the movie *Stories on Canton 3 Days Massacre in 1650*《廣州三日屠城記》, are popular anti-Japanese invasion songs.

1941

- On Christmas Day, the British garrison in Hong Kong surrenders to the Japanese.

1942–1945

- During the three years and eight months of Japanese occupation, a special genre of "New Songs of Illusion" 幻景新歌, possibly the prototypes of Cantopop, is very popular in Hong Kong.
- Britain restores its control over Hong Kong on August 29, 1945, ending the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong, which lasted for three years and eight months.

1. The 1930s to the 1990s is based on Chi-Wah Wong's works in Chinese. Available at: http://blog.chinaunix.net/uid/20375883.html.

1947

- "Never Too Late to Come Home"〈郎歸晚〉, theme song of the first Cantonese movie after the end of Japanese occupation, is released in January.

1948

- The government broadcaster GOW (renamed ZBW in 1929; Chinese channel ZEK established in 1934) is officially renamed Radio Hong Kong 香港廣播電台.
- Among the four theme songs in the first color production in the history of Hong Kong cinema, *Madame Butterfly*《蝴蝶夫人》, "Sing and Dance"〈載歌載舞〉is especially very well received (later rewritten to become the Cantopop classic "Sigh of Bettors"〈賭仔自嘆〉).

1949

- Radio Rediffusion 麗的呼聲 is established in Hong Kong and launches its programs on March 1, featuring the wired distribution of one English-language channel and one Chinese channel, with the addition of a further Chinese channel in 1956.
- The People's Republic of China is founded on October 1.

1951

- The highly popular Cantonese ditty "Blooming Beauty by the Silver Pond"〈銀塘吐艷〉(a.k.a. "Fragrant Water Lily"〈荷花香〉in the Cantonese opera movie *Hongling's Blood* (Alias: *Mysterious Murder*)《紅菱血》is released.

1952

- Harmony Records 和聲唱片 releases the first batch of albums (eights songs in four albums) that is packaged with the term "Cantopop" in Chinese on August 26.
- EMI opens its Hong Kong office.

1953

- Harmony Records continues to release "Cantopop" albums, and Chung Chow 周聰, Hung Lu 呂紅, and Kwan-Min Cheng 鄭君綿 are popular Cantopop singers.
- Rediffusion launches the first Cantopop radio program "Studio Dance Hall" 空中舞廳.

1954

- The movie *Belle of Penang*《檳城艷》premieres on March 11, featuring Yuet-Sang Wong's 王粵生 theme songs and musical scores with extensive use of Western musical arrangements.

1957

- The Cantonese opera *The Flower Princess*《帝女花》premieres in June. The ditty, extracted from the section "Fragrant Sacrifice"〈香夭〉, becomes an all-time classic.

1958

- The movie *Two Fools in Hell*《兩傻遊地獄》, featuring the early Cantopop classic "Teddy Boy in the Gutter"〈飛哥跌落坑渠〉, a Cantonese version of "Three Coins in the Fountain," premieres on September 3.

1959

- Thanks to the rising popularity of song and dance, Cantonese movie songs such as Patricia Lam's 林鳳 "Young Rock"〈青春樂〉and "The Fragrance of Durians"〈榴槤飄香〉gradually broadens Cantopop's fan base.
- Commercial Radio begins its first broadcast on August 26.

1962

- Commercial Radio starts using theme songs to promote radio dramas in the early 1960s, and the theme song of the Commercial Radio drama *Love of Rose*《薔薇之戀》(in Cantonese) sung by Kitty Lam 林潔 (in Mandarin) is very popular.

1964

- The Beatles visit Hong Kong on June 8, generating an instant rock band wave in Hong Kong, and rock band music becomes the vogue of the time.

1965

- The local record company Diamond Music 鑽石 issues many band albums. Local bands (singing English songs) such as Lotus, Teddy Robin and the Playboys, Joe Junior and the Side Effects, Anders Nelson and The Inspiration, Mystics, D'Topnotes, and Kontinentals steal the limelight.
- Singaporean singer Low-Won Seong Koon's 上官流雲 "Walk Faster Please"〈行快啲啦〉and "Thinking of My Lovely Beauty"〈一心想玉人〉, Cantonese cover versions of the Beatles' classics "Can't Buy Me Love" and "I Saw Her Standing There," respectively, trigger a rock wave in Hong Kong.

