

# The “World” in Some Popular Sinhala Reggae, Hip Hop, and Pop Songs

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## Abstract

Though Sri Lanka is an island with a number of burning internal cultural problems, “world music” elements are one feature that is highly regarded in the Derana Music Video Awards ceremony. This study is to investigate the impact of fragmented world music and its reception by the listeners who consume popular music texts in the Sinhala language. Important questions are how those elements of world music are imitated and adapted in popular Sinhala songs and what motivates Sri Lankan musicians to adapt them. A detailed scrutiny into processes of imitations and adaptations of that what happened to become “world music trends” in popular Sinhala songs have been explored by choosing a close-up analysis of products presented at a recent Derana Music Video Awards ceremony.

*Il “mondo” in alcune popolari canzoni reggae, hip hop e pop singalesi. Sebbene lo Sri Lanka sia un'isola con una quantità di problemi culturali scottanti, la presenza di elementi di world music è una caratteristica altamente considerata all'interno della cerimonia dei Derana Music Video Awards. Il presente studio intende indagare l'impatto della world music, nelle sue varie componenti, e la sua ricezione presso il pubblico che ascolta canzoni pop in lingua singalese. Alcune questioni importanti sono come questi elementi di world music siano imitati e adattati nelle canzoni pop in lingua singalese e cosa spinga i musicisti dello Sri Lanka ad adattarli. Un esame dettagliato dei processi di imitazione e adattamento di quelle che sono diventate delle “tendenze di world music” nelle canzoni pop singalesi è stato affrontato attraverso un'attenta analisi dei prodotti presentati in una recente cerimonia dei Derana Music Video Awards.*

## Introduction

Apparently, today's popular Sinhala songs are taking up a variety of musical styles regardless of the history and cultural background those styles bring along. The modern youth are eager to imitate Western trends of music with all the easily available technological improvements, internet facilities, and electronic equipment that are within their reach in a twinkling of an eye. Whatsoever, more importance is given to such adapted creations with striking so called "world music" elements at the Derana Music Video Awards Ceremony. However, some definitions and adaptations of world music and their reception in the Sri Lankan musical life are yet to be discussed (Koskoff 2008).

This study attempts to elucidate the impact of world music trends and its reception by the Sinhala listener. The key questions aimed at are how trends in world music are imitated and adapted in popular Sinhala songs; what motivates Sri Lankan musicians to adapt world music trends; how world music trends affect the Sri Lankan music community and how the many amateur musicians and modern recording techniques and technologies affect a changing essence of popular Sinhala songs. Therefore, a detailed scrutiny into processes of imitation and adaptations of world music trends in popular Sinhala songs have been explored herein.

## Selection criteria for material to be analyzed

The Sri Lankan music industry is constantly evolving and over the last decade it has gone through many changes. The way the people experience music has been changed. Lots of musicians came into the scene and also lots of new phrases were introduced to the Sri Lankan music vocabulary and a lot of songs released these days have been composed imitating mainstream musical styles, such as hip hop, rap, reggae and many more. Over the last decade most of the television channels in Sri Lanka started granting awards for the many events of the fields of performing arts. Derana Music Video Awards was the first operation in Sri Lanka that presented awards for the event of music videos.

The following section briefly introduces the Derana Music Video Awards in the year 2013. Typically for the XXI century music industry in Sri Lanka and possibly elsewhere, music is widely perceived as being connected to visual effects that may support the lyrical and/or musical ideas. Due to the effect of digital technology, certain rapid and extensive changes as well as innovations have been taking place in the field of commercial Sinhala song productions in recent times. However, the primary musical structure is increasingly important to the evaluation of music production, though visuality is undeniably interfering.

