

D'Academy Indosiar as a Popular Culture Practice

Wahyu Triana Sari

Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia
Corresponding e-mail: wahyutriana2907@gmail.com

Abstract: *D'academy is a kind of music entertainment show that is not only about musical, but also a cultural practice. Dangdut is no longer consider as traditional music, but has turned into one kind of music that can be accepted by various layers in society. Through the construction built by D'academy, various advertisements and ratings for dangdut music are on the rise. This phenomenon will be analyzed using two analytical frameworks, the popular culture of John Storey and the representation of Stuart Hall.*

Keywords: *Dangdut, Popular Culture, Representation*

1. Introduction

D'Academy Indosiar is a talent show competition program of dangdut (a genre of Indonesian popular music) singers, not only in terms of dangdut singers' voice but also as an action to socialize dangdut at all levels of society. This program is not only about the case of dangdut music conservation that is considered as an Indonesian indigenous culture, but there are also contestation and interest of several parties. Discussing dangdut in this era is not just concerning on its history, variety, talented singers and songs but still more than those. Dangdut dynamics has been evolving into popular culture field that is interesting to be discussed.

Dangdut music has been in long existence. Its popularity began in 1970s with Rhoma Irama as a King of Dangdut and then other singers appeared. Dangdut music dynamics has been constantly evolving and even experienced a controversy during the appearance of Inul Daratista. Pros and cons arise because of the presence of this singer who presented ngebop typical hips rocking around 2003. Various arguments appear in society and result in the increase of society's interest on dangdut, especially koplo dangdut or typical dangdut music genre in Pantai Utara (Pantura).

Media tries to accommodate this phenomenon by creating a television program. Dangdut Academy (D'Academy) is a television program presented in society's life, even very close. This television program, which is showed every day in long show time, not only presents an entertainment but also builds a construction that leads society's perspective to consider it as a worthy entertainment to watch. It does not stop at that point. Society's perspective, which can be built by media, results strength in this television program to always live through the support of product advertisers or sponsors.

Precisely, mass media is the most important tool to persuade social construction [1]. This paper will discuss how D'Academy is able to transform into popular culture that hailed by society, moreover builds a representation as a high position and worthy television program. This paper uses popular culture concept by John Storey and representation theory by Stuart Hall as the frame of analysis.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. Popular Culture by John Storey

Hall said cultural studies is a discursive formation, that is, 'a cluster (or formation) of ideas, images and practices of particular social activity or institutional site in society' [2]. A popular culture study blurs the

boundaries with the subject of its study. In analyzing process, D'Academy phenomenon needs to be dissected using popular culture concept. One of the keenest activists in defining popular culture was John Storey. There are at least five popular culture concepts that can be used as analysis tools of D'Academy Indosiar.

Storey defined popular culture as a cultural formation and practice that is favored by many people and produced in large quantity. Large quantity does not only solely mean as quantitative count but also as wide measure of culture that can be accepted by society. Popular culture is simply culture that is widely favored or well-liked by many people [3]. Culture, which is produced in large quantity and targeted to be favored by many people, has the second definition that popular culture tends to ignore the difference between social classes. Popular culture is neither indigenous nor authentic culture, but through the third definition, Storey explained that each popular culture is like imitating to fight cultural hegemony. In more detail as in the fourth definition, Storey provided a view that popular culture is born from lower class society that can be consumed by all classes of society. In the fifth definition, popular culture as a mass culture has an opposition used to achieve a compromise balance.

2.2. Representation Theory by Stuart Hall

Hall started the discussion of representation by stating that representation connects meaning and language to culture [4]. Hall explained that representation is an important part of meaning production process and simultaneous cultural parts exchange. Moreover, Hall explained that representation splits into two important processes, those are mental representation that is formed in individual mind and language representation that is the result of construction. Hall used reflective, intentional, and constructionist approach in viewing representation language. Hall also explained that representation can be viewed in visuals and images. This constructionist approach or construction influenced by various factors was used to analyze various signs contained in D'Academy Indosiar.

Hall linked representation and culture closely. According to him, culture is about sharing the meaning, so in viewing at representation needs to understand a circuit of culture [4]. Hall simply described an interrelated circle about representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation. Those five matters are always and will be always interrelated in creating new meanings. D'Academy is a mass culture that builds meaning and is extended to the consumers through the concept that Hall said as representation.

3. Analysis

3.1 A Brief History of Dangdut and D'Academy

Dangdut is a genre of music considered as Indonesian indigenous culture. Looking at its long history, actually dangdut music is an interfusion of various music such as Indian music and Arabic music. Dangdut music roots from Malay music in 1950s when it still had romance theme with poetic language and then it changed later in 1970s. Therefore, before becoming dangdut, this kind of music was called as Malay Orchestra. It can be explained briefly that the origin of dangdut name came from two words, dhang and ndut as the simplicity of the music it brings. Several articles explain that dangdut name is degrading word for music that rhymes very simply. Thus, it influences on the assumption that dangdut was music for lower class society.

