Indonesian Cinema after the New Order

Going Mainstream

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HKU PRESS
香港大學出版社

Hong Kong University Press
The University of Hong Kong
Pokfulam Road
Hong Kong
https://hkupress.hku.hk

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ISBN 978-988-8528-07-3 (*Hardback*)

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed and bound by China Translation & Printing Services Ltd., Hong Kong, China

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Introduction

Indonesian Cinema after Authoritarianism

Prelude

In January 2008, I flew to Jakarta to begin research for what would eventually become this book. Initially, I intended to research the so-called "pirate" film industry that supplied many Indonesians with cheap movies, mostly from Hollywood. Centered in the trading area of Glodok, North Jakarta, the pirate film economy touched all corners of the archipelago. At the time, international pro-copyright bodies the MPAA (Motion Picture Association of America) and WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization) were pressuring Indonesian law enforcement to eradicate this trade. However, serious efforts at enforcement risked a popular backlash, and police actions remained largely tokenistic. Indonesian feature films were also beginning to be copied and sold, indicating a hunger amongst audiences for local films. However, an informal agreement brokered between the pirates and the local film industry succeeded (at least for a time) in excluding local films from the pirate trade, demonstrating a flair for patriotism amongst Indonesian film pirates.

During those months, I witnessed police bribes and corruption, experienced uneasy relations between rival Glodok gangs, drank bootleg alcohol with sellers, and saw how piracy intertwined with other illicit economies like drugs and prostitution. Yet, my initial goal of piercing pirate production and distribution networks was beyond my abilities, and I eventually abandoned the research. I next turned my attention to the local film industry. But, just before making this pivot, I interviewed Hanung Bramantyo, a young director whose soon-to-be-released film *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (*Verses of Love*, 2008) was already circulating on pirated copies (someone in the editing room had reproduced and released a production cut of the film). I met Bramantyo in Citos, an upmarket café and restaurant mall in South Jakarta, where we talked about his film, the pirated version, and his experiences as a filmmaker. He was largely unperturbed by the pirate release of his film, and instead had much more to say about the state of filmmaking in Indonesia. On its official release, *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* broke a long-standing box-office record when it was watched by more than 3.7 million people at the cinema, defeating arguments about film piracy damaging sales. More importantly, the success of *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* showed that local films were at the forefront of pop culture and attracting huge audiences and earning big profits. Something quite monumental was happening in local production, and I was there at just the right time to research it.

For the next nine months, I researched the burgeoning Indonesian film industry attending press preview screenings and interviewing over fifty film industry personnel including directors, scriptwriters, and producers. 2008 marked a decade since the fall of the New Order regime, and over that time local film production had grown exponentially. In the wake of the 1997–1998 Financial Crisis and the fall of President Suharto, film production had effectively ground to a halt as old industry players became inactive, projects were abandoned, and production reached a nadir when only one feature film—*Jelangkung* (*The Uninvited*) directed by Rizal Mantovani and Jose Poernomo—was released in 2001. Yet the end of the New Order catalyzed new modes of expression and cultural production which proliferated across a range of media including fiction writing, journalism, short film, music, and fashion. Feature filmmaking by contrast took longer to gestate, and production was sporadic due to higher production costs and the difficulties of long form filmmaking. Slowly over the subsequent decade, young filmmakers adopting an indie approach to making movies that were experimental in content and production methods made feature films that found audiences and began to make money.

In fact, I had been in Jakarta in February 2002 when a new film called *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* (*What's Up With Love?*, Rudi Soedjarwo) was creating significant excitement in the media and amongst young Indonesians. Intrigued I went to the cinema to watch the film during a midday screening. The cinema was packed and young Indonesians reveled in the high-school love story of Cinta (Dian Sastrowardoyo) and Rangga (Nicholas Saputra) on screen, as they spoke in Jakartan slang, and dealt with real life issues. With a hit pop music soundtrack and smart marketing, followed by a television series of the same title, *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* laid the groundwork for future productions that were not only connecting with their audience but leveraging the networks and formats of the already vibrant post–New Order pop culture. Between 2002 and 2008 young filmmakers kept making films, and by bringing audiences back to the box office, they regularized Indonesian films as part of the broad cultural diet. Many films are now profitable and filmmakers and crews can make a career in the film industry. By 2008 there were two new Indonesian-made films in the cinemas every week.

It was clear that Indonesian cinema was integrating with prevailing forms of mainstream pop culture while adapting techniques of mass production already evident in television and advertising. Creative labor and production companies from other sectors were moving into feature film, enmeshing film in existing domestic networks of cultural production and promotion. Cinema created a new roster of stars and contributed to Indonesia's growing celebrity culture. Films now regularly include pop songs in their soundtracks and feature local musicians as cast members and in cameo appearances; these have included Fedi Nuril from the rock group Garasi, all five members of the Bandung rock group Changcuters, and *dangdut* singer Dewi Persik. Sequels and remakes are becoming more prominent, including *Ayat-Ayat Cinta 2* (*Verses of Love 2*, Guntur Soeharjanto, 2017) and *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta? 2* (*What's Up With Love? 2*, Riri Riza, 2016) as recent examples. Gossip television and other media cover the film industry, looking for the latest scoops on upcoming productions, celebrities, and insider rumors. New film releases have become spectacles featuring celebrity appearances and endorsements from public figures, with cross-platform marketing to entice potential audiences to the cinema. A variety of genres now proliferate, catering to multiple tastes: mainstream horror and romance films now play alongside more serious biopics, historical dramas, and art cinema titles. Not only is Indonesian cinema vibrant, productive, and popular it is now firmly in the mainstream.

While these developments have been a cause for celebration in most quarters, not everyone has welcomed these developments positively. Many observers have lamented the commercialization of the film industry,[1] likening cinema post-1998 to the popular cinema of the 1970s and 1980s when money-minded producers were said to dominate. Yet this perspective is simplistic: it not only over-emphasizes the power of commercial producers it more importantly fails to account for the broad structural changes in Indonesia after 1998. Democratization, decentralization and liberalization have expanded the market as an economic mechanism and devolved political power from a few to the many. Cinema is no longer shaped by the state and its interests, as it was during the New Order, but is now subject to a market in which the state is only one of a group of competing interests and forces that include capital,

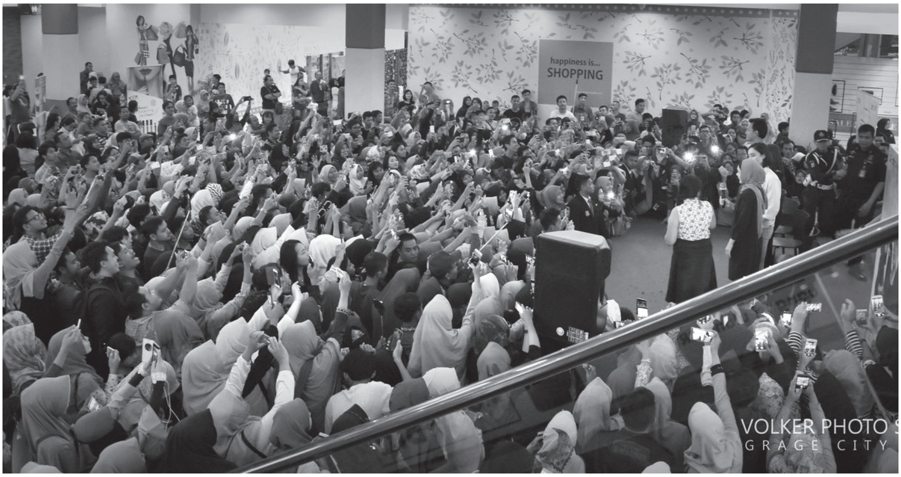

Figure 0.1: Fans swarm the stage to see the stars of *Ayat-Ayat Cinta 2* (*Verses of Love 2*, Guntur Soeharjanto, 2017) at Grage City Mall in Cirebon, West Java in December 2017. Photograph courtesy of Volker Photo Studio (Cirebon).

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[1] See, for example, Nova Chairil, "Looking at Both Sides of the National Cinema," *The Jakarta Post*, April 28, 2010; Adi Wicaksono, "'Dosa Asal' Film Indonesia," *Kompas*, March 2, 2007, 51.

consumers, and interest groups within the general public. Old frames of reference and discourses reducing film to narrow categories, as either a national cinema or a commercialized mass cultural product no longer work.

Of vital importance in the post-1998 era are the audiences who now play a greater role as taste, fashion and identity driven consumers rather than the singular mass as they had been conceived as previously. Prior to 1998, audiences were either assumed, ignored, unseen, or untheorized, and the little research that was conducted reduced their consumption preferences and patterns to a function of income level. With film's integration into the broader pop cultural landscape, new consumers and consumption patterns come into existence in the post–New Order market economy. Audiences are attuned to trends and fashions and filmmakers must respond to these demands. In the market era, audiences increasingly determine the fate of a film and therefore the financial returns that flow back to filmmakers and into subsequent production. Acknowledging the importance of audiences and their consumption patterns is concomitant with the post-1998 democratic era in which the citizenry has a stronger voice in the political process. Audiences still mattered before, but they now take on a new significance in the market era because of the economics of the film industry, its integration into prevailing modes of pop culture, and the emergence of market segments based around identity driven consumption.[2]

Increased film production has tracked the growth and consolidation of the new consumer economy and market for media products and entertainment in post New Order Indonesia. The first decade of *reformasi* was marked by considerable growth with the proliferation of new publications, communities, and outlets catering to new consumer segments based on factors like geography, subcultural affiliations and other demographics and interests. National television broadcasters increased from the five allowed to operate under the New Order to ten,[3] with many more operating at the provincial level. By 2007, over 65 percent of households had a television, up from 54 percent in 2000. In the second decade to 2018, as the market stabilized, market rationalization has occurred, reducing the total number of outlets, at the same time as large media conglomerates increase their presence in the media sector through business expansion, consolidation, and rapid diversification.[4] As film has integrated within this media system and consumer market, the changes in Indonesia's dynamic media sector since 1998 warrant closer examination.

