



## Research Article

# The Role of *Aktuil* Magazine in Shaping Rock Music Culture among Bandung Youth (1967–1978)

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**Abstract**

*Aktuil* was a popular-culture magazine published in Bandung from 1967 to 1978. It played a significant role in disseminating information about and representing the development of rock music in Indonesia, particularly in Bandung, yet it has received limited scholarly attention. This study examines *Aktuil*'s role in shaping youth sociocultural life through its representations of rock culture. It employs Kuntowijoyo's historical method, encompassing topic selection, heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. The analysis combines a sociology-of-music framework with Stuart Hall's theory of representation to interpret the content presented in *Aktuil*. The findings indicate that the magazine contributed to shaping young people's perspectives, tastes, fashion, and lifestyles through its representations of rock culture, including the hippie lifestyle, marijuana use, long hair, cut-bray trousers, and the consumption and imitation of Western music.

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## INTRODUCTION

*"Kalau lo berjiwa muda dan lo gak baca Aktuil, kayanya ketinggalan jaman, sejak gue pertama kali ngeliat (Aktuil) langsung kecanduan dan akhirnya setiap bulan gue minta saudara untuk nyariin"* (Silvianus, 2018).

[*"If you're young at heart and you don't read Aktuil, you're really missing out. Ever since I first saw it, I've been hooked, and now every month I ask my sibling to get it for me."*]

The quotation above comes from the late Andi Julias, drummer of the rock/art-metal band Makara in the 1980s. His statement suggests that *Aktuil* was not merely a source of pop-rock entertainment but had become part of the lifestyle and a marker of identity for a generation of young readers. Examining *Aktuil* is therefore important for understanding the extent to which the magazine participated in the sociocultural development of Indonesian youth during the 1960s and 1970s.

The development of Western pop and rock culture in Indonesia was closely connected to the growth of mass media from the 1950s onward. Radio broadcasts from Hilversum, ABC, the BBC, and Voice of America, imported films such as *Blackboard Jungle* (1955), and magazines such as *Vista* and *Selecta* became important channels through which Western music and lifestyles entered Indonesia (Saputro, 2019; Widiatiaga, 2018). These media contributed to the emergence of a younger generation that increasingly adopted Western musical styles and associated forms of expression, including musical arrangements, stage performances, clothing, hairstyles, and public image.

Western influence became particularly visible during the 1960s with the popularity of the British Invasion (Worang, 2026). This trend inspired local bands such as Koes Bersaudara, El Dolores Combo, The Blue, The Rhythm, The Irama Cubana, and The Alulas, which adapted musical styles associated with artists and groups including The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Who, The Monkees, Joan Baez, Led Zeppelin, and Deep Purple (Tannos, 2017; Widiatiaga, 2018).

The growing popularity of Western culture generated concerns about national identity during the Guided Democracy period. Guided by anti-imperialist principles and Manipol-USDEK, President Sukarno viewed rock music as a form of cultural imperialism and sought to strengthen a national culture rooted in local values (Pertiwi, 2014; Tambayong, 1992). Concerns about juvenile delinquency and the

emergence of long-haired “cross boys,” inspired by groups such as The Beatles, further reinforced these views (Pertiwi, 2014; Widiatiaga, 2018).

Consequently, Western cultural influences were restricted through measures such as banning Western songs on RRI, destroying imported records, discouraging Westernized terminology, and prohibiting long hair and clothing considered excessively Western. Many bands also replaced Western names with Indonesian ones (Anwar, 2007; Tannos, 2017).

These restrictions gradually weakened after the September 30th Movement and the decline of Sukarno’s power. Under the New Order, Western music regained popularity as earlier anti-Western cultural restrictions receded (Weintraub, 2012; Worang, 2026). This resurgence was supported by mass media, particularly *Aktuil*, founded by Denny Sabri Gandanegara in Bandung on June 8, 1967 (Tannos, 2017). The magazine emerged during the political transition from Guided Democracy to the New Order, when previous restrictions on Western cultural influences were being relaxed. At the same time, years of cultural restriction had not eliminated young people’s interest in Western music; rather, a generation already exposed to foreign music through radio, imported records, films, and magazines retained a strong demand for such material. *Aktuil* positioned itself to serve this audience, turning Western-oriented popular culture into both a significant cultural influence and a viable commercial market (Worang, 2026).

