

GLOBALIZATION GOES LOCAL: NATIONALISM IN INDONESIAN JAZZ

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ABSTRACT

Article presented how Jazz, as a product of American popular culture, can be very local in Indonesia. Nationalism, in this case, refers to how Indonesian jazz artists translate and create a kind of 'dialogue' between jazz and local Indonesian culture. The study used library research by finding what values that jazz had in order to create such dialogue, and how Indonesian nationalism could be transformed in jazz. The evolution of Jazz in Indonesia and the attitude of Indonesian jazz audience were discussed to see the position of jazz in Indonesian popular culture mainstream. It can be concluded that Jazz seems to deconstruct the common notion that music should be understood to be enjoyed. In jazz, the irrational and sometimes absurd combination between jazz and other indigenous culture, has created a specific kinds of the music itself. Jazz in Indonesia has gone through its own cycle of evolution where the western and the eastern culture has created its own art and nobody knows the direction of jazz in the future.

Keywords: jazz, globalization, nationalism

ABSTRAK

Artikel menggambarkan perkembangan jazz yang merupakan produk global, yaitu Amerika, dapat berkembang di Indonesia dalam taraf nasional. Nasionalisme berarti bagaimana artis jazz di Indonesia dapat menerjemahkan dan menciptakan jazz yang mampu beradaptasi dengan budaya Indonesia. Penelitian menggunakan studi pustaka dengan tujuan menemukan nilai global jazz yang dapat menciptakan suatu "dialog" yang mampu mengekspresikan nasionalisme di dalam musik tersebut. Perubahan jazz dan perilaku pemirsa jazz dianalisis guna melihat posisi jazz di jalur budaya populer di Indonesia. Disimpulkan, tampaknya jazz dapat mengubah pendapat bahwa musik itu harus dapat dimengerti dan dinikmati. Di dalam musik jazz, kombinasi yang tidak masuk akal antara jazz dengan berbagai budaya nasional bisa menciptakan suatu jenis /genre musik tersendiri. Perkembangan jazz di Indonesia telah mengalami perubahan, yaitu telah menciptakan suatu seni yang merupakan gabungan budaya barat dan timur dan tak seorang pun tahu bagaimana perkembangannya di masa yang akan datang.

Kata kunci: jazz, global, nasional

INTRODUCTION

As popular culture, Jazz is a global phenomenon. In Indonesia, jazz is also blended with the local indigenous culture. Like any other jazz musicians in the world, many Indonesian local jazz musicians relate themselves to their ethnic regions. Jazz artists such as Luluk Purwanto who combine Jazz with Javanese culture, or the Balinese guitarist I Wayan Balawan, who are famous of his tapping technique are some artists who are, in my opinion, have gone through the process of acculturation between jazz and the local values.

Besides the global phenomenon, Jazz in Indonesia has gone beyond the music and culture itself. Indonesian Jazz pianist, Idang Rasjidi, for example, has released two albums: *Sound of Belief* and *Sound of Hope* that reflects a perfect blend of Islam with Jazz. Although Jazz can be connected to Islam by following the history of the slaves who brought the music to the US, the cultural dialectic between Jazz and Islam in Indonesia is unique, which I believe, it can never be found in any other place in the world.

By performing in local context, Jazz in Indonesia has crossed the boundary between the West and the East. It seems that there are certain universal values, which are shared between jazz and Indonesian culture. The connection, in my opinion, can be seen in most of Indonesian jazz in terms of music, sounds and personal interpretation.

“Jazz does not belong to one race or culture, but is a gift that America has given the world.”
(Ahmad Alaadeen, American Jazz saxophonist)

Jazz is a global phenomenon of popular music. In the beginning, the main ideology of jazz was the self- rebellion of African Americans in the 18th century against repressive social and political conditions. In further developments, jazz was interpreted not merely as a political movement, but it also became a place for artists to deconstruct their understanding of music so they can to have room to improvise or to create new styles.

Jazz does not exclusively belong to the American culture. When the slaves were taken from Africa, they brought their indigenous culture and music with them. The hollering and the slave songs were the expressions of their ancestors in Africa, which was a mixture of many kinds of culture, experience, history, and belief. An article in *The San Francisco Chronicle: Muslim roots of the blues; The music of famous American blues singers reaches back through the South to the culture of West Africa*, mentioned that there are relations between the Muslim call for prayer and the Levee Camp Holler, the product of ex-slaves in post-Civil War America. Jonathan Curiel, the writer of the article mentions how Sylviane Diouf, a researcher at New York's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, played the two recordings at Harvard and everybody agrees that there is a connection between the two. Curiel emphasized the connection by mentioning the history of the slaves from Africa who still preserve their African culture despite the oppression during the slavery era (Curiel, 2004).

