

Korean Band Music Surfing the Korean Wave: K-wavification in *Great Seoul Invasion* (2022)



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1: The concept of K-wavification

Commodification

Transformation from use values into exchange values ex) Nature, Labor, Culture, etc.

K-wavification

K-wave + Commodification

Definition: "The transformation of Korean culture into transnational cultural commodities by commercially appropriating and utilizing the global popularity of the Korean Wave"

Key Actors: Corporations, Korean Government, Cultural workers

Part 1: The concept of K-wavification

K-wavification effects

Globalization of Korean culture:

- Korean cultural elements adapted for transnational tastes

Hierarchization of Korean culture:

- Selective Korean culture like K-pop established as idealized standard

Spectacularization of Korean culture:

- ex) Korean places as tourism consumption objects

Dehistoricization of Korean culture:

- Cultural works lose depth, becoming superficial spectacles
- Historical meaning replaced by market value

Part 1: The concept of K-wavification

K-wavification of local regions and places in Korea for tourism

Brief example: 'Imagine Your Korea' Campaign by Korean Tourism Organization (under Korean government)



Feel the Rhythm of Korea with BTS



Escape to Korea – BETTER RUN



Parasite - Feel the Rhythm of Korea: SEOUL



Squid Game (Lee Jung-jae)- CHALLENGE KOREA: BATTLE OF K-FOOD

Part 1: The concept of K-wavification



Escape to Korea – BETTER RUN



2: Mnet's survival reality TV genre & Korean Band music

- K-wavification of Korean Band Music by GSI
- (How?) By utilizing Mnet's survival audition reality TV format and leveraging the global success of K-pop.

Part 2: Mnet's survival reality TV genre & Korean Band music

Mnet

Mnet Background:

- CJ Entertainment (distributed *Parasite*)
- Self-promoting as "Global Music Network"
- East Asian expansion: Japan, China collaborations
Ex) Hosts MAMA, (Mnet Asian Music Awards) annually

Themed Survival Programs:

- American Idol Format Adaptation
- "Evil Editing" Techniques for creating Drama
Ex) Hip-hop: Show Me the Money
- K-pop Idols: Produce 101
- Dance: Street Woman Figther

Operates global K-pop platform: "Mnet Plus"

Global Partnerships & Collaborations with Apple TV, Spotify, Amazon



Part 2: Mnet's survival reality TV genre & Korean Band music



Producer 101

Part 2: Mnet's survival reality TV genre & Korean Band music

Mnet's survival audition genre



Participants/art as “Musicians/Music as Objects of Evaluation”

Neoliberal Ideology of **Meritocracy**
Merit based on

- Viewers' preferences
- Subjective judgment
- Entertainment value



Part 2: Mnet's survival reality TV genre & Korean Band music

Commercialized Korean Bands: K-pop band

Managed by K-pop Companies

Idol-style Visual Presentation

Idol-adjacent Activities



SM Entertainment: Trax (2004)



FNC Entertainment: N.Flying



JYP Entertainment: Day6

Part 2: Mnet's survival reality TV genre & Korean Band music

Hongdae (area) Scene (Mid-western Seoul)

Independent Music Hub (Mid-1990s):

- Underground and experimental music scene
- Multiple venues for band and hip-hop performances
- DIY subculture emphasizing diversity, spontaneity, and musician subjectivity

Gentrification Pressures:

- Post-2000: Soaring rents threatened indie scene survival

Strategic responses:

- Government support programs: K-Rookies(Indie band battle), Seoul Mucon (Festival)
- Moving to other local areas

Ex) Boongaboom Records: "Small-scale handicraft-manufactured records"



Part 2: Mnet's survival reality TV genre & Korean Band music



Crying Nut – 'Speed Up Losers' (말달리자) (1996)
(Punk Rock)

Life's like that, huh? Yeah, right.
Is it everyone's fault? I know everyone,
so shut up.
Does singing make you forgotten?
Does loving make you loved?
Does having money mean success?
Does having a car make you go faster?
Shut up, shut up, shut up, shut up,
shut up and listen to me.
We gotta run, we can't be fools.
Let's run. Let's run, let's run, let's run.