1966

- The movie *The Story between Hong Kong and Macao*《一水隔天涯》(literally "World of Water Apart" in Chinese) premieres on New Year's Day, and the title tune sung by Winnie Wei 韋秀嫻 is exceptionally well received.
- The title tune of the movie *Lady Bond*《女殺手》(premiered on August 1; starring Connie Chan 陳寶珠) becomes a Cantopop classic, and the teen musical *Colorful Youth*《彩色青春》(premiered on August 17; starring Connie Chan and Josephine Siao 蕭芳芳) sets the trend of the decade.

1967

- Large-scale riots erupt on May 6 and escalate in the second half of the year.
- Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB) 無線電視 is established on November 19.

1968

- Joseph Koo 顧嘉煇 and James Wong 黃霑 start writing songs for movies; examples include Koo's works in *A Time for Reunion* (Alias: *Auld Lang*

Syne)《春曉人歸時》(in Mandarin) and Wong's works in *The Blossoming Rose* (Alias: *The Forsaken Love*)《青春玫瑰》(in Cantonese).

1969

- Taiwanese singers generate a heated wave of Mandapop in Hong Kong; Yao Surong's 姚蘇蓉 "I'm Not Going Home Today"〈今天不回家〉, among others, becomes a huge hit.

1971

- *The Hui Brothers Show*《雙星報喜》, hosted by Michael Hui 許冠文 and Sam Hui 許冠傑, premieres on TVB on April 23.
- Sam Hui releases his first album, *Time of the Season* (in English).
- In the midst of the heated wave of Taiwanese Mandapop, there are also very popular Cantopop hits, such as "Sound of the Bell at the Zen Temple"〈禪院鍾聲〉and "Tears of Love"〈相思淚〉by Singaporean singers Kam-Cheong Cheng (Kim-Chong Tay) 鄭錦昌 and Lisa Wong 麗莎, respectively.

1972

- Joseph Koo writes the first TVB theme song for the drama *Star River*《星河》(sung by Judi Jim 詹小屏 in Mandarin).
- Sam Hui performs his first Cantopop hit, "Eiffel Tower above the Clouds"〈鐵塔凌雲〉(original title: "Here and Now"〈就此模樣〉), on *The Hui Brothers Show* on April 14.

1973

- TVB launches the Jade Theatre 翡翠劇場 series with *Romance in the Rain*《煙雨濛濛》on March 19, which is the first TV drama featuring a Cantopop theme song sung by Adam Cheng 鄭少秋.
- The TVB-inspired movie *The House of 72 Tenants*《七十二家房客》premieres on September 22 and breaks the box-office record set by the legendary Bruce Lee 李小龍, paving the way for the later comeback of Cantonese movies.
- Hong Kong economy experiences a major recession owing to the oil crisis and the stock market crash.

- Radio Rediffusion, granted a free-to-air broadcasting license on April 6, is renamed Rediffusion Television Limited (RTV) 麗的電視.

1974

- TVB releases the drama *A Love Tale between Tears and Smiles*《啼笑因緣》in the *Chinese Folklores*《民間傳奇》series on March 11, and the Cantopop theme song sung by Sandra Lang 仙杜拉 is so popular that it effectively changes the image of Cantopop among Hong Kong fans.
- Joseph Koo wins the "Hong Kong Popular Song Contest" organized by TVB on September 21, with the song "Shau Ha Ha"〈笑哈哈〉(sung by Sandra Lang in English and Mandarin), and the first runner-up is James Wong's "L-O-V-E Love" (sung by The Wynners 温拿樂隊 in English).
- Michael Hui and Sam Hui's Cantonese movie *Games Gamblers Play*《鬼馬雙星》premieres on October 17, and the theme songs by Sam Hui trigger a tidal wave of Cantopop.

1975

- In August, Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) launches a new program entitled *New World* 新天地 (later renamed *Chinese Pop Chart* 中文歌曲龍虎榜, a weekly top chart for Chinese—de facto Cantonese—songs in 1976) to broadcast Cantonese songs on Channel 2, the popular music channel.
- Commercial Television (CTV) 佳藝電視 goes on air on September 7, becoming the third free-to-air broadcast television station in Hong Kong.
- Chelsia Chan 陳秋霞 wins the "Hong Kong Popular Song Contest" held on September 28 with her English song "Dark Side of Your Mind."
- The Wynners sing their first Cantopop songs in the movie *Let's Rock*《大家樂》directed by James Wong (premiered on December 24).

