
Uncovering Cultural Capital in Indonesia's Underground Music Scene: A Discourse

Catur Surya Permana

Music Study Program, Faculty of Arts and Literature
Jl. Setiabudhi 193, Bandung, 40154, Indonesia
Catur Surya 35@gmail.com
Catur Suryapermana@unpas.ac.id

Abstract

Underground music is considered to have a very strong context in terms of cultural capital. By examining the capital and musical concepts of the underground music scene, it is possible to elaborate and explain the collapse of the regime. So that it raises a reaction to freedom in voicing certain class ideologies. The role of music was finally able to represent the voices of the politicized or oppressed people overpowering, one of which occurred in the New Order. Underground music emerged as a cultural capital which Bourdieu called an artifact in dissecting the problems of the social field. The purpose of this research is to uncover the cultural capital possessed by Underground Music which creates views that open the minds and hearts of representatives of certain classes. This research is carried out by reviewing literature, musicology, and historical records of Underground music, which will be presented and dialogued with the concept of Modal theory from Bourdieu and popular music analysis from David Machin. This research tries to answer the image anxiety that emerges from the dark and loud Underground Music Scene but instead has a sacred context in the development of the socio-cultural situation in Indonesia.

Keywords: Cultural Capital, Underground Music, History of Music, Musicology

1. Introduction

The collapse of the New Order regime in Indonesia was caused by the increasingly unfavorable socio-political situation marked by Suharto's leadership which was deemed too authoritarian (Wallach, 2005). This situation culminated in 1998 with the milestone of reforms that the people wanted so that the

Suharto era would end soon. The chaos also did not escape from the context which is also related to the development of art and culture in Indonesia. Music is one of the air that blows factual circumstances into a strong cultural symbolism in reconstructing events. Often this incident has resulted in protest music that overshadows and represents the voice of the people (Alexander & Sugiono, 2021).

Underground music was the source, one of which also existed in the social and political realities of the time (Rossmayani & Dewanto, 2018). Considering that in the 70s Indonesia was bombarded with a strong ideology of Western music, as was the case with rock music at that time. Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath, and Rolling Stones, as well as enlivening the aura of youth by creating similar creations by bringing up rock music genres, such as GodBless, Kantata, Gong 2000, and so on.

The emergence of youth culture in music, especially rock, later developed into other types of music, including Underground music (Wallach, Berger & Greene, 2011). Underground itself is a style of music production carried out by musicians who are better known as the underground movement. This happens because the music industry is more massive in arranging pop music. After all, it is more acceptable to the audience. However, this situation has given rise to creative ideas for the underground movement, which often introduces its music in different ways and ways, be it music performances or music albums.

Underground music is known for its loud characteristics, strong beats, prominent

attributes, and even fast rhythms. They are often dark and gloomy, wearing black clothes, which are sometimes depicted with satanic nuances, and album covers with satanic or dark themes. And also in terms of lyrics, Underground music often has the theme of social and political criticism. Lidskog assumes that music is capable of protesting and criticizing this to raise awareness of the issue of injustice, and marginalization of a certain community group (Lidskog, 2016). This issue was also discussed in Jeremy Wallach's article entitled "Underground Rock Music and Democratization in Indonesia" explaining that Underground music had an influence on the birth of democracy in Indonesia, especially in the early 90s until after the 1998 reformation (Wallach, 2005).

Looking at the issues that have developed above, this article tries to build a comprehensive view of the concept of Underground music from the visual, lyrical, and sound side that is used as a symbol, as well as its influence on socio-cultural construction in Indonesia.