This book argues that the recovery of the Indonesian film industry after 1998 was a process of going mainstream. Focusing primarily on the period between 1998 and 2010, this book examines significant films, events, people, and decisions that brought Indonesian cinema from its nadir and location on the cultural periphery

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[2] Ariel Heryanto, *Identity and Pleasure: The Politics of Indonesian Screen Culture* (Singapore and Kyoto: NUS Press and Kyoto CSEAS Series on Asian Studies, 2014).

[3] Yanuar Nugroho, Dinita Andriani Putri, and Shita Laksmi, "Memetakan Lanskap Industri Media Kontemporer di Indonesia" (Jakarta: CIPG dan HIVOS, 2012). http://cipg.or.id/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/MEDIA-2-Industri-Media-2012.pdf.

[4] Nugroho, Putri and Laksmi, "Memetakan Lanskap Industri Media," 33–50.

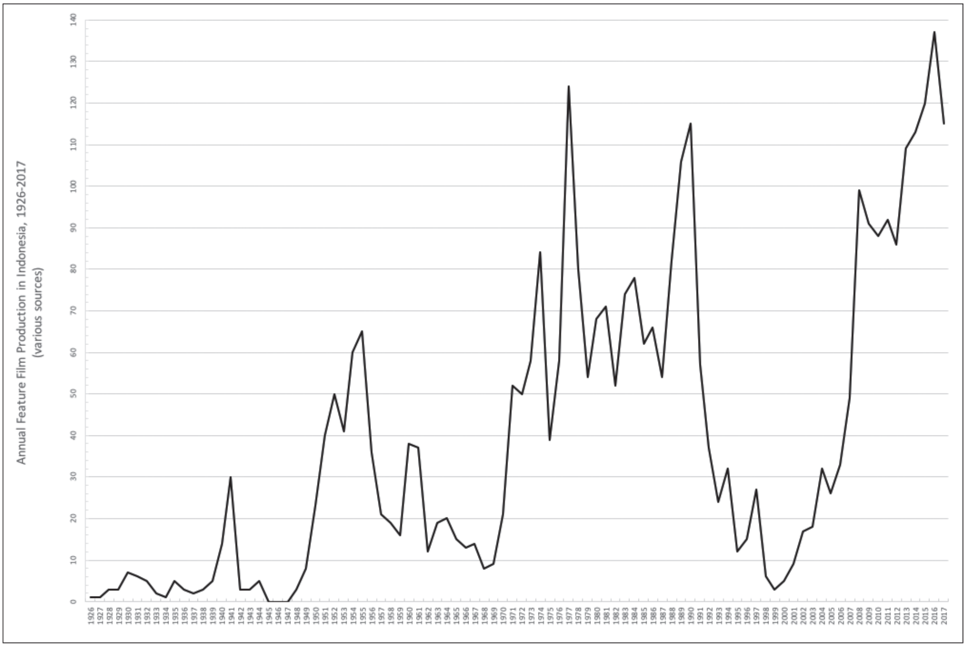

Figure 0.2: Annual film production in Indonesia, 1926–2017

in the late 1990s into the mainstream where it now enjoys domestic popularity, commercial profitability, and increasingly global attention. In order to integrate with prevailing modes of mainstream pop culture, the film industry adopted new production techniques, developed audiences by revitalizing genres, managed interactions with the state and its regulations, and adapted to new exhibition paradigms. On one hand this book details the economics and sociology of film production, circulation and distribution. It asks who is making films, how are they making them, and the production conditions in which they are created. Here we see how indie film production morphed into an industry and the complications and negotiations that went with it. At the same time, the book explores genre and film content to see how the interests of filmmakers and audiences are represented on screen. Here, filmmakers tapped into emerging trends and fashions popular amongst Indonesian youth. By combining new modes of production and new modes of audience engagement, Indonesian cinema has emerged as one of the most dynamic pop culture industries in Asia, increasingly integrated into global flows of capital and media products.

Thinking about Indonesian Cinema

Given such significant changes have occurred in Indonesian cultural production since 1998, new ways of thinking about cinema are not only possible, but essential. Old models and approaches to understanding Indonesian cinema have become anachronistic and cannot adequately explain contemporary cinema. This book sees cinema as a form of pop culture since studying cinema is no longer just about cinema, but goes to broader questions around cultural production, regulation and the state, industry infrastructure and political economy, as well as social change. Indonesian cinema is not just a national cinema with no relevance to film and pop culture elsewhere: rather, the experience of Indonesian cinema and the debates in that country today provide insight into the global phenomena of pop culture and our understanding of it. The recent experience of cinema in the nation has as much to tell the world as the world has to tell Indonesia.

Studies of Indonesian cinema to date can be categorized into three approaches—national cinema, state cinema, and *reformasi* cinema. Locally, the dominant approach to studying Indonesian cinema has been through a national cinema paradigm I have previously identified as *film nasional*.[5] *Film nasional* is best represented in the work of the two most prominent film scholars of the New Order period, Misbach Yusa Biran and Salim Said. To them—and to those who have adopted or share their perspective—Indonesian cinema is an extension of nationalism in both economic and cultural terms. This is expressed in the oft-quoted slogan "*film Indonesia harus menjadi tuan di rumah sendiri*" (Indonesian film must become the master in its own house), which aspires to a vision of Indonesian films dominating local cinemas.[6] At the same time, proponents of *film nasional* advocate for a particular kind of Indonesian film, namely those made by filmmakers who approach filmmaking as an art form, driven by idealism, and who show the "real Indonesia." Instead, they argue that most films have been produced by commercially-minded filmmakers for mass appeal, and present vulgar fantasies that merely ape foreign culture.[7] In their view, audiences are the victims of cheap marketing who need to be educated and encouraged to watch "quality" films. Seen through a perspective of *film nasional*, the history of Indonesian cinema is thus another history of the conflict between film-as-art and film-as-commodity.[8] For them, the state's role is to regulate the commercial industry, and protect and promote national cinema.

Studying film as methodologically national aligns with a nationally bounded market, under national regulations, by citizen filmmakers addressing themes and issues of national concern. To some extent this is a logical way of studying cinema, but often embedded in the national cinema framework are assumptions or prescriptions of national culture and identity. National cinemas tend to promote certain filmmakers at the expense of others, and assign value to films that are seen to best represent the idealized nation rather than critical or even popular works.[9] As the work of Benedict Anderson and others tells us, nations are imagined communities and any ascribed national culture must itself be an invention.[10] Yet descriptions of national cinemas invariably become prescriptive when certain cultural practices, political beliefs, and interpretations of history are taken as normative, even if the actual films themselves offer much more complex readings of history and identity.[11] In reality, nations are riddled by debates, contestations, and contradictions over identity and history, bringing into question the ability to identify a stable object we might designate as "Indonesian Cinema." Film industries are also deeply embedded within global forms of exchange and interaction, meaning no national film industry is ever isolated from developments and influences from regional and global pop cultures.[12]

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[5] Thomas Barker, "Historical Inheritance and 'Film Nasional' in post-Reformasi Indonesian Cinema," *Asian Cinema* 21, no. 2 (2010): 7–24. https://doi.org/10.1386/ac.21.2.7_1.

[6] See, for example, Umar Kayam, "Filem Indonesia Menjadi Tuan Rumah di Negeri Sendiri," *Kompas*, January 15, 1979.

[7] Sjumandjaya, "Films in the Hands of Petty Bourgeois," *Prisma*, no. 7 (1977): 28–31.

[8] For example, see Patrick Campos, *The End of National Cinema: Filipino Film at the Turn of the Century* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2016), 1–27.

The second prominent strain of Indonesian film scholarship was much more critical in its approach and saw Indonesian cinema primarily in its relationship to the state. Krishna Sen wrote the most comprehensive study of Indonesian cinema during the New Order (1966–1998) and suggested in *Indonesian Cinema: Framing the New Order* that cinema could be understood as a site of conflict between creative expression and state control.[13] What was allowed or disallowed, and what was possible, was refracted through the ideological and institutional constraints imposed by the New Order regime. Because of the New Order's hegemonic power, cinema became a reflection of the state (both in terms of its ideology and its political economy) through mechanisms of regulation and censorship, control, and ownership. With the film industry under state control, the opposing paradigm was one of resistance or opposition, showing how filmmakers evaded or challenged state strictures, such as through satire or flouting the regulations.[14] For Sen, Indonesian cinema history after 1966 is the history of how it became thoroughly imbued by the ideological, regulatory, and economic imperatives of the New Order regime.