Through its coverage of music, fashion, and popular culture, *Aktuil* played an important role in shaping the tastes and lifestyles of Indonesian youth. Boy Worang, a musician and member of the Bandung band Les Troubadour in 1975, recalled this influence as follows:

*“Ia (Aktuil) membuat sensasi musik, dan ia membuat apa yang ada dalam gairah musik itu disimpulkan di situ, sehingga menjadi tren menjadi suatu mode dari apa yang diinginkan anak muda. Ditampilkan semua di situ. Dan kayanya tidak akan ada majalah yang sama seperti Aktuil dahulu”* (Worang, 2026).

[“*Aktuil* created a sensation in the music world and captured the excitement surrounding music, turning it into trends and fashions that appealed to young people. Everything was featured there. And it seems there will never be another magazine quite like the *Aktuil* of that era.”]

This recollection suggests that *Aktuil* was more than a music magazine: it participated in shaping youth culture and popular trends in Indonesia. The limited scholarship devoted specifically to this role provides an important rationale for the present study and an opportunity to enrich local cultural historiography. This study builds on two earlier academic works. The first is Aldis Sahanan Raiputra Tannos’s (2017) article, “Budaya Tanding dan ‘*Aktuil*’: Tentang Subkultur Kaum Muda tahun 1960–70,” which discusses Indonesian youths’ fascination with Western music during the 1960s and 1970s and the emergence of a new countercultural form (Tannos, 2017). However, Tannos situates *Aktuil* within a broader discussion of youth subcultures and does not examine the magazine in detail as a cultural agent that both shaped and represented Bandung’s rock scene. Its textual and visual content also receives only limited attention as historical evidence. These limitations provide a basis for further research.

The second is Bima Widiatiaga’s (2018) thesis, “Musik Indonesia Dalam Konteks Sosial Politik 1967–1978,” which examines the dynamics of Indonesian music during that period from a sociopolitical perspective (Widiatiaga, 2018). Because the study focuses primarily on national sociopolitical developments, it devotes limited attention to local dynamics and to the role of popular media in shaping rock culture. It also does not examine in depth how rock culture was represented and legitimized through *Aktuil*’s visual and textual content. Addressing this gap, the present study explores *Aktuil* as a cultural medium that shaped and represented rock music culture in Bandung between 1967 and 1978.

This study does not treat the overall development of rock music in Bandung as its primary object of analysis; rather, that development provides the context for examining *Aktuil*’s role. Nor does the study analyze song lyrics as musical texts. Its focus therefore remains on the social and cultural meanings surrounding rock music rather than on the musicological characteristics of rock itself.

Accordingly, the study asks to what extent *Aktuil* developed and contributed to shaping rock culture among young people in Bandung between 1967 and 1978. The discussion first outlines the early New Order context and the emergence of *Aktuil*, then examines representations of rock culture in the

magazine, and finally considers the magazine's observable influence on the everyday lives and cultural practices of Bandung youth.

## METHOD

This study employs the historical method as formulated by Kuntowijoyo, comprising five stages. First, topic selection was based on the limited scholarly attention devoted to *Aktuil*'s role in shaping and interpreting the sociocultural formation of rock music among young people in Bandung. Second, during the heuristic stage, the principal sources collected were issues 3, 4, 10, 11, 13, 48, 49, 52, 114, 116, 117, 128, 151, 154, 161, 166, 187, 215, and 219 of *Aktuil*, published between 1967 and 1978. These issues were selected because they span the study period and contain articles, news coverage, columns, and visual materials directly related to the topic. The study also uses interviews with Hengki Herwanto, a former *Aktuil* journalist, and Boy Worang, a Bandung cultural figure. Third, source criticism involved both external and internal criticism to assess the authenticity, credibility, and evidentiary value of the sources. Fourth, during interpretation, the researchers compared discourses across sources and analyzed them with the support of Stuart Hall's theory of representation. Fifth, historiography organized the findings into a historical narrative centered on the sociocultural phenomena surrounding rock music among Bandung youth, with a sociology-of-music perspective serving as an analytical lens (Kuntowijoyo, 2013; Silbermann, 2007). These stages enable the study to organize historical evidence into a coherent chronological and analytical account.

Because this study does not seek to provide a comprehensive history of rock music in Bandung or a detailed analysis of song lyrics, it adopts a sociological approach to music that emphasizes social processes surrounding music rather than musical structure itself. Drawing on Silbermann (2007), the sociology of music is used here to examine relationships between musical forms, practices, and the social groups that produce, circulate, and consume them. In this study, the sociological approach is therefore used not to analyze internal musical elements such as lyrics or composition, but to explain the social and cultural conditions in which rock culture emerged and acquired meaning.

