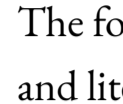


# INTERVIEW: ‘MATH/FOLK ROCK’ BAND GDJYB ON CLOCKENFLAP, THEIR POLITICIZED LYRICS, AND SINGING IN KONGISH



All-female math-folk rock band GDJYB, with guitarist Soni Cheng, vocalist Soft Liu, bassist Wing Chan, and drummer Heihai Ng (L to R). Photo: Vicky Wong



By Vicky Wong

Oct 25, 2018 | 3:45pm Hong Kong time

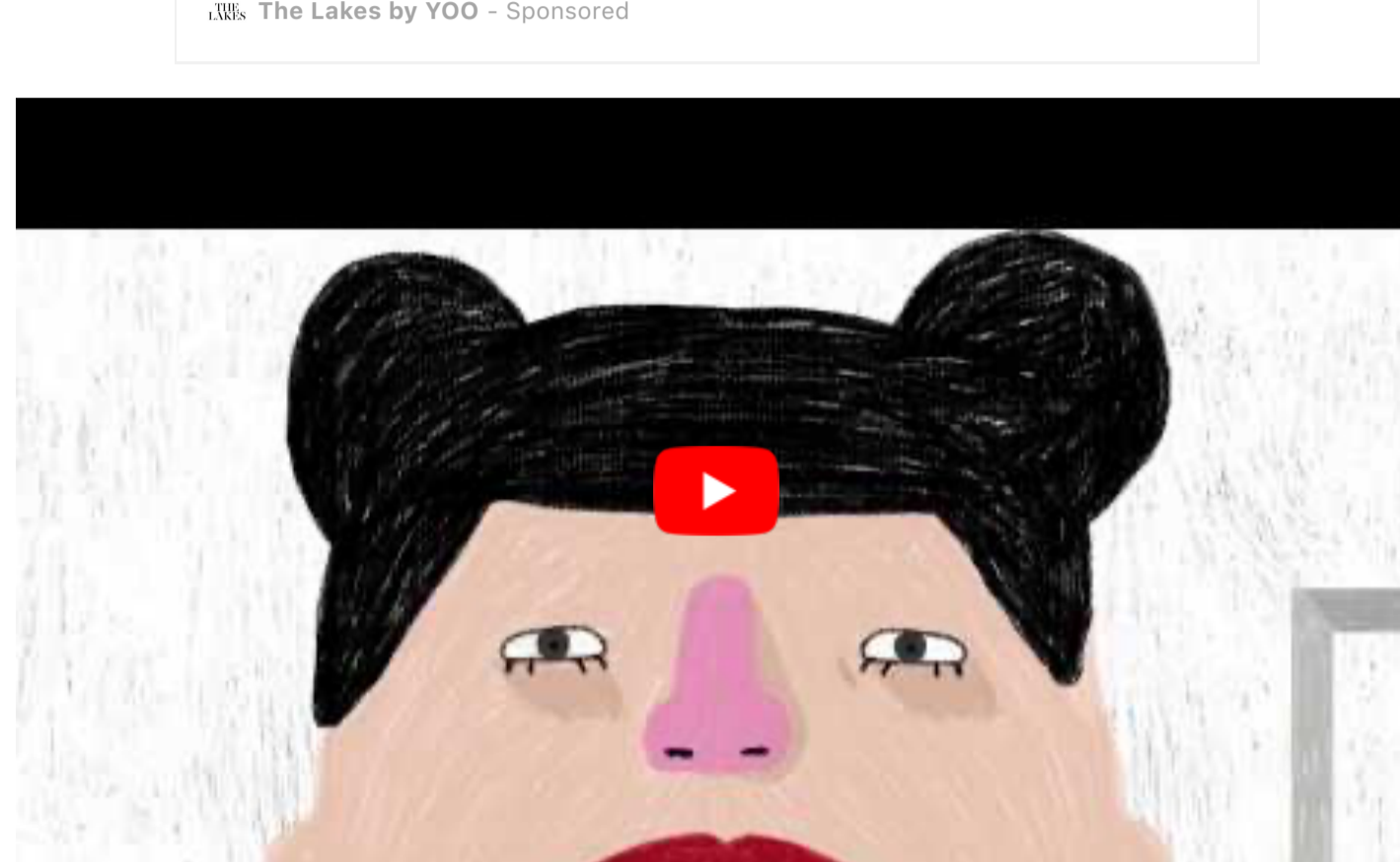
You’d be hard-pressed to find a musical act as quintessentially Hong Kong as GDJYB. The four-piece, all-female indie rock band performs in Kongish, a mix of Cantonese and literal English translations from Cantonese. Their songs address social issues important to the city and its citizens. Their name is even an acronym for a beloved Hong Kong comfort food dish of fried egg with minced pork patty, or *gai dan janc yuk bang*.