After the end of the New Order in 1998, both the *film nasional* and the statist approaches fail to explain contemporary Indonesia cinema. As new forms of filmmaking and filmmakers emerged in the *reformasi* era, they neither faced a hegemonic state nor felt attachment to the ideals of *film nasional*. To account for these changes a third category of *reformasi* scholarship has emerged documenting the

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9. Yingjin Zhang, *Cinema, Space, and Polylocality in a Globalizing China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009).
10. Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).
11. Dag Yngvesson, "The Unconscious Is Structured like an Archive: The 'Epic' Politics of Postmodernity in Indonesian Cinema," *Plaridel* 15, no. 1 (2018): 67–104. http://www.plarideljournal.org/article/the-unconscious-is-structured-like-an-archive-epic-politics-and-postmodernity-in-indonesian-cinema/.
12. See Gina Marchetti and Tan See Kam, "Introduction: Hong Kong Cinema and Global Change," in *Hong Kong Film, Hollywood, and the New Global Cinema: No Film Is an Island*, ed. Gina Marchetti and Tan See Kam (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 1–34.
13. Krishna Sen, *Indonesian Cinema: Framing the New Order* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1994).
14. Barbara Hatley, "Cultural Expression," in *Indonesia's New Order: The Dynamics of Socio-economic Transformation*, ed. Hal Hill (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1994), 216–66.

post-authoritarian era. *Reformasi* scholarship grappled with the changing landscape of film production, including Leila Chudori writing for *Tempo* magazine and filmmaker Garin Nugroho writing on media.[15] One of the first comprehensive studies of the *reformasi* period came from Katinka van Heeren who documents the emergence of the indie cinema movement, dedicated to cultural and political expression, and implicitly resistant to the state in the book *Contemporary Indonesian Film: Spirits of Reform and Ghosts from the Past*.[16] Subsequent work from Ariel Heryanto describes emergent forms of pop culture,[17] emphasizing social conditions that allow for new expressions of pleasure and identity. In the context of *reformasi*, the lifting of state restrictions and its accompanying new freedoms gave young Indonesians space to express themselves, unhindered by oppressive state agencies or restrictive regulations.

As feature filmmaking proliferated, there have been efforts to revive *film nasional* by decrying the commercialization of the "national cinema" and extolling filmmakers to use their work as a platform to promote nationalism or artistic idealism.[18] This is largely in response to the perceived loss of certainty and nationalist sentiment that has accompanied *reformasi*, democratization, and the market era. Although sharing the euphoria of filmmakers in the 1950s following the end of colonialism, young filmmakers do not share the sense of nationalism that accompanied independence, having emerged from thirty-two years of domestic authoritarian rule. Instead, their struggle in the early years of *reformasi* was more practical as they sought to express themselves while remaining independent from the state and the commercial industry. New generation filmmakers such as Edwin, Yosep Anggi Noen, and Mouly Surya who might be called "idealists" prefer to leverage their opportunities on the international film festival circuit, which provides funding, prestige, and international exposure. Following in the footsteps of internationally renowned director Garin Nugroho, their films seek to challenge domestic mainstream audiences whilst appealing to the sensibilities and tastes of foreign festival audiences. Even as more market-minded filmmakers turned to commercial producers for production capital, their films still engaged with questions of national identity and cultural values in popular genres such as horror and romance. As Goenawan Mohamad remarked in 1974 in response to similar debates about national identity in film: "our face is revealed there. It may not be that intelligent, deep, or respectable, but so what."[19]

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[15] Garin Nugroho, *Seni Merayu Massa* (Jakarta: Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2005); and Leila S. Chudori, "Hasil Perdana Kuartet Sutradara Muda." *Tempo*, December 7, 1998.

[16] Katinka van Heeren, *Contemporary Indonesian Film: Spirits of Reform and Ghosts from the Past* (Leiden: Universiteit Leiden, 2009). https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004253476.

[17] Ariel Heryanto, ed., *Popular Culture in Indonesia: Fluid Identities in Post-Authoritarian Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008); Heryanto, *Identity and Pleasure*.

[18] Ekky Imanjaya, "Idealism versus Commercialism in Indonesian Cinema: A Neverending Battle?" *Rumah Film*, 2009, http://old.rumahfilm.org/artikel/artikel_neverending_1.htm.

[19] Goenawan Mohamad, "Film Indonesian catatan tahun 1974," in *Seks, Sastra, Kita* (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1980), 89. "Secara tak langsung wajah kita tampak di sana. Mungkin tidak terlalu cerdas, tidak terlalu dalam dan tidak terlalu terhormat, tapi apa boleh buat."

Even as Indonesian cinema has grown in international profile either at international film festivals including Busan, Rotterdam, Shanghai, and Cannes, as well as through international co-productions and international distribution, it is often reduced to an iteration or subclass of Asian Cinema. This serves to reproduce existing cinema studies paradigms which emerges out of Euro-American scholarship in which Hollywood is the global benchmark and industry of reference. Following the success of Gareth Evans's action film *The Raid: Redemption* in 2011, there has also been a growing interest in Indonesian new action stars Iko Uwais and Joe Taslim and the ultra-violent films of the Mo Brothers (*Killers*, 2013; *Headshot*, 2016; *The Night Comes For Us*, 2018). Yet even this new action cinema tends to frame Indonesian cinema through its exoticism and much of the complexity and context of post-authoritarian Indonesia is thus unappreciated and cannot be equated with stylistic or thematic similarities with films from South Korea, Thailand, Japan, or Hong Kong. Indonesia's growing stature in the global cultural circuit is not matched by a deepened understanding of Indonesia specifically or of its domestic film industry.

New ways of understanding post-1998 Indonesian cinema are required to replace previous anachronistic and overly simplistic models. Approaching Indonesian film as a form of pop culture allows us to account for both the importance of cinema's entertainment qualities and its role as a profit-driven, commercially orientated cultural industry. This book is interdisciplinary and incorporates cultural studies and sociology as much as it does work in contemporary film studies to analyze the return of film production in Indonesia by understanding it as a process of "going mainstream." This represents a new approach to the study of Indonesian cinema which complicates the nationalist and state-centered approaches in previous work by engaging with market-orientated work post-*reformasi*. It recognizes how feature films have integrated with local pop culture, including emerging cultural trends and commercial forms of cultural production, and puts the audience and the market at the center of its considerations. To understand film as pop culture is to understand the complicated relationships between filmmakers, capital, the state, audiences, and broader Indonesian society. As the Indonesian film industry has expanded in terms of output, audience figures, visibility, and international reputation, it has invariably become mainstream.

Popular Cinema of the New Order

In returning to mainstream appeal, Indonesian films of the 2000s occupy a similar position in the cultural landscape as Indonesian films did in the 1970s and 1980s. However, there are structural, organizational, and thematic differences between the cinema of the New Order and the cinema of today. I will be marking this difference by defining mainstream cinema of the New Order as popular culture and mainstream cinema of the post New Order as pop culture. This is not merely semantics, but is a means to theorize the shift from the New Order to post–New Order cultural economy and explain why in the 1990s Indonesian cinema was no longer mainstream. Popular cinema of the New Order imagined a mass national audience, was defined through national frames, and was a cinema of the people. After *reformasi*, as cinema became mainstream again, it integrated with other entertainment industries, including promotion and marketing, with an audience that is now skewed towards the youth, and subject to market forces. Characterized by rapid turnover, and close attention to fashions and trends, contemporary Indonesian film is qualitatively different to the cinema of the New Order. There are similarities and continuities such as the horror genre being a staple, but the production, content, marketing, and audience, are very different.

If we follow the fortunes of Indonesian film production since its inception in the 1920s, the 1970s and 1980s represent a most golden era. Over these two decades, annual film production reached new peaks, cinema was a staple part of people's cultural diets, and the film industry was a prominent part of everyday life. Film producers operated in familiar genres such as comedies, romance, and horror for a mass audience, aided by state censorship and content policies which imagined the audience as a generalized, singular mass. In this context, film could be described as mainstream popular culture. Not only were Indonesian films well-liked and well-patronized, their themes and content reflected the interests of a majority of the population. Following Raymond Williams, Indonesian cinema constitutes popular culture not just because it was "of the people" but because it was conceptually contrasted with "high culture."[20] In cinema, high culture refers to art cinema or films made by "artist" filmmakers, which in Indonesia was defined and promoted by proponents of *film nasional*. As popular culture, cinema was a source of anxiety for proponents of *film nasional* who considered popular films to be vulgar, crass, and thoroughly commercialized and its audiences needed to be encouraged to watch "quality" films. This debate between popular cinema and "quality" cinema characterized debates around cinema during the New Order and helps us define mainstream Indonesian cinema of the period as popular culture.

Indonesian cinema's connection to the popular was evident in what anthropologist Karl Heider saw as the creation of a "national character" on the cinema screen.[21] Although dismissed by serious critics from Misbach Yusa Biran to Teguh Karya,[22] popular cinema incorporated personalities, jokes, mannerisms, and cultural references that could be broadly defined as Indonesian. In this way, cinema represented a broad mainstream culture offering entertainment to a majority of the population. Iconic genres, titles, and stars of Indonesian cinema emerged from this period of relatively stable production. Five big actors in the 1970s—Roy Marten, Doris Callebaute, Yati Octavia, Yenny Rachman, and Robby Sugara—dominated the popular cinema of the late 1970s earning up to 5 million rupiah per film. Suzzanna became an icon of the horror-mystical drama with her roles in *Ratu Ilmu Hitam* (*The Queen of Black Magic*, Imam Tantowi, 1981) and *Sundel Bolong* (*Whore with a Hole*, Sisworo Gautama Putra, 1981). Local comedies were defined by the Warkop DKI comedy trio who made thirty-four films between 1979 and 1991 and Betawi musician-comedian Benyamin S who acted in seventy-four films between 1970 and 1992.[23] Operating under restrictive conditions, the domestic film industry still managed to be the entertainment of choice for millions of Indonesians, offering a range of genres from action to horror, campus love stories to historical drama.

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[20] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana, 1976), 236–38.

[21] Karl G. Heider, *Indonesian Cinema: National Culture on Screen* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1991).

[22] Teguh Karya, "In Search of Ways and Means for Making the Film an Instrument of Expression," in *Histories and Stories: Cinema in New Order Indonesia*, ed. Krishna Sen (Melbourne: Monash University, 1988).