Part 2: Mnet's survival reality TV genre & Korean Band music



**Kiha & the faces – 'Cheap Coffee' (싸구려커피) (2008)
(Folk Rock)**

I drink cheap coffee. It's lukewarm, making
my stomach ache quite a bit. My soles
stick to the damp vinyl flooring. Then peel
off. Now it doesn't bother me

Even if a cockroach scurries by. On heavy
mornings, only a slight cough. Shows no
sign of stopping. I shake out the damp
sheets. Open the creaking door and step
outside. The sky, still not fully clear, feels
too close. Breathing isn't easy. It feels
dizzily familiar, like I've seen it ten
thousand times. So familiar it could make
me collapse. I lock myself away, empty,
with nothing left.

Part 2: Mnet's survival reality TV genre & Korean Band music

Hongdae (area) Scene (Mid-western Seoul)

The Duribang Incident: Peak of Indie Music Resistance

The Conflict (2009):

- A small restaurant in Hongdae became protest site against gentrification
- Musicians, artists, and citizens challenged forced eviction
- Music festival of *Party 51* (51 teams)

Resistance Outcomes

- **Creation of Jarip Co-op** : Infrastructure/Community for non-profit, minor genre music production independent of capital
- **Subcultural Activist DIY ethos** : Art for the commons



Party 51 (Documentary, 2013)

Part 2: Mnet's survival reality TV genre & Korean Band music



**Bamsom Pirates- 'I can do it' (하면된다) (2010)
(Grindcore)**

I am a toilet cleaner fired the day before
yesterday
I wonder why I got fired
I guess I was just too weak
I'll scrub the toilet so hard it could be used as
a dinner plate!
With the "I can do it" spirit, I strive relentlessly!
With the "I can do it" spirit, I scrub the toilet
like hell!
With the "I can do it" spirit, I work my ass off!
With the "I can do it" spirit, I remake myself!

Part 2: Mnet's survival reality TV genre & Korean Band music



Ladybug, longhorn beetle, dung beetle, bug

Ladybug, longhorn beetle, dung beetle, bug

It's been too long since I thought about it

So we are Kilimanjaro

Poisonous mushroom, elephant rock,
lotus flower

Bug bugbugbugbugbugbugbug

Bug! Bug! Bug! Bugbugbug

Bugbugbugbugbugbugbugbug

Bugbugbugbugbugbugbugbug

Bugbugbugbugbugbugbugbug

MukiMukimanmansu- 'Andromeda' (안드로메타) (2013)
(Korean Punk?)



3: K-wavification in *Great Seoul Invasion*

Globalization of Band music

Hierarchization of K-pop

Spectacularization of Korean history and Seoul

Moment of Authentic Resistance

Part 3: K-wavification in Great Seoul Invasion

Globalization of Band music

Statement from the main producer at a Press Conference:

"These days, K-pop is a globally influential genre, and I thought [Korean] band [music] could follow the same path. The most influential time for bands was probably when the Beatles conquered the American market. The title is derived from the term 'British Invasion'"

Fictional character of Mr. G Character

-Leader of fictional Korean band "THE GREAT", which once rivalled the Beatles but failed in the 1960s

-Scouts millennial / Gen Z bands for making global bands

-Invests funding for the competition and awards

"Now, I can help young generation bands achieve success. I know what it takes to create a world-class band"



Part 3: K-wavification in Great Seoul Invasion

Hierarchization of K-pop

- Utilizing K-pop while imposing the genre as an idealized standard

BTS Mission

- Bands must select and reinterpret BTS hit songs: 'DNA' or 'Fake Love'

Judges and team mentors from K-pop industries

- Participant of Produce 101, K-pop music video director, a K-pop Artists and Repertoire (A&R) producer, and members from K-pop bands