In 1979, Kompas newspaper explained that influence of rock music changes the character of Malay music rhythm to be more attractive, various, and aggressive, especially on the line of its verse [5]. At that time, dangdut singer who was able to take advantage of that occasion was Rhoma Irama with his Soneta Group. Together with his group, Rhoma was able to make dangdut as a medium of nationality propaganda and it has made him called as a King of Dangdut to date. In 2003, Rhoma as a King of Dangdut and a chairman of an association of Indonesian Malay musicians called as Persatuan Artis Musik Melayu Indonesia (PAMMI) prohibited Inul Daratista as the performer of ngebor typical hips rocking from singing her songs. It is widespread in terms of pornography and porno-action pros and cons. Inul's ngebor typical hips rocking was considered has gone beyond the obedience limits, broken religious norms, and undermined national morality [6]. However behind that

occurrence, dangdut especially koplo dangdut or Pantura (Panturanan) dangdut music genre has experienced rapid development throughout Indonesian society.

D'Academy is a talent show competition program of dangdut singers in Indosiar television station. This program is not the first talent show competition program of dangdut singers owned by Indosiar because Indosiar has ever had *Kondang In* previously. D'Academy was first held on February 3th, 2014 and it has been continued to be held again every year to 2017, so D'Academy has been held for four times to date. D'Academy's success in getting good rate led Indosiar to make expansion programs after D'Academy, such as D'Academy Asia, D'Academy Celebrity, and D'Academy Award. D'Academy has various program sponsors both in the form of food producer advertisers and actors' together with participants' supporting appearance. D'Academy holds many national class actors such as Inul Daratista, Elvi Sukaesih, Benigno, Iis Dahlia, dan Rita Sugiarto. In addition there are also commentators who called themselves as Gunarso Family; they are Ivan Gunawan, Nassar, and Soimah. Furthermore, master of ceremony consists of Rina Nose, Irfan Hakim, and Ramzi. In its performance, D'Academy often invites some actors as guest stars and certainly, almost every show is always added with comedy from all performers. Moreover, this program can be said has long show time since it starts from 06.30 PM until midnight in Indonesia Western Standard Time.

3.2 D'Academy as a Popular Culture Practice Favored by Many People

D'Academy is a television program that succeeds in drawing attention of Indonesian society. The fourth D'Academy, which was held on May 19th, 2017 that was reported by <http://showbiz.liputan6.com/>, occupied the second rank of AC Nielsen audience rating by getting TVR up to 4.6 and share point up to 26.2 percent. When approaching the winner announcement, its share point shots up to touch the total of 63.6 percent. This occurrence shows how D'Academy became a mass culture because it has been accepted by society. Rating toward television station is still seen not only as a success or prestige measurement but also a sustainability determinant [7].

D'Academy has various strategies to be accepted as mass culture. This program not only aims to gain talent, but also concerns to gain profit. Viewing from its show time, D'Academy is displayed daily on prime time to late night. It is cannot be separated from its management policy that can lure more product advertisers to advertise their product through this program. The number of national actors involved also influences its ability to draw dangdut consumers. In addition, long comment and comedy, which always exist, provide opportunity for various products to be advertised in this program. For examples, Mie Sedaap and Pepsodent 123 are always advertised in this television program.

3.3 Abolishing the Difference between Society Classes

D'Academy is a mass culture that seems to abolish society classes. It can be viewed as a strategy to gain more interest from society. The unique thing in D'Academy program is, participants do not represent their province, but represent their regency. The name of regency brought by each participant makes D'Academy more socialized and more accepted by Indonesian society because it shows that D'Academy is close with society. It also gives effect on society in remote areas to consider that D'Academy is presented to all Indonesian society. This condition shows that television has indeed blurred physical and cultural boundaries and creates a "deterritorialization", a new world with relative boundaries and values [8].

Indosiar's studio 5 as the place where D'Academy is held is always fulfilled by audience. This place seems to be a unifying space for all society classes. Participants who bring regionalism element cause their regent or mayor often come to Indosiar's studio. More than that, usually each region brings typical souvenir to be given to juries, commentators, masters of ceremony, and so forth. D'Academy seems to show that all ages and classes can be unified in dangdut music. The actors merge to all society classes because they can still enjoy every gift given from different region. As a rating enhancer, participants bring their family when they perform which sometimes causes sad moments. The last real example is when the fourth D'Academy was held, Putri and Fildan as participants were both accompanied by their parents to wait for final decision.