Indonesian cinema as popular culture was similarly evident in the practice of film consumption since watching film and going to the cinema are widely enjoyed cultural practices in Indonesia. Films were censored so that anyone from the general population could watch them. Going to the cinema was largely a family or communal experience, and where there were no fixed cinemas, mobile screenings called *layar tancap* were held periodically. *Layar tancap* were operated by touring operators who would set up a projector and screen in a public square or field and screen films at night. These were often sponsored by local officials or businesses, and were sometimes held in conjunction with wedding celebrations; they brought together the whole village or neighborhood for carnivalesque occasions, with food and trinket stalls and other forms of entertainment. People came together to mingle, socialize, and hang out. Cinemas were located across the archipelago in towns and cities and served a broad national audience. This was a cinema for everyone.

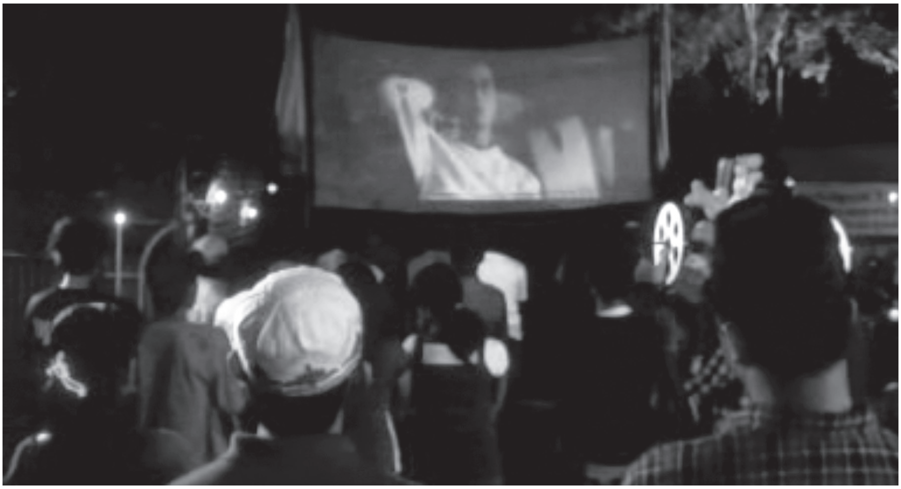

Figure 0.3: *Layar tancap* as presented in *3 Doa 3 Cinta* (*3 Prayers 3 Loves*, Nurman Hakim, 2008). Image courtesy of TrixImages.

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[23] Warkop DKI are a comedy trio consisting of Dono, Kasino, and Indro active in various forms from the early 1970s to today. Warkop is a contraction of Warung Kopi meaning “coffee stall.” DKI is an abbreviation of Daerah Khusus Ibukota (Capital City Special Region), a reference to Jakarta.

Indonesian cinema of the 1970s and 1980s was the most visible form of popular entertainment. Films drew inspiration from other cultural forms such as novels, comics, radio plays, and sometimes copied overseas titles as is common in film industries across the world. The racy American drama *The Blue Lagoon* (Randal Kleiser, 1980) for example was remade as *Pengantin Pantai Biru* (*The Bridegroom of Blue Beach*, Wim Umboh, 1983) with Merriam Bellina and Sandro Tobing in the lead roles. Film magazines including *Ria Film* and *Majalah Film* provided gossip and insider news from the industry. Television broadcasting which began in 1962 was possible competition for cinema, but with only the state broadcaster TVRI in operation it was primarily propaganda and educative content, rather than entertainment. Although cinema competed with radio and television, it occupied a preeminent position in the nation's mainstream popular culture. Official audience figures have never been reliable due to the informal nature of the film business and under-reporting to avoid paying tax and royalties, but anecdotally and from reports and writing at the time, Indonesian film was the top entertainment of choice at the cinemas throughout the 1970s and 1980s. By the late 1970s, Indonesian films accounted for about 50 percent of tickets sold at the box-office.

Tastes were however beginning to shift and fragment in the 1980s as a domestic middle class grew in cultural and economic importance. They were less inclined to consume Indonesian films and preferred imported products that matched their aspirations and lifestyle orientation. Produced as a result of New Order economic development, the middle class became increasingly visible in the big cities of Jakarta, Surabaya, Medan, Bandung, and Denpasar and in the consumption spaces catering to their new consumption patterns. Shopping malls were built in Jakarta such as Glodok Plaza in 1986, Pondok Indah Mall in 1991, Blok M Plaza in 1992, and Plaza Senayan in 1996, offering middle class consumers access to lifestyle products, status markers, and taste segmentation.[24] Within these air-conditioned shopping malls, new modern multiplex cinemas offered the latest audio-visual technology in comfortable surrounds, with tickets priced accordingly. Indonesian films struggled to access these cinemas in part because they were not catering to the taste profile of these audiences and could not match the technical quality of Hollywood films which from the mid-1970s had shifted to the high-budget blockbuster model.[25]

Local filmmakers lacked the resources and income to respond to these changing market conditions because economic and structural conditions of the film industry hindered their ability to innovate. As most producers were located in the Jakarta area, they relied on a network of brokers to distribute their films to regions where the majority of their audiences lived. Brokers paid a flat fee for distribution rights which guaranteed producers a set income but did not reward them for producing successful films and discouraged risk-taking or investment in higher production values. Moreover, industry players found their market share decreasing and their ability to generate income reduced when the film industry came under the influence of Suharto crony Sudwikatmono, who monopolized film imports in the late 1970s before cornering the exhibition market through his Cinema 21 chain of theaters in the 1980s. Over time, this led to a decline in income and revenue, a stagnation in production, and compounded by an inability by the film industry to respond to changes in audience tastes and interests. Without access to middle class consumers, income for Indonesian film producers steadily declined.

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[24] Lizzy van Leeuwen, *Lost in Mall: An Ethnography of Middle-Class Jakarta in the 1990s* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

[25] Toby Miller et al., *Global Hollywood 2* (London: BFI Publishing, 2005).

Filmmakers were further stymied by the New Order's corporatist political economy which had made the representative organizations of the film industry largely docile and compliant to the state. The film industry was structured to support the New Order's organicist mode of governance by bringing the various industry representative bodies into a forum relationship with the Department of Information. Organizations such as the Indonesian Film Producers Association (PPFI, Persatuan Produser Film Indonesia), Indonesian Cinema Owners Organization (GPBSI, Gabungan Pengusaha Bioskop Seluruh Indonesia), and Film Importers Association (AIF, Asosiasi Importir Film) representing producers, cinema owners, and importers respectively, subordinated their own interests for the sake of national objectives such as order and development. Under an authoritarian regime which practiced cronyism, critical problems could not be adequately discussed and resolved for fear of upsetting the regime. This entrenched a conservative establishment who maintained the status quo and were wary of radical or critical viewpoints. Young Indonesians who wanted to become filmmakers were subject to onerous accreditation procedures to socialize them into this prevailing work culture, further limiting new ideas and innovative filmmaking practices.

Although the Indonesian film industry continued to provide entertainment for a mass audience into the early 1990s, it had effectively stagnated and was merely recycling old ideas and tired concepts. Concurrently, media industries both locally and globally were beginning to change with globalization and the proliferation of new technologies such as videocassette and satellite television. With the introduction of private television broadcasting in 1989 and its subsequent rapid expansion, the media landscape in Indonesia changed dramatically, multiplying the amount of available content and entertainment options to the country's population. Private broadcasters were more attuned to capturing large audiences by giving them what they wanted. Selling these audiences to advertisers, private television stations generated incomes that dwarfed anything that a feature film in the cinema could earn. Local cinema declined in popularity as audiences shifted to television en masse along with many producers and filmmakers who made the new television content. The few remaining producers in feature film production turned almost exclusively toward *filem esek-esek* (sex films) in a failed attempt to regain audiences.[26] Local films moved from the mainstream to the periphery and declined in number, quality, and visibility, throughout the 1990s.

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[26] Sexual content had been used in popular films since the 1970s, but in the 1990s it had become much more explicit in film titles, posters, and taglines. The films of the 1990s were similar to Category III films from Hong Kong, which often played in the same cinemas, although less explicit because of Indonesian censorship requirements.

Pop Culture as Youth Market

In this book I conceptualize contemporary Indonesian cinema as pop culture, rather than as national cinema or as popular culture as it has been previously imagined in the Indonesian context. Understanding Indonesian film as pop culture focuses on two attributes that help explain the return of the Indonesian film industry after 1998: the audience and changing consumption patterns, and the product and new modes of production linked into other media industries. Rather than seeing the audience as an undifferentiated mass, we need to see the audience as composed of segments who respond to the market of cultural goods based on taste, fashion, trends, and their need for identity-based consumption expressed through desire and pleasure. Likewise, films as products cannot easily be divided into the "quality" and the "commercial" but need to be seen as expressions of production relationships and negotiations between different interests. Using pop culture rather than popular culture is to further differentiate the era of mass culture associated with the twentieth century, with the current era in which consumption patterns interact with the relationships between capital, the state, producers, in a commercialized and liberalized marketplace.

As Chua Beng-Huat has previously shown,[27] pop culture refers to mass-produced entertainment aimed for broad consumption in modern market-based capitalist societies. For Chua, this has become the predominant form of culture in circulation today, replacing not only traditional culture but more diverse than the homogenized products of "mass culture."[28] Most pop culture is produced and circulates through modern media forms such as feature films, music, television programs, and comics. In addition, pop culture is characterized by a rapid turnover of products which in turn drives a constant search for newness in the latest fashions and trends. Whilst pop culture appeals to the broad population, its primary consumers and trendsetters are the youth who have disposable income to spend and who use pop culture to define and shape their identities. Viewed through the lens of pop culture, the trajectory of Indonesian cinema after 1998 becomes much clearer, but it requires a historical understanding of the emergence of the youth consumer segment since the 1970s.