1976

- TVB spends a handsome budget on *The Book and the Sword*《書劍恩仇錄》(premiered on June 28). The two versions of the title tune by Adam Cheng and Roman Tam 羅文 set a new trend of *wuxia* (martial arts hero) theme songs.

- In the movie *Jumping Ash*《跳灰》(premiered on August 26), which is generally considered a pioneering work that sets the scene for the later New Wave Cinema, there are two very popular Cantopop songs, "A Real Man"〈大丈夫〉and "Ask Me"〈問我〉.
- The theme song of TVB's Jade Theatre drama *The Hotel* (Alias: *Raging Tide*)《狂潮》(written by Joseph Koo and James Wong) premieres on November 1 and pioneers a new style of Cantopop.
- Michael Hui and Sam Hui's *The Private Eyes*《半斤八兩》premieres on December 16 and breaks the box office record for Hong Kong cinema. The movie and the theme songs bring Sam Hui's career to new heights.

1977

- The International Federation of Phonographic Industry Hong Kong (IFPIHK) hosts the first Gold Disc Award Presentation on March 26.
- Leslie Cheung 張國榮 attains first runner-up at the Asian Music Contest held by RTV on May 9.
- The title tune of TVB's *A House Is Not a Home*《家變》(premiered on August 1), sung by Roman Tam, surpasses "Raging Tide" in terms of popularity.
- The Composers and Authors Society of Hong Kong Limited (CASH) starts operating on October 1.

1978

- A series of TVB's Jade Theatre theme songs written by Joseph Koo and James Wong, including "Vanity Fair"〈大亨〉(sung by Paula Tsui 徐小鳳), "The Giant"〈強人〉(sung by Roman Tam), and "Conflict"〈奮鬥〉(sung by Jenny Tseng 甄妮), take the craze of Cantopop TV songs one step further.
- CTV shuts down on August 22.
- The founding Hong Kong New Wave film, Ho Yim's 嚴浩 *The Extra*《茄喱啡》features the Cantopop theme song "An Extra in Life"〈人生小配角〉, sung by Michael Kwan 關正傑. A creative synergy is subsequently created between Cantopop and Hong Kong New Wave.
- The Wynners unofficially disbands after the movie *Making It*《追趕跑跳碰》, and members pursue solo careers.

- George Lam 林子祥, who has been focusing on English popular songs, releases his first Cantopop album, *Money Trip*《各師各法》.

1979

- "Below the Lion Rock"〈獅子山下〉, the unofficial regional anthem of Hong Kong, is released in January.
- The First RTHK Top 10 Gold Songs Awards (1978) is held on February 20.
- Sam Hui becomes the first Hong Kong singer to participate in the Tokyo Music Festival on June 17. The song he sings, "You Let Me Shine"〈你令我閃耀〉, is bilingual—Cantonese and English.
- Alan Tam 譚詠麟 releases his debut solo Cantopop album *Porky's*《反斗星》in February.
- Leslie Cheung turns to Cantopop with *Lover's Arrow*《情人箭》in September. Meanwhile, Danny Chan 陳百強 releases his debut Cantopop album *First Love/Tears for You*《初戀／眼淚為你流》in December, raising the curtain on the era of Cantopop idols in the 1980s.

1980

- The TVB theme song "The Bund"〈上海灘〉, sung by Frances Yip 葉麗儀, generates a huge wave across Chinese communities, including the Mainland, which just adopted the Open Door Policy, after the drama premieres on March 10.
- The Queen Elizabeth Stadium, with a seating capacity of 3,500, becomes the largest venue for concerts in Hong Kong after it opens on August 27.
- The new campaign "Raising a Thousand Sails" 千帆並舉展繽紛 launched by RTV on September 1 is a successful, albeit short-lived, challenge to the leading role of TVB. It changes the landscape of TV theme songs.

1981

- Television theme songs no longer dominate the Cantopop industry: only three of the RTHK Top 10 Gold Songs in 1981 are from television dramas.
- Folk song concerts and contests are very popular, and the Academic Community Hall becomes the cradle of folk singers.