METHODS

This article is a historical research on American and Indonesian history focusing on American popular music: Jazz. Since it involves two different focus of study, this research applies comparative research approach by comparing Jazz in the US with Indonesian values and culture. By comparing them, it is hoped that the cultural dialectic between Jazz and Indonesian culture can easily be understood. By this method, the readers will understand how Jazz in Indonesia is developed and reached its own audience.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Jazz in Indonesia

Szwed in *Jazz 101; A Complete Guide To Learning & Loving Jazz* stated that Jazz has to be understood through its history, image, and its own vocabulary, that in turn will provide the reality (Szwed, 2000). In Indonesia, Jazz is going through several stages of evolution. In contrast to the seventies and the early eighties, when jazz was regarded as exclusive, in the beginning of the 21st century Jazz has crossed over to various social classes including teenagers. Jazz music events such as *Java Jazz*, *Jazz goes to campus*, and *Jak Jazz Festival*, indicate how Jazz has gradually become part of Indonesian popular musical mainstream. Jazz in Indonesia nowadays is also adapting to local traditions and beliefs. Small Jazz communities have also flourished all over Indonesia in response to the more liberal political atmosphere.

Jazz in Indonesia cannot be separated from its presence during the colonial Dutch in the early 20th century. Sudibyo Pr, an Indonesian jazz researcher, mentioned that based on history, jazz was first performed in Indonesia around the year of 1922. It was performed in parties among the Dutch families in Batavia (now called Jakarta) and Bandung, West Java. Artists from the Philippines also played a major role in introducing Jazz in Indonesia. They were either invited or came voluntarily to Jakarta and Bandung to play jazz in functions or public places such as hotels. Benny Pablo, Benny Corda and Sambayong are some of the prominent Filipinos who played jazz in the city of Bandung in 1925. (Mundiarso & Nugroho, WAWANCARA DENGAN SUDIBYO Pr. Sebuah Catatan Sejarah Jazz di Indonesia, 2001).

The presence of jazz in clubs and hotels, marked the image of jazz as music can only be understood by small group of people. Hara (2000) stated that Jazz became exclusive in Indonesia because it does not have many fans. It takes time for someone to understand jazz, which probably makes it more exclusive because only the educated people have time to learn it. Pop and Rock music are more popular since they are easier to memorize, and simpler in terms of harmony and composition. No wonder, negative opinions about jazz such as “difficult music” or “music for the elite” is common among Indonesian audience.

Most Indonesian artists agree that the only way to make people understand about jazz is to make lots of performances to the public. Luluk Purwanto, an Indonesian jazz artist, chose an unconventional way of disseminating jazz by using “the Stage Bus”. This bus was used to reach more audience. In one interview, she said that artists should understand the audience as well. Although she does not care if the audience leave in the middle of her performance, she said that artists need to attract audience by making the sound close to the audience’s background. It explains why she includes the *ilir-ilir* song, a Javanese traditional songs in her compositions. (Arko, 2006)

The dilemma in making jazz popular in Indonesia are also becoming the main concern among jazz artist. Hara (2000) said that most Jazz audience in Indonesia is not enjoying the music. Rather, he said, jazz is altered into a kind of a “hip” lifestyle, where the elites pretend to like it although they do not understand it. The exclusiveness of jazz is strengthened by the recording companies. Since only few understand it, jazz recordings become a specific segment which makes it rare and expensive. Niwandhono, 2002 said that nowadays the number of radio stations that proclaims themselves as Jazz stations are sharply declining. They changed their idealism or even close their business due to the low demand of the listeners to listen to jazz.

The dialectic of Jazz in Indonesia

From the history, it can be concluded that Jazz in Indonesia has been influenced by a mixture of the colonial and local cultures. The result is a unique perception of jazz determined by local jazz's cultural background and religious beliefs. Jazz in Indonesia can blend beautifully with local music. This mixture brings its own sense of nationalism to jazz.

Jazz in Indonesia and Islam

Religious music, especially Islamic music that was highly scrutinized during the Soeharto's regime is now performed freely to the public. Jazz, has also experienced this freedom by combining its sound with the local music. One example is Idang Rasjidi, a local jazz artist who composed his own version of Islamic religious Jazz in his two albums *Sound of Belief* and *Sound of Hope*. Rasjidi's albums, suggest that Islam can work harmoniously with western music such as Jazz, by creating a dialogue of its own.