In Indonesia, the emergence of market driven, youth focused pop culture, did not go unnoticed, but was seen as a worrying development that threatened the quality of art and national culture. Such sentiment was captured in a 1977 edition

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[27] Beng Huat Chua, "Conceptualizing an East Asian Popular Culture," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 5 (2004): 200–221; Beng Huat Chua, "Return to/of the Political Popular in Cultural Studies in Asia," *Situations* 9, no. 1 (2016): 1–19.

[28] Theodor Adorno, *The Culture Industry* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991).

of the national academic magazine *Prisma* which lamented the rise of a new phenomenon it called *budaya pop* (pop culture) because it came at the expense of more traditional and nationalist art and culture. It saw new forms of writing, new genres of music, and the popularity of comics as signs of shifting consumer tastes towards entertainment that was pleasurable and light, discussing issues such as romance or growing up. Literature, comics, music, and radio were much more responsive in capturing new youth interests and producing content compared to the film industry which was much more focused on the mass popular market, rather than on the new youth segment.

One of the antecedents of this youth segment can be traced back to the establishment of Radio Prambors in Jakarta. Set up in the late 1960s, and formally licensed in 1970, Radio Prambors came to define much of the emerging pop culture in Indonesia through music and on-air programming. Prambors built up a dedicated audience by staying at the forefront of emerging trends in music, discovering local acts, and developing innovative in-house productions such as the Warkop comedy group in 1973 and the radio play *Catatan Si Boy* (*Boy's Notes*) first broadcast in 1984. *Catatan Si Boy* broadcast on Thursday nights from 10pm to midnight became an iconic voice for Indonesian youth. These forms of pop culture began to articulate their identity as young people otherwise unrepresented in the political system and the mass media such as television and cinema.

For the New Order, the youth—or *pemuda*—constituted an ambiguous segment of the population since they had been instrumental to many of the political movements leading to independence in the 1950s and to Suharto's rise in the 1960s. Feared by the state and poorly understood by producers, youth were increasingly depoliticized over the course of the New Order's regime, becoming "consuming youth" rather than "revolutionary youth." This was visible in the film version of *Catatan Si Boy* (Nasri Cheppy, 1987) starring the popular Onky Alexander in the titular role, one of only a handful of films that targeted youth audiences. In the film, Boy is presented as a model youth, fashionable, working out in the gym, driving a flashy car, but also chaste and pious. At the end of the film he flies to America, the epitome of modern consumerism, to attend university. The politically engaged youth of the 1960s had been replaced by the trendy, materialist youth of the 1980s. Although state efforts to depoliticize young people were not entirely successful, as the student-led protests of 1997–1998 made obvious, the emergence of a consuming middle class enabled much of their energies and identity expression to be channeled into pop culture.

For these middle-class youth audiences, Indonesian films were largely stuck in old paradigms from the 1970s and 1980s and could not keep up with styles and fashions that their consumption patterns and lifestyles demanded. Pop culture into the 1990s would be characterized by a splintering of taste, subcultural segmentation, and fast-moving trends. Global fashions and forms contributed to shaping youth trends as the cultural repertoire available to young Indonesian consumers expanded dramatically due to globalization.[29] Indonesia's mediascape proliferated with the widespread availability of home video, satellite television, and privately-owned television broadcasters. The pop culture television program *MTV* began airing in Indonesia in 1995 and gave voice and recognition to Indonesia's youth. Music from the likes of Slank, Chrisye, Dewa 19, Iwa K, Sheila on 7, Padi, Potret, AB Three, Iwan Fals, Dewi Gita, and others became the focal point for youth culture, often including slang, satire, protests, and themes such as love and self-expression. Music provided Indonesia's youth a space to socialize and discuss their problems, and represented their concerns, dreams, and issues in ways that other media did not. Music videos became an important part of the youth diet alongside going to the cinema to watch Hollywood (not Indonesian) films. The film industry in the 1990s was distant from changes in youth consumption patterns, and peripheral to mainstream pop culture. One of the primary reasons that the film industry of the late 1980s and 1990s collapsed is because it failed to appeal to young people.

In these youth-orientated media industries of the 1990s, new institutions of production, marketing, and distribution were established to keep up with demand and ever-changing trends and tastes. This focus on the needs and desires of audiences had already been normalized in privately owned national broadcast television, but in music the focus was much more on the youth market. Attentive to audience tastes and trends, the music industry developed strategies to recruit cultural producers who were attuned to the emerging trends in 1990s youth culture and who could produce content relevant to them. Music recording companies developed music video production arms that were linked into television stations and the live music circuit. Infrastructure and standards were introduced to facilitate the easy transfer and consumption of cultural products such as music cassettes and fashion. These were integrated into global forms of pop culture and attentive to emerging trends and fashions. By the end of the 1990s, there was a significant and flourishing culture industry producing pop culture orientated towards the growing youth market.[30] What was missing were local feature films.

In the wake of the 1997–1998 Asian Financial Crisis (known locally as *krismon*) and the resignation of President Suharto on May 21, 1998—marking the end of the New Order regime—new opportunities appeared in the cultural economy. Bankruptcies of old business players freed space for new sources of capital and new players to enter the media industry, which during the New Order had been largely closed off to outsiders. Institutional and political reform followed by reducing the authoritarian powers of state agencies, introducing market reforms into the economy, and instituting forms of democratic accountability into the political system. Pertinent to the film industry was the abolition of the Department of Information in 1999 under President Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie, and with it the end of the onerous requirements placed on film production including script approval and membership in state-sanctioned unions. Increasingly the economy would be opened to the market, giving precedence to competition, and making consumption a more determinant mechanism. These conditions would assist the post-1998 filmmakers by opening their industry to the market and providing incentive to integrate with prevailing modes of pop culture.

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[29] Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Culture Economy," *Theory, Culture, and Society* 7 (1990): 295–310.

[30] Michael Bodden, "Rap in Indonesian Youth Music of the 1990s: 'Globalization,' 'Outlaw Genres,' and Social Protest," *Asian Music* 36, no. 2 (2005): 1–26. Emma Baulch, "Alternative Music and Mediation in Late New Order Indonesia," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 3, no. 2 (2002): 219–34. https://doi.org/10.1080/1464937022000000138.

When film production began again after 1998 through the efforts of young, indie-minded filmmakers their concern was not to appeal to a broad national audience, but rather make films that they as young people wanted to make. Emerging from thirty-two years of domestic authoritarian rule under which creative expression was curtailed and highly regulated, *reformasi* offered a space to make forms of culture that had previously been forbidden, dangerous, underground, or risky. They made films about issues relevant to themselves as young people about first love, identity, youth struggles, self-definition, and so on. These representations of youth culture found an audience segment already primed from the 1990s and now a significant consumer segment in the Indonesian entertainment economy. As middle-class values and consumption patterns normalized across the economy, the demand for pop culture increased, primarily from a youth segment who came of age after 1998.[31] Indonesia's youth were looking for other outlets that spoke to them. They were turning away from television and came to the cinema as a place where their interests, identities, and struggles were increasingly being represented. Filmmakers who were themselves young Indonesians found a connection with a new audience by expressing a shared set of tastes and interests, desires and pleasures. This was a different set of concerns to that of the cinema during the New Order.

Whilst creativity has been largely freed from state intervention, it is now the market that drives investment, allocates resources, and determines relationships between various industry actors. This has made Indonesian cinema much more attentive to its audiences and responsive to the various trends within broader Indonesian society. At the same time, it has allowed for the institutionalization of cultural production into systematic operations and processes that can produce content of a consistent and regularized quality. Film is now a part of pop culture in Indonesia, producing content for the mainstream market and diversifying to satisfy subcultures and niche market segments. New segments have emerged reflecting a diversity of interests giving rise to new content and new debates. A lively pop culture gives rise to new trends that interact in complex and fragmented ways, of which pop Islam has been the most visible and the most contentious over the last decade.[32] As the Indonesian film industry has integrated with prevailing modes of pop culture, it has often been at the forefront of new cultural movements and trends. Indonesian film is no longer peripheral, indie, or alternative culture, but now constitutes an important component of the mainstream.

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[31] Nuraini Juliastuti, "Whatever I Want: Media and Youth in Indonesia before and after 1998," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 7, no. 1 (2006): 139–43. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649370500463786.

[32] Inaya Rakhmani, *Mainstreaming Islam in Indonesia Television, Identity, and the Middle Class* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-54880-1.

How to Go Mainstream

In modern consumer societies, pop culture is omnipresent—on television, on the radio, in the cinemas, and on the streets as fashion—and we take its presence for granted. At the same time, pop culture is ephemeral and its trends and fashions transient. Histories of pop culture have been written that chronicle the ever-changing trends and fashions as singers, stars, brands, and icons rise to prominence, gain popularity, before falling out of favor and fading away. However, this is not the same as *historicizing* pop culture, which traces the contingency of broader cultural movements and cultural forms. In many places and at varying times, different forms or modes of pop culture may become unavailable or irrelevant, or the content of what is available may be dominated by product from elsewhere. In these cases, foreign domination may be seen as cultural hegemony, and has been a consistent theme in analyses of Hollywood's presence in cinemas across the world.[33] Just as salient are the local conditions of cultural production that allow producers of culture to connect with and react to the tastes and needs of their audiences, thereby bringing a form of pop culture into the mainstream.