3.4 Not Authentic

D'Academy is not a new culture even though it was held from four years ago. As a mass culture or popular culture, dangdut songs sung by participants are not new songs but old songs. In fact, participants often sing twice in one show time. Most songs sung in D'Academy program are Rhoma Irama's, Rita Sugiarto's, and other legendary dangdut singers' song. Many changes was occurred in musical arrangements, such as when Danang sang a song entitled Judi (gamble) from Rhoma Irama, it was mixed with pop rock and reggae. Talent show competition of pop or dangdut singers is also run by other television programs such as Kodang In, KDI, The Voice Indonesia, and so forth. It shows how each program wants to be better program and make a greater influence on society.

3.5 Derivated from Lower Class

Dangdut is reproduced to all society with additions of stage, makeup, performers, advertisements, and show time. Popular culture or mass culture does not come from culture favored at first. However, popular culture is capable to bring something previously is uninteresting to interesting or previously unknown to favored. D'Academy as a mass culture currently much preferred by society though dangdut originally came from the lower class society. Viewed from dangdut history described above, dangdut is regarded as music for lower class society because of its simple music type, easy understood lyrics, even lower price if compared to other types of music. Up to now, there are still many people who think that dangdut is lower class society's music because it is often sung in small stage by dangdut singers who often wear tight clothes considered sexy by society. However, with dangdut fame and all sorts of problem, D'Academy is easily accepted by all society classes and has succeeded as great mass consumption.

3.6 Creating Balance

D'Academy constantly attempts to accommodate society's diverse desire. Balance is created by D'Academy by involving society directly in its program and improving the program stage arrangement. Society involvement can be seen in the presence of spectators to Indosiar studio, support via SMS, and audition for all society. Dangdut is trying to be socialized to society by accommodating all society's desire and providing more modern performance. D'Academy has been able to bring dangdut in different impression and create new culture.

This program has been able to present a grand stage arrangement, Ivan Gunawan's famous branded fashion, Yongki Komaladi's shoes, Inez makeup, as well as more complicated music arrangement. All those components can attract society who previously thought that dangdut was "countrified" to not shy or feel hesitant to love dangdut. Thus, the rating can go up and D'Academy can live longer. This event has created new construction or produced new pattern of culture. The performers of this program do not only follow the previous dangdut pattern, but also stop at one point of perfection that is much favored by Indonesian society.

3.7 Representation

D'Academy builds visuals and images to build language as messenger of meaning. Through that language, D'Academy has succeeded in building representation through stage arrangement, fashion, actors, and various other components. Those various components ultimately form an ideology of consumption on dangdut as a decent entertainment. Those components build the knowledge in society that dangdut is a prestigious and decent modern music. This discourse is always strengthened through cultural circle that continues to be built through the representation, identity construction, production, consumption, and regulation.

D'Academy as a mass culture has succeeded in creating new representation on dangdut music. D'Academy tries to create new patterns so dangdut is acceptable by society and succeeds to draw society's high interest that invites the benefit of its sponsors. D'Academy is not only a program that displays good voice in reality, but surpasses the reality as a key to maintain society's interest. This program was successfully stopped at a perfection and built society's ideology beyond what was seen. One of definitions regarding on television said that television does not only provide reality, but it has constructed new reality that transcends the reality, hyper-real or "false reality" [9].

D'Academy can be seen as a program that represents dangdut music as a decent consumption for upper class society because it has prestige components. Here are some points, which D'Academy has, as a form of designation that dangdut is a popular culture and seeks to win the stage of entertainment as a worthy program to consume.

D'Academy's stage arrangement looks magnificent. This program applies bright lightning and wide size stage. Not only in the studio, but it also has a stage that can be used outside studio. The place for audience is also spacious with seat arrangement that is always crowded by spectators or participants' supporters. Various properties used as interior cannot be said as cheap properties. In addition, this program shows modern dance by backdrop dancer that customizes the song. From this stage arrangement can be seen how dangdut has been completely different from its original history, because at this time dangdut is also able to represent luxury, prestige, and modern style music.

The worn clothes and applied makeup by the performers and the participants have meaning that dangdut performance is an event that requires big amount of funds. The clothes often used by participants are clothes designed by Ivan Gunawan as a world recognized fashion designer and also as a commentator in this program. Viewed from popular culture side as well as Hall's representation, it shows that dangdut is trying to be taken to higher class. Clothes affair cannot be considered trivial, because it occupies an important position in society consumption culture. Clothes as communication indicate where person is and what person's position is. Roach and Eicher also showed that makeup has had place in the court of power [10]. In this case, D'Academy is also supported by Inez makeup that has been accepted by the public as a classy product and has good makeup in face and hair. Based on the worn clothes and applied makeup, this program shows how dangdut has become a popular culture that represents upper class society and deserves to be a trend in society. In addition, Yongki Komaladi shoes that have been known as a famous brand of shoes in Indonesia are also worn.

