

**LOCALISING POP YEH YEH WITH MALAY
MUSICAL ELEMENTS AND LANGUAGE IN THE
1960S**

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by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EP	extended play
LP	long play
PYY	Pop Yeh Yeh
PHoM	Penang House of Music
RPM	revolution per minute
USM	Universiti Sains Malaysia

GLOSSARY OF MALAY TERMS

Term	Definition
alap	intro without metre, found in Hindustani music.
asli	Malay folk social dance music
asli lenggok	vocal style
bangsawan	Malay opera
Berita Filem	film news
Bintang dan Lagu	film & stars
ghazal	a genre of folk syncretic music from Johor
inang	lively Malay dance song
joget	Malay dance of Portugese origin
kronchong	Love songs originating in the 16th century music of the Portugese colonies in Indonesia
kumpulan gitar rancak/kugiran	upbeat guitar band
Lagu2 Filem & TV	songs of film & TV
Majulah	advance
Masri	Dance of Middle eastern origin
Murtabak	type of pancake
Muzik	music
Orkes Melayu	Malay orchestra
pantun	Malay poem
penarik beca	rickshaw puller
Raja Pop Lagu-Lagu Melayu	King of Malay Pop Songs
ronggeng	Malay social dance
seloka	Malay poetry
Seni Majallah Muda Mudi	Youth art magazine
Utusan Radio dan TV (URTV)	radio & TV messenger
zapin	Dance of Middle eastern origin

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APPENDIX A LIST OF MUSICIANS AND BANDS ANALYSED

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APPENDIX C LIST OF RECORD COVERS ANALYSED

MELOKALISASI POP YEH YEH DENGAN ELEMEN MUZIK MELAYU DAN BAHASA PADA TAHUN 1960-AN

ABSTRAK

Istilah ‘Pop Yeh Yeh’ merujuk kepada genre muzik popular Melayu yang muncul pada tahun 1960-an di Malaysia dan Singapura yang dipengaruhi oleh aksi barat seperti The Beatles, The Shadows, dan The Rolling Stones dari United Kingdom. Muzik Pop Yeh Yeh diiringi oleh kugiran (kumpulan gitar rancak) yang terdiri daripada tiga gitar dan set dram yang mencerminkan konfigurasi yang digunakan oleh kumpulan muzik Barat pada zaman itu. Muzik Pop Yeh Yeh mendapat kritikan daripada pemuzik berpengalaman yang menganggap pemuziknya sebagai amatir yang tidak mempunyai pendidikan muzik dan menghasilkan lagu yang tidak berkualiti. Melalui temu bual yang mendalam dengan orang dalam industri muzik dan analisis muzik pemuzik tempatan yang dirakam pada piring hitam, tesis ini menunjukkan bahawa muzik Pop Yeh Yeh diilhamkan oleh dan mempunyai banyak ciri yang sama dengan kumpulan muzik dan muzik popular United Kingdom di tahun 1960-an. Walaupun Pop Yeh Yeh pada mulanya meniru gaya pop Barat, pemuzik tempatan seperti L. Ramli dan A. Rahman Hassan dengan kumpulan mereka Orkes Teruna Ria dan Orkes Nirwana akhirnya melokalkan muzik mereka dengan menggabungkan gaya vokal asli, bahasa Melayu, dan lirik tentang kehidupan Malaysia dengan irama surf rock, paduan vokal, dan bentuk muzik Barat. Mereka juga mencipta kulit album yang menggambarkan orang dalam pakaian tempatan Malaysia, dan pemandangan dari Malaysia. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa walaupun muzik Pop Yeh Yeh mengikut gaya muzik Barat, pemuzik tempatan memasukkan ciri-ciri Melayu dan elemen muzik yang menjadikannya unik kepada Malaysia.

LOCALISING POP YEH YEH WITH MALAY MUSICAL ELEMENTS AND LANGUAGE IN THE 1960S

ABSTRACT

The term ‘Pop Yeh Yeh’ refers to the genre of Malay popular music that emerged in the 1960s in Malaysia and Singapore influenced by western acts like The Beatles, The Shadows, and The Rolling Stones from the United Kingdom. The music of Pop Yeh Yeh was accompanied by a *kugiran* (upbeat guitar band) consisting of three guitars and a drum set, mirroring the configuration used by the Western bands of the era. Pop Yeh Yeh music faced disapproval from seasoned musicians who viewed the musicians as amateurs who had no music education and produced songs of poor quality. Through in-depth interviews with people in the music industry and analysing the music of local musicians recorded on vinyl records, this thesis shows that Pop Yeh Yeh music was inspired by and shared many similar characteristics with the popular bands and music of the United Kingdom in the 1960s. Although Pop Yeh Yeh was initially imitative of Western pop styles, local musicians such as L. Ramli and A. Rahman Hassan with their bands Orkes Teruna Ria and Orkes Nirwana eventually localized their music by integrating Malay *asli* vocal styles, the Malay language, and lyrics about Malaysian life with Western surf rock rhythms, vocal harmonies, and musical form. They also created album covers that illustrated people in Malaysian-style clothing, and scenes from Malaysia. This study shows that although Pop Yeh Yeh music followed western musical styles, local musicians included Malay characteristics and musical elements that made it unique to Malaysia.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The introduction of the western pop rock music genre of music in the 1960s pioneered by artists such as Cliff Richards, The Beatles and The Shadows inspired many local Malaysian musicians to imitate them through their music, fashion and lifestyle.

