

Hsu, Wendy, University of Virginia, United States
Identity, Geopolitics, and Networks in Transnational Asian Indie Rock Music

Asian American independent rock musicians are building grassroots connections with musicians in Asia through transnational exchanges of music performances. Crossing national and continental boundaries, these socio-musical linkages lead to unexpected aesthetic and ethnic collusions between Asia and Asian America. This paper analyzes the creative ways in which the New-Jersey-based, Taiwanese-American-led progressive rock band Hsu-nami confronts the Taipei-based metal band Chthonic in performance. The analysis will be contextualized within the political relations between Taiwan and the United States, heeding to the inflamed issue of Taiwanese independence dominating public discourses in Taiwan and the Taiwanese American community in New York. Informed by extensive multi-sited field research, this paper focuses the musicians' outward-looking, potentially liberating transnational orientation, instead of their U.S.-bound experiences as ethnic minorities. This project maps the 21st century transpacific social geography of Asian American indie rock music thus recontextualizing the critical scholarship on the geopolitics between East Asia and North America via Asian America.