The TV Derana – which is considered as the Sri Lanka's premium entertainment channel – presents Derana Music Video Awards since 2007 to promote the music video makers of the Sri Lankan music scene. The only award ceremony dedicated solely for music videos. The 5<sup>th</sup> Derana Music Video Awards ceremony of 2013 in collaboration with Ponds

was originally telecast on 30 June 2014 night, held at Citrus hotel, Waskaduwa. Musicians from all over the country congregated to supposedly celebrate and honor music and brilliance in technical styles. There were 25 awards for the songs which have been visualized into music videos and the technicians behind – the director, cinematographer, art director, choreographer, editors and many more that have worked to make the music videos, were awarded for their efforts. These are the categories of some awards:

1. Best Sri Lankan Reggae Video
2. Best Sri Lankan Hip Hop Video
3. Best Sri Lankan Pop Video
4. Best Rap Performance
5. Most Popular Online Music Video
6. Best music Video
7. Best Sri Lankan Pop Video
8. Best Overall Act By Singer / Group Male
9. Best Visual Effects
10. Best Editing
11. Best Cinematography
12. Best Art Direction
13. Best Alternative Video
14. Best International Collaboration
15. Best Sri Lankan Tamil Video
16. Best Director
17. Special Jury Award
18. Best Concept in a Video
19. Best New Artist
20. Hot and Spicy Video
21. Most Popular Video (Gold, Silver & Bronze Awards) – (SMS voting)

The panel of adjudicators consisted of (with the self-describing attributes in brackets):

1. Wasantha Dugannarala (song writer, media reporter, actor and announcer)
2. Steve De La Silva (director, actor, English drama writer and commercial artist)
3. Suminda Gamage (Senior Creative Director and Associate Vice President of JWT Colombo)
4. Saminda Ranawaka (animator, editor, commercial artist and visiting lecturer)
5. Channa Perera (director and actor)

In the following discussion of Music Video Awards, there will be no attempt to examine the best works or criticize the granted awards on video basis. Accordingly, observing the

Derana Music Video Awards 2013 as a model, the examination will be limited here to the first three categories of the above-mentioned award list, which support the perception of music video and show as a strong connection to so called “world music trends” that were widely discussed among musicians and press. Those three categories with the song titles and the singers are as follows:

1. Best Sri Lankan Reggae Video: *Mottu* – Lahiru Perera (La Signore)
2. Best Sri Lankan Hip Hop Video: *Athamita Kaasi* – Big Harsha & Kaizer / Iraj & Peshala
3. Best Sri Lankan Pop Video: *Mal Madahasa* – Randhir.

In the agenda of the event is stated that Music Video Awards help music video makers in reaching to telecast their productions to the possible audience, enabling the general public to experience the power of music, and promote new trends to the Sri Lankan music industry.

### How are music videos judged and which role plays the visual impact in relation to the sound quality?

The Derana Music Video Awards are solely dedicated for songs which have been visualized and produced as music videos, and the technicians behind.<sup>1</sup> However, they are not entirely for any specific sound quality or music. As far as this is concerned, this is a problematic ground that the public musical life in Sri Lanka faces today. Despite the critical fact that many involved people may not have a highly sophisticated perception of music videos, it seems to be unknown what the term “music video” really means. The definition lacks deeper understanding and anything simply named “music video” is considered. However, several practical questions arise when dealing with this topic. Particularly, coming up with addresses of the judges and the director of TV Derana, it appears that their attention is seemingly only focused on the visual aspect of the video. The following section gives a demonstration of the jury’s measures in order to judge the production of music videos and to decide about these awards. The members of the jury (Fig. 1) were asked first questions right after the show:

Wasantha Dugannarala: «We have analyzed the most talented & popular artists in the country. The final decision was given by five of us who were in the judgment panel based on our own personal knowledge, views, and thoughts. This should be accepted. The final decision will always be varied depending on the judges. It is not a constant one. However, today awards will be given away for those who are popular. We did creative

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<sup>1</sup> See more at: <<http://www.gossiphotlanka.info/2014/05/derana-music-video-awards-2013.html#sthash.V02vznzIF.dpuf>>, last visited 26 September 2018.



**FIGURE 1.** Panel of the jury. From left: Steve De La Silva, Saminda Ranawaka, Wasantha Dugannarala, Channa Perera and Suminda Gamage (captured during the ceremony of Derana Music Video Awards 2014).

visuals. Maybe it is important to award the visuals. I will add one more thing: the singer and the composer get a good publicity because of the media. However, the men who are behind the screen such as the art directors, the lighting men and whoever have been giving a helping hand on effects of the video will not be getting an opportunity. This is a good chance. I believe the decision we took is correct».

Suminda Gamage: «This is a great deal and an opportunity to all Sri Lankans. This is a new approach and the new experience. I feel this as a completely new venture to produce new artists. That is why I really value this».