It may seem counterintuitive for local feature films not to be a part of mainstream pop culture, but for around fifteen years in Indonesia they were not. Pop culture products and entire genres are susceptible to changing audience interests and cycles of popularity, and at times local producers may be out of step with what local audiences want.[34] This is what happened in Indonesia in the 1990s: what was being made was being watched by very few people, in cinemas at the fringes of social respectability. It was not attracting the interest of youth consumers who drive the production of pop culture. Indonesia's youth still went to the cinema, but they went to watch imported and foreign films rather than anything locally made. Producers of culture are constantly working to make their work relevant, make it accessible, and adopt familiar tropes, themes, and content. In instances where pop culture thrives, there exists mechanisms, platforms, and processes that enable and facilitate the translation of ideas and creativity into a palatable and consumable form that reaches audiences. Through these mechanisms, a cultural form can become mainstream.

Whilst seeing film as pop culture moves away from aesthetic and value judgements inherent in the distinctions of high culture or national cinema, we require ways with which to classify and demarcate different streams of cultural content and define different cultural spaces. To some extent the categories of high culture and popular culture have collapsed with the unravelling of previous forms of cultural authority, new media making previously exclusive forms of culture more accessible, and the proliferation of subcultures, but this does not mean that pop culture is homogenous and free from distinctions. Therefore, this book uses the concept of the mainstream as a new way of thinking about and discussing pop culture. Mainstream pop culture is liked and acceptable to a majority of people or to the "center." It is here that pop culture finds its primary audience and the constellation of values, ideas, and content that are acceptable to them. Mainstream culture is often discussed in derisive terms as being derivative, formulaic, and predictable but it is precisely these features and the stability and predictability of themes, genres, formats, and values that make it attractive and pleasurable to a broad audience. Mainstream culture is nevertheless constantly changing and evolving to suit new tastes, trends, fashions, and interests driven by youth consumers.

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[33] See for example Miller et al., *Global Hollywood*, 2004.

[34] For more on cycles, see Amanda Ann Klein, *American Film Cycles: Reframing Genres, Screening Social Problems, and Defining Subcultures* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011).

Mainstream pop culture can be defined in contrast to alternative forms of culture, typically independent, alternative, art, and the experimental. Here I draw on Pierre Bourdieu's work on "the field of cultural production,"[35] in which he draws a distinction between the field of limited production and the field of large-scale production. These distinctions are determined partly by content and format, but also by production methods, means of circulation, audiences, and consumption location. In Bourdieuian terms, mainstream pop culture corresponds to the field of large-scale production in which cultural goods are produced for a wide public of consumers for economic profit. Products are distributed through commercial channels of distribution such as prominent cinema chains and television, catering to a large an audience as possible. Independent or indie production typically occurs outside these networks and channels and often embodies alternative values—oppositional or minority politics for example—in formats and genres that are less palatable to a mainstream audience.[36] Alternative and indie culture finds avenues in less prominent venues such as underground clubs, alternative radio, independent cinemas, and so on.[37] Conversely, art and experimental media tend to be harder to understand, are less accessible, and thus outside of a mainstream cultural diet. There is constant movement, negotiation and appropriation between different cultural streams, as content creators seek popularity and greater audiences and established commercial producers adopt ideas and trends from alternative and indie content.

To "go mainstream" and to appeal to this broad middle ground, cultural producers shape their products in particular ways. This means products need to be meaningful to audiences and respond to their changing tastes and needs. Audiences will seek and find what is meaningful and pleasurable for them, and this may not automatically be pop culture from their own culture or country. This was seen for example in England in the 1930s, when British working class audiences snubbed locally made films in favor of Hollywood films because the latter spoke to their aspirations more than stale British films could.[38] Locally produced pop culture might have certain advantages over imported content, for reasons of familiarity and accessibility, but it is by no means guaranteed. Once producers of pop culture have found their audience and the means to appeal to them, then that cultural product might enter the mainstream cultural diet. Stuart Hall calls this relationship between production and consumption as one of "articulation" in that cultural producers make culture that appeals to and has meaning for consumers at a particular time.[39] Ultimately, this articulation between production and consumption sustains pop culture as an industry. The exact ingredients necessary to do this will vary from society to society, but in general terms mainstream culture will need to be familiar, relevant, and accessible to its audiences. I briefly explain each of these three in turn and their importance to how pop culture becomes mainstream.

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[35] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed," *Poetics* 12, no. 4–5 (November 1983): 311–56.

[36] See Roy Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music Culture*, 5th ed. (London: Routledge, 2016), 14–16. Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).

[37] Roy Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music Culture*, 203–4.

Pop culture relies on familiarity, often expressed through genre or other forms of content, to meet audience expectations. This is a central argument in genre theory as found in the work of Andrew Tudor, where genre is used to describe the process by which cultural products are constantly being renewed, but in ways that are incremental and dynamic rather than sudden or rupturing.[40] Genres are a way of conforming content and stories to recognizable patterns and drawing on familiar tropes, presented through characters and language that the audience will understand. Characters will be recognizable, as will the situations they get themselves in and the locations and language that appear. Familiarity is also expressed through the problems that characters encounter, and the dreams and values that emerge from these scenarios. This does not mean that audiences will only consume what is locally made, but even local cultural producers need to know how to translate contemporary interests and themes into a pop culture product that audiences want to consume. Different genres and programming require different skills and abilities on the part of their creators, to "articulate" to their respective audiences. In Indonesia, *sinetron* became a highly successful format in the 1990s and remains popular until today, whereas feature film only regained its popularity with audiences in the decade following 1998.

Pop culture that is also relevant to its audience by being meaningful to people's lives and struggles will have greater mainstream appeal. Recent studies of how

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[38] Peter Miles and Malcolm Smith, *Cinema, Literature and Society* (London: Croom Helm, 1987).

[39] See Lawrence Grossberg, "On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10, no. 2 (1986): 45–60.

[40] Andrew Tudor, *Image and Influence: Studies in the Sociology of Film* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1974), 225–26.

Japanese and later Korean television drama have gained popularity across East Asia show that these dramas have a particular appeal to young women audiences because they describe the dilemma of romance, family and work that modern women struggle with in their day to day lives.[41] For these women, television dramas present and operationalize a social reality that is more familiar to them than dramas made in their own country or American television shows such as *Sex in the City*. The values, concerns, and struggles are more familiar and relevant to them. Mainstream content therefore needs to be able to speak to its audience, cover themes and ideas that people want to watch, and discuss the concerns that audiences have. For teenagers who are often the primary consumers of pop culture, this will include content that discusses coming of age themes such as love and relationships.

Mainstream pop culture content also needs to be accessible in terms of both form and content. Accessible content speaks to an audience in their own language, through culturally appropriate idioms, and characters, in recognizable situations. This may also include stories and scenarios that are close to people's interests and experiences and thus "of the people." Cultural products need also to be accessible for people to consume in formats and media that are readily available. Mainstream pop culture occupies the main commercial channels of distribution including broadcast television, music radio, and the cinema which are accessible and available. In Indonesia for example, affordability is important and explains why films are consumed on "pirated" DVDs rather than legitimate DVD copies because of the significant price difference. Mainstream pop culture can be characterized as much by its location and spaces of consumption as it can be by its content and format.

"Going mainstream" is therefore not a simple equation and cultural industries around the world constantly flirt with failure in creating and delivering content to audiences. Films regularly flop at the box-office, and music albums disappear into obscurity. Filmmakers are constantly vexed by the tastes and interest of audience, unable to know for sure what will succeed and what will fail. Integrating film into other forms of pop culture by adapting content and adopting music and stars, and utilizing marketing and advertising, lessen the risk of market failure. We often come to see mainstream pop culture as already operating, rather than seeing it take shape and develop as it has in Indonesia over the past ten to fifteen years, and this is what Indonesian cinema shows us: how a pop culture form can go mainstream. It is a process that is complex, fraught, and revealing not only in terms of how cultural industries operate, and the ways in which cultural production articulates with consumption, but of the broader post-authoritarian context of Indonesia in the years following the end of the New Order and its democratization in which the citizen-consumer has become increasingly sovereign.

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[41] Koichi Iwabuchi, "Discrepant Intimacy: Popular Culture Flows in East Asia," in *Asian Media Studies: Politics of Subjectivities*, ed. John Nguyet Erni and Siew Keng Chua (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 19–36. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470774281.ch2.

Inside *Going Mainstream*

Following this introduction, *Going Mainstream* is divided into seven chapters with a short conclusion. Chapter 1 delineates Indonesian film history from the beginning of the twentieth century until 1998. In tracing the fortunes of local production under different political regimes—colonialism, Japanese occupation, independence and guided democracy, and the New Order—it shows how film has been imagined, discussed, and operationalized by various actors, including intellectuals, the public, state officials, and filmmakers themselves. Behind the names and production numbers of film history, there is a cultural politics that has shaped the discourse of what Indonesian film is and what it should be. Indonesian film history is read as an ongoing conflict between a commercial, popular imperative and a national cinema ideal.

Chapter 2 looks at the impact of a new generation of young filmmakers such as Rizal Mantovani, Riri Riza, Mira Lesmana, Upi Avianto, and Monty Tiwa, who experimented with new technologies and modes of production. Beginning film production as largely an indie endeavor, over the decade they realigned feature film towards mainstream pop culture. Firstly, they provoked the largest movie theater chain in Indonesia, the Cinema 21 Group, to play local films again, allowing local audiences direct access to their films. This enabled other young filmmakers to gain exposure, seek audiences, while earning valuable experience in feature-length filmmaking. Secondly, young filmmakers developed new storytelling and visual techniques to make films that local audiences could enjoy, restoring film as a consumption option. Thirdly, young filmmakers forged ties with older producers to secure a consistent supply of production capital, allowing them to produce films on a more consistent basis. In going from indie to industry, Indonesia shows how a cultural form such as cinema can re-enter mainstream pop culture.