Pop Yeh Yeh is a genre of music that became popular in Malaysia as a result of a musical syncretism between western and local music in the mid 1960's until its decline in the early 1970's. The name Pop Yeh Yeh originated from a song by The Beatles 'She loves you (yeah, yeah, yeah)'. The first Pop Yeh Yeh song was recorded by M. Osman and The Mods titled Suzana in 1964.

Characteristics of Pop Yeh Yeh music include vocal harmonies, simple drum rhythms, repetitive guitar riffs and chords with embellished bass lines. The music was imitative of the western genre and had a similar instrumentation of a main vocal accompanied by a band called *kugiran* short for *kumpulan gitar rancak* (upbeat guitar band) which consisted of 3 guitars (lead, rhythm and bass) and drums. This configuration became popular locally after the live performance of Cliff Richard and The Shadows in 1961 at Happy World Stadium, Singapore and inspired many copycat acts and cover bands. Some of the earliest Pop Yeh Yeh artists were L. Ramli and The Teruna Ria, Roziah Latiff and The Jayhawkers, and A. Halim and D'Fictions.

The introduction of the Western pop music in the 1960s also promoted elements of the Western culture, such as fashion trends, ideas and a lifestyle that was considered as modern and progressive by Malaysian youths in search of an identity that was different from the traditional music and culture. However, this raised concern

among authorities and the older generation of musicians who felt that the youth was abandoning the local music traditions and promoting a foreign culture. Thus, various policies, and guidelines were introduced in the 1970s to regulate the performing arts and promote local art forms.

This thesis intends to investigate the various musical styles that had influenced the music of Pop Yeh Yeh in Malaysia. Through an analysis of the music and the lyrical content of Pop Yeh Yeh music, record labels and record cover designs, I show that Pop Yeh Yeh was basically Western in style but Malay musicians localised their songs by adding Malay lyrics and musical elements.

1.1 Problem Statement

Early Malaysian pop rock music was imitative of the Anglo-American pop rock genre in terms of musical styles, instrumentation and fashion. The instrumentation of three guitars and drums or *kugiran* used in Pop Yeh Yeh was greatly inspired by the performance of Cliff Richard and The Shadows in Singapore in 1961 (Music SG:2004). However, Pop Yeh Yeh musicians were often criticized for not having professional music training and playing repetitive songs with only 3-4 chords (musicSG 2004). In the book 'The Bright Star', P. Ramlee was quoted saying that the (pop rock) music prioritised the loudness rather than the quality of the song. He also said that poor quality songs would give rise to a future generation that was exposed to negative elements and ill-discipline (Harding, James and Sarji, Ahmad 215-216).

Contrary to the criticisms that prevailed, I show that Pop Yeh Yeh allowed the youths of the 1960s to express and distinguish themselves from the older generation through their music and fashion based on Western trends. These youths incorporated Malay musical elements into their music to create their own styles. The lack of music

transcription and documentation on the genre makes it difficult to show how the musicians incorporated local elements into their music and lyrics to localise it. Through a detailed study on the musicians, lyrics, musical styles and record labels of the Pop Yeh Yeh era, I identify the local expressions in the music and lyrics of Pop Yeh Yeh and show that it is not entirely western in influence.

1.2 Research Gap and Justification

There is limited literature on Pop Yeh Yeh and the popular music of Malaysia of the 1960s. Previous studies regarding Malaysian music have focused more on the traditional music and theatre of local communities and film music. A detailed study on the music of the 1960s and the genre of Pop Yeh Yeh has not been done before and questions related to the lyrical content, musical elements, and album cover designs have not yet been fully explored. This study aims to show how local elements were incorporated into the westernised Pop Yeh Yeh.

1.3 Objectives

1. To study the musical styles and lyrics of popular musicians of the 1960s from the United Kingdom such as the Beatles, The Rolling Stones and The Shadows and how they influenced the development of Malay Pop Yeh Yeh in Malaysia.
2. To investigate the musicians, musical styles, lyrics, record cover designs and record labels of Malay Pop Yeh Yeh in Malaysia.
3. To show that although Pop Yeh Yeh music was based on Western Pop music of the United Kingdom in the 1960s, local musicians localised their songs by adding Malay musical elements, Malay lyrics and Malaysian images in the record covers.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the musical styles and lyrics of the music of the pop musicians of the 1960s such as The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and The Shadows and how did these musicians influence the development of Malay Pop Yeh Yeh?
2. Who were the musicians and what was the musical style, lyrics, record cover designs and record labels of Malay Pop Yeh Yeh in Malaysia?
3. How did Malay Pop Yeh Yeh and other Malay pop musicians localise Western pop music of the 1960s, their musical styles, lyrics and record covers?

1.5 Scope of Study

This study will be limited to the pop rock genre of music of the 1960s and early 1970s in the United Kingdom and the Malay Pop Yeh Yeh genre of music in Malaysia. For the latter, I will examine the musical styles, musicians, lyrics, album covers and recording companies.

