



金牌監製不簡單 梁榮駿

Alvin Leong ACE PRODUCER

「可知熱誠是那麼美，曾在往日往昔少年時……得知熱誠未有減退，曾遇每日每天的挑戰，面對多少冷風上路，仍是那舊句子」

這一首是王菲於1989年初出道的舊歌《仍是舊句子》，也是當年亞太金箏流行曲創作大賽香港決賽季軍歌曲，作曲的正是本地著名音樂製作人 Alvin Leong 梁榮駿，由八十年代開始加入本地音樂圈，就是憑著一股不滅的熱誠，經歷本地樂壇幾個不同年代的高低起伏，仍堅守其舉足輕重的金牌唱片監製之位，真材實料，殊不簡單。

從頭說起 監製歷程

其實，Alvin 早期也寫過不少歌曲，例如王菲的《溫柔的手》及《仍是舊句子》等，何解後來再沒有為其他歌手寫歌，反而專注於唱片監製一職呢？

「《仍是舊句子》正是最佳例子，當時自己曾經試過找人編過一兩個版本，但我作為作曲人，不太滿意效果，最終都兜了一個大圈之後，才落在王菲手上，然後清楚知道應該如何編曲及填詞。我其實好喜歡寫歌，不過，卻有一個理念，就是如果別人交來的歌寫得好過自己，那倒不如就用別人的作品更實際而見效，就算不是自己作曲，歌都是自己的 baby，整件事始終是一個 teamwork 工作。」

「監製就像導演，未必負責寫劇本，重要是找到一個好劇本、好演員和好團隊，要有這種 vision。可能把自己寫的歌交給其他人監製，會產生更大化學作用。我經歷很多，學習如何與歌手和唱片公司接觸，又做過宣傳工作，了解市場，知道商業前線的情況，最後才去當監製。而且我每次聽歌都會聽很多次，覺得有感覺，亦有信心這首歌會 plug，才去說服歌手唱，亦令他們演繹更好。」

當今樂壇趨勢

很多人認為八十年代本地流行樂壇比較百花齊放，歌手樂隊可以嘗試不同類型音樂風格，相反現在變得愈來愈保守，集中以主流 R&B 和 Hip Hop 為大路風格，Alvin 又有何感覺？

「是的，可能當時市道比現在興旺，加上當年大家都剛剛起步，好 raw 好 green，好有熱心去做好唱片，因為好市，所以唱片公司可以容許大家去嘗試。以前大家著重於幕後製作質素方面，對於我們這些音樂製作人來說是很重要的，反而現在今非昔比，未必再以製作質素為首要。」

近年，普羅樂迷似乎留意一首歌的歌詞內容，比留意一首歌的音樂風格有興趣得多，大家偏愛關注文字內容，而多過音樂上的認知，Alvin 亦有感而發。

「我覺得香港人是非常重視歌詞，等同美國人愛聽 Country Music 一樣，因為 Country Music 又是很注重歌詞內容，可能香港人本身比較熱情及感性一點，好想找到一些有共鳴的東西，想深一層，亦跟香港人生活太重壓力有關，希望聽多一些抒情歌曲，藉此來舒緩減壓，或者暫時逃離現實生活。」

對於 K 歌文化市場，Alvin 又會否需要作出妥協，為做 K 歌而做 K 歌？

「首先，我覺得大眾對 K 歌這個字眼是帶點濫用的意思，究竟甚麼才是 K 歌？我認為 K 歌是一件好事，就只分別於好聽不好聽，無論稱它為 K 歌也歌都一樣。K 歌這詞語有些誤導，大家付錢去唱 K，點一首想唱的歌，證明這首歌是流行的。我覺得每首歌都有 pop 成份，就算 rock band 也有，你看外國 billboard 排前幾名的多是抒情歌。香港人比較感性，這類歌或許令他們感到陶醉，也不是壞事。相反，為 K 歌而寫 K 歌就太刻意，因為你只是為迎合市場，而沒有做到帶領潮流的效用。」