2. Methods

This research uses a literature review from the views of observers of Underground, Metal, and Rock music in Indonesia. The views expressed will then be discussed and dialogued with Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, to see how the efforts and massiveness of the Underground movement can construct reality in society, especially in the context of resistance to the establishment. Bourdieu (1987) offers a view on Capital Theory which he sees into four categories, namely economic capital, social capital, symbolic capital, and cultural capital. He admits that economic capital follows the Marxist view which activates that economic power will give power to certain class communities or so-called upper classes. Social capital is formed through the large structure that is owned in the institutional setting, while symbolic capital will focus on one of the arts, art also provides space for the formation of power that is indirect or symbolic. Cultural capital is capital that is owned based on the construction and views in the society of a culture that moves in it.

In addition, to clarify the textual music, musicology and analysis of popular music from Machin (2010) are used. Machin analyzes

music through three dimensions, namely lyrics, visuals, and sound, that the view of music is not only as a medium for propaganda, especially in the Underground scene, it is necessary to look in more detail on this side. The analysis uses semiotics that is directly related to the signifiers and signifieds that work in the three domains. That the lyrics that seem critical, protests, and criticism are signs of anti-establishment ideology, along with the dark nuanced visuals that present a sign of the invisible world of the underground movement to present the dark side of the ruling superstructure and hegemony. So the flip side of a loud, distorted and fast sound is a symbol of disorder and a form of resistance, by piling up chord progressions, the melody being voiced.

3. Discussions

Bourdieu (1987) has explained the social field in his book "Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste", that taste is something that is socially constructed which is segmented, in creating social differences. Piliang (2011) also sees this system of differentiation and segmentation, of course, to distinguish the complexity of one society from another. Taste also shapes and justifies culture, which is manifested in lifestyle to become an

identity, both in terms of fulfilling aesthetic and cultural aspects, to distinguish classes in society (Resmadi, 2021).

In his notes, Bourdieu also views that art is not only a matter of beauty but also a strategy of consensus in the social order. Art products are seen as an indicator to determine the social field, namely the state of class or position in society. Furthermore, music is recognized as a symbolic power field. So the social field is considered a symbolic space to maintain social status. According to Bourdieu, symbolic power is a form of power that is invisible but can construct reality (Hujatnikajennong, 2015). Therefore, symbolic power works, one of which is as a form of prestige through taste.

Indirectly, tastes will form a community with the same pretext, the same view in space or social field. Bourdieu views this as the accumulation of capital that every human being has. The capital is divided into four namely economic capital, social capital, symbolic capital, and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1987). Based on this reference, capital will be able to bring individuals into a position in their social reality. Just like Underground music lovers who have the same taste will also produce an ideological concept

about the same musical taste and experience. Therefore, underground music is felt to form an order of cultural capital that forms a strong social field under the pretext of rejecting political distortions that are increasingly crowded in the reform era.

Furthermore, Bethany Bryson (1996) in her reading of Bourdieu, interprets the phenomenon of music as a symbolic form in social life, and describes and explains the tendency of people to accept a genre of music based on their musical background. So that the exclusivity of music is influenced by a person's level of education in assessing music. Bryson offers three benchmark indicators of people's tastes, namely social exclusion, symbolic exclusion, and political intolerance at the level of cultural diversion.

Rakhman in his article entitled *The Growth of Metal Music in Indonesia* at the end of the 1980s explained in his reading of the historical research he went through using four stages namely heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography, that the enthusiasm of young people gave rise to the turmoil of underground music in the 80s as a background of the growth of metal music in Indonesia, as well as the view that metal music has a contradictory nature with indigenous

Indonesian culture, especially a friendly and polite culture (Rakhman, 2022). Whereas loud underground music, fast tempos, and loud distortion roars represent an attitude that departs from the subtle and polite nature of Indonesian culture, indirectly admits that underground music has the opposite impact on Indonesian culture.