Although Pop Yeh Yeh musicians performed in both Malaysia and Singapore, much has been documented about the bands from Singapore and their music by the National Library Board (NLB) of Singapore and researchers such as Joseph Pereira. Therefore, this study will focus on music and musicians from Malaysia.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

This thesis draws theoretical insights from a few books and articles. In their important book entitled *Made in Nusantara, Studies in Popular music*, Adil Johan and Mayco Santaella (2021, p. xiii) emphasize that historically, Nusantara had fluid borders. Popular musicians in the region adapted Western music but added their own local musical styles and hybrid aesthetics to generate novel expressions. This

phenomenon of blending Western and local musical elements was not specific to Malaysia. In his article Revisiting the “Traditional” and the “Popular” in Maritime Southeast Asia: Towards a Nusantara Popular Praxis”, Santaella (2021) further elaborates that the influence of global genres and iconic bands resulted in the development of national genres that had similar rhythms, chord progressions, singing styles, and aesthetics such as the *kugiran* in Nusantara.

In her article Revisiting Post-Cultural Imperialism: Singing Vernacular Modernity and Hybridity through the *Lagu Melayu* in British Malaya, Tan (2021,p.65) notes that hybridity and localisation can already be found in the first popular music of Malaya in the first half of the twentieth century. Known as *Lagu Melayu*, the music included a mixture of Malay and Anglo-American music, which was constantly changing to create a localised modernity. Disseminated by *Bangsawan* or Malay opera performers, the *Lagu Melayu* was sung in Malay and included Western musical instruments such as the piano, drum kit, plucked bass and violins and Western harmonic triads. The *Lagu Melayu* retained the local rhythmic patterns of Malay social dance music, pantun verses, independent heterophonic lines and singing with nasal and tense vocals (2021, p.68). It also included Chinese, Middle Eastern and Indian influences. The music of the 1950s that was performed by swing or big bands, incorporated more Western instruments and dance rhythms such as the waltz, foxtrot and tango. But the Malay texts conveyed a sense of nationalism and the desire to be independent from the British colonialists (Tan, 2021, p.69).

Correspondingly, this thesis illustrates that Pop Yeh Yeh music of the 1960’s was hybrid as it incorporated the Western music form, structure of verse and chorus, and instruments. Yet, it showed continuities with the past by adding Malay rhythms, vocal techniques and styles as well as lyrics about local affairs, themes and

circumstances. As Adil Johan (2018) writes in *Cosmopolitan Intimacies: Malay Film Music of the Independence Era*, the genre began with emulative practices, including covers of rock and roll songs. It was eventually localised through the translation of English songs into local languages and the creation of original compositions. Pop Yeh Yeh musicians expressed their emotions and thoughts about being Malaysian and Singaporean teenagers in the lyrics. In an article titled *Syncretic Cultural Multivocality and The Malaysian Popular Musical Imagination*, Pillai (2013) adds that in the 1960s, most Pop Yeh Yeh music borrowed heavily from Western rhythmic patterns but retained the *asli* vocal techniques.

Pop Yeh Yeh musicians did not just imitate Western popular music but created new expressions and wrote their own songs and lyrics to differentiate themselves from other bands. Following Stuart Hall (1991, p.42-49), who wrote about old and new identities in postcolonial societies, we highlight that Pop Yeh Yeh musicians created a new musical identity by combining local (old) and western (new) musical elements to form a new genre of music. For Hall, identity is a continuous process of identification, as it adapts something from the past into the present. Therefore, our identities would always have some of the old in it as it is a form of continuity from the past; making it always unique.

1.7 Operational Definition

Fusing: Combining elements of two distinct genres, resulting in a new genre featuring elements from both original genres.

Localise: To adapt or change characteristics of music to appeal to local audiences.

Popular music: Commercial music intended to appeal to the majority of a population.

Influenced by and reflects socio-cultural trends.

Transnational: A phenomenon that consists of elements crossing geographical, political and cultural boundaries.

1.8 Methodology

This study builds on Bruno Nettl's (1964) foundation on fieldwork and lab work but contextualises it using historical ethnomusicology methods as proposed by McCollum and Herbert (2014) for contemporary works. It provides an understanding of how the music of Pop Yeh Yeh is intertwined with historical processes and cultural changes and looks at Pop Yeh Yeh in the broader context of the recording industry, the musicians, technology and mass media available in the 1960s.

The methodology combines archival research (newspapers, magazines, vinyl records) with ethnographic fieldwork such as interviews with experts in the field to connect to past practices with current ones. An analysis of the music of Pop Yeh Yeh is done by analysing lyrical themes, musical style and instrumentations, and identifying Malay music elements in the music. Digital tools such as online archives and music notation software was employed to assist in retrieving newspaper articles and notating music to be analysed.

1.8.1 Fieldwork

This thesis employs 2 formal interviews: one informant from a music and events management background and one with a background in graphic design. Informants were selected based on their past experience in the industry and their current active involvement to provide insights into its development and changes over time.