Comprised of vocalist Soft Liu, guitarist Soni Cheng, drummer Heihai Ng, and bassist Wing Chan, the band is a local favorite within Hong Kong’s indie music circles.

They formed in 2012, with then-bassist YY Wong, and two years later, were invited by Clockenflap’s music director Justin Sweeting to perform at the 2014 edition of the festival. This year will be GDJYB’s third Clockenflap — the group also performed in 2016 — and marks the first for Chan, who joined the band last year.

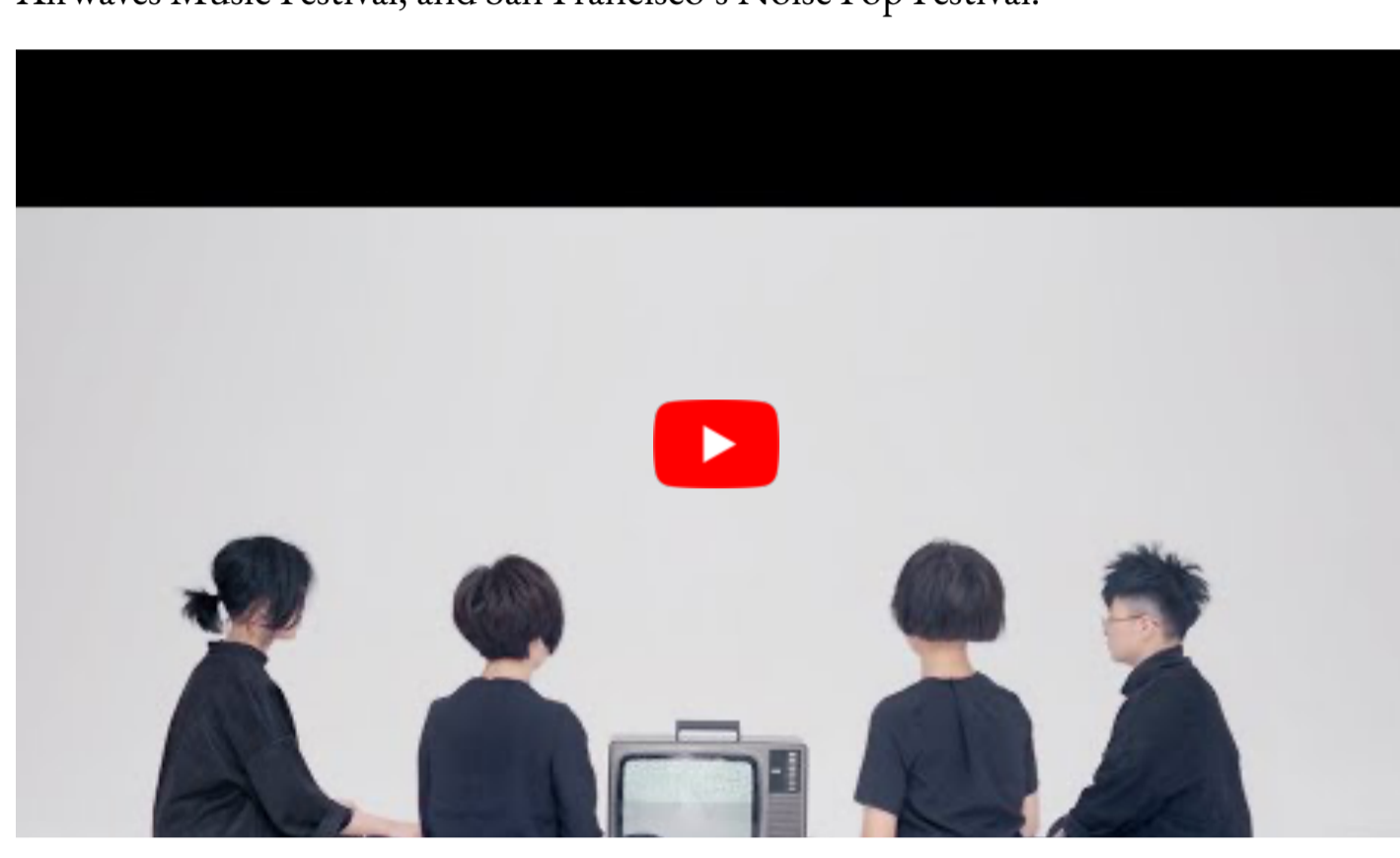


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Cheng, Liu, and Ng say they clearly remember that first Clockenflap performance in 2014. Liu joked: “We sh’t our pants! Our first music festival experience!”

The band, who had just released their first album at the time, credit Clockenflap as the stepping stone that led to them performing in other festivals around the world, such as Singapore’s Laneway Festival, Kuala Lumpur’s DongTaiDu Music Festival, Iceland’s Airwaves Music Festival, and San Francisco’s Noise Pop Festival.



Cheng tells *Coconuts HK* that when the group first formed, their style “was more simple, more folk music.”

The band describes their current sound as “math/folk rock,” which they explain as using the complex rhythmic structures and varying tempos of math rock, with the storytelling and oral history elements of folk music. According to Cheng, though, the group is constantly experimenting with their sound, and is not married to the idea of keeping within this framework forever.

In any case, knowing what this “math/folk rock” concept entails is necessary to understanding GDJYB’s songs, as the lyrics may seem puzzling for listeners who approach their music without that primer.