Another note was written by Andrew, Sihombing, and Ahmad entitled *Music, Media, and Works: The Development of Underground Music Infrastructure in Bandung (1967-1997)* said that his focus was on studying underground music infrastructure at the level of production, distribution, and consumption that contribute to the current generation (Teguh Vicky et al., 2017). Using the historical method as an analytical knife, his notes focus on the music infrastructure built in the 1967-1990 period, the media (print and radio), and independent albums. *Aktuil Magazine* was noted as a mass media that popularized as well as propagated the flow of rock music among young people. *Radio GMR* is also noted as a space for playing underground music works with various genres such as Rock, Heavy Metal, Thrash Metal, and Death Metal. In addition, Radio also encourages musicians to create their works in the form of recordings. After the success of Pas Band on their albums,

there has been a new trend to develop a music infrastructure that supports independent album production, such as Reverse, which initiated the establishment of Reverse Studios rehearsals, record labels, and reverses music accessories and record stores. Another consequence is the development of music infrastructure, there is also a tendency to polarize underground music genres which are no longer synonymous with rock music, and give rise to Metal, Punk, Grindcore, and Hardcore. The Saparua building is also recognized as the formation of the polarization of this type of music flow.

Underground music fans are also recognized as having an aggressive drive and diversion to anxiety about the values that develop in society (Sri Hayati, 2002). A culture of resistance is also manifested in the enjoyment of underground music performances such as the moshing movement (Robbyansyah, 2012). Underground music genres, which include Metal, Punk, and Hardcore, are recognized by Sarah Thorton in her book *Club Culture (1996)*, describing the context of open dance parties in Underground in England as a counter-culture to mainstream culture. The concept of the moshing movement is defined as swaying ngebor or other patterned movements, which try to open up

cultural and economic boundaries. Golding and Murdoch (1991) have two views on the political economy elements of culture for popular music:

“...focuses on the interplay between the symbolic and economic dimensions of public communication (including pop music). This approach intends to show how to finance and organize a cultural product that is different and has various consequences that imprint on a series of discourses and representations in the public sphere and on public access to these discourses and representations.” (Golding & Murdock, 1991)

Notes from Mangoenkoesoemo and Soerjatmodjo note that the concept of reciprocity is also caused by the personality formed in the family realm. That those who were formed by parents who were born in the 80s will have views, experiences, and feelings about the quality of the music they hear when the context of government in Indonesia is in the stage of development of the New Order (Cahyawati; Mangoenkoesoemo & Soerjoatmodjo, 2018). The parents who lived in that era did not stop at their enjoyment but

also continued on daily practices which were even passed on to their children. So basically cultural awareness is formed in a small environment such as a family.

3.1 The Concept of 'Underground' Music as a Sign

Machin writes in his book *Analysing Popular Music: Image, Sound & Text* analyzes popular music from the visual, sound & composition sides, and lyrics (Machin, 2010). Based on this method of analysis, Machin cannot be separated from the Semiotic theory, that the category of analysis will be converted into a sign system. Therefore, from the three instruments, we will get a dissection of the ideology that works in that realm. Especially in Bourdieu's theory of Capital, the study of art is included in Symbolic Capital. Then the analysis of the musical text will be in the form of symbols which are translated through Semiotics.

In the explanation above, the presentation will start from the context of the band. Bands that enlivened the 70s included God Bless from Jakarta, AKA from Surabaya, Bentole from Malang, and The Rollies from Bandung. Uniting with the issues above, Underground music has a musical concept that can deconstruct society in a critical direction

so that it can break the establishment of government power at that time, we can identify it through the musical structure that formed it. Melody, Harmony, and Rhythmic as well as the lyrics used in the music also encourage the ideology of resistance. Like the song from Godbless entitled 'Semut Hitam' on the album Semut Hitam.

“...Semut-semut bagai sisa-sisa
Toleransi peradaban dunia
Sementara yang katanya
manusia
Makhluk paling bijaksana

Oh, halalkan segala cara
Oh, menipu soal biasa
Semut-semut menyaksikan
Semut-semut mendengarkan
Teriakan, jerit, makian
Gila! Gila! Gila!...”

“...Ants are like remnants
Tolerance of world civilization
While what he said was human
The wisest creature

Oh, justify all means
Oh, cheating about the usual

The ants are watching
The ants listen
Screams, screams, curses
Crazy! Crazy! Crazy!...”

