

---

## Foreword

---

### Hong-Chi Shiau

Communications Management Department,  
School of Communication and Journalism,  
Shih-Hsin University,  
#1 Lane17 Sec.1, Mu-Cha Rd.  
Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China  
E-mail: Hongchi\_2003@yahoo.com

---

China's rise, with economic growth averaging 9% over the past two decades has attracted considerable academic attention. The rapid growth of the Chinese economy has encouraged businesspeople not only from the region but also from both Asia and elsewhere to seek closer relations with China. Together with China's economic rise, Mandarin popular music has become increasingly ubiquitous across China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, being heard in convenience stores, supermarkets, night markets, taxis, buses, restaurants and bars, and in the form of music videos or televised live cable or terrestrial broadcast performance.

Since the end of the 20th century, the integration of pop music across the Greater Chinese region has accelerated. Since the start of the 21st century, Mainland Chinese artists have begun producing an increasingly diverse range of Mandarin pop songs and these are growing in popularity in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Significantly, many Taiwanese and Hong Kong artists performed in promotional events associated with the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Despite significant economic/cultural integration in Greater China, Western interest in the Chinese music industry has mainly been limited to music copyright issues and piracy. For example, the International Phonographic Industry Federation estimated that 95% of music sales in China involve pirated products. While international concerns regarding decreased music sales and their impacts on artists, record companies and retailers are justifiable, few studies, if any, have systematically analysed the recording industries of different countries, and no studies have focused on the Greater Chinese region. Most authors of works on this area in this issue grew up in Hong Kong or Taiwan and immigrated to Canada to the USA. They have a conviction to adopt a very local Chinese view of gender and popular culture, and avoid overly interpreting cross-cultural differences, given the rapid technological changes and so as the media environment. A key question is whether the rise of new technologies and different uses of music exert an equal influence on the market logic. With its clear international and interdisciplinary approach, the *International Journal of Chinese Culture and Management* has long fostered discussion of Chinese culture and business. Accordingly, this special issue focuses on contextualising the use of popular music in the Greater Chinese region and analysing several nuanced differences in the Mandarin music market in an attempt to provide a basis for further research regarding their impacts and ramifications.

This special issue gathers six timely and in-depth analyses addressing the above concerns and bridging the academic gap between the local and the West. The first three

articles employ a macroscopic approach, contextualising the use of popular music in the larger Chinese popular music environment. Their analyses extend beyond primary comparisons and contrasts, endeavouring to repack cultural commonalities and specialties.

The use of karaoke singing has permeated multiple areas of cultural life in Taiwan, particularly in business circles. Karaoke singing and the formation of Chinese identity formation were discussed in Lum's pioneering work (1996): *In search of a voice: Karaoke and the Construction of Identity in Chinese America*. In this issue, Casey Lum follows up on his earlier work and synthesises the transitions over the past decade. Drawing upon ethnographic case studies conducted in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and New York City, Lum's study attempts to illuminate how karaoke singing serves as a complex form of collective sense-making experience in an age of interactive electronic media. Further research on karaoke within the theoretical framework of media and globalisation is accordingly suggested. Along the same lines with the discussion of Karaoke, business negotiations have long been important but under researched subject as elaborated in the study of Rich Holt and Hui-Ching Chang entitled 'Business negotiation and Taiwanese relationship building: mediated experiences in karaoke singing.' The study posits that the purpose of Karaoke has gone far beyond facilitating existing kinship networks or identity formation. In the business circles, the dynamics among parties involved in karaoke singing may include making deals. Nuanced arrangements can be concluded during a karaoke session; handled at some future time based on promises made during that session or taken up.

In the following study, 'Branding strategies and celebrity economy: a study of Mandarin pop music in the digital age,' Fu-Mei Lin adopts a holistic perspective, analysing how music agencies were required to restructure their A&R function (artist and repertoire: talent scouting and the product development) to leverage brand value via increasingly emphasising the role of originally peripheral functions, such as music concerts, fan activities or commercial features. Lin is critical of the glamorisation of digital labour in a 'celebrity economy', and attempts to bridge the easily dismissed continuities with the modern sweatshop and the increasing degradation of knowledge work in the Taiwanese music industry.

In the second section, three articles synthesised the rise to stardom of three popular singers and their ramifications in the age of globalisation. The three singers include: Sammi Cheng (鄭秀文), Faye Wong (王菲) and Teresa Teng (or Deng, 鄧麗君/邓丽君). The articles attempt to address how the rising popularity of these singers challenged and/or maintained the existing social order in the Chinese cultural context. The studies of the persona of Sammi Cheng and gender values conducted by Anthony Fung, and Jeroen Groenewegen's study of Faye Wong represent two significant cases in which emerging celebrities are related to the struggles associated with achieving social change in thought, status, gender and feminist values in Greater China. While their popularities in Greater China are to some degree likened to other popular imaginaries, such as Madonna or Cranberries in the West, they are not necessarily connected to global music discourse and nationalism in English publications.

Finally, my own contribution to this issue dealing with the Teresa Teng phenomenon examines nostalgia and social memories among Chinese diaspora communities. Motivated by my 'personal calling', my essay on Teresa Teng draws on my accidental cultural intersection with ethnic Chinese immigrants in several restaurants in China town in the US, and subsequently coming to terms with our shared sense of 'Chineseness'. My

research attempts to examine how Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China derived meanings from media texts related to Teresa Teng, and how they maintained and negotiated their Chinese identity despite their disparate history of migration. By listening to the music of Teresa Teng, my informants came to see their migration experiences as surmountable obstacles leading to acclimation, as coming loneliness and struggle with friendship and intimacy, and as difficult adjustments in conflict with tradition.

Before closing this foreword, I would like to thank all of the contributors whose efforts and enthusiasm made this issue possible. First, the Editor in Chief, Prof. Patricia Ordóñez de Pablos has been extremely supportive of this issue; particularly during those times when I faced major challenges. I would like to thank Prof. Chang, Hui-Ching, Prof. Fung, Anthony and my colleague, Prof. Fu-Mei, Lin, who have long been enthusiastically involved in this area of research. Their initial proposals and submissions were invaluable in helping me put the issue together. Notably, I also enjoyed several long and intellectually stimulating conversations with them. I am greatly indebted to them for their continuous efforts to facilitate my editorial work. Allow me to take this opportunity to say ‘Xie Xie Ni’ (thank you) loud.