*Durian What What What*, for instance, uses Kongish turn of phrases to talk about the struggle between pro-democracy and pro-establishment camps after the 2014 Umbrella Movement — represented as the yellow and the blue beings in the accompanying music video, respectively.



*Philip the Buster* is a play on the word “filibuster,” which the band explains, refers in this case to the tactic used by Hong Kong’s pro-democracy lawmakers to stall or block government-backed bills from being passed in the city’s legislature.

The song *Double No No*, on the other hand, has a chorus that goes “the Friso [milk powder brand] is mine, the Yakult is mine” — an expression of anger at parallel traders from the mainland bulk-buying goods from Hong Kong, thereby leaving locals with depleted supplies of their own stock of goods.

Social commentary is certainly a defining characteristic of GDJYB’s music, but the band don’t see themselves as a band that just sings political songs.

Liu, who writes most of the band’s songs, tells *Coconuts HK*: “I don’t always want to write so many songs about social issues. But every time you open the newspaper or watch the news, the only thing you can do is talk about how you feel about it. If you care about this city, and you love this city, you need to keep speaking out.”

She then goes on to say: “If this place were very peaceful, and it was all ‘wah so peaceful, every day happy news’, then I’d write happier songs, and people would still enjoy listening to them. But that’s not the case, and we have a responsibility to record what is happening now.”



Singing in Kongish added an extra dimension of representation. Within this vernacular, speakers blend English, Cantonese, and literal English translations of Cantonese phrases or words (for example, “laugh die me” is a literal translation of the Cantonese phrase that expresses the act of laughing so hard that one ‘dies’).