My first informant was Paul Augustin, a musician in the 1970s and 1980s and the organiser of the Penang Island Jazz Festival which ran annually for 14 years. He is also the co-author of the book 'Just for The Love of It' with James Lochhead (2015)

and is currently the director at the Penang House of Music (PHoM). In the process of writing the book, Paul has interviewed various personalities in the Malaysian music industry such as Ahmad Nawab, Ahmad Merican, Johari Salleh, Ooi Eow Jin, members of bands from the 1960s such as Basir Ahmad and S.M. Idrus from the band Teruna Ria, Jimmy Tan from the band The Dreamers, Jules Ooi from De Westerlies, Rubia Lubis, Richard Hoon. Through his work at PHoM, he has published articles, documentaries and been interviewed regarding various aspects of the history of Malaysian popular music and its industry.

The second informant was Mustaffa Ahmad Hidzir or popularly known as Tapa, a photographer and graphic design graduate from Universiti Teknologi Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA). Tapa was the first Malaysian hired by EMI to design record covers for local artists in 1979 and has designed album covers for Malaysian artists since. Among the artists he has worked with include Carefree, Sharifah Aini, Sudirman, Man Bai, Ramli Sarip, Search, Wings and many others. His experience working with EMI and later freelancing for Warner Music, EMI and BMG is useful to the study. In an interview with him, he explains the history of record covers in Malaysia and talks about the elements found on a record cover such as the concept, designs and typefaces used.

Questions for the interview were formulated based on the interview questionnaire created by McAllester (1954:91-92) when interviewing a professional musician or expert in the field but adapted to the needs of this research. Below are some of the questions asked during the interviews:

Questions for Paul:

- Background and experience in the music industry
- What are the characteristics of Pop Yeh Yeh music?

- What were the other popular genres of music in the 1960s-1970s?
- How was Pop Yeh Yeh and *kugiran* music different from other genres of music?
- How did local musicians localise their music?
- How did local musicians record and distribute their music?
- Who were the popular musicians?
- What caused the decline in popularity of Pop Yeh Yeh music in the early 1970s?

Questions for Tapa:

- Background and experience in graphic design
- When did he start and what was his first album cover?
- What was the process of making an album cover in the 1960s?
- Where did they get inspiration from; fonts, designs and pictures used?
- How do they incorporate Malaysian influences in the covers?
- How has the design of album covers changed over time

The Penang House of Music resource centre houses a collection of various audio formats, such as CDs, cassettes, reel tapes and more than 10,000 vinyl records ranging from the 10-inch 78 rpm shellac records, 7-inch 45 rpm extended play (EP) records and 12-inch 33 1/3 rpm long play (LP) records. The collection includes recordings by both local and international artists and most of these are in the English, Malay and Chinese language. From this collection, 45 EP records of Malaysian pop music in the Malay language were digitised, resulting in 174 recordings of songs by Malay musicians who sang in the Pop Yeh Yeh style from the 1960s. These songs were analysed from the aspects of rhythm, melody, harmony, and instrumentation.

Some recordings of local bands and bands from the United Kingdom were taken from internet sources such as YouTube. These were used to compare the music performed by Western and Malaysian bands. Song lyrics were obtained by transcribing the audio files, from magazines and online sources.

Table 1.1 List of records used from Penang House of Music

No	Year	Artist Name	Album Title	Catalogue Num.	Record Label
1	1964	M. Osman & The Mods	Su Zana	TK 1003	Eagle Record
2	1965	Ahmad Daud	Dendang Potianak	DPE.8182	Parlophone
3	1965	Ahmad Daud	Manis 17	DPE.8184	Parlophone
4	1966	M Bakri	Malaysia Baru	EGEP 587	Parlophone
5	1966	Ahmad Daud	Aksi Kuching	EGEP. 612	Parlophone
6	1966	Halim Yatim & The Sangam Boys	Janda-Ku	TRC 1007	Mr Record
7	1966	Orchid Abdullah	Ghazal	EGEP.609	Parlophone
8	1967	Ahmad Daud	Engkau-lah	EGEP.635	Parlophone
9	1967	L.Ramli & Orkes Teruna Ria	Kesah Di Taman Bunga	MTR-6703	Mutiara Quality Record
10	1967	Roziha Latiff Dan The Jayhawkers	Lagu Ku Ini	KSEP 5004	Federal
11	1967	S.Agil And The Beats	Kenangan Janji Mu	T.R.C. 1009	Eagle Records
12	1968	Impianbateks	Guru Baru	YHEP 111	Panda Record
13	1968	L.Ramli	Bertemasha Dengan L. Ramli	MTR 6707	Mutiara Quality Record
14	1969	Ellya M.Harris	Selamat Jalan	EP 020	Super
15	1969	L.Ramli	Ayah-Ku Kawin Lagi	MTR 6710	Mutiara Quality Record
16	1969	L.Ramli	Kata2 Yang Terpendam	MTR-6708	Mutiara Quality Record