Chapters 3 and 4 reveal the ways in which young filmmakers such as Hanung Bramantyo, Rizal Mantovani, Kuntz Agus, and Nayato Fio Nuala have reconnected with young audiences in Indonesia by reinventing two genres: horror films and Islamic-themed films. Both have been criticized for being commercially oriented, but these are important genres that appeal to mainstream tastes. Horror has been a staple of Indonesian film culture since the 1970s, and the return of the genre after 2000 showed how young filmmakers were able to revitalize it by translating the unconscious fears and anxieties of Indonesia's youth into traditional ghostly forms. Islamic themed films rose in prominence in 2008 and tapped into a growing Islamic market in post–New Order Indonesia. Often mixing Islam and love themes, this new genre speaks to young Indonesians whose fantasies are tied to modern romance and religious piety. Yet this provoked debate and controversy around the commodification of Islam, representations of polygamy, and the role and place of Islam in everyday life.

Chapter 5 considers the exhibition sector, its role as point of consumption for feature films, and the dominance of the Cinema 21 Group. Tracing the emergence of cinema technologies and the shifts in the exhibition sector through the financial crisis, it examines how the exhibition paradigm contributes to the current landscape of film consumption which in turn shapes how producers and filmmakers find audiences and make money. Despite attempts to challenge the market dominance of the Cinema 21 Group through protest and litigation, it has instead been big capital who have capitalized on the under-serviced cinema market, introducing a logic of large-scale capital investment whilst challenging the dominant position of the Cinema 21 Group. This opened the exhibition sector to new forms of competition marking the sector's further integration into the market system and global capitalism.

Chapter 6 returns to the political economy of the film industry, pointing out how the film industry is structured around an oligopoly of producers. These producers were nurtured during the New Order expanding into the television sector where they professionalized their production businesses to the point that they have emerged as large-scale enterprises in the post-1998 market era. Although subject to negative characterization due to their ethnicity, these producers are the product of the New Order political economy which benefited from their politically weak position as ethnic minorities. Despite the changes ushered in by *reformasi*, these large producers have been able to capitalize on the open market conditions, returning to film production by taken advantage of their structural advantage, allowing them to maintain a position as an oligopoly in an industry otherwise subject to market forces.

Chapter 7 discusses the ongoing conflicts filmmakers have had with a state that is still adapting to a post-authoritarian era. The persistence of draconian laws and regulations, and the continuation of state apathy and corruption in the creative sector continue to frustrate filmmakers. Lawmakers continue to be embedded in an old paradigm reminiscent of the New Order, and struggle to adapt to the new realities of a market driven pop culture even if the term "creative industries" has become a new policy buzzword for the government as it tries to capitalize on the creative potential of Indonesia's citizens. Attempts by filmmakers to bring reform to the film sector have more often than not failed, bringing into question the state's commitment to reform and the ability of the film industry to provide the structural support for the next generation of filmmakers.

Finally, the Conclusion looks at the new realities of the Indonesian film industry determined as it is by the market rather than the state. It reconsiders the three salient frames of reference being used: *film nasional* (national cinema), pop culture, and more recently creative industries. This book offers a new approach to studying cinema in the context of Indonesian post-authoritarianism by understanding that cinema is subject to a variety of often contradictory forces and influences. For studies of pop culture, it shows how the concept of the mainstream provides a means to capture and analyze cultural industries through times of political and economic upheaval. By detailing the important process of institutionalization whereby forms of production and consumption are routinized and regularized, a pop culture industry can be sustained that is able to respond creatively to emerging trends and demands within the market and contribute to ongoing debates about Indonesia today. It recognizes the growing power of the market in Indonesia and the ways in which pop culture is increasingly integrated with all aspects of daily life.

Conclusion

Indonesian Cinema as Pop Culture

The process of Indonesian cinema going mainstream required alterations in how films were regulated, planned, financed, made, and screened. Many of these changes were made possible by *reformasi*, which provided the necessary reset and allowed new players to enter the film industry in the late 1990s and early 2000s. These new players reimagined how films were made and what films contained. By making films that appealed to a contemporary audience, a new generation of filmmakers reinvented the cinema as a place for young people to consume pop culture. As the cinema regained its place as a vibrant location for youth culture and as it became a part of the cultural diet of Indonesian youth, it attracted large commercial production companies who have helped sustain the higher rates of production necessary because of their resources and by coupling with the new generation of filmmakers who are able to make attractive and therefore profitable films. Indonesia's film industry today sees a mix of large commercial companies, smaller independent companies, and a small but thriving indie scene. All these ingredients have been essential in helping feature films go mainstream after a decade in the 1990s when feature films were peripheral to mainstream culture.

In Chapter 1, I established that the dominant narrative of Indonesian cinema has been a prescriptive national cinema often referred to as *film nasional*. This narrative was blind to audience tastes and interests and failed to understand the changing technological and social forces between the 1970s and 1990s. When filmmaking restarted after 1998, as detailed in Chapter 2, young filmmakers drew on codes of cultural production they had developed in television, advertising, and music video, aligning cinema with the mainstream codes of cultural representation. In Chapters 3 and 4, I linked developments in the genres of horror and Islamic film to the formation of largescale commercial production and a closer association between filmmakers and the needs and desires of their audiences—both in experiencing the trauma of the New Order and consumption patterns linked new Islamic piety. Chapters 5 and 6 show how the reformed film industry has remained structured by legacy companies and figures in the exhibition sector linked to an oligopoly of large producers who straddle media sectors. In Chapter 7, I consider the regulatory legacy of the New Order and the ongoing struggles filmmakers have had in dealing with censorship and the government.

In conclusion, I outline the three ways that film in Indonesia can be conceptualized as it consolidates in the second decade after *reformasi*. As outlined in Chapter 1, the predominant way of thinking about cinema in Indonesia has been as *film nasional* which idealizes the filmmaker-as-artist. Given that *film nasional* has historical depth, it continues to be evoked in discussions of film and the film industry. Secondly, the Indonesian government has since 2011 adopted creative industries as its preferred means of approaching cinema, but as the previous chapter showed, the government's record of regulating and promoting the film industry is patchy at best, with tendencies to control and limit rather than support. Thirdly, I suggest that seeing film as pop culture changes the focus to the audience and its consumption patterns, which is consistent with the way in which market relations now shape the film industry and its output.

Film Nasional: The End of the Artist

As discussed in Chapter 1, *film nasional* rests on the premise that a truly Indonesian cinema can only be made by indigenous, idealist, artists. Solidified by the work of key New Order intellectuals such as Salim Said and Misbach Yusa Biran, the *film nasional* position was the dominant interpretation of, and solution to, the film industry's problems. It was based on a retelling of the life and work of Usmar Ismail who was a progenitor of a nationalist cinema in post-independence Indonesia in the 1950s. Although Ismail's own ability to maintain his idealism faltered and his films were not always paradigms of *film nasional*, throughout the New Order he was revered and filmmakers such as Djajakusuma, Arifin C Noer, Sjuman Djaya, Teguh Karya, Slamet Rahardjo, and Wim Umboh were located within the *film nasional* tradition. Through the work of these filmmakers, a new national cinema was to emerge because as artists they were expected to approach film as a medium for the unadulterated expression of their ideas and representations of life. Yet state control, audience tastes, and a commercially-orientated film industry worked against the realization of *film nasional* ambitions. For proponents of *film nasional*, these factors could be overcome given the right mix of state policy, audience support, and filmmaker orientation.

It was therefore expected that after 1998 new idealist filmmakers would emerge after the moribund 1990s to carry the mantle of *film nasional* forward in the footsteps of Ismail and thereby revitalize not only the film industry but also the entire film industry with a less commercial orientation. However, filmmakers working after 1998 were a generation cut off from the events of the 1950s and had little connection to *film nasional*. Almost none of them had experience in theater, unlike the generation of idealists before them. To many of them, Indonesian nationalism had been sullied by the New Order regime which had used national institutions and nationalist rhetoric to further its own ideological and hegemonic goals, turning many of the symbols of the nation into empty slogans and forms of coercion. Nationalism, as it had been conceived, was bankrupted by the New Order, and young filmmakers wanted to invent something new, turning first to indie and later to the commercial mainstream to realize this. This is not to say that idealist filmmakers did not emerge after 1998: both Edwin and Joko Anwar are post-1998 idealists, despite the fact that their ambitions and politics were not aligned with *film nasional*.

IKJ graduate Edwin hit national headlines when his short film *Kara, Anak Sebatang Pohon* (*Kara, the Daughter of a Tree*, 2005) became the first Indonesian short film to screen at the Director's Fortnight at the Cannes Film Festival.[1] This immediately identified Edwin as a talented and provocative filmmaker. His feature films *Babi Buta yang Ingin Terbang* (*Blind Pig Who Wants to Fly*, 2008) and *Kebun Binatang* (*Postcards from the Zoo*, 2012) showed however that his idealism was not directed towards nationalism, but rather forms of contemplative self-expression. Even his more recent commercial work *Posesif* (*Possessive*, 2017) and *Aruna dan Lidahnya* (*Aruna and Her Tongue*, 2018) focus on everyday forms of belonging and experience in Indonesia. In particular *Babi Buta* is a challenging mediation on what it means to be Chinese in Indonesia, dramatizing the history of stigmatization, marginalization, and exploitation that the ethnic Chinese have endured. Here, Edwin's idealism is not directed at celebrating the nation and its independence, but rather describing its shortcomings in protecting its citizens irrespective of background or difference.[2] As an early contender for idealist, Edwin clearly did not conform to *film nasional*'s ideal.