“Hong Kong English is very unique. There are no other places using it, except here,” says Liu, adding that she finds it easier to express herself in Kongish because most of the songs they sing deal with very Hong Kong-specific subject matter.

She adds, jokingly: “Because you know lah, my English is not so good ma. I cannot easily communicate with you, then you know lah!”



GDJYB points out two things that will be special about this year’s Clockenflap appearance: One, that they will be producing everything for their set on their own, and secondly, that they will be releasing their EP *Squarele*, which contains five songs, on Saturday, Nov. 10 — the day of their performance.

When asked about the rest of the line-up, the band tells us that though they’re looking forward to seeing some of this year’s headline acts (Wolf Alice and Suchmos, to name a couple), they’re more keen to see the bands they have never heard of.

“Even if you don’t know who the bands are, it’s an opportunity for everyone to listen to bands from other countries, because their countries have a lot of musicians with a lot of potential,” Chan explains. “This festival allows them to perform on an international stage, and that’s a great thing.”

As for the future of the band, Ng says that GDJYB are keen to release another album, but will probably take some time to produce it. “We work very slow, we create very slowly,” she says, laughing.

And might they consider writing a song about [the controversial artificial island project](#)? Liu pauses for a moment and replies in Kongish: “Probably ar.”

*Clockenflap starts next week and runs Nov. 9, 10 and 11 at Hong Kong’s Central Harbourfront. Acts this year include David Byrne, Interpol, Jarvis Cocker, Cigarettes After Sex, Irvine Welsh, The Vaccines, and many more. Three-day passes and tickets for individual days remain available [here](#).*

Topics: [HONG KONG](#), [LIFESTYLE](#), [MUSIC & SHOWBIZ](#)

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# HONG KONG OBSERVATORY ISSUES NO. 8 TYPHOON WARNING

Tropical cyclone track of Nalgae. Photo: Hong Kong Observatory

By Coconuts Hong Kong

Nov 2, 2022 | 2:52pm Hong Kong time

The Hong Kong Observatory issued the No. 8 typhoon warning this afternoon with tropical cyclone Nalgae approaching the city.

The No. 8 northwest gale or storm signal was issued at 1:40pm.

This means that winds with mean speeds of 63 kilometers per hour or more are expected from the northwest quarter.

“At 6pm, tropical storm Nalgae was centered about 120 kilometers south-southeast of Hong Kong and is forecast to move northwest at about 10 kilometers per hour edging closer to the vicinity of the Pearl River Estuary,” said the city’s meteorological agency.

“According to the latest forecast, Nalgae will edge closer to Hong Kong tonight as compared with the previous forecast and will skirt within 100 kilometers of Hong Kong.”

Under the influence of the rainbands associated with Nalgae, showers over the territory are expected to become more frequent gradually tonight.

The No. 8 gale or storm signal will remain in force before 10pm tonight.

Nalgae will weaken further. Whether the No. 8 gale or storm signal is maintained thereafter depends on the degree of weakening of Nalgae. If Nalgae weakens further into a tropical depression, the observatory will issue a lower tropical cyclone warning signal.

Seas are very rough with swells. Members of the public are advised to stay away from the shoreline and not to engage in water sports.

Earlier in the day, the Education Bureau announced that classes at all schools are suspended today.

The Labour Department reminded employers to make work arrangements for staff during and after tropical cyclone and rainstorm warnings, including arrangements for reporting for duty, release from work, resumption of work and work from home (if applicable).

There are changes to public transport routes. Check out these links for the latest updates: [MTR](#) | [KMB](#) | [Citybus and NWEB](#) | [Star Ferry](#)

However, the Global Financial Leaders’ Investment Summit organized by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, which has been hyped by the government as proof that Hong Kong is “back”, is continuing at the Four Seasons Hotel. The summit features around 200 financiers from around the world.

*Editor’s note: The story has been updated with weather information by the Hong Kong Observatory at 6pm.*

Topics: [HONG KONG](#), [NEWS](#), [WEATHER](#)

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