The above is a snippet of lyrics that, when listened to, has an idea about criticizing the system’s workings, which is not good. Likewise, Iwan Falls with the song 'Bento' criticizes the ruler, power, and wealth. Finally, in this era of resistance, many musicians were arrested and imprisoned for safekeeping to reduce the threat from the increasingly heated people.

The visual context that appears in Underground's music can be seen in the music albums, costume photos, and stage acts on display.

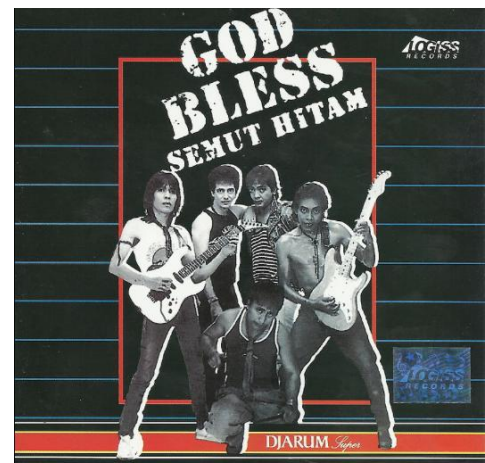




Fig. 1 God Bless the album cover of Semut Hitam album (top), Forgotten album Kaliyuga, and Burgerkill album adamantine (bottom). (Google Source)

Not a few bands with Metal, Rock, and Punk genres are identical with spooky visuals, monsters, demons, and even dark nuances. The visual symbol is interpreted as a fight with bright, human, and colorful visuals, which is also synonymous with pop music. In addition, the roar like a wild bear is also embodied in the musical essence of the sound, distorted guitar sound, loud, strong, and fast drum beats, progressive chords, complex shifts, and fast melodies. This essence is a form of competition as well as a difference

from pop music which tends to have subtle harmonies with major or minor qualities, and chord progressions ranging from I, IV, and V chords (such as C, F, and G chords) or the minor ii, iii and vi chords. (such as Dm, Em, and Am chords). So it is not surprising that musical compositions and musical concepts are not only a medium but a symbolic representation and reaction to the ongoing culture.

4. Conclusions

We know in the notes of Wallach & Clinton (2013) that the context of the music genre which is very strong and has an influence on the socio-cultural status, politics, and economy in Indonesia cannot be separated from three main genres, namely Dangdut, Pop and Underground. Therefore Underground in the records of Underground music researchers always associate themselves with this situation. That Underground music is not only recognized as a scary, sloppy, and rude image but because the essence of the music does contain an identity for music, as well as a representation of the context that exists in society. Representative representation of resistance that cannot be separated from how the visual, lyrical, and sound aspects are presented in music.

The dilemma of the state of democracy in Indonesia which is dissolved in the government authority which is felt to be lacking, unable to represent the feelings of the people, the slumping economic status, and the culture of the rulers can be represented by the Underground music genre which includes Punk, Metal, and Rock. So Underground music lives based on tastes and backgrounds owned by the people, eventually becoming a cultural capital, to build a view of counter-cultural reactions. Mass media, public spaces, radio, rehearsal studios, souvenirs, and stage performances become tools to form ideological unity and work side by side with the existing hegemonic context.

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Catur Surya Permana, born in Bandung, April 10, 1986. Earn a Bachelor's Degree (S.Sn.) in the Music Arts Study Program, Universitas Pasundan in 2010 and Master's Degree (M.Sn.) in the Arts Study and Creation Study Program, Sekolah Tinggi Seni Indonesia in 2014. I am pursuing further studies at the Doctoral Program of the Faculty of Culture Studies, Universitas Padjadjaran. I work as a Lecturer in Music Arts Study Program, Universitas Pasundan. My based research and working on popular music studies, focusing on Dangdut, Pop and Underground Music in Indonesia.