- Alan Tam, while based in Taiwan, continues to release Cantopop albums. His *Can't Forget You*《忘不了您》(released on August 13) establishes a sound basis for his Cantopop career.
- TVB launches the music show *Jade Solid Gold*《勁歌金曲》on October 10.
- The Amateur Lyric Writers' Association of Hong Kong 香港業餘填詞人協會 is founded in December.

1982

- Joseph Koo is presented the first Highest Honour Award at the Fourth RTHK Top 10 Gold Songs Awards (1981).
- James Wong and Jimmy Lo 盧國沾 win the first-ever Best Melody Award and Best Lyrics Award at the Fourth RTHK Top 10 Gold Songs Awards (1981) with "Forget Him"〈忘記他〉and "Unable to Find an Excuse"〈找不着藉口〉, respectively.
- Anita Mui 梅艷芳 wins the First New Talent Singing Awards 新秀歌唱大賽 organized by TVB on July 18.
- On September 22, soon after then British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher slips on the stairs in front of the People's Hall in Beijing, the Hong Kong economy also falls sharply.
- Capital Artists 華星唱片, a TVB subsidiary founded in 1971, establishes its records department.

1983

- The inauguration of the Hong Kong Coliseum, a multipurpose indoor arena originally designed for sport activities, on April 27, provides a perfect venue for Cantopop concerts.
- Sam Hui holds the first concerts at Hong Kong Coliseum in May.
- Anita Mui's first solo album, *Crimson Anita Mui*《赤色梅艷芳》, records a five-times platinum disc sales volume as per Hong Kong standard.
- Jimmy Lo initiates a "Non-Love Songs" campaign to promote more subject matter besides romantic love.

1984

- TVB hosts the First Jade Solid Gold (JSG) Music Awards Presentation (1983) on January 28.
- The competition between Alan Tam and Leslie Cheung brings sales volumes and the influence of Cantopop to new heights.
- Jacky Cheung 張學友 wins the 18 Districts Amateur Singing Competition held on September 1.
- In response to Jimmy Lo's "Non-Love Songs" campaign, RTHK organizes a "Non-Love Lyrics Writing Contest." The winner, Lin Xi 林夕 (a.k.a. Albert Leung 梁偉文), later becomes one of the leading lyricists in Hong Kong for more than thirty years.
- The Sino-British Joint Declaration is signed on December 19, according to which Hong Kong will be reverted to China in 1997.

1985

- Tickets for Cantopop concerts held at Hong Kong Coliseum sell like hot cakes. New records are set throughout the year.
- Tom Lee Music, a local musical instrument company, collaborates with Carlsberg to launch the Carlsberg Pop Music Festival, which later generates a band wave that sweeps the territory in the late 1980s.
- Danny Summer 夏韶聲 wins the First "Asia-Pacific Popular Song Contest" organized by the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union on August 10 with the song "Empty Chair"〈空凳〉(melody by Violet Lam 林敏怡 and lyrics by Richard Lam 林振強).
- Asia Television (ATV; formerly RTV) organizes the First Future Idol Contest 未來偶像爭霸戰 to emulate TVB's New Talent Singing Awards.
- The CD format becomes popular in Hong Kong, which helps boost the sales of Cantopop albums.

1986

- TVB sets up a JSG pop chart on February 1, which becomes one of the indexes of the popularity of Cantopop singers and songs.
- The fierce competition between Alan Tam and Leslie Cheung continues. While the number of Gold Song Awards won by Alan Tam is greater,

Leslie Cheung wins the TVB Gold Song Gold Award (given to the most popular song of the year) with "Who Feels the Same?"〈有誰共鳴〉.

- Band music becomes a new trend as Beyond, Tai-chi 太極, and Tat Ming Pair 達明一派 enter the mainstream.
- According to Chi-Wah Wong 黃志華, local Chinese record companies, such as Crown Records 娛樂唱片, are taken over by international labels owing to their outdated operation.