Channa Perera: «There were lots of competitive creations this time. We were unable to do justice to each and every creation. It was a hard task for the judges to choose the best. We agreed, disagreed, and argued to come to the final decision. Finally, we were able to choose the best. We always tried to think differently to capture the most suitable talents».

Steve De La Silva: «It's good to be here and it was good judging the program. It was really good stuff. I am really happy that we have made a good decision».

Saminda Ranawaka: «This is a good program for the new generation that is planning to enter the music visual field. The importance of music visuals is not being only the easiest to digest but beneficial to education, too. We will be able to capture those who are talented regarding new techniques, new thoughts, and creations. We can lend a hand to them. I see this as an opportunity which brings out new talents».

Laksiri Wickramage (director of TV Derana): «This is not an easy task. I take this opportunity to thank all the judges, and Shamil and the team as well. Some are asking us what this nonsense is. We don't award for the “song” yet the most popular award is given considering the song. For the other videos we only consider the visual shape. Further, there are particular genres of songs. For instance: reggae, hip hop, pop and others. This is an effort to identify the best of these».

What we can understand from the above comments is that the jury only values the visual elements of the music video, but not the musical elements. If that is the case, then, how could have been the various contributions categorized under “music genres”? The main element of these genres should be their musical quality of which the sound is a remarkable component. Taking this thought seriously, Somaratne Dissanayake's idea has to be analysed. He spoke against the Derana Music Video Awards during the Derana



**FIGURE 2.** Somarathna Disanayake criticizes the Derana Music Video Awards in 2012.

Music Video Awards ceremony, which was held in 2012 (Fig. 2). He said that «I was under the impression that this is all about awarding music. But I did not witness such a thing. Also, these events will mislead the young generation and ultimately destroy the taste of their music».

Awards can be given for the creations that fulfill the characteristics of genres. The creations that fail to meet the basics will be considered as weak creations from the viewpoint of some agents in the music industry. It is disappointing to distribute awards without possessing a suitable knowledge on those genres.

The outcome of the first questions asked confirms Channa Perera's comments «The most important thing in a music video is not the music but the visual». Press and observing music researchers were asking subsequently: «If the board of judges publicizes such comments, what would be the message given to the future generation? Is this an encouraging approach taken by one of the leading media institutions in the country?» It was stated that all the music videos will be thoroughly reviewed through an esteemed panel of judges. The uneducated Sri Lankan listener warmly accepts these genres unknowingly, as the media is already in line with a shallow accommodating of industrially uniformed expectations. However, this is not a useful approach to reviewing and does not provide any justice to the musicality of the artists. This situation is definitely discouraging, especially in the field of music education and attention paid to musical life within Sri Lanka.

The following section analyses some features of music videos in order to understand the reason for this popular perception. Also, the distinction between music as a creative process of making art and the marketing of an industrial product should not be forgotten.

## Music video

A lot of contrasting approaches are possible when music videos are being dissected. Starting with the most common encyclopedias, such as the the *Cambridge Dictionary* (2011) that defines "music video" as a «short film made to advertise a popular song». The *Oxford Dictionary* (2011) defines a music video as «a videotaped performance of a recorded popular song, usually accompanied by dancing and visual images interpreting the lyrics». «A short film integrating a song and imagery, produced for promotional or artistic purposes». They are characteristically short, around the duration of the single song itself and not too much more, and so may be represented to as a type of short film. Moller argued that, «to describe a music video as simply an advertisement for a song or a videotaped performance severely limits both the scope and potential of the genre. They can be used to entertain, provoke thought and promote various causes – not just to sell songs» (2001).

Accordingly, a music video is first and foremost a song and imagery. It is composed by fitting images to music. Images are bound together by the rhythmic structure and the underlying beat as well as by other musical features.

Consequently, coming to an understanding about the definitions of "music video" it is essential to comprehend that a music video is a many-faceted multi-discursive phenomenon of audio-visual concoction in which the meaning is created via (1) the music, (2) the lyrics and (3) the moving images.