「香港人未如外國人般接受合法下載歌曲，如果香港可以設立更多的網上平台會幫助到唱片業，同時亦是新的商業模式。當然需要更多時間去教育香港人合法聽歌。現時有些唱片公司仍然專注做唱片，但有些則做多方面製作，分散了注意，所以我希望一些大型唱片公司可以更著重做好音樂部分。」

合作伙伴 未來計畫

Alvin 由華納唱片公司做外語唱片宣傳初入行，後來轉投新藝寶正式全職做唱片幕後製作，並開始有機會成為唱片監製，同時，亦認識到「太極」的 Gary Tong，二人一拍即合，轉眼又無間斷合作廿幾年。

「真的一眨眼又廿幾年，其實這些年來都已成習慣，每當聽到一首 Demo 覺得好適合交由 Gary 來編曲，就自動打電話找他，Gary 對製作有一定的要求，正是我跟他共通點，一起想盡辦法去做好每一首歌為目的；記得第一次合作應該是由柏安妮《尖東》一曲開始，當時聽過他的編曲 Demo 相當滿意，於是相約他上來唱片公司開會洽談，就是由此展開這個合作關係。」

這廿幾年來，Alvin 曾經為無數本地一線頂級流行歌手監製大量流行金曲，其中最深入人心必屬哥哥張國榮，由新藝寶、滾石到最後的環球唱片時代，可謂見證哥哥三個不同年代的音樂路途。

「當時碰巧 Leslie 由華星轉投新藝寶，好記得當時在公司走廊跟他傾談的開心往事，之後有機會為《側面》監製五首歌曲，就是由此起一直開始合作。後來他復出去到滾石唱片，再合作廣東專輯《紅》，當時他已經給予我很大自由度去創作。跟著到環球唱片，記得《路過蜻蜓》原本是打算收錄於《陪你倒數》大碟內，可惜趕不及而沒有出現，可能一切真的早有安排，後來推出《Untitled》EP 才有機會曝光，而且成為大熱，回想當初如果收錄於《陪你倒數》可能沒有如此流行。」

既然 Alvin 曾與多位歌手合作，還想找誰合作呢？未來有什麼音樂大計？

「我將來想有一張自己監製的大碟，可能是 Alvin featuring XXX，找以前合作過或想合作的歌手一起去玩。譬如一向唱抒情歌的歌手，我為他製作一隻搖滾風格的，希望做到一張 for fun 的大碟。」

精彩訪問片段可於 CASH 網站 www.cash.org.hk 內瀏覽。

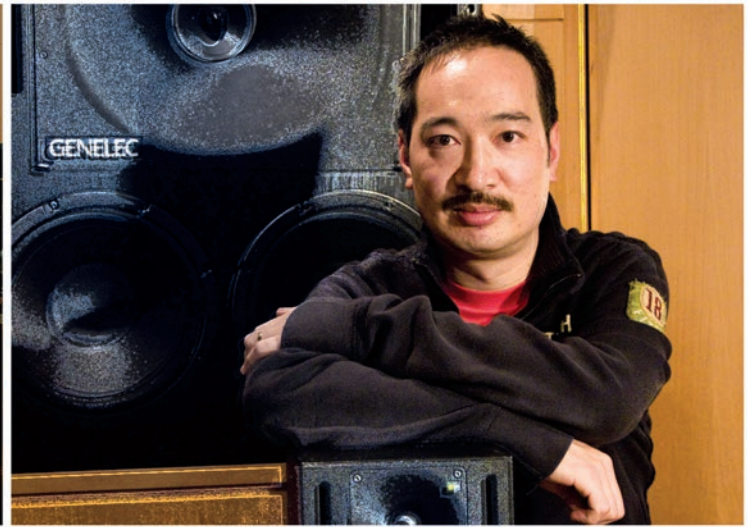
Selected video clips of the interview can be viewed at CASH's website at www.cash.org.hk.