Table 1.1 Continued

No	Year	Artist Name	Album Title	Catalogue Num.	Record Label
17	1970	Bintang2/Radio Dan T.V.	Rindu Kampong Halaman	TRC 1057	Olympic
18	1970	Habibah Yaakob	Madah Ibu	S-EGEP- 697	Parlophone
19	1970	Hafsah Ahmad	Sri Kukub Gazal	T.R.C.1073	Olympic
20	1970	Helen Velu & The Kilats	Kereta Lembu	RE 121018	Royal Record
21	1970	J.Sham Dan Norlela Nasir	Joget Memikat	RE-121026	Royal Record
22	1970	L.Ramli	Ibu Di Madu Anak Menderita	MTR-6712	Mutiara Quality Record
23	1970	L.Ramli	Lupa Daratan	MTR-6713	Mutiara Quality Record
24	1970	L.Ramli	Antara Suami Isteri	MTR 6714	Mutiara Quality Record
25	1970	L.Ramli	Sudah Ku Katakan	MTR 6715	Mutiara Quality Record
26	1970	Norlela Nasir	Kalau Jodoh Tak Kemana	RE 121027	Royal Record
27	1970	Orchid Abdullah	Kelohan Dara	KLC 913	Cameron K.L.C
28	1970	Rubia Lubis	Kata-Kan	RE 121021	Royal Record
29	1970	S.Roha dan A. Romzi	Usek Mengusek Bawa Bahgia	RE 121036	Royale Record
30	1970	Salim I & J.Kamisah Dan Wisma	Wisma Vol-13	MEP 431	TNA Records
31	1970	Sarena Hashim	Ku Ingin Mu Jua	RS 8014	R Super
32	1970	Sarena Hashim	Harapan Bersama	S-EGEP- 703	Parlophone
33	1970	Syed Bakar	Keagongan Ilahi	TOP 21008	Top
34	1971	Betty Ismail	Wanita	RE 121074	Royal Record
35	1971	Hussain Marican	Jangan Merajok	TOP 21018	Top
36	1971	Jeffrydin dan Faridah Mansor	Burok-nya Besi	RE 121079	Royal Record
37	1971	M.Shariff	Nasehat Ku	TOP 21015	Top
38	1971	M.Y. Shamsudin & Fatimah Isa	Bukan Jodoh	RE 121073	Royal Record

Table 1.1 Continued

No	Year	Artist Name	Album Title	Catalogue Num.	Record Label
39	1971	Mike Ibrahim Dengan The Nite Walkers	Bangselebu	S-EGEP- 721	Parlophone
40	1971	Norlela Nasir	Resam Manusia	RE 121051	Royal Record
41	1971	S.Ahmad & S.Rohani	Aku Tak Mahu Di- Madu	GREP 1111	Garuda Records
42	1971	Salim I & Orkes Vennilla	Salim I & Orkes Vennilla	RS 8065	R Super Records
43	1971	Sarena Hashim	Persembahan Ku	S-EGEP- 717	Parlophone
44	1971	Zaleha Hamid	Perasaan Rindu	SEP-113	Star Records
45	1972	De Westerlies	Johan Juara Kugiran 71-72	TOP 21061	MMI

1.8.2 Labwork

Relevant academic journals, books, articles from internet sources and the library of Universiti Sains Malaysia were used to find gaps in literature and provide information on the topic. Books about Malaysian pop rock music of the 1960s and Malaysian music include *The Music of Malaysia: The Classical, Folk, and Syncretic Traditions* (Matusky & Tan 2017), *Dance of Life* (Lockard 1998), *Just For The Love Of It* (Augustin and Lochhead 2015), and *65 Tahun Muzik Rock Di Malaysia* (Muhammad Takiyuddin Ismail 2023).

Local entertainment magazines from the mid 1960s-1980s such as *Fanfare*, *Utusan Radio dan TV* (URTV), *Lagu2 Filem & TV*, *Seni Majallah Muda Mudi*, *Bintang dan Lagu* and *Berita Filem* provided information regarding advertisements promoting record labels, inviting musicians to audition for competitions and to send tapes to record labels, interviews with bands and musicians and articles regarding artists, concerts and competitions. The table below is a list of articles used from the magazines.

Table 1.2 List of articles used from magazines

No	Magazine	Issue	Title of Article/Advertisement
1	Bintang dan Lagu	April 1967	La-O-Be Lagu hit Di Jerman Barat
2	Berita Filem	June 1967	Aku Di Padang Pasir - S. Jibeng
3	Berita Filem	July 1967	Pahlawan Bangsa, Lambaian Mu
4	Lagu2 Filem & TV	August 1969	Pesta Pop
5	Lagu2 Filem & TV	August 1969	Lagu2 Baru
6	Seni Majallah Muda Mudi	January 1970	Salim & Orkid
7	Seni Majallah Muda Mudi	May 1970	Ku Ingin Mu Jua
8	Utusan Radio dan TV (URTV)	April 1970	Peluang Istimewa Kepada Penyanyi2 (Sharikat Rekod Canary)
9	Utusan Radio dan TV (URTV)	April 1970	"Juara Pop 1970"
10	Utusan Radio dan TV (URTV)	April 1970	Penyanyi2 MMI Yang Terkenal
11	Utusan Radio dan TV (URTV)	September 1976	Mengenang Kembali Pelopor Lagu Pop Melayu
12	Utusan Radio dan TV (URTV)	April 1973	Juara Kugiran
13	Utusan Radio dan TV (URTV)	April 1973	M. Shariff Scope
14	Utusan Radio dan TV (URTV)	April 1982	Irama 60-an Berkumandang Semula
15	Utusan Radio dan TV (URTV)	December 1985	Cerita Di Sebalik Kebangkitan Semula Pop Yeh Yeh
16	Fanfare	March 1973	Juara Kugiran Heat 4
17	Fanfare	March 1973	What is Malaysian Music

These materials were obtained from the resource centre of Penang House of Music. The design of record covers was also analysed and compared to covers of records by Western artists of the same period. Information about recording companies were obtained from vinyl records, their covers and from internet sources such as online archives and databases. The online database of vinyl records, Discogs have provided information of records which was then compared with the information available at PHoM. Newspaper articles related to Pop Yeh Yeh from the 1960s to the 1980s were accessed from the National Library Board of Singapore's website.