In contrast to another Islamic country such as Iran, the attempt to link Islam and western music is never easy. In the July 2009 edition of Guardian Weekly, it was stated that Ohsen Namjoo, an Iranian singer-songwriter, was sentenced to five years in prison (in-absentia) for recording music that "dishonours" passages from the Qur'an. The musician was convicted for "his unconventional singing" of the Muslim holy book. It was reported that Namjoo has "insulted sanctities" and "ridiculed [and] dishonoured" the Qur'an. (Michaels, 2009)

Ceto Mundiarto (2002) in his article: "Jazz dan Islam (sebuah perspektif)" (Jazz and Islam, a perspective) compared the values between jazz and Islam from an Indonesian perspective. He mentioned that Jazz can be performed either solo or as a band. This goes the same way with Islam, where it gives freedom to its followers to conduct the rituals alone or in groups (*Jamaah*). Islam also has different sects known as *firqoh*. But the member of these sects will blend with the other whenever they are conducting ritual activities together such as prayer. The same thing happens in Jazz where all artists create instantaneous mutual understanding whenever they are on the stage regardless of their genres, and background.

Jazz also teaches democracy. When jazz artists perform on stage, everybody in the band will respect him or her. Nobody should feel that one individual is dominating the other although there is a collective respect for one particular person as the leader (for example in a Big Band). In Islam, individual respect is as important as other values. This value is called *Tasamuh*, which means all people in the group should be tolerant and equally respected.

Improvisation or interpretation in Jazz is very common. Mundiarto (2002) also adds that an artist can offer their own interpretations of the music they play. *Ijtihad*, or difference in interpretation, is recognized and common in Islam. Islamic clerics in the world have the same opinion that there is a freedom to have different interpretations in dealing with certain religious issues. However, they all agree that whenever they find differences, they should stick to the basic, which is the holy Qur'an. It also happened in Jazz after the free improvisation moment (*jam session*). Every player must return to the basic song after they finish their moment of free interpretation of the song.

Jazz and Indonesian Nationalism

"As long as there is democracy, there will be people wanting to play jazz because nothing else will ever so perfectly capture the democratic process in sound. Jazz means working things out musically with other people. You have to listen to other musicians and play with them even if you don't agree with what they're playing. It teaches you the very opposite of racism and anti-Semitism. It teaches you that the world is big enough to accommodate us all (Wynton Marsalis in *Blue Isle Jazz*, 2009)

Although the relation of values between Jazz and religion such as Islam is still needed to be proven further, there is no doubt that the process of cultural evolution between Jazz and local Indonesian culture is unique. Similar to its harmonious relation to Islam, jazz in Indonesia can blend beautifully with local music. This mixture brings its own sense of nationalism of jazz. Many Indonesian jazz artists composed music by connecting it to their ethnic traditional origin. Luluk Purwanto, for example, combines Jazz with Javanese culture. Another artist, I Wayan Balawan and Dewa Budjana a jazz guitarist from Bali, are famous of their Balinese jazz. Broader nationalism can be found in the artist Dwiki Dharmawan, who has explored across cultures of Indonesia by producing jazz/world music with his band *Krakatau*.

Szwed (2000) mentioned that jazz have a unique characteristics where it can “shamelessly borrow” any elements without any obligation regardless of its cultural status, social hierarchy while enjoying the contradiction and absurdity. (Szwed, p. 8). The universalism of jazz reveals when it can freely embrace and absorb other culture. Wishnoebroto (1998) has indicated that there are universal values of freedom, democracy, equality and spontaneity in jazz as part of the dreams of the African Americans. This universal values are the factors that make the “dialogue” between jazz and Indonesian culture, which will create the sense of nationalism of Indonesian jazz.

Although the connection between jazz with Indonesian indigenous culture is still arguable, the similarities in values between jazz and its counterparts is equally shared. In comparing Jazz with Javanese Gamelan ensemble, for example, the concept of “understanding” between players and improvisation is mutually recognized. Despite of the sharp differences of the tonality and harmony between jazz and gamelan, the hybridity and the elasticity of Jazz has successfully creates its own music. (Szwed, 2000 p.8) The fact that jazz can merge with different kinds of elements no matter how far the connection is, made jazz become a unique arts and sometimes being misunderstood by other people. In Luluk Purwanto’s jazz composition for example, She combines Jazz with Javanese values reflected in her composition “*ilir-ilir*.” In other composition by local Indonesian jazz musicians, such as Balawan and Dewa Budjana, the blend is sometimes untraceable. It is purely a personal interpretation of an artist.

CONCLUSION

Jazz seems to deconstruct the common notion that music should be understood to be enjoyed. In jazz, the irrational and sometimes absurd combination between jazz and other indigenous culture, has created a specific kinds of the music itself. In this case, Jazz in Indonesia has gone through its own cycle of evolution where the western and the eastern culture has created its own art and nobody knows the direction of jazz in the future. As Miles Davis said, “*Jazz is the big brother of Revolution. Revolution follows it around. Always look ahead, but never look back. Don’t play what’s there, play what’s not there.*”

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