

Publication: The Straits Times, p D01_D02
Date: 01 November 2017
Headline: The new beat generation

THE NEW BEAT GENERATION



Local electronic musicians such as Myrne (pictured), Jasmine Sokko, Fulses and Evanturetime are realising they can have a viable career in their chosen field – they are hitting the charts and holding tours overseas. [Anjali Raguraman and Eddino Abdul Hadi](#) report. D2

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Electronic acts find global beat

Home-grown music artists are making a name for themselves on the world stage

Anjali Raguraman and Eddino Abdul Hadi

A new wave of electronic artists from Singapore is coming to the fore – not just locally, but also internationally. And they are making a career of it.

DJ producer Myrnie, or Manfred Lim, has just completed a three-week club tour in North America where the crowds are already familiar with his music.

The captivating Jasmine Sokko, with her electronics-leaning tunes, has had her share of chart success, going to No. 1 on streaming service

Spotify's viral charts in Singapore and No. 2 on MTV Asia's regional Viral Charts.

Lim, 22, says: "I used to have the idea that you can't have a music career in Singapore, but two years of playing here has changed that."

Having also played in Australia, China and South-east Asia, he notes how the regional scene has changed from catering to commercial, big-room or electro house music every night, to making space for more independent and niche electronic acts.

He says: "People are coming round to the idea that you don't have to have a huge label to be a successful artist or to get people to come to your venue. You can just have a Soundcloud page, be independent, but still be very successful."

anjali@sph.com.sg
dinohadi@sph.com.sg

Eventurtime looking for the Singapore sound

Eventurtime made his debut as a solo electronic artist only a year ago, when he released his first single *Vulturex*.

But as a producer, composer, songwriter and audio wizard, the 29-year-old, whose real name is Evan Low, has put his stamp on a wide range of projects in the last few years.

He has worked with acts that range from American hitmaker David Foster to some of the home-grown indie scene's most prominent names, such as singer-songwriter Inch Chua.

If you have watched a movie at any of cinema chain Golden Village's screens recently, you would have heard his music too – he worked on the tune that plays when the company's logo appears on screen.

In April this year, he released his second single *Don't Care*, a collaboration with home-grown experimental electronic artist Yllis, as well as a joint EP, *Heartstrings*, with singer, rapper, musician and songwriter Tim De Corta.

Low is keen on expanding his long list of local collaborators, which includes singer-songwriters Charlie Lim, Theodora and Laying.

"I have always been curious about our sonic identity, about finding a Singapore sound," he says.

"South Korea has K-pop, Taiwan and China have their own identities. I believe we have something even stronger and better, but we haven't quite figured it out yet."

"So by reaching out, meeting, chatting and eventually working with artists who are aligned with my vision, I'm hoping, maybe some years down the road, we can figure this out together."

Low, who first took piano lessons

at the age of five, graduated from Singapore Polytechnic with a Diploma in Music and Audio Technology, honed his skills at famed American music school Berklee College of Music, thanks to scholarships from the school as well as the Media Development Authority.

He credits musician and songwriter Jonathan Chua from pop band The Sam Willows for helping him get a firmer foothold in the music industry. Low is a manager in Zendyhi, an audio-visual production house co-founded by Chua.

Low says: "He heard of my work and wanted to work together to cultivate the scene not only from his capacity as an artist, but also from the commercial world as arrangers and producers."

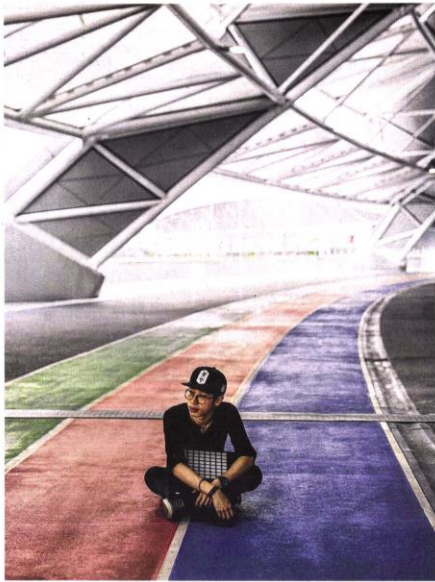
His debut solo EP is due to be released next year.

Before that, however, his schedule is packed in the next few months. In January, he is the music director at the upcoming concert by social media personalities Muna and Hirzi at the Capitol Theatre.

A new song will be released soon. Titled *Sober*, he describes it as a "fun" and "quirky" electronic pop single featuring jazz crooner and last year's *Sing! China* breakout star Nathan Hartono, as well as Benjamin Kheng and Jonathan Chua from The Sam Willows.

"I strongly believe that if you're passionate about your craft and you're good at it, you'll definitely find a place in the industry you seek, which, in my case, is music. The best way for me to achieve that is to lead by example and provide aid the best I can whenever someone seeks it."

Eddino Abdul Hadi



Eventurtime is keen to work with other local singer-songwriters to find Singapore's sonic identity.



Her music is all you need to know

Singer, songwriter and electronic artist Jasmine Sokko (above), who released her debut EP called *N°* two months ago, is fast becoming a regular name in the gig scene.

Earlier this year, she performed among some of electronic dance music's biggest names at Ultra Music Festival Singapore 2017. Recently, she was one of the budding artists featured in *The Great Singapore Playlist*, a project where classic Singapore songs from the 1960s to 2000s are re-imagined in a new light.

On the personal front, however, she likes to keep things mysterious. When performing or in official photos, her face is usually obscured by a visor or mask.

Sokko is not her real surname – as she sings in the chorus in her debut single *1057* released a year ago: "You don't know my name." She even declines to say what inspired her stage name.