1987

- The legendary rock band Beyond signs with Cinepoly 新藝寶 and releases their first mainstream debut EP *Waiting Forever*《永遠等待》in January (their first cassette *Goodbye Ideals*《再見理想》, released in 1986, was self-financed).
- RTHK increases the number of songs on its pop chart from ten to fifteen, a sign of the growing number of Cantopop songs.
- RTHK organizes the band show "Fly High with Bands" on May 17, after which the band wave gradually recedes.
- Cantopop concerts continue to be highly profitable. Paula Tsui and Anita Mui set new records of twenty-two and twenty-eight shows at Hong Kong Coliseum, respectively.

1988

- Alan Tam announces at the Tenth RTHK Top 10 Gold Songs Awards Ceremony (1987) held on February 13 that he has decided not to receive any awards involving competition from then on.
- Sally Yeh's 葉蒨文 "Blessing"〈祝福〉, a cover version of a Taiwanese song, becomes the most popular song of the year, an extraordinary achievement as the industry is dominated by Alan Tam, Leslie Cheung, and Anita Mui.
- TVB increases the number of new plugs from four to seven per week, showing that the number of Cantopop songs continues to grow.
- Winnie Yu 俞琤, invited to return to Commercial Radio as general manager, declares on February 1 that CR2 will become an "All Chinese Pop Music Station" beginning March 21.
- ATV turns its Future Idol Contest into a trans-region competition to include participants from Guangzhou and Macau.

1989

- Commercial Radio holds the First Ultimate Song Chart Awards Presentation (1988) on January 16.
- "Concert for Democracy in China"「民主歌聲獻中華」is held at Happy Valley on May 27 to support the student democratic movement in Beijing, which is later cracked down on June 4.
- Alan Tam sets a new record of thirty-eight shows at Hong Kong Coliseum, which began on July 31.
- On September 17, Leslie Cheung announces his very early retirement from the music industry at the summit of his career and popularity after his *Final Encounter* album and thirty-three farewell concerts at the Hong Kong Coliseum.
- The CASH organizes the First CASH Popular Song Writing Contest in December, and the winner is "The Flow of Time"〈光陰流轉〉(sung by Kit-Man Mak 麥潔文, melody by Ching-Yue Wong 王正宇, and lyrics by Keith Chan 陳少琪).

1990

- RTHK presents the "Top Ten Hong Kong Entertainers in the 1980s" on March 10, and five of the awardees are Cantopop singers: Alan Tam, Leslie Cheung, Anita Mui, Paula Tsui, and Liza Wang 汪明荃. In addition, Jackie Chan 成龍 and Yun-Fat Chow also release Cantopop albums.
- Anita Mui announces on October 7 that she will no longer receive any music awards.
- Tat Ming Pair disbands after the album *Nerve*《神經》, signaling the end of the band wave.
- More and more Taiwanese singers, such as Jeremy Chang 張洪量, Harlem Yu 庾澄慶, and Sky Wu 伍思凱, test the waters of the Hong Kong market.
- Andy Lau 劉德華 signs with the new record company In-Co Music Publishing Ltd. 寶藝星, a joint venture of PolyGram 寶麗金 and Entertainment Impact 藝能娛樂, and releases two chartbusting Cantopop albums, *Would It Be Possible?*《可不可以》and *Goodbye*《再會了》.

1991

- Jacky Cheung releases his career-defining album *Uncontrolled Passion* 《情不禁》 in January, which includes his all-time classic "Love You More and More Each Day" 〈每天愛你多一些〉.
- Music Factory 音樂工廠, led by Luo Dayou 羅大佑, arrives in Hong Kong from Taiwan, and their pioneering work "Queen's Road East" 〈皇后大道東〉 is very well received by Hong Kong people.
- Metro Broadcast Corporation Limited 新城電台, founded on July 1, begins broadcasting on August 12.
- The career of Leon Lai 黎明 gathers momentum with big hits such as "Sorry, I Love You" 〈對不起我愛你〉 and "Will You Come Tonight?" 〈今夜你會不會來〉.
- Sandy Lam 林憶蓮 shines in *Wild Flowers* 《野花》 (released in December), with a transformation toward a more-than-mainstream image.
- The age of compact discs begins as local record companies stop producing vinyl discs.