Juries, masters of ceremony and commentators presented in D'Academy are national actors who have been widely known by the public. They are Inul Daratista who once reaped a controversy because of her ngebong typical hips rocking, Rita Sugiarto, Elvi Sukaesih, and Iis Dahlia as famous dangdut singers. In addition, the masters of ceremony are also selected from actors who are able to make funny jokes to attract audience and to break the boredom of long show time. The next interesting point relates to commentator Ivan Gunawan as an international class fashion designer, which from him D'Academy can be represented as not cheap dangdut performance but dangdut performance is greatly noticed in fashion. The performers in D'Academy program represent that now is the time for dangdut to be considered music and it is not cheap or countrified music anymore. Through D'Academy, the interested parties also can take advantage of this occurrence, so the program is always hailed and succeeds to get many advertisers or sponsors.

D'Academy expands in various events. D'Academy's success in gaining popularity in society led it to develop various programs. D'Academy attempts to emerge various programs that represent this program as a worthy program to be considered as a modern culture. In addition to its performance, D'Academy has various other programs such as D'Academy Celebrity, D'Academy Award, and D'Academy Asia. These various programs can be regarded as instruments to draw wider society's interest and represent that D'Academy has been an accepted program, even at the international level.

Large quantity product advertisers in D'Academy program. The main product advertisers on this program are Mie Sedaap and Pepsodent 123, besides that there are often some products that take the promotion slots in the middle of the program. Advertisements are presented in program interlude that appear in every few minutes. The bustle of advertisements in D'Academy program represents that this program is watched by many people and becomes mass desire that receives a lot of support.

4. Conclusion

D'Academy is a dangdut music program that has succeeded to bring itself into mass culture. Dangdut, which was previously regarded as a countrified and lower class society's music, is reproduced into more modern music

and accepted by the society. The representation of dangdut as a decent consumed music with prestigious position was built successfully through the reproduction of stage arrangement, fashion, actors and advertisers. Dangdut popularity through D'Academy is not only in terms of singing talent search but also images construction to create the knowledge in society. Images and texts, which are built by D'Academy to public through various interesting appearances, produces an ideology that dangdut is not a countrified music anymore. That ideology is always consumed continuously daily through its long show time, so it raises the knowledge to the public that dangdut music performance is prestigious entertaining entertainment to watch.

5. Future Studies

Dangdut music phenomenon continues to develop. Therefore, further research and study are needed to be done. This paper is a discourse study, so field research is also necessary to be done. Dangdut music in Indonesia, which grows with other music genres, is still an interesting topic. In addition, dangdut, which has widespread throughout Asia, becomes an interesting study concerning on dangdut dynamics with all its problems in international world. The interesting question is, will dangdut be an accepted music by various countries as well as pop, rock, jazz, and so forth.

6. References

- [1] Ibrahim, Idi Subandy. 2011. *Budaya Populer sebagai Komunikasi: Dinamika Popscape dan Mediascape di Indonesia Kontemporer*. Yogyakarta: Jalasutra.
- [2] Barker, Chris. 2013. *Cultural Studies: Teori & Praktik*. Yogyakarta: Kreasi Wacana.
- [3] Storey, John. 2009. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture An Introduction*. Sunderland: Pearson Longman.
- [4] Hall, Stuart. 1997. *Representation*. Great Britain: Bath Colourbooks.
- [5] Luaylik, Fathin dan Johny A. Khusyairi. 2012. *Perkembangan Musik Dangdut Indonesia 1960an-1990an (journal)*. Surabaya: Verleden, Vol 1, No. 1. http://journal.unair.ac.id/download-fullpapers-3_Fatin.pdf
- [6] Junaidi, Ahmad. 2012. *PORNO! Feminisme, Seksualitas, dan Pornografi di Media*. Jakarta: PT. Gramedia.
- [7] Panjaitan, Erica L. dan TM. Dhani Iqbal. 2006. *Matinya Rating Televisi: Ilusi Sebuah Netralitas*. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia.
- [8] Abdullah, Irwan. 2007. *Konstruksi dan Reproduksi Kebudayaan*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- [9] Ibrahim, Idi Subandy. 2011. *Kritik Budaya Komunikasi: Budaya, Media, dan Gaya Hidup*. Yogyakarta: Jalasutra.
- [10] Bernard, Malcolm. 2011. *Fashion sebagai Komunikasi: Cara Mengomunikasikan Identitas Sosial, Seksual, Kelas, dan Gender*. Yogyakarta: Jalasutra.