And she wants to keep it that way. "When you make music, you don't want people to focus on anything else but music," says the 21-year-old Singaporean, who is inspired by the films of acclaimed Japanese animation house Studio Ghibli as well as by dystopian films.

"In this age, where your Instagram account is like your own private museum, as a musician, you don't want people to follow you because of how you look, you want them to follow you because of your sound."

Follow her sound local and regional fans did – *1057* went to No. 1 on music-streaming service Spotify's local Top 50 Viral chart and reached No. 8 on the Indonesian equivalent. It also peaked at No. 2 on MTV Asia's viral charts.

Last week, she got serious validation when Canadian electronic pop singer-songwriter Grimes, incidentally one of her musical heroes, praised her music on Instagram.

Sokko, who is studying business at the Singapore Management University, has also been making music with fellow home-grown electronic acts such as Yllis, Myrnie, Fulses and Eventurtime.

She is looking farther afield and wants to make her mark beyond Singapore. She has worked with New York-based producer Lucian, and her latest single, *10000FF*, was released by Dutch electronic music label KnightVision Records.

Her music journey started about a decade ago, with piano lessons at age 11. She later picked up the recorder and guitar and began singing and writing songs at 13. About two years later, she began creating her own music on her computer, dabbling with digital audio workstations.

"Music would probably have remained just fun and games for her had she not been assigned musician and live looping artist Randolf Articola as her mentor when she took part in the National Arts Council's Noise Music Mentorship for budding musicians in 2014."

"He made me realise how badly I wanted to make music. Before joining Noise, it was just totally a hobby."

Eddino Abdul Hadi

Marc Lian's journey from performer to producer

Marc Lian (right), 29, working as producer *Fulses*, is the person behind some recent trending tracks by Singapore acts, including the dreamy pop number *Somerset*, by 16-year-old singer-songwriter Gabrielle Ng, and all-out marimba-laced tropical house number *Jump The Gun*, featuring vocals by singer-actress Gayle Nerva, who is his wife.

Most recently, he co-produced Jasmine Sokko's single *Porcigine* from her debut EP *N°*, which was originally more upbeat and tropical until he added a darker mood to the track via minor chords and glitched-out vocals.

As a producer, he feels that it is a fine line he has to straddle when steering an artist in a particular direction, or drawing out what the artist has expressed that he wants for the track.

"Sometimes, the artist isn't really sure what he wants, so you steer him, but if he's decisive, you have to let it come through," says Lian, who



works from a studio in his apartment in Waterloo Street.

"Sometimes, it takes months to get a song done, sometimes, it's within a few days and hours – it's always nice when that happens."

His moniker *Fulses* is a play on the word "pulses", which connotes rhythm and beats.



PHOTOS: CLOUDEL PHOTOS: GRIFF NEVA: GALEN THURMFIELD: WARREN TAY

Before he became a full-fledged producer, he was a fixture in bands such as pop quartet *Quick Quick Danger* and hip-hop duo *Trick*. While he loves all genres of music, he has always had a fascination with electronic music.

His move to production began with producing, mixing and

mastering *Quick Quick Danger*'s four-track debut EP *Love Electric* in 2010.

"I was always more drawn to making music in the studio than performing," says Lian, who started his *Fulses* project in the middle of last year, putting out stuff he had worked on that he just wanted to release, as well as tracks that he had written with collaborators, such as *Rave Republic*, *Ming Bridges* and his *Trick* partner, Richard Jansen.

New projects on his plate include collaborations with the likes of *TheLionTyrBoy*, *Fifon* and R&B singer Howard Chan.

Lian is also moving towards more free-flowing jam sessions, instead of having only "objective-driven" production sessions.

He says: "A lot of artists now don't really create stuff till a need comes, but it's a shame. I'm trying to encourage musicians to just make music like how they would in a band."

Anjali Raguraman

Make a yearly date with Myrnie – in the US

Of the new wave of electronic artists to emerge here recently, perhaps the one who has made the biggest dent in DJ-producer Myrnie (right).

The 22-year-old Singaporean, whose real name is Manfred Lim, has gained plenty of momentum since signing with American DJ Diplo's Mad Decent record label 1½ years ago.

His brand of future bass, R&B and trap has secured him slots at major

dance music festivals such as this year's *Ultra Singapore* and *Dakar's Warehouse Project* in 2015.

Just last month, he wrapped up an 11-date North American tour, with shows in Los Angeles and New York, as well as at a mega club in Vancouver.

Speaking to *The Straits Times* from Vancouver, he says it was important for him "to explore the biggest electronic market in the world" – America.

"For me, it was a check (off the list) for myself to know I'm doing the right thing and that people love it," he adds.

"When I first started out, I wanted to be a very indie musician and be very pedantic and passionate about my art, to the point that I would exclude people from listening to it if they didn't understand it. But then you realise that without the people in the club, you're going to play to

no one."

Indeed, he does not shy away from dropping crowd-pleasing, commercial tracks during his sets.

"It's a balance between realising who your listeners are and understanding what they're most excited about because people come to have a good time," he says.

It has paid off. While on his North American tour, he recalls seeing kids in the front row at one of his shows in Los Angeles who knew most of his songs.

Lim, a Singapore Management University student, plans to make touring the US once-a-year affair.

Anjali Raguraman

His latest music includes *Confessions*, featuring US singer Cozi Zuehlhoff, released with independent Canadian record label *Monstercat*. He also plans to release his next single with *Gentle Bones* today.

"When I first started out, there was no one for me to look up to, emulate or take advice from, so it was really firing shots in the dark and hoping something sticks," he says. "It's great if (what I do) encourages someone to download a demo and just make beats all day."

Eddino Abdul Hadi

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