1992

- Anita Mui completes her farewell concerts "Anita Mui Final Concert" in January.
- Aaron Kwok 郭富城 moves his base back to Hong Kong from Taiwan and releases his debut Cantopop album *Dance Endlessly, Love Endlessly, Sing Endlessly* 《跳不完・愛不完・唱不完》 in February.
- Sam Hui holds his farewell concerts, beginning on March 18 in Hong Kong and ending in a US-Canada tour in September.
- Danny Chan goes into a coma on May 19 and passes away on October 25, 1993.
- "Four Heavenly Kings" 四大天王 is coined at the RTHK summer event "Solar Project" to name the four male artists—Andy Lau, Jacky Cheung, Leon Lai, and Aaron Kwok—who are dominating the Cantopop scene.
- California Red 加州紅 opens the first karaoke venue, with a computerized song selection system, in Wan Chai, marking a new era of the karaoke industry.

1993

- Winnie Yu publicly crowns Jacky Cheung the new "God of Cantopop" at TVB's JSG Music Awards Presentation in January.
- Jacky Cheung's album *Goodbye Kiss*《吻別》, selling almost five million copies around the world, conquers the swiftly growing Mandapop market.
- Ka-Kui Wong 黃家駒, the soul of Beyond, passes away on June 30 after a stage accident during the recording of a Fuji Television game show in Tokyo.
- Cable TV enters into service with eight channels on October 31.
- Commercial Radio launches "Ultimate Global Chinese Pop Chart" 「叱吒全球華語歌曲排行榜」, an indicator of the rising popularity of Mandapop.

1994

- Faye Wong releases *Random Thoughts*《胡思亂想》, in which she uses—for the first time—her Chinese name "Fei Wang" 王菲 instead of the Hong Kong–styled "Ching-Man Wong" 王靖雯.
- Jacky Cheung is named the most popular singer in Asia at the US Billboard Music Awards.
- Hutchison Telecom rolls out a new large-scale advertising campaign with Leon Lai as the leading character. The title song "Thinking of You Every Day"〈那有一天不想你〉generates a new wave of Cantopop-commercial crossovers.
- Alan Tam holds concerts at the Hong Kong Stadium, reopened with an increased seating capacity of 40,000, from April 22 to 24. Owing to noise complaints, subsequent restrictions on noise levels render the venue unsuitable for concerts.

1995

- Commercial Radio initiates a campaign that only original songs can be aired on CR2 beginning March 21.
- The legendary Teresa Teng 鄧麗君 dies on May 8 from a severe asthma attack during her holiday in Chiang Mai.

- Leslie Cheung makes a comeback and releases the album *Beloved*《寵愛》on July 7.
- Faye Wong releases her last Cantopop (with the exception of one song in Mandarin) album, *Di-Dar*, in December, and thereafter she records mainly in her native Mandarin.
- The four major broadcasters jointly present four pop music awards: Best Album, Best Song, Outstanding Performance, and Media Grand Award.

1996

- Cass Phang 彭羚 reaches the apex of her career with two Most Popular Female Singer awards (TVB and CR2) won in January.
- In its October 14 issue, *Time* magazine dubs Faye Wong a songbird, joining "the chorus of women heard around the world."
- Leslie Cheung's androgynous style shines in the album *Red*《紅》, released in November. "Grieving Man"〈怨男〉, among others, showcases a man's unique beauty.
- Eason Chan 陳奕迅 releases his debut Cantopop album *Eason Chan*《陳奕迅》.

1997

- Aaron Kwok becomes the first Chinese pop singer to sign with a global promotion project—Pepsi Cola.
- Jacky Cheung plays a leading role in Hong Kong's first modern musical, *Snow Wolf Lake*《雪狼湖》, with over 100 performances around the world.
- Hong Kong is reverted to China on July 1.
- Andy Lau's Mandapop "Chinese"〈中國人〉is arguably the most remarkable composition to come out of the 1997 handover.

1998

- Leon Lai's Korean song "After Loving You" reaches top 10 on Korean pop charts, the first time a Hong Kong singer has managed to achieve this.
- PolyGram is acquired by Universal Music 環球唱片.
- Cantopop stars go global in transnational projects, such as Andy Lau's joining forces with saxophonist Kenny G in "You're My Woman"〈妳是

我的女人〉and Sammi Cheng's collaboration with All 4 One in "I Cross My Heart."

- LMF (a.k.a. Lazy Mutha Fucka), a hip-hop group, forms by merging underground bands Anodize, Screw, and N.T., and local hip-hop star DJ Tommy.
- Cantopop sales drop from HK$1.853 billion in 1995 to HK$0.916 billion in 1998.