近期 Alvin 監製最新大熱《陀飛輪》街知巷聞，提到跟陳奕迅的合作，不得不提《富士山下》這首年度金曲。話說此曲原是一首歌曲創作比賽的參賽作品，當時 Alvin 一聽已知非池中物，怎料此曲最後落選而回；於是 Alvin 亦立刻找來作曲人 Christopher Chak 表示對此曲有興趣，但原來 Christopher 當時一直堅決此曲必需由女歌手主唱才對，反而 Alvin 卻認定由男歌手更適合，最終《富士山下》得到的驕人成就，不得不佩服 Alvin 對流行曲的敏銳觸覺，也同時引證其成名作《仍是舊句子》的歌詞內容—

「得知熱誠未有減退，曾遇每日每天的挑戰，面對多少冷風上路，仍是那舊句子……」

'Could you see how beautiful passions were when we were young; our enthusiasm has not diminished in the face of daily challenges. We hit the road facing chilly wind. Still the Same Old Words...'

These are the lyrics of Faye Wong's debut song 'Still the Same Old Words' in 1989, which was awarded the second runner-up in the Hong Kong Final of the ABU Popular Song Contest. The composer of this song was Alvin Leong, now a well-known music producer in Hong Kong. He came on the scene in the 80s with an undaunting heart and has experienced many ups and downs in the local music industry over the years. However, he remains secure in his status as an influential and prominent record producer. He certainly has what it takes to deliver the goods.



From the very beginning

Alvin, you wrote quite a number of songs in your early career, such as 'Soft Hands' and 'Still the Same Old Words' by Faye Wong and the like. How come later you haven't written songs for other singers, focusing instead on the job as a music producer?

'Still the Same Old Words' can pretty much sum up the answer. At that time I tried to find someone to arrange one or two versions of it. However, as a composer, I was not really satisfied with the results. After taking a wrong path, my song was finally selected for Faye, and only then that I knew how the arrangement and lyrics should be done. As a matter of fact, I love to write songs, but I always think that I should let someone who can write songs better than me do the job, if adopting someone else's work can deliver better results. Even if it is not my work, I will treat it as my baby and the success of the whole process requires a team effort.

A producer is just like a movie director, who may not be responsible for writing the script. The important thing is you have to have a vision for good scripts, good actors and a good team. If you allow your songs to be produced by others, you can get greater chemistry. I've experienced a lot of things and I've learned how to deal with singers and record companies. I've been involved in promotion work, and I understand the market and frontline business before I finally became a producer. Moreover, I listen to each song over and over again. I'll only send a song to a singer if I have a feeling for it, and I'm confident it will be plugged. In that case, I'll help them to perform well.

Current trends in the music industry

A lot of people think that the local pop music industry was at its most diverse in the 80s. There was more room for a lot of singers and bands to explore different styles of music. In contrast, the industry nowadays has become more conservative and focuses on mainstream styles of R&B and Hip Hop. What do you think of this?

Probably the market at that time was thriving more than it is now. Also, because the industry had just got off the ground, people were determined to deliver great albums despite having little experience. The market was booming, so record companies were able to give us more room to experiment and we, the music producers, used to emphasise the importance of making quality records. Right now, however, production quality may no longer be the most important thing when making a record.

In recent years, the general audience are much more interested in and paying greater attention to the lyrics than musical styles of songs. People seem to prefer appreciating the content of the words over learning more about the music.

I think Hong Kong people focus heavily on the lyrics, just like how Americans feel about the importance of the lyrics to their country music songs. Maybe people in Hong Kong are more passionate and perpetual and want to find something that resonates with their feelings. On a deeper level, maybe it is a result of the increasing pressure that Hong Kong people live under. They want to hear more emotionally expressive songs to help alleviate their stress or seek a temporary escape from reality.

How do you pick your lyricists? Some people say 80% of pop songs are the works of a few individual lyricists. What is your response to this?

As a matter of fact, those few individuals write great lyrics. We usually get together in meetings and discuss the content of lyrics. They really live up to expectations and deliver lyrics in the context of themes we discuss. For example, I have worked with Lin Xi for a long time now. We talk about movies we have recently seen and often will come up with ideas for lyrics that the messages in these movies have inspired in us. We get inspiration from our daily conversations.

As for the karaoke song culture in the market, do you need to make compromises sometimes, to make karaoke songs just for the sake of making them?