Transcription and description of music, song texts and record covers were done using methods suggested by Nettl (1964). This research uses a combination of 2 approaches to describe musical compositions. The approaches suggested by Nettl (1964:134-136) are the systematic approach and the intuitive approach.

The systematic approach was used to methodologically identify and describe selected aspects of music in a group of musical compositions such as melody, rhythm, metre, form and harmony and justifies the categorisation of the selected musical compositions as a group. The intuitive approach helped to identify the aspects of compositions that are most important. This required the student to have an understanding of the music being studied so that an accurate description of the music can be made. For example, the function of a song, intention of the songwriter or a song where the melody is given more importance than other elements. This approach acts as a supplement to the systematic approach to provide a more accurate description of the music.

According to Nettl, transcriptions of music need to include elements and features that differentiates and distinguishes musical expressions and musical styles from one another. Nettl's suggested procedure for transcriptions is adapted to be used

as a reference when transcribing music in this thesis. The steps are as follows:

1. Listen to the piece carefully; read all notes and available material about it, determine the parts to be transcribed and structural divisions.
2. Determine the key and chord progressions and fill them in.
3. Notate the melody and rhythm.
4. If words are available, fill them in.
5. Check the transcription.

The steps were adapted to suit popular music transcription, where melody, chord progression and rhythm play an important role. The music notation software Sibelius was used to notate transcriptions of selected songs used as examples in the thesis.

1.9 Outline of Chapters

Chapter 1 introduces the genre of Pop Yeh Yeh, and states the objectives, research questions, theory, methodology and gives an outline of the thesis.

Chapter 2 traces the background of popular music in Malaysia. It shows the influence of Anglo-American music in Bangsawan music prior to Independence in British Malaya, the development of transnational Malay popular music in the 1950s and current literature on the topic of Pop Yeh Yeh.

Chapter 3 documents the emergence of Pop Yeh Yeh bands, musicians and some of the competitions held to promote talents in the 1960s and early 1970s. It introduces some of the well known local musicians and bands of the era who sang in the English, Malay and Chinese language. It also lists some of the local record companies and record labels that produced records and looks at record cover designs and companies that designed and printed record covers.

Chapter 4 explores how Pop Yeh Yeh artists localise their lyrical themes by singing about nature, using lyrics of popular children's songs, themes of patriotism and singing songs in other languages.

Chapter 5 looks at the musical elements in Pop Yeh Yeh songs and shows how local Malay elements are incorporated into western based songs by using the Malay language and *asli* vocal styles.

Chapter 6 concludes the thesis, showing that Pop Yeh Yeh is based on Western music of the 1960s, but local musicians have localised it by incorporating some local music elements and gives suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2
DEVELOPMENT OF POPULAR MUSIC AND POP YEH YEH IN
MALAYSIA: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter traces the development of Malay popular Music focusing on the emergence of Pop Yeh Yeh in Malaysia. By doing so, I review the relevant literature about the topic.

2.1 Malay Popular Music Prior to Independence in British Malaya

According to Tan (1993), *Bangsawan* theatre stimulated the development of the first popular music in Malaysia. This theatre emerged in the early twentieth century as a result of British colonialism that brought changes in the politics, economy and cultures in Malaya. This theatre was commercialised and adapted to the latest Anglo-American theatre and dance music so that it could appeal to the multicultural audience in the cities. Singapore became the main centre for popular music during British colonial rule as there were more recording companies and job opportunities for aspiring musicians. However, the centre of entertainment shifted to Kuala Lumpur after Malaysia achieved independence in 1957 and Singapore left Malaysia in 1965 (Matusky & Tan, 2017).

Bangsawan music sung by famous artists was recorded by gramophone companies on 78 RPM discs such as His Masters Voice, Columbia, Odeon and Pathe (Tan: 2013). This music used waltz, foxtrot, tango, rumba rhythms and was accompanied by western dance bands known as *orkes Melayu* (Malay orchestra) comprising western instruments such as the violin, flute, clarinet, saxophone, double

bass and piano. This music was performed live by bands in the *ronggeng* dance halls of the amusement parks or entertainment centres in towns such as Singapore, Penang, Ipoh and Kuala Lumpur and was distributed through radios, gramophone records and films.

Bangsawan music was often performed at entertainment parks, cabarets, and modern *joget* and *ronggeng* dance stages. As commercial music, popular *bangsawan* music performances were flexible and changed according to the latest western music influences. *Bangsawan* performers modernised the Malay folk songs. These songs retained Malay characteristics such as the vocal style, layered texture, nasal singing, rhythmic patterns associated with social folk songs and *pantun/seloka* (Malay verses) texts. Western characteristics include the usage of harmony, major & minor diatonic scales, western instruments, and stave notation. To attract the various races, musical elements and stories from China, Middle East & India were often added. *Bangsawan* music syncretized elements from different ethnic groups to attract a wider audience/market. Some examples include the minor 3rd interval in pentatonic scale from Chinese music, *zapin* and *masri* rhythms from Middle Eastern music, Hindustani *alap* (intro without metre), Indian vocal ornamentation and instruments (harmonium and table) and the Malay *pantun* form (Tan 1993: chapter 6).