1999

- *Billboard* publishes an essay entitled "The Cantopop Drop" in its February 27 issue, advertising the fact that the golden days of Cantopop has passed.
- Leon Lai announces at his concert on December 12 that he will no longer accept music awards in Hong Kong.
- Aaron Kwok works with Janet Jackson, singing the Chinese version of the song written by Janet Jackson for Pepsi—"Ask for More"〈渴望無限〉.
- The three remaining members of Beyond announce that they will stop working together after their December concert, signaling the end of a glorious era.
- Emperor Entertainment Group (EEG) 英皇娛樂 is established in September.
- The era of portable MP3s for music listening begins in Hong Kong.

2000

- Sammi Cheng's 鄭秀文 "Episode"〈插曲〉wins the JSG Gold Song Gold Award (1999) on January 16, becoming the second female singer to receive this prize in the decade of the Four Heavenly Kings (the first was Sally Yeh in 1990).
- Kelly Chen 陳慧琳 is crowned a Heavenly Queen with the JSG Most Popular Female Singer Award (1999).
- Andy Lau enters the Guinness World Records for "Most Awards Won by a Cantopop Male Artist," with 292 awards throughout his singing career by April.
- Karen Mok 莫文蔚 wins the Most Popular Female Singer of the Year at the China Music Chart Awards.

- People Mountain People Sea 人山人海, a music production company established by Anthony Yiu-Ming Wong 黃耀明 with a team of artists and musicians on June 16, 1999, releases its first album, *Washing Machine Emergency Button*《入洗衣機緊急掣》.

2001

- Eason Chan wins Commercial Radio's Ultimate Best Male Singer Gold Award. From 2001 to 2013, he has won this title a remarkable ten times.
- Miriam Yeung 楊千嬅 wins the JSG Gold Song Gold Award (2000) held on January 14 with "A Maiden's Prayer"〈少女的祈禱〉, firmly establishing her status as a new Heavenly Queen.
- Joey Yung 容祖兒 turns into a Heavenly Queen with the tremendous success of albums such as *Solemn on Stage*《隆重登場》.
- Charlene Choi 蔡卓妍 and Gillian Chung 鍾欣桐 form Twins in the summer.

2002

- Andy Hui 許志安 wins the JSG Most Popular Male Singer Award (2001) held on January 13, signaling the end of the Four Heavenly Kings decade.
- Hacken Lee 李克勤 holds five "comeback" concerts at the Hong Kong Coliseum in February to signal the (re)birth of a Cantopop King.
- Twins hold their first Hong Kong Coliseum concerts in September, and Charlene Choi becomes the youngest singer at 19 to hold a concert in the temple of Cantopop.
- Roman Tam dies on October 18 after an extended battle with liver cancer.

2003

- Hong Kong is badly hit by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) from March to May.
- Leslie Cheung jumps to his death from the twenty-fourth floor of the Mandarin Oriental Hotel on April 1.
- James Wong obtains his PhD in May, with his thesis, "The Rise and Decline of Cantopop: A Study of Hong Kong Popular Music (1949–1997)"《粵語流行曲的發展與興衰：香港流行音樂研究 1949–1997》(in Chinese).
- Cancer robs the lyric master Richard Lam of his life on November 16.

- Cancer-stricken Anita Mui passes away on December 30.
- LMF disbands after the album *Finalazy* to strive for further developments in different fields.

2004

- Sam Hui stages a total of thirty-eight quickly sold-out "Keep on Smiling" comeback concerts at the Hong Kong Coliseum from May to August.
- James Wong dies of lung cancer on November 24.
- Gold Typhoon Group 金牌大風, incorporating Paco Wong's 黃柏高 Gold Label Entertainment in 2003, starts operating its digital music business in Greater China.
- Tat Ming Pair reunites to celebrate their twentieth anniversary, with four shows at the Hong Kong Coliseum in December.

2005

- The first edition of Entertainment Expo Hong Kong is held in March, with Hong Kong Music Fair being the key event for popular music.
- Candy Lo 盧巧音 releases a truly avant-garde concept album entitled *Evolution Theory*《天演論》 in July, but her popularity fades after this.
- The comeback concerts phenomenon continues—Paula Tsui, Sally Yeh, Sandy Lam, and George Lam, among others, stage their comeback concerts at the Hong Kong Coliseum.
- A number of singer-songwriters come onto the scene, giving fresh but short-lived impetus to the industry.