Similarly, Joko Anwar is the other possible candidate, having publicly stated a number of times that he approaches film as an idealist. He has been particularly critical of "filmmakers for hire" who he says are not the same as filmmakers who "have something to say" like himself or Edwin. Looking over his film and television work, Anwar's idealism is quite different to the nationalism of those who precede him. Anwar's definition of idealism is to assert his autonomy and vision as a film director, but it is not an idealism directed towards the nation. His work rarely if at all discusses national issues, with many such as *Kala* (*Dead Time*, 2007), *Pintu Terlarang* (*The Forbidden Door*, 2009), *Modus Anomali* (2012), and *Halfworlds* (2015, HBO Asia), rooted much more firmly in the noir genre. *A Copy of My Mind* (2015) set in Jakarta about two unlikely lovers, does offer a portrait of contemporary Jakarta and the struggles of life, but is not a celebration to the nation. Rather, *A Copy of My Mind* is a study in alienation and despair as the two lovers seek shelter from a dangerous and predatory society.

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[1] This was the third Indonesian film to screen at Cannes Film Festival after *Tjoet Nja' Dhien* in 1989 and *Daun di Atas Bantal* (Leaf on a Pillow, Garin Nugroho) in 1998.

[2] Gaik Cheng Khoo, "Spotlight on the Films of Indonesian Filmmaker Edwin," Asian Cinema 21, no. 2 (September 2010): 135–49. https://doi.org/10.1386/ac.21.2.135_1.

Despite both Edwin and Joko Anwar approaching filmmaking as an artistic endeavor in which idealism rather than commercialism drives their work, neither can be said to be in the same vein of idealism-as-nationalism per *film nasional*. If anything, the assumed relationship between idealism, art, and nationalism have been decoupled in the post *reformasi* era. Nationalism means something very different to the post-1998 generation who did not live through the revolutionary period of the late 1940s and the independence era of the 1950s. Instead, they have emerged following a thirty-two-year period of domestic authoritarianism, in which the Indonesian state and not a foreign colonial power, controlled the population. To them, idealism is much closer to the themes and ideas of the indie movement that emerged in the years following the end of the New Order in which the creative autonomy of the filmmaker is asserted against state control on one hand and big, commercial business interests on the other. For *film nasional* to be relevant after 1998 requires major revision and reconsideration of what national cinema means in the post-authoritarian context. The era of the artist as the conscience and voice of the nation has passed.

Creative Industries: Back to the Future

Given that the state was such a dominant influence over film and culture during the New Order, there has been a continued focus on the state and its role in post-authoritarian Indonesia. Although the state retreated in the decade following *reformasi*, since the new film law in 2009 it has reasserted itself more in the creative space by introducing new regulations, reforming institutions, and seeking to manage the film industry again. Since 2011, the state's approach to the film industry has been shaped by its adoption of a creative industries inspired policy perspective. Creative industries have emerged as a policy discourse over the past fifteen years, and have been adopted by governments in the Southeast Asian region, including in Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. Conceptualizing film within a larger creative industries framework modernizes the state's approach to the film industry which has for a long time been seen as a unique form of mass media, requiring separate rules and regulations. However, the creative industries discourse carries with it inherent assumptions and priorities that also can be problematic.

"Creative industries" as a concept has become a way for city, state, and national administrations to target the growth and development of a range of activity previously outside the scope of policy-making or subject to different government agencies. For example, national film industries have often had their own dedicated government agency making policy and funding decisions solely for film. By adopting the broader category of creative industries, governments are able to bring together theater, advertising, arts, film, television, media, fashion, architecture, and others under one broader policy umbrella. Since all activities are said to involve some creative input, and produce some kind of cultural product or intellectual property, then it makes sense to develop a single policy for all of them. This means enhancing media and design courses in higher education, creating a business environment conducive to creative startups, and promoting local content in media channels. There is a clear economic agenda behind creative industries policy, despite the emphasis on creativity and culture, since many administrations see the creative industries as contributing significantly to national income especially if products can be exported overseas.

Indonesia formally adopted a creative industries policy when it established the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy in 2011 to expand the role and scope of the Ministry of Tourism. Mari Pangestu, the former minister of trade from 2004 to 2011 who had promoted creative industries in that role, sought to develop policy to enhance Indonesia's cultural and creative industries, especially for export. Under the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy two sub directorates were created: Creative Economy based on Art and Culture and Creative Economy based on Media, Design, and Knowledge. In part this was in response to a recognition that Indonesia has a rich cultural heritage—such as batik—that could be translated into cultural products but also a growing presence in regional and global fashion and media industries. It is also an acknowledgement that there is growing regional competition in the media and creative industries from countries such as Singapore and Malaysia who are both heavily investing in content industries, and trying to attract global entertainment business to their countries. By developing creative industries, governments see an economic benefit in terms of new products and services, but the opportunity to promote forms of national culture abroad and forms of cultural expression domestically.

For Indonesia, two Ministries now have jurisdiction over the film industry. Currently, the legacy film agencies—the LSF and BP2N—sit under the Ministry of Education and Culture, whilst the new film industry umbrella organization IMPAS (Indonesian Motion Picture Association) has been established under the Ministry for Tourism and Creative Economy. The risk here is that the film industry will find itself torn between two models of governance, split between cultural concerns such as content and censorship under one ministry, and economic issues such as regulation, tax, and labor under the other. Based on its record, the Indonesian government has often complicated rather than simplified film industry policy. Film has remained peripheral to the efforts of the state, and often viewed as a threat to the status quo, established narratives of history, and to public order. Moving policy under the umbrella of creative industries seems to liberate film from its current institutional quagmire, moving it into a framework that is much more focused on development and support rather than restraint and control. However, despite the fanfare and excitement generated by the creative industries move, film remains under the same institutional constraints as it has before. Creative industries so far only add another layer of complication, creating further confusion, and pulling the film industry in possibly contradictory directions.

Despite the rhetoric and adoption of a creative industries model, a 2015 corruption scandal engulfed the Directorate of Film and spread to the former minister of tourism, Jero Wacik. This revealed that the attitude and behavior of Indonesian government officials had not changed in line with the new creative industries policy direction. In February 2015, a list of ten government-sponsored delegates to the Berlin International Film Festival set to cost around USD 120,000 (IDR 1.5 billion) for ten days was leaked online via twitter and Facebook. Joko Anwar, who publicized the list wanted to know "Who are these people? . . . Who are these artists Sarah Astriani and Waliani Achmad May? Moreover, who is this 'film supporter' Tini Afianti?"[3] Further investigation revealed that the names on the travel list were members of family, friends, and mistresses of film department officials. As the story gained traction in the media, over 200 members of the filmmaking community signed a petition to protest the blatant misuse of public funds, and the missed opportunity to properly promote Indonesian cinema internationally. The government was forced to act, and after initial denials of culpability Director of Film Industry Development Armein Firmansyah (who had signed off on the list) was sacked, and the delegation was cancelled. Firmansyah had been brought into the Ministry by Tourism Minister Jero Wacik, in part to facilitate corrupt practices.[4] Wacik was subsequently arrested by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) for corruption and jailed for four years in February 2016.

The "Berlinale Gate" scandal as it became known reveals the deep fault line between the government and the film community. This was not the first time that an official delegation meant to promote the film industry overseas had been used as a free holiday by civil servants at the expense of the industry it was meant to promote. Film agencies have for years been conducting trips overseas to "promote" Indonesian films with few results. What was even more galling for the film community was that the agency had rejected sponsorship requests from young filmmakers to accompany their films to the Berlin International Film Festival and participate in the Berlinale Talent Campus. What was shocking was that this practice was still happening after years of reform, in the context of the presidential "mental revolution" slogan, and film now being located under the new Creative Economy Body (Badan Ekonomi Kreatif), established under the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy. Joko Anwar accused government officials of "having the same attitude as in the past."[5] Many in the film community remain deeply skeptical of the Indonesian government and its commitment to supporting the film industry beyond rhetoric, but it also speaks to how the film industry has grown and developed in the absence of, and in spite of, government assistance.

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[3] "Kagak ada yang pernah denger namanya, Cuy! . . . Contohnya, siapa artis Sarah Astriani dan Waliani Achmad May? Dan siapa pula 'pengamat film' Tini Afianti?"

[4] J. Ksatria, "'Berlinale Gate', Menguak Korupsi Kemenbudpar: The Untold Story," Kompasiana, February 16, 2015.

[5] "Masih bermental yang sama seperti dulu." Joko Anwar, Twitter, February 2, 2015. https://twitter.com/jokoanwar/status/562497936378961920.

Pop Culture: Going Mainstream

This book has argued for a reconsideration of Indonesian cinema as part of the broader pop cultural landscape. Rather than focus on the normative *film nasional* or an over-emphasis on the state, seeing film as pop culture acknowledges that film is the product of interactions between makers and consumers within a particular national, economic, and social context. Pop culture may be dismissed as inconsequential in Indonesia, but it is in pop culture that the mainstream is defined and debated. This has allowed us to see how the film industry grew over the decade since 1998, and how over that time feature films have become mainstream. Pop culture allows us to do away with the expectations that *film nasional* demands of cinema to see what is emergent on screen. The open market conditions after 1998 lead to a cinema that is much more closely aligned with the tastes and fantasies of its makers and its audiences. If anything, this is Indonesian cinema. As pop culture, Indonesian cinema provides insight into the workings of post-authoritarian Indonesia. Indonesia is a country that is growing in stature and power in the South East Asian region which now boasts a dynamic and flourishing cultural scene. Here we find that democracy is alive and well in Indonesia, and that a dynamic and creative polity is emerging to shape politics and culture in the region. May its cinema continue to grow, informing, entertaining and challenging how we think about Indonesia and its people.

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