In the 1940s and 50s, new Western and Latin American rhythms such as mambo, blues, swing, bolero, rumba and styles such as Hawaiian and tango became popular. Jazz bands and swing (big bands) using western instruments, for example, brass, wind and stringed instruments and pianos were introduced. *Asli*, *inang*, and *joget* songs used harmony and were played by jazz and swing bands. Texts of popular songs often reflected the local lifestyles of the *penarik beca* (rickshaw puller), taxi driver, *murtabak* (type of pancake) seller. Local texts about nationalism

and people who work hard for a living using humour and local dialects, also reflect the sentiments of the people and the need for change in order to acquire Independence from the British (Matusky & Tan, 2017).

After WWII, film music became popular. Most of the 1950s and early 1960s popular music originated from Malay films produced by Chinese companies, with Indian directors, local actors and actresses, as well as singers and choreographers from *bangsawan* theatre. The music was more homogeneous because it was arranged by a limited number of studio musicians and sung by certain artists only. This caused a big change to the sound of music because conductors expanded linear textures by using brass instruments, traditional instruments were replaced with western instruments, the use of microphone led to the development of a softer crooning style of singing and more use of vibrato and singers and musicians harmonised, while the bass and piano played chords. The music had less improvisation, contrasting timbres, long instrumentals and was homophonic. But the Malay song text, dance rhythms and linear textures were maintained.

2.2 Rise of Transnational Malay Pop in the 1950s

Elvis Presley, the King of Rock and Roll, whose music combined influences of country, rhythm and blues and black gospel genres, was influential in the Malay pop scene of the 1950s. In his book entitled *Elvis Presley: A Revolutionist History*, Wallace (2012) states that as the American music charts were dominated by singers such as Frank Sinatra and Tommy Dorsey whose crooning vocal styles appealed to older audiences, Elvis' unique vocal style, swinging hips, and good looks drove him to become a national sensation in the United States of America; his upbeat guitar-oriented music and electric guitar instrumental solos appealed to the younger audiences. Elvis Presley's sexually provocative dance moves were looked down upon

by parents and the older population but became a symbol of teenage rebellion as teenagers began to copy his clothes, his hair, the way he sang and danced. Through media such as radio, cinema, movie magazines and vinyl records, Presley's music, along with other rock and roll acts transcended geographical boundaries and allowed teenagers all over the world to have their own sense of identity that differed from their parents.

As in the USA and Europe, teenagers in Southeast Asia who were seeking new identities and new ways of expression in the 1950s were influenced by Elvis Presley's style and created their own local form of transnational Malay pop music (Barendregt 2017). This music had gone through layers of acculturation starting with folk & syncretic music to pop/rock from mainstream Anglo-American styles such as rock and roll.

Local songwriters took the western popular music idioms such as rock and roll and gave them Malay lyrics and a Malay feeling. Aspects of traditional Malay social dance music such as *asli*, *zapin*, *joget*, *inang* and *masri* were used in Malay pop songs and electric guitars and piano were used to supplement violin, traditional drums, and gong in performances (see Matusky and Tan 2017 for analyses of Malay social dance music). The music was primarily sung in Malay to appeal to the Malay audience. However, it also incorporated elements from other ethnic groups to appeal to a wider audience and was sometimes also sung in other languages such as English, Mandarin/Cantonese, Tamil or Hindustani. Some language crossovers took place. For instance, the Malay singer Syed Agil sang Chinese songs in English while the Malay singer Zainal Alam sang in four different languages (English, Malay, Mandarin and Tamil). Les Lee incorporated Malay words in his English song *She'll be Coming Round the Mountain*.

In particular, the transnational Malay pop of the 1950s was syncretic, consisting of Malay lyrics and western instrumentation and musical style. These syncretic elements attracted multi-ethnic audiences and the songs were liked and understood by a multicultural society and distributed all over the country through media such as radio, theatre (*bangsawan*) and dance halls such as cabaret. The main market for popular music consisted of Malays, Chinese, Indians, and foreigners from Indonesia. This popular music was recorded by recording companies and sold to the public (Matusky & Tan, 2017).

According to Lockard (1998) in *Dance of Life*, P. Ramlee, whose career spanned from the late 1940s to the early 1970s, played a pivotal role in the development of Malaysian popular culture. Ramlee drew on a wide range of musical influences, including Malay social dance rhythmic patterns such as *asli* and *joget*, Indian, Arab, and Chinese popular musical elements, as well as popular Western styles ranging from samba, cha-cha, and waltz to rock and roll, twist, rhythm and blues, jazz, and even psychedelic sound in the late 1960s. Ramlee was proficient at blending various styles, such as samba and *joget*. Many of Ramlee's songs have a distinct Malayan feel due to the frequent use of *asli* influences.

2.3 The Development of Pop Yeh Yeh

2.3.1 Beat Music and Its Influence Around the World in the 1960s

In the 1960s, a new type of pop music known as Beat music, British beat or Merseybeat developed in the United Kingdom and took the world by storm. It was influenced by traditional pop music in England, rock and roll and skiffle, a genre of British popular music in the 1950s mixes jazz and folk music, usually performed on

homemade or improvised instruments (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.).