Artists and Repertoire (A&R) producer/ Global Business expert



Participant of Produce 101



Members from K-pop bands

Part 3: K-wavification in Great Seoul Invasion

Hierarchization of K-pop



K-pop Performance Adoption:

- Adopted K-pop's "ending pose" - dramatic choreographed stance
- Round 4 Collaboration mission: Collaboration with K-pop idols
- Direct fusion of band music with K-pop trends

Ex) Band Nah's Leader: "We incorporated elements that always appear in K-pop, such as a build-up followed by a drop, or a rap-like element in the second verse"

Part 3: K-wavification in Great Seoul Invasion

Spectacularization of Korean history and Seoul

Seoul Branding Strategy:

Title Choice: "Great Seoul Invasion" not "Korean Invasion"

- Strategic leveraging of Seoul brand value over Korea
- Stage backdrops: skyscrapers, glamorous cityscapes > Spectacularizes Seoul as an "urban scenic resource for global tourism consumption"



Decade Mission - Dehistoricization: Selective Romanticization

- D82 '70s Night: "Free club" concept ignoring Yusin regime oppression
- Band Nah '88: Seoul Olympics festive vibe obscuring military dictatorship
- Lacuna '1998: Millennium bug fairy-tale, detached from 1997 Asian financial crisis
- ONEWE 'Hippie': 2000s youth freedom, disregarding neoliberal precarity

> **Result:** Erase Korean historicity, transforming music into spectacle providing only sensory pleasure for global audience

Part 3: K-wavification in Great Seoul Invasion



Band Nah – '88' (2022)

Sometimes I recall
When my breath catches slightly. You and I,
meeting without words
Where are we going? Words like "We
mustn't fall behind". Endlessly torment us
But whenever I see you, even for a moment
It feels like we've forgotten something
In these waves of time. Flowing only swiftly
You and I, swept along. We gaze into each
other's hearts. Hand in hand, we walk on
It doesn't matter where, you and I
Looking back on the days we've passed
We'll be there together

Part 3: K-wavification in Great Seoul Invasion

Moments of Authentic Expression Against the Competition

Complaints about the mission

- Band Nah leader: "Music cannot be ranked by grades"
- Walking After U: "It was cruel... asking us to pick just one [song] and cut it down"

The Next Generation's Withdrawal:

Rejection of commodification logic for artistic integrity

- Chose to withdraw when program direction differed from their "romance"
- Prioritized artistic beliefs over competitive success
- Program respected decision, showed them in Hongdae practice room
- Caption: "happier singing in their small but precious self-made concert hall than on the glamorous spotlight stage"



Part 3: K-wavification in Great Seoul Invasion



Surl – 'Rollin' Rollin' Rollin'" (2022)

How far have I come? I've stopped again
How far have I come? Why are you here?
How far will I go? My legs have stopped
How far will I go? He's here again I shake you
You tirelessly shake me Rollin', rollin', rollin'
You roll me around

Surl's Creative Resistance:

- Used lyrics to express discontent in a mission
- "Gulline [굴리네]
= (you're making me work excessively)
- > Transformed anger into musical expressions of dissent

Paradox: Resistance ultimately absorbed into entertainment value



Thinking with the concept of K-wavification

1. What constitutes the "Korean" elements that K-pop conveys or constructs for global audiences?
2. In the Korean cultural content you consume, including popular music, which Korean elements are emphasized, selected, excluded, adapted, or transformed? What drives these choices?
3. How are K-pop's influence being applied to other cultural content genres, including various forms of popular music?
4. In what ways is various musical genres including Korean popular music, hierarchical? What are the social, economic, and cultural factors behind this hierarchization?
5. How are Korea's history, regions, places, and social realities packaged into "cool and consumable" images for global audiences within popular culture?
6. What examples can you identify where popular music transcends being merely an object of momentary consumption and connects individual experiences to broader communities and society in alternative ways?