A serious weakness with this situation, however, is that of the "musical styles" used. They are named in a purely economic sense of production and do not imply any historically or culturally grown diversity in primary use and individual application. There were several awards preserved for some specific genres economically summarized under "world music" in the Derana Music Video Awards, such as hip hop video, pop video, or reggae video. Bearing in mind that there exists somewhat a contradiction if only the visual act is considered, it is difficult to discrete the connection between the musical features of such non-historically interpreted and abstract genres and the actual song, since the music to the lyrics is composed in relation to the musical genres imagined by the respective composers and their imagination of what the audience would be able to identify. Hip hop, rap, reggae, and pop are per definition of different sources and only in the economic context of the music market musical genres. Another relevant point is that the song lyrics of these genres create a symbolic meaning through interaction with the images. Insofar, a symbolic language is used. Therefore, between the content of the lyrics and the images in this symbolic joining, it becomes harder for viewers to understand and interpret the context. The categories of the Awards, so to say, fix some previously non-existent boxes in the mind of the audiences.

In the following section, three examples are scrutinized comprehensively in order to examine the main points focusing on the basic audio product of each example.



## Best Sri Lankan Reggae Video

The song *Mottu*, by Lahiru Perera (La Signore)<sup>2</sup> emerged as Sri Lanka's best reggae video of the year 2013 at the Derana Music Video Awards ceremony ([Video example 1](#)). Basic principles of reggae were widely studied (Manuel & Daniel 2010) yet not fully applied in Sri Lanka as the following excerpts from interviews show.

Speaking about how he got into making *Mottu*, he says, «*Mottu* is completely reggae, although a mix of Indian bhangra music, too, is placed there. I began liking reggae, owing to the pop reggae album released by SuperHeavy<sup>3</sup> music band, and I got addicted to it. In that music album, the single *Miracle Worker*<sup>4</sup> became my national anthem at that time. I love the song and I started listening to it. It was not because of Mr. Bob Marley, I started to like Reggae. After hearing this song I wanted to compose a song using the same tempo and I made it exactly similar to the *Miracle Worker*'s tempo. I gathered so many things right through that album, and it was just as if I had got into the picturesque colors of the painting only and not into the parts of the painting itself. I composed *Mottu* with the feeling of that album and the melody was still fresh in my mind. I took the instruments of that and it was just as I had made a new thing. No one could find it as a copy of that. But I copied its feeling, because reggae has not been in my body at any time. I took advantage of the tone and the baseline as well. I used all from that album only as a reference, so that could not be identified».<sup>5</sup>

Besides this, he has elaborated. «My music is more about live instruments. I don't use samples; samples are ready made loops or beats that can be bought. But with the help of other popular artists, especially from the band Daddy, we have come up with unique compositions».<sup>6</sup> According to Tegal's report from 16 May 2010, «he will not restrict himself to this particular genre, and said he was looking to explore other avenues of music, such as pop, jazz, alternative rock and r&b. Lahiru also said that he plans to experiment and create music over this wide range of genres».

<sup>2</sup> Kurugamage Lahiru Nil Nuwan Perera born on 18 April 1984 also known by his stage name La Signore is a Popular Sri Lankan singer, musician and music producer who came to lime-light with his baila single *Rambari* released in 2008. After specializing in oriental music during school time, Lahiru went on to study sound engineering in Singapore to pursue music, and that's where his occupation got under way as an artist. During this time, he composed some of his best known songs, including *Rambari* (this song was nominated as the most popular song of the year 2010, eventually winning the Gold Award at the Derana music video awards), *Labandiye*, *Sudu gawma* and *Desin pe*.

<sup>3</sup> SuperHeavy is a musical group, originating from Los Angeles, California, in the year 2011 and consisting of Mick Jagger, modern-day soul singer Joss Stone, Eurhythmic guitarist Dave Stewart, award winning Indian film composer A. R. Rahman, and reggae star Damian Marley.

<sup>4</sup> *Miracle Worker* was SuperHeavy's first single, the straight-up reggae track. Read more: <<http://ultimateclassicrock.com/superheavy-miracle-worker/?trackback=tsmclip>>, last accessed 15 December 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Lahiru Perera, personal interview, 26 September 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Further details can be found via <[http://www.sundaytimes.lk/100516/Magazine/sundaytimesmirror\\_01.html](http://www.sundaytimes.lk/100516/Magazine/sundaytimesmirror_01.html)>, last accessed 15 December 2018.



### Verse 1

මාතලේ හදුවා මම ගේ තරිටු  
කෙතලෙන් මල්ලක් ගත්තා කෙට්ටු  
ඒ කෙල්ල දැමීමෙන් මට වෙට්ටු  
කවදා හරි කරනවා නංගිව මට්ටු

සිරිපාල කපුවා තිබ්බේ මොට්ටු  
මොට්ටුවට මතුරලා ඕරින් කර්ටු  
මොට්ටු කී ඇ හට උනා මම කුට්ටු  
ඇයි ද දැන් පෙරලෙන්තේ පනිට්ටු

### Chorus

කට ගැස්ම වී මා ලෝකෙට පේනවා  
කලු මරා මාවම බයිටට ගන්නවා  
නිස හැරුණු ඒ මේ අත මා දුවනවා  
රිදිපතු පිරමිඩෙක මා නිදනවා

### Verse 2

උන් දෙන්න වගුරනවා කපුළු සකුටු  
ඉතිරි උනේ මට මේ බල්ලා නකුටු  
සමගියෙන් ඉන්නේ අපි වී වකුටු  
කවද හරි පෙන්නනවා රැමබෝ

ඒ කාලේ අපි කැවේ කෝලි කුට්ටු  
කෙලින් තිබු කොන්ඩේ උනා නේ බොකුටු  
කුන් වෙල කන්නේ දාලා සිට්ටු  
දැන් ඉතින් හිටගෙන ගිලින්නයි වෙන්නේ පිට්ටු

### Chorus

කට ගැස්ම...

The song <i>Mottu</i> in Latin script	Rough translation into English language
[Verse 1] Mathale heduwa mama ge thattu Kethalen mallak gaththa kettu E kella dammane mata wettu Kawada hari karanawa nangiwa mattu	[Verse 1] I made a two storey house at Matale Took a slim girl from Matale That girl intercepted me One day I will punish her
Siripala kapuwa thibbe mottu Mottuwata mathurala on rin kattu Mottu dee e hata una mama thuttu Aida dan peralenne panittu	Ritualist Siripala put dots on the forehead Spelled “onreeng kattu”, a mystical formula to the dot I became worthless to the lady to whom I put dots Why now rolling buckets
[Chorus] Kata gassma wee ma loketa penawa... Thalumara mawama bytata gannawa... Hisa harunu e me atha ma duwanawa... Egiptu pirameedeka ma nidana...	[Chorus] I was seen by the world as a bite I was teased greedily I was running here and there I am sleeping inside a pyramid of Egypt
[Verse 2] Un denna waguranawa kandulu sathuthu (echcharai) Ithiri une mata me balla nakutu Samagiyeen inne api wee wakutu Kawada hari pennanawa rambo part two	[Verse 2] Both of them are shedding happy tears This unhealthy dog was left for me We live crooked in harmony One day I will show the Rambo part two
E kale api kawe kolikuttu Kelin thibbu kondaya unane bokutu Thun wela kanne dala sittu Den ithin hitagena gilinnai wenne pittu	We ate banana those days The straight hair became curled We get three meals on debits After all, we have to eat pittu in standing position
[Chorus] Kata gassma ...	[Chorus] I was seen to the world as a bite...

**FIGURE 3.** The song text of *Mottu* as used in the composition is presented in Sinhala and Latin script, and as a rough translation into English language. Lyrics by Manuranga Wijesekara, music by Music Oven Crew, melody composed, recorded, mixed and mastered by Lahiru Perera (La Signore).

The song of *Mottu* is structured as verse/chorus. The chorus is repeated. It is the formal format of reggae music style. One thing should be noted here, that this verse/chorus structural format, which is imitating an imagined Western musical style, has also had its effect on the Sinhala song system in recent times. Otherwise in earlier times, it was only a simple chorus/verse format that was adapted into the Sinhala *sarala gee* system.

The title of the song *Mottu* is seemingly attractive. The song has five parts with four-line stanzas in each part. The lyrics of *Mottu* have been written by Manuranga Wijesekara. The story is about the person La Signore been deceived by his girlfriend who was tempted into doing this deceitful act by a *Kapuwa* (ritualist). Lahiru's opinion about the lyrics are interesting. He wanted words for the story that match up the endings and sounds with the vowel "tu". So, concerning the theme of the song the lyricist has highlighted the sound "tu" at the end of each line of the verses. For that reason, the identical vowel and the consonant combinations of the sounds and the rhythm of the song have emerged regularly (for example *thattu*, *kettu*, *mottu*, *kattu*). However, when considering the song construction, he has not paid attention to the meaning of each line that relates back to the subject. There is no obvious connection between each line's meaning, which distorts various interpretations and leaves them to the listeners.

The most important feature is the way the lyrics were processed in the song *Mottu* which may not converge with the themes of genuine reggae songs. Fundamentally, reggae is famed for its tradition of social criticism in its lyrics, "promote love"; multidimensional messages, such as social criticism, political, economic, poverty, religious, and the difficulties of life and also conveys happy times, such as love, sex, dancing. Other common socio-political topics in reggae songs include black nationalism, anti-racism, anti-colonialism, anti-capitalism, and criticism of political systems and *Babylon* (Hombach 2012: 22). To illustrate on this, the lyrics of Bob Marley's songs – including, *No woman no cry*, which is asking a woman not to cry. The song is about the rise of the ghetto and encouraging a woman that things will get clearer. The song *Buffalo Soldier* speaks of the black U.S. cavalry regiments, known as buffalo soldiers that fought in the Indian wars after 1866. Marley associated their fight with a fight for survival, and reorganizes it as a symbol of black resistance. The lyrics of the song *Iron Lion Zion* are directly linked to the Rastafarian beliefs (Hombach 2012: 33, 49, 50). Therefore, lyrically *Mottu* has failed to go along with the meaningful incorporation of such a subject matter in reggae songs.

As declared by Perera, *Mottu* has been created by mixing two genres; that of simple pop and that of reggae. The chorus part composed in the mode of a simple pop song and the reggae style has been merged in the part of the verses.<sup>7</sup> Essentially, *Mottu* has been created by mixing soft pop and some reggae elements with what is understood as Irish fiddling.

The stanza shape of *Mottu* is ||: A+A+B+C :|| D+D+E<sup>1</sup>+E<sup>2</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Lahiru Perera, phone interview, 13 February 2015.

Accordingly, the verse part of the song takes in a firm rhythm and regular, simple chord progressions with a simple melody which is common in reggae songs. Musically, reggae features count on its slow and relaxed simplicity regarding those harmonic progressions.

The chord progression of *Mottu* plays on beats 2 / 4 of each measure,<sup>8</sup> almost like a percussion instrument and this bouncing effect of music is a noticeable sound in this reggae music style.<sup>9</sup> The chord works as follows:

Beat: 4/4 (Reggae beat)

[Intro]

A | - | F#m | - |  
E | - | D | E |  
A |

[Verse 1]

A F#m  
Maatale heduwa mama ge thattu  
A F#m  
Kethalen mallak gaththa kettu  
E D  
E kella demma ne mata wettu  
E E7 A  
Kawada hari karanawa nangiwa mattu

[Chorus]

A F#m  
Katagesma wee ma loketa penawa  
A F#m  
Thalumara maawama bytata gannawa  
E D  
Hisaherunu e me atha ma duwana  
E A  
Egipthu pirameedeka ma nidanawa

[Inter]

A | E | D | E |  
A | E | F#m | D |

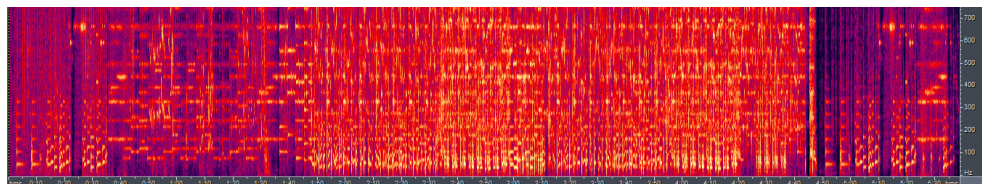
In order to consider the musical features of the chorus, the Indian *bhangra*<sup>10</sup> mix can only be seen with the drum beat which is played by a drum called *dhol*.

The violin has been brought into play as a part of the interlude of *Mottu* imitating Irish fiddling as imagined by an audience unfamiliar with Irish music. According to the Band SuperHeavy's official website, the composer team considered making different sounds comprising of musicians from different genres with different backgrounds of music. Since they wanted to get as many genres together as would fit to their work, the selected fragments belonged to different styles and genres such as rock'n'roll, reggae, soul, and various contemporary Indian musics. The idea was to use similar methods as rock violinist Ann Marie Calhoun for her work *Miracle