2006

- According to figures of the Hong Kong Heritage Museum, record sales drop from HK$17 billion in 1997 to HK$0.56 billion in 2006.
- In February, Joey Yung, widely known as the Karaoke Queen, releases her album, *Ten Most Wanted*, in which she tries to broaden her music style.
- Denise Ho 何韻詩 is baptized into stardom with her first Hong Kong Coliseum concerts held in October.

- With an eye toward making new stars, EEG and TVB collaborate in the launch of the new Entertainment Channel 英皇娛樂台 on December 11 (which shuts down in December 2009).

2007

- Kay Tse 謝安琪 releases *The First Day* after signing with Cinepoly in January, bringing her fame from indie circles to the mainstream.
- The first local large-scale Cantopop exhibition "Riding a Melodic Tide: The Development of Cantopop in Hong Kong" is jointly held by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the Hong Kong Heritage Museum, Radio Television Hong Kong, and the School of Journalism and Communication at the Chinese University of Hong Kong from March to August.

2008

- Leo Ku 古巨基 wins the first of his JSG Most Popular Male Singer Awards (between 2008 and 2011).
- The album *Binary* released in July turns Kay Tse into a household name. Among other hits, "Wedding Card Street"〈囍帖街〉truly stands out as the song of the year.
- Major labels such as Universal Music, Gold Typhoon, and BMA Records formally absorb band music into their marketing plans (e.g., Universal Music's Mr. and Gold Typhoon's RubberBand).

2009

- Denise Ho decides to take a temporary leave from Hong Kong to tour in Taiwan and the Mainland to rekindle her music passion.
- TVB has a row with Hong Kong Recording Industry Alliance Limited (HKRIA) over copyright fees. Unable to resolve the dispute, TVB decides to ban singers in the four big companies—Universal, Warner, Sony, and EMI—from their programs.
- ATV and TVB launch the music talent programs "ATV-Asian Millionstar" 亞洲星光大道 and "The Voice" 超級巨聲 in July, respectively.

2010

- Hacken Lee becomes the only Cantopop singer to win music awards in four different decades—from the 1980s to the 2010s.
- In February, the local band Kolor launches their innovative project "Law of 14"—uploading a song onto the Internet for free listening every month on the 14th—which is an example of using new media to disseminate Cantopop.

2011

- Jacky Cheung's record-setting "1/2 Century Tour" runs from December 30, 2010 to December 29, 2011, with 105 live concerts in sixty-one cities around the world.
- The Seventh Entertainment Expo Hong Kong features the Asian Pop Music Festival in March.
- Digital Broadcasting Corporation Hong Kong 香港數碼電台 (DBC, formerly Wave Media Limited 雄濤廣播) begins to air in August.

2012

- Softhard 軟硬天師 and Grasshoppers 草蜢 stage twelve full-house shows at the Hong Kong Coliseum, a sign of the extension of the comeback phenomenon into the 2010s.
- Ivana Wong 王菀之 holds her debut "Water Lily" concerts at the Hong Kong Coliseum in October, making her one of the very few singer-songwriters to enter the Cantopop shrine.

2013

- At TVB's JSG Music Awards Presentation (2012) held on January 13, the Most Popular Male Singer in the Asia-Pacific Region Award goes to the Taiwanese group Lollipop 棒棒堂, the first time in twenty years that the title has been awarded to a non-Cantopop unit.
- The TVB-HKRIA dispute is settled in January, but damage has been done.

2014

- Hong Kong singers started going north to join Mainland hit reality shows and singing competitions after G.E.M. Tang's 鄧紫棋 success in Hunan Television's *I Am a Singer 2*.
- The song "Raise the Umbrella"〈撐起雨傘〉, sung by Denise Ho, Anthony Yiu-Ming Wong, and other pop singers, becomes the anthem of the Umbrella Movement, which begins as the mass movement "Occupy Central With Love and Peace" to fight for genuine universal suffrage.

2015

- In the aftermath of the Umbrella Movement, singers such as Anthony Yiu-Ming Wong and Denise Ho, who have taken a high-profile stance in support of the movement, shift from the mainstream to the independent music scene.

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