In the 1960s, Liverpool was home to the development of the Merseybeat style, popularised by artists including Gerry & The Pacemakers. According to an article by R. Franks titled “The Story of How Merseybeat Took Over the World”, other urban English cities that were at the forefront of the Merseybeat scene included London, Birmingham and Manchester with a number of bands emerging from these cities. During the peak of Merseybeat, there were reportedly up to 350 active groups performing in Liverpool, playing at venues like The Cavern Club (Franks, 2017).

According to Doggett (2015: 308), like many bands from Liverpool in the 1960s, the Beatles formed their sound by combining elements of skiffle, doo-wop, and soul with American influences, especially rhythm and blues. Doo-wop is a genre of rhythm and blues music that originated among African American youth in the 1940s (Gentry, 2011). Its lyrics are simple, usually about love, sung by a lead vocal over background vocals, and often featuring, in the bridge, a melodramatically heartfelt recitative addressed to the beloved. Harmonic singing of nonsense syllables (such as "doo-wop") is a common characteristic of these songs (Goldblatt, 2013). Soul is a music genre that originated in the African American community throughout the United States in the 1950s and early 1960s. It combines elements of African American gospel music, rhythm and blues and jazz (Mojapelo, 2008).

As Inglis (2010) says in “Historical Approaches to Merseybeat”, as the Beatles rose in popularity in 1963, the terms "Mersey sound" and "Merseybeat" were applied to bands and singers from Liverpool, making it the first time in British pop music that a sound and a location were linked together (Inglis 2010: 11). Among the characteristic of beat music was a strong beat with a driving emphasis on all the beats of 4/4 bar. It uses the backbeat usually found in rock and roll and rhythm and blues music

(Heinemann 2001: 158). The most common instrumentation of beat groups featured lead, rhythm and bass guitars plus drums, as popularised by the Beatles, the Searchers, and others (Longhurst 2007: 98). Beat groups—even those with a separate lead singer—often sang both verses and choruses in close harmony, resembling doo wop, with nonsense syllables in the backing vocals (Painter 2006: 261).

In late 1963, the term "Beatlemania" was coined by the British press to describe the phenomenal and increasingly hysterical interest in the Beatles (Inglis 2010: 17). The word was first widely used following the band's 13th October appearance on Sunday Night at the London Palladium; amid reports of wild crowd scenes outside the venue, and after 15 million viewers watched the broadcast, Britain was said to be "in the grip of Beatlemania" (Philo 2015: 31). The phrase "yeah, yeah, yeah!" from the song "She Loves You" was a popular catchphrase for European fans according to MacDonald (2007: 75).

In the book *Reading the Beatles: Cultural Studies, Literary Criticism, and the Fab Four* by Womack & Davis (2012: 51), from 1963 to 1967, the Beatles increasingly broke with established rock and pop conventions. By writing their own songs, they revolutionised the music industry in Britain and inspired change in the US by combining the roles of songwriter and performer. Adding to their sophistication as composers was the application of modal mixture, wider chord palettes, and extended AABA form (Womack & Davis 2012: 43).

The Beatles also had an impact on the fashion of the 1960s as noted by Scheucher (2013). The haircut known as the mop top immediately became the subject of media discussions after the Beatles appeared in public with it as it appeared long and feminine. The haircut was created by combing the hair forward instead of greasing it back which was very unusual at the time and (Scheucher, 2013). The band's

early fashion, characterised by a scruffy look and black leather outfits, was swapped out for suits in order to appear more presentable for the broadcasting industry. These suits were tailored to create a unique style for the Beatles but it was quickly copied by other bands. They also popularised the Chelsea boots which were customised with a high Cuban heel. The boots were eventually renamed 'Beatle boots' (Scheucher, 2013). According to Szatmary, (2014: 123) in the book *Rockin' in Time*, The Rolling Stones distinguished themselves from The Beatles by creating an image that contrasted with the Beatles. They wore unmatched clothing, had long hair, and had an unkempt appearance. Their image is described by Szatmary as a "raunchy, gamy, unpredictable bunch of undesirables" with the intention to establish the band as "threatening, uncouth and animalistic".

Internationally, the fame and success of the Beatles inspired the proliferation of new groups in many other countries. In Spain, the bands Los Estudiantes and Los Brincos modelled themselves on the Beatles. So too did the Uruguayan band Los Shakers, one of the many groups around the world that was formed after the release of the song *A Hard Day's Night* (Doggett 2015: 387–88). Following the Beatles' concerts in the 1964 world tour, imitation bands sprung up in Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong, while some existing acts, such as the Bee Gees, changed their style to match the Beatles' (Clayson, 2003: 162–63).

The Daily Express reported in 1965 that a band known as the Candid Lads had started in the Soviet Union, with a sound and look identical to the Beatles'. Bands there were forced to play in secret due to the communist authorities' ban on rock music, and Beatles records had to be smuggled into the country. According to Sathian, (2016), in Japan, the Beatles influenced what was dubbed the "Group Sounds" era, before which Japanese bands were mainly imitations of acts such as Presley and Pat Boone.