First of all, I think the general public has a negative view on karaoke songs. What does this term mean? I think that making a karaoke song is a good thing to do - the point is that if a song is a joy to listen to, it doesn't matter whether it is called a karaoke song or not. This is a misleading term to a certain degree. If we pay to sing a song, we want to pick one we like, so the chosen one is a popular song. I believe each song has pop elements in it, even songs played by rock bands. Top ranking songs under foreign billboards are mostly lyrical songs. Hong Kong people are relatively sensational and attracted by such songs. That is not a bad thing. Conversely, making karaoke songs just for the sake of it would be too deliberate, only catering for the market's needs, without establishing a trend.

Hong Kong people aren't accustomed to legally downloading songs like foreigners are. If there were more online sales platforms setup in Hong Kong, this would be a big help to the music industry; it would also serve as a new business model. Of course, we need to try harder to educate Hong Kong people to enjoy songs legally. At present, some record companies are still only focused on making albums while some record companies are distracted and involved in different kinds of productions. Therefore, I hope that those major record companies could be more focused on producing good music.

Partners and future plans

When you first entered the scene, you promoted foreign language albums at Warner Music, then you switched to record production on a full-time basis for Cinepoly Records and you worked your way up to become a record producer. In

In the meantime, you got acquainted with Gary Tong, member of *Tai Chi*. You guys worked closely thereafter and this partnership has lasted for over twenty years.

This time has gone by in the blink of an eye. In fact, over the years, it became a habit that whenever I heard a demo which I thought was suitable for Gary to arrange, I would give him a call. Gary has his own requirements for song-making, and these match up with mine. We work together and try every means in an attempt to perfect each song. I remember the first song we worked together was 'Tsim Sha Tsui East' by Ann Bridgewater. When I listened to the demo of his arrangement, I liked it and so I asked him to meet with me at the record company to discuss further and that started our collaboration.

Over the past twenty years, Alvin has produced many golden hits for countless local top-notch pop singers, and the most recognised partnership is undoubtedly the one with Leslie Cheung. Alvin produced for him at different labels, such as Cinepoly Records, Rock Records and Universal Music (the last label he worked for) and witnessed three different phases for the musical journey of Leslie.

Leslie moved from Capital Artists to Cinepoly Records and I happened to work there. I remember well I had a very happy conversation with him along the corridor at the office one day. I then had the opportunity to produce five songs for the album *Side Face*, marking the beginning of our partnership. Later on he moved to Rock Records and we teamed up again for the Cantonese album *Red*. During this time, he gave me a lot of room for creativity. Then after he moved on to Universal Music, I remember the song 'Pass-By Dragonfly' was originally intended to be part of the album *Countdown With You*, but we didn't have enough time to make it. Maybe this happened for a reason because this song was included in the later released EP *Untitled* and became a big hit, which probably wouldn't have happened if it was included in *Countdown With You* instead.

Since you have worked with many artists, is there anyone else you want to work with? What is your major future plan in the scene?

I want to make an album with me arranging all the songs. The title could go like 'Alvin featuring XXX'. I want to find singers who have or have not worked with me before and have some fun. For example, I will produce a song with a rock style for a singer usually singing lyrical ballads. I hope to have a for-fun album.

Alvin produced the latest hit of 'Tourbillion' for Eason Chan as well as 'Under Mount Fuji', another smash hit a couple of years back. This latter song was originally an entry song for a songwriting competition. When Alvin heard it, he knew it was going to be a big hit. Although it did not win any awards, Alvin immediately contacted the song's composer Christopher Chak to let him know he was interested in recording the song. A slight disagreement happened as Christopher had written this song with a female singer in mind whereas Alvin believed a male singer would be more suitable for the job. At the end of the day, 'Under Mount Fuji' achieved outstanding success. Alvin has a natural instinct for what makes a great song and his success in the industry is a testament to the words of his own career-starting song, 'Still the Same Old Words' –

'Our enthusiasm has not diminished in the face of daily challenges. We hit the road facing chilly wind. Still the Same Old Words....'