The study also draws on Stuart Hall's theory of representation. Hall defines representation as the process through which meaning is produced through language (Hall, 1997). From this perspective, magazine content—including images and other visual materials—does not simply “speak” for itself but must be interpreted within shared systems of meaning. The representations examined here include music, musicians, genres, audiences, and the visual symbols through which they were depicted. The units of analysis therefore include magazine covers, recurring sections, and the language used in *Aktuil*. These elements are interpreted as signs that construct particular cultural images, values, and hierarchies. This approach makes it possible to examine the extent to which *Aktuil* functioned as an active medium in shaping how young people encountered rock music and understood the lifestyles associated with it.

By combining the historical method, the sociology of music, and representation theory, this study situates the development of *Aktuil* and rock culture within the social world of Bandung youth. The historical method traces change across the 1967–1978 period; the sociology of music provides a perspective for understanding the relationship between rock music and the social lives of young people; and representation theory is used to analyze how rock music, musicians, and associated lifestyles were portrayed in *Aktuil*. The study therefore addresses not only the historical development of rock culture but also the processes through which meanings about that culture were produced and circulated by the media.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### The Early New Order and the Emergence of *Aktuil*

In the early years of the New Order, the government adopted a more open attitude toward Western popular music than had prevailed under the restrictive cultural climate of Guided Democracy. This greater openness did not arise from a formal policy explicitly guaranteeing musical freedom; rather, it developed gradually amid political changes following the transfer of power, particularly after Manipol-

USDEK was revoked through MPRS Decree No. XXXIV/MPRS/1967 (Hutari, [2022](#); Widiatiaga, [2018](#)).

The renewed availability of Western music significantly influenced musical practices and public taste. In Bandung, this was reflected in the emergence of local bands such as The Rollies and The Peels, which adopted Western musical styles and identities (Worang, [2026](#)). The connection between local musicians and global influences was strong; as Yockie Soerjoprajogo observed, Western influences were difficult to avoid when playing rock music (Sakrie, [2011](#)).

Shops also began selling Western popular-culture magazines, including *Actueel*, *Muziek Express*, and *Pop Foto*. These publications were widely available at Bandung's Cikapundung magazine market and became popular among young readers (Tannos, [2017](#)). This environment helped create the conditions for the launch of a local music magazine, *Aktuil*.

In 1967, the idea of publishing *Aktuil* emerged from discussions involving Bob Avianto, a freelance film writer, and Toto Rahardjo. The proposal was supported by the Toto family's Timbul Printing Press on Jalan Lengkong Kecil in Bandung, which made production possible. Denny Sabri Gandanegara, a contributor to the Yogyakarta magazine *Discorina*, also played an important role in developing the concept; he was dissatisfied with *Discorina*'s limited focus on musician profiles and song chords (Tannos, [2017](#)).

The three subsequently met at the home of Syamsudin (Sam Bimbo) to discuss publication plans. They agreed on the name *Aktuil*, inspired by the Dutch magazine *Actueel*. The editorial office was established at Jalan Lengkong Kecil No. 41, Bandung, alongside Timbul Printing Press, which served as the production center. The venture required initial capital of approximately 10 million rupiah (Tannos, [2017](#)).

The magazine was originally scheduled to appear in May 1967, but publication was delayed because the editorial team had limited experience and faced several technical difficulties. These included the need for additional electrical capacity and a lack of familiarity with color separation and layout processes. After these obstacles were addressed, *Aktuil* made its debut on June 8, 1967, approximately one month later than planned. The first issue appeared without formal authorization from the Ministry of Information and relied only on approval from the West Java Regional Military Commander, yet the magazine received no government reprimand (Tannos, [2017](#)).

During the New Order, publishers were generally required to hold two interdependent permits: a Publication Permit (SIT) issued by the Ministry of Information and a Printing Permit (SIC) issued through the military security apparatus, KOPKAMTIB. Without both permits, media outlets could not legally operate; the revocation of either could effectively shut a publication down through the state censorship system (Hill, [2011](#)).

*Aktuil*'s ability to survive during its early period may also have been facilitated by sociopolitical connections. Denny Sabri, one of the magazine's managers, was the son of Sabri Gandanegara, who served as Deputy Governor of West Java from 1966 to 1974. There is no direct evidence that this relationship resulted in intervention or special protection, but it may have afforded the magazine some degree of flexibility during the licensing process (Worang, [2026](#)). Because local government officials also operated within the New Order's political structure under Suharto, such relationships could potentially have influenced how regulations were implemented in practice.

Content may have been another factor. Because *Aktuil* concentrated largely on art, music, and popular culture, its material may have been regarded as less politically sensitive and therefore less likely to become a priority for state censorship. Moreover, some members of the political and social elite had access to global culture and consumed Western music, potentially creating a degree of cultural acceptance for a publication such as *Aktuil* (Worang, [2026](#)). This interpretation remains conjectural, however, and should not be treated as a factual conclusion in the absence of direct evidence.

*Aktuil* formally obtained a Publication Permit (SIT), No. 27/BPPR/3/67, with its third issue. The permit was later renewed through Minister of Information Decree No. 0929/SKDIR/PP/SIT/1970

(Sabri et al., 1967; Usman, 1977). A new Printing Permit (SIC), No. 15-16/KAMDA/JB/74, was obtained in 1974 (Usman, 1977).

In its early years, *Aktuil* was distributed by informal vendors, many of whom came from middle-class families in Bandung. Riding motorcycles, they sold the magazine across the city and in nearby areas such as Sumedang, Garut, and Cianjur. The 5,000 copies of the inaugural issue reportedly sold out in less than a week—“*sigar kacang goreng kasar na mah*” [“more or less like fried peanuts”]—as recalled in a memory of Denny Sabri (Tannos, 2017).

As distribution expanded and readership grew, *Aktuil*’s content became increasingly important in shaping the cultural orientation of young people. This influence was reflected in the growing number of Bandung youth who formed rock bands and adopted Western-oriented clothing, hairstyles, and forms of behavior (Worang, 2026). In this sense, *Aktuil* served as a medium that accelerated both the imitation and the local internalization of global popular culture.

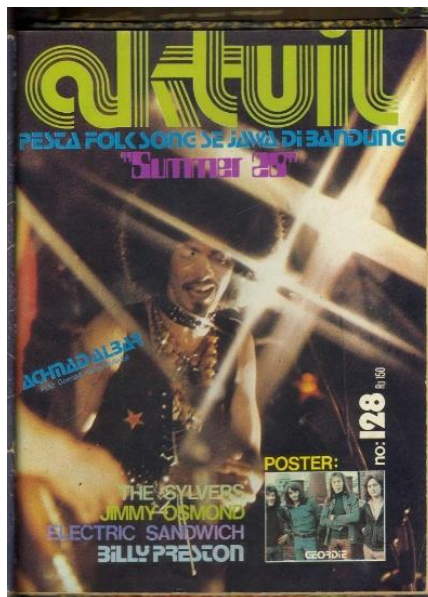
The following discussion is organized into two subsections. The first analyzes how *Aktuil* represented rock music through its cover design, writing style, and recurring sections devoted to local and international music. The second examines sociocultural phenomena among young people that developed in relation to this media exposure.

### Visual Representations of Rock Culture in *Aktuil*

*Aktuil*’s representation of rock culture can be examined through four main elements: (1) cover design, (2) writing style, (3) sections devoted to the local rock scene, and (4) sections covering international rock. Together, these elements functioned as textual and visual devices that helped shape readers’ perceptions of rock culture.



**Figure 1.** *Aktuil* Issue 13, featuring George Harrison of The Beatles on the cover.  
Source: Indonesian Music Museum



**Figure 2.** *Aktuil* Issue 128, featuring Achmad Albar and God Bless on the cover.  
Source: Denny Sakrie's collection

In its cover design, *Aktuil* displayed a consistent tendency to feature popular figures as visual focal points. Covers were frequently dominated by photographs of models or prominent rock musicians at the height of their popularity. The selection of these figures helped establish who could be recognized as an icon of rock culture, making the cover a visual gateway through which readers encountered the changing rock-music landscape (Worang, 2026). The covers also incorporated visual elements closely associated with rock culture, including long hair, distinctive fashion, expressive poses, stage

performances, and concert lighting. These were not merely aesthetic choices but cultural symbols associated with self-expression, freedom, and youth.

The second element is writing style. *Aktuil* developed a linguistic character as distinctive as its cover imagery, using language to animate and reinforce a recognizable rock-cultural identity. One of its most notable features was an informal, deliberately unconventional tone—what has been described as a “whatever I want” style (Warsito, 2024). From a popular-culture perspective, this linguistic informality resonated with rock music’s association with freedom and anti-establishment values.

This tendency is evident in various reports. In issue 26 (1969), for example, the magazine wrote, “Kalau penari GATOTKATJA GANDRUNG sudah kena wabah mode BEATLES, maka tariannya akan menjadi tarian GATOTKATJA GONDRONG...” [“If the GATOTKATJA GANDRUNG dancers caught the BEATLES craze, their dance would become the GATOTKATJA GONDRONG dance”]. In issue 29 (1969), it joked, “THE DOORS anggauta2nja ialah tukang2 KAJU jang suka bikin PINTU...” [“The members of THE DOORS are carpenters who like making doors”] (Warsito, 2024). Such wordplay reflected a style that frequently used irony, parody, and playful criticism of dominant cultural conventions.

*Aktuil* also employed hyperbolic and provocative language, as seen in its coverage of the hippie phenomenon and psychedelic rock culture in Bandung in 1968.

“.... ‘THE PHILLON’ Artinja memang banjak kalau kita menjelidiknya. Arti pertama ialah, (maaf lho!!!!) Sebagai orang<sup>2</sup> DUNGU, djuga GOBLOK dan TOLOL. Kemudian kalau kata phillon ini diambil dari kata Junani Philein, artinja..... (sekali lagi maaf) orang jang seneng menghisap madu WANITA<sup>2</sup> alias hidung belang” (Suriaatmadja, 1968b).

[“... ‘THE PHILLON.’ It actually has many meanings if we look into it. The first is (sorry!!!!) people who are STUPID, DUMB, and IDIOTIC. Then, if the word ‘phillon’ is derived from the Greek word ‘philein,’ it means ... (again, sorry) someone who enjoys ‘sucking the honey’ from women—in other words, a womanizer.”]

The hyperbolic, provocative, and outspoken language used by *Aktuil* became part of the magazine’s representation of a hard-edged rock culture and served as an expressive medium for projecting boldness (Worang, 2026). Its writing style can therefore be read as an attempt to reproduce the raw, informal, and expressive qualities associated with rock culture.



**Figure 3.** Advertisement for Harry Roesli’s rock opera *Ken Arok*, accompanied by photographs of the performance from an issue of *Aktuil*.  
Source: Collection of the Indonesian Music Museum.

The third element concerns sections devoted to the local rock scene. Here, *Aktuil* functioned as an active medium connecting the dynamics of local music with its readers. Its concert coverage generally appeared in two forms: advertisements and reviews. Advertisements informed readers about schedules, venues, and lineups, while concert reports described the atmosphere, audience responses, and the performances of individual bands (Herwanto, 2025). This pattern demonstrates how *Aktuil* linked local rock musicians with audiences in Bandung and beyond. One example is its advertisement for Harry Roesli’s rock opera *Ken Arok*, performed on April 12, 1975, at Gedung Merdeka in Bandung

(“Rock Opera Ken Arok, Harry Roesli,” 1975). Beyond promoting the concert, the advertisement also functioned as a visual cultural object representing the identity and aesthetics of Bandung’s local rock scene.

Interviews with members of local bands were another important component of this coverage. Through them, readers gained access to musicians’ perspectives on songwriting, band-lineup changes, and current issues in the rock scene. *Aktuil*’s coverage of Giant Step in issues 186 and 187 (1976), for example, not only reviewed the band’s debut album *Mark I* but also included direct interviews with band members (Leo, 1976a, 1976b).

The fourth element is *Aktuil*’s coverage of the international rock scene. The magazine provided Indonesian readers with access to global music trends from the mid-1960s through the 1970s through several recurring formats.



**Figure 4.** International rock-music news and a section featuring popular song lyrics in *Aktuil*, issue 154 (1974) and issue 10 (1968).

Source: Collection of the Indonesian Music Museum.

First, *Aktuil* published profiles of international bands and musicians accompanied by illustrations, photographs, lineup information, and descriptions of musical styles. This format positioned the magazine as a visual and textual guide to the international world of rock. Artists and groups such as The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Elvis Presley, Led Zeppelin, Shocking Blue, the Bee Gees, Alice Cooper, Emerson, Lake & Palmer, and Deep Purple appeared in concise profiles addressing their reputations, musical innovations, and interview excerpts, some adapted from foreign music magazines (“21 Tahun Sebagai Raja Rock ‘n’ Roll ELVIS PRESLEY,” 1975; “Jethro Tull,” 1970; “Led Zeppelin: Penganut Irama Heavy Rock Sound,” 1970; “Mick Jagger Bukan Manusia Biasa!,” 1970; “Shocking Blue, Dutch Rock Band The Hague, Netherlands,” 1970; Billy, 1967). For readers with limited access to imported music media, such profiles offered a window onto international popular music. At the same time, they implicitly positioned Western rock as a benchmark of musical quality and influence, helping shape perceptions of which artists and styles merited attention.

Second, *Aktuil* published reviews and recommendations of international rock songs, including both new releases and songs currently regarded as popular or as hits (“Hit *Aktuil*,” 1968). By selecting and recommending particular songs, the magazine participated in shaping readers’ musical tastes and defining what counted as current within the international rock scene (Worang, 2026).

Third, international news appeared in recurring sections such as “Close Up,” which provided short profiles of prominent figures in Western music and film (“Close Up,” 1970). Written in a concise narrative style, the section presented background information, achievements, and accounts of the influence of the figures discussed, thereby broadening readers’ knowledge of global popular culture.

Taken together, these sections made *Aktuil* an important channel through which rock culture was introduced to Indonesian readers. By combining visual materials, biographical narratives, interviews, reviews, and song recommendations, the magazine broadened young people's knowledge of Western popular culture while also helping shape their perspectives on it (Worang, 2026). *Aktuil* can therefore be understood as a cultural mediator that both transmitted and constructed local understandings of rock as a global phenomenon.

## Aktuil and the Formation of Sociocultural Practices around Rock Culture

The rock lifestyle that emerged in Bandung during the 1970s was expressed through appearance, behavior, and patterns of cultural consumption. Visually, the rock aesthetic was associated with various styles of jeans, long hair, screen-printed T-shirts, fitted shirts, leather jackets or vests, and denim jackets. It was also expressed through theatrical stage performances that offered fans models of freedom and self-expression. In terms of cultural consumption, young people followed musical trends, collected cassettes and vinyl records, and displayed posters of favorite musicians in their rooms (Herwanto, 2025; Worang, 2026).

### Visual Style among Young People

During the 1960s and 1970s, mass media became increasingly embedded in everyday life. Advertisements and images of public figures circulated idealized forms of appearance and identity, influencing how audiences understood particular styles and social images. Mass media therefore played an important role in introducing cultural forms and in shaping lifestyle changes during this period (Prasetyo & Bayu Aji, 2020).

*Aktuil* offered readers a sustained visual record of the styles adopted by musicians and their fans, making it easier for teenagers to recognize and emulate the appearance of admired performers. During the 1970s, one of the most visible fashion trends among Bandung youth was the “cut bray” style—flared trousers that became strongly associated with a rock-oriented youth aesthetic. The popularity of cut-bray trousers has been linked to the influence of rock and hippie culture in the United States, where such clothing was associated with freedom and self-expression before spreading internationally through popular media (Sanjaya, 2024).

The popularity of cut-bray fashion is evident in its frequent appearance in mass-media advertisements from the early 1970s. Magazines of the period promoted cut-bray jeans, denim jackets, and other items associated with rock culture. *Aktuil* was one of the publications that repeatedly represented and reinforced this trend between 1970 and 1978. Its advertisements visually linked cut-bray fashion with youth confidence and modern rock identity, turning the style into more than a passing fashion. Boy Worang's photographic archive from the 1970s further illustrates the widespread adoption of cut-bray clothing in everyday life.



Figure 5. Fashion advertisements from the 1970s in *Aktuil*, issues 114, 116, and 117 (1973).

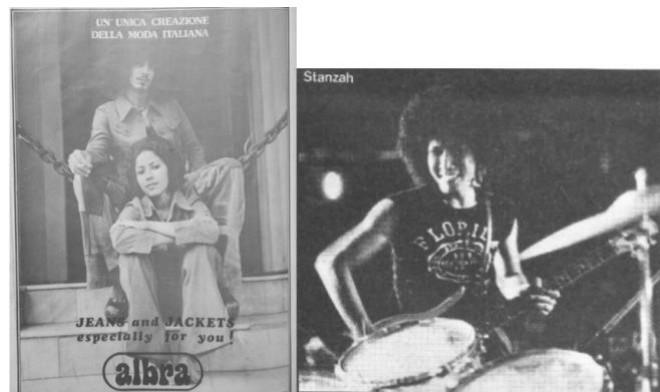
Source: Collection of the Indonesian Music Museum.



**Figure 6.** Bandung’s “cut-bray” generation in the 1970s.

Source: Boy Worang’s personal archive.

Alongside fashions such as cut-bray trousers, young people’s lifestyles were influenced by rock musicians who appeared repeatedly in *Aktuil*. The popularity of rock music made musicians important visual models in the formation of youth identity. Young readers emulated their idols’ hairstyles, clothing, speech, and behavior. Long hair became one of the most recognizable forms of imitation and a hallmark of many rock musicians of the period (Haryanto, 1973). Figures such as Ahmad Albar and Deddy Stanzah provided visual models that fans could adopt. By repeatedly portraying such musicians as symbols of confidence, modernity, and rock identity, *Aktuil* helped transform their images into social models through which readers could express affiliation with an emerging youth rock culture.



**Figure 7.** Ahmad Albar, associated with God Bless, wearing his characteristic long hair in *Aktuil*, issue 161 (1975), and Deddy Stanzah during his time with Superkid in *Aktuil*, issue 215 (1977).

Source: Collection of the Indonesian Music Museum.

This process is also visible in *Aktuil*’s interactive features, such as the “Ironing Board Design Contest” (screen printing), which published photographs of teenage winners wearing long hairstyles clearly associated with rock musicians. Such features gave readers a space in which to display and negotiate identities that had circulated through the magazine.



**Figure 8.** Youth styles represented in *Aktuil*, issue 161 (1975).

Source: Collection of the Indonesian Music Museum.

## Attitudes and Behavior among Young People

The influence of rock culture, as mediated by *Aktuil*, extended beyond appearance into the realm of social behavior. From the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, the growing circulation of Western cultural forms contributed to new patterns of expression associated with the counterculture, particularly the hippie movement. This identity was characterized not only by long hair and unconventional clothing but also, in contemporary accounts, by behaviors regarded as departures from prevailing social norms, including drug use, sexual freedom, and an emphasis on unrestricted personal liberty (Tannos, [2017](#)).

In Indonesia, and particularly in Bandung, the emergence of the hippie movement accompanied the wider circulation of Western music and its representation in mass media. *Aktuil* did not simply transmit these cultural values; it also framed and amplified public discussion of the hippie lifestyle and its perceived social consequences. Contemporary discussions increasingly linked music to listeners' social behavior, particularly as psychedelic music became associated with debates about drug use among teenagers (Worang, [2026](#)). *Aktuil* reported:

*".... bahwa dewasa ini terdapat hubungan yang lebih besar dan erat antara Musik dengan pentjiptanja, serta orang2 yang berhasrat mendengarkanja. Hal seperti ini tidak pernah terdjadi didjamanja Elvis Presley, Memang benar, oleh karena musik pada saat sekarang telah diidentikkan atau sekurang-kurangnya diintegrasikan dengan penggunaan obat2 bius (narkotik). Terutama hal ini terdjadi di negara2 Barat. Dan masalahnja telah menjadi suatu Nation Wide (umum) yang ramai diperdebatkan disamping persoalan perang Vietnam"* (Suriaatmadja, [1968a](#)).

[ "... today there is a stronger and closer relationship between music and its creators, as well as those who want to listen to it. This did not occur in Elvis Presley's era. Indeed, music today has come to be identified with, or at least associated with, the use of narcotics. This is particularly the case in Western countries, where the issue has become a nationwide subject of heated debate alongside the Vietnam War." ]

This report shows how *Aktuil* framed psychedelic rock as closely associated with drug use, reflecting and reinforcing a discourse already circulating within Western popular culture.

This discourse became more concrete through the circulation of psychedelic rock imported from the West. One example regarded as influential among Bandung youth was The Beatles' album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967), which has been linked to the spread of hippie culture (Tannos, [2017](#)). Contemporary accounts also associated the growing use of marijuana among some young people with the popularity of The Beatles. *Aktuil* illustrated this connection through commentary on the band's songs, including the following passage:

*"Marilah kita perhatikan sebuah lagu dari The Beatles 'She's Leaving Home', Kita akan mengetahui melalui sjair lagu tsb. apa sebenarnya yang menusuk hati para Teen Agers. Tiada lain ketjuali..... leaving alone for so many years' Dan sebab lainja ialah .... something inside that was always denied, that MONEY CAN'T BUY"* (Suriaatmadja, [1968a](#)).

[ "Let us consider The Beatles' song 'She's Leaving Home.' Through the lyrics, we can see what truly pierces the hearts of teenagers: nothing other than ... 'leaving alone for so many years.' Another reason is ... 'something inside that was always denied,' something that MONEY CAN'T BUY." ]

Hippie culture subsequently became more visible in the social lives of some Bandung youth. Contemporary accounts described reckless driving that prompted police raids, as well as private gatherings known as "*pesta gengsot*," held in homes or villas and restricted to invited participants. At such parties, teenagers reportedly ate, drank, and engaged in forms of sexual behavior that contemporary observers associated with the countercultural ideal of personal freedom (Tannos, [2017](#)). These practices generated concern among parents and other members of society.

A more extreme case was reported in 1969 with the emergence in Bandung of a group known as United Haggard D.113. Led by a man identified only by the initials JH and based on Juanda Street, the group was reported to have coerced members into abducting women for sexual violence as part of practices described as "free love." Its members used flower emblems and colorful clothing associated with contemporary hippie imagery. The songs *Kota Kembang* by Tetty Kadi and *San Francisco*, popularized by Scott McKenzie, were reportedly adopted as group anthems. Police eventually arrested 15 members of the group (Tannos, [2017](#)).

Overall, *Aktuil* contributed to shaping the sociocultural landscape surrounding rock music in Bandung. Through its varied forms of presentation, the magazine influenced how some young people

understood and expressed rock culture in everyday life. This process, however, cannot be attributed to the magazine or to music alone. It occurred through a broader process of mediation involving magazines, musicians, peer groups, and other social networks that collectively reinforced the formation and circulation of particular lifestyles.

## CONCLUSION

The development of rock culture in Bandung between 1967 and 1978 was closely connected to the changing sociopolitical context that followed the transfer of power from Sukarno to Suharto. The New Order created a cultural climate more open to Western influences, reflected in the revocation of Manipol-USDEK through MPRS Decree No. XXXIV/MPRS/1967. Within this changing environment, Western popular culture—particularly rock music—circulated more freely among young people. In Bandung, this process gained further momentum with the emergence of *Aktuil*, which became an important medium for introducing, disseminating, and framing rock culture.

Analysis of the magazine's cover design, writing style, coverage of local rock, and reporting on international music demonstrates that *Aktuil* did more than convey information about rock culture. Through repeated textual and visual representations, it also helped shape readers' perceptions of that culture. These representations encouraged processes of imitation through which some young people incorporated elements associated with rock into everyday life, including clothing, hairstyles, attitudes, and forms of behavior.

These findings contribute to the historiography of Indonesian media and popular culture by showing how *Aktuil* functioned as a cultural agent involved in shaping, disseminating, and legitimizing rock culture in Bandung. The study also contributes to media history by positioning the magazine as a site of meaning production through which identities, tastes, and cultural practices were negotiated. It therefore offers a perspective on the relationship between popular media and the formation of local youth culture during the New Order.

This study nevertheless has several limitations. Because it focuses on representations of rock culture in *Aktuil*, it does not comprehensively examine the magazine's institutional and economic dimensions, including its funding, printing processes, and distribution networks. Nor does it analyze the composition and size of its readership in detail; consequently, the extent of *Aktuil*'s influence across different social groups in Indonesia cannot yet be measured with precision. Editorial practices and possible forms of censorship affecting the selection and presentation of content also fall outside the principal scope of this study. Future research could address these issues to deepen the history of media and popular culture in Indonesia.

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## Author contributions

Ageng Rachmad, as the lead author of the study, was responsible for formulating the research concept, defining the research questions, developing the theoretical framework, and designing the research methodology. In addition, the lead author also collected data through archival research and interviews, analysed the data, drafted the manuscript from the initial to the final stage, and was responsible for the

revision process and final approval of the manuscript. Guruh Prasetyo contributed to field data collection, the search for secondary sources, and assisted in the data processing and verification process. Ahmad Arif Budiman Nasution played a role in data analysis, strengthening the conceptual framework, and provided substantive input in the drafting and refinement of the manuscript's content. Meanwhile, Jefri Rieski Triyanto contributed to the manuscript editing process, the structuring of the writing, and also provided evaluation and final revisions to ensure the quality and suitability of the manuscript for publication.

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### Declarations

#### Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not applicable.

#### Consent for publication

The authors have given approval for the publication of this manuscript.

#### Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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