The Cambridge Companion to K-Pop

How did Korea come to create a vibrant pop culture scene that would enthral not only young Asian fans but also global audiences from diverse racial and generational backgrounds? From idol training to fan engagement, from studio recording to mastering choreographic sequences, what are the steps that go into the actual production and promotion of K-pop? And how can we account for K-pop’s global presence within the rapidly changing media environment and consumerist culture in the new millennium? As an informed guide for finding answers to these questions, The Cambridge Companion to K-Pop probes the complexities of K-pop as both a music industry and a transnational cultural scene. It investigates the meteoric ascent of K-pop against the backdrop of increasing global connectivity wherein a distinctive model of production and consumption is closely associated with creativity and futurity.

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Contents

List of Figures page xi
List of Tables xii
List of Contributors xiii
Acknowledgments xiv
Notes to Readers xv

Introduction: Korea’s Moment in the Limelight
Suk-Young Kim 1

Part I Genealogies 9
1 Sticking It to the Man: Early Neoliberalism in Korean Pop Music
Roald Maliangkay 11
2 Itaewon Class, Gangnam Style, and Yeouido Star: The Industrial Revolution of Korean Pop in the 1990s
Hyunjoon Shin 28

Part II Sounding Out K-Pop 49
3 Finding the K in K-Pop Musically: A Stylistic History
Jung-Min Mina Lee 51
4 Recording the Soundscape of K-Pop
Hye Won Kim 73

Part III Dancing to K-Pop 95
5 K-Pop Dance Music Video Choreography
Chuyun Oh 97
6 Embodying K-Pop Hits through Cover Dance Practices
CedarBough T. Saeji 116

Part IV The Making of Idols 137
7 K-Pop Idols: Media Commodities, Affective Laborers, and Cultural Capitalists
Stephanie Choi 139
8 From K-Pop to Z-Pop: The Pan-Asian Production, Consumption, and Circulation of Idols
So-Rim Lee 154
x Contents

Part V The Band That Surprised the World 173

9 BTS, Transmedia, and Hip Hop
Kyung Hyun Kim 175

10 The BTS Phenomenon
Suk-Young Kim and Youngdae Kim 192

11 Transcultural Fandom: BTS and ARMY
Candace Epps-Robertson 208

Part VI Circuits of K-Pop Flow 229

12 K-Pop and the Participatory Condition: Vicarity, Serial Affect, and "Real-Life Contents"
Michelle Cho 231

13 Idol Shipping Culture: Exploring Queer Sexuality among Fans of K-Pop
Thomas Baudinette 249

14 Following the Footsteps of BTS: The Global Rise of K-Pop Tourism
Youjeong Oh 265

Index 281
Figures

1.1 Advertisement for a concert by Columbia singers includes photos of Jeong Ilgyeong and Go Boksu  page 18

2.1 Record covers of three full-length albums by Young Hyun-jin produced by SM Enterprise in 1990, 1992, and 1993  34

2.2 The first “best albums” compiled by SM  37

2.3 The back cover of Kim’s third album and the front cover of Shin’s fifth album  38

2.4 The front and back covers of the Noise debut album  39

2.5 Colloquially defined as “made in Europe for Japan,” Eurobeat was invented and disseminated by Avex Trax through the compilation CD series; Avex Trax also released the “J-Euro” series, which compiled remixes of J-pop hits  40

2.6 Compilation disc released by Valentine Music Korea in 1994 and Made in Asia, released by Rock Records Korea in 1996  41

2.7 The transformation of Seo Taiji’s image from a rebellious rock musician to a singer-cum-dancer in a B-boy style  42

3.1 Passage leading to the hook and the hook of Wonder Girls’ “Tell Me”, mm. 19–42  59

6.1 Miska (standing) with East2West performing BTS’s “Not Today”  124

6.2 Hive Dance Crew (France) performing TWICE’s “More and More”  126

8.1 Priyanka’s visual performance diverges from the perceived Korean physiognomy  167

12.1 A screenshot from “BTS ‘DNA’ Official MV reaction mashup” edits together individual reaction videos into a single frame, to produce the semblance of a crowd response  241

12.2 Screenshot from East2West’s “[EAST2WEST] NCT 127 REACTED TO OUR COVER???”  244

13.1 Myra’s webcomic  250
Tables

3.1 Formal structure of Seo Taiji and Boys’s “Hayeoga”  
3.2 English-language hooks in select K-pop songs from 2007 to 2013  
3.3 Formal structure of Girls’ Generation’s “I Got a Boy”  
3.4 Select K-pop tracks released since the 1990s that borrow elements of traditional Korean music and/or culture  
6.1 Examples of well-known cover groups (November 25, 2020)  
7.1 Expenses for a debuting idol group  
7.2 Revisions after release of the Improvement of Unfair Trading Convention between Entertainment Companies and Affiliated Trainees  

page 56  
60  
63  
65  
120  
145  
146
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Acknowledgments

Anyone working on popular culture knows well that time is at once their best friend and worst enemy. In the fast-changing world of pop culture, every day offers scholars a windfall of new materials to swim in, but with each minute’s passing they also become inevitably outdated. No matter how hard one tries, one can never have a full and comprehensive perspective on something evolving so quickly. My collaborators whose work is highlighted in this volume saved me from being outdated or, at least, helped slow down the pace. Thanks to their fresh perspectives and keen insights, they inspired me to examine this dynamic field with a renewed appreciation and a much deeper understanding.

Qianxiong Yang was a smart and reliable editorial assistant, who stepped in to provide much needed help. Thanks to Stephanie Sakson, whose editorial work improved the book, and to Abi Sears, who patiently guided me through each step of the production process. Kate Brett first presented the idea of making this book, for which I am grateful. A Korea Foundation Small Grant supported the production of the index and funded a series of online lectures, allowing me to feel a sense of community during the difficult days of the Covid-19 pandemic. Particular thanks go to Chungmin Lee, who supported this endeavor in many way, both big and small.

Researching K-pop requires one to repeatedly renew their perspective. It is like chasing a storm that leaves you strides behind. Day after day, minute after minute, new songs are released and fresh faces step into limelight. But my media-savvy students are always ahead of me, and writing this book is my belated gesture to acknowledge their contribution to the field of K-pop. This book is dedicated to my students, past, present, and future.
Notes to Readers

- For transliteration of Korean words, the volume will consistently use the official Korean language Romanization system released by South Korea’s Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 2000, also referred to as Revised Romanization of Korean. Exceptions are made for proper names well known in the English-speaking world by alternate Romanizations (e.g. Lee Soo-man rather than Yi Su-man); for authors who published their names in alternate Romanizations (e.g. Suk-Young Kim rather than Suk-yeong Gim); for performers who deliberately use alternate Romanizations for their names (e.g. Lee Hi rather than Yi Ha-i).

- Although East Asian convention dictates that surnames precede given names (e.g. Lee So-Rim), in this volume, East Asian names appear with the given name first followed by surnames (e.g. So-Rim Lee). Exceptions are made for stage names and artistic names, which have been widely used in the music and entertainment industry (e.g. Bang Si-hyuk rather than Si-hyuk Bang).

- K-pop band names like BLACKPINK or Agust D are left in their own Anglicized spellings since they deliberately use idiosyncratic spellings for professional purposes and are known as such in both Korean and international media.

- All translations not otherwise credited are contributor’s own.

- When quoting others’ work, author’s use the transliteration system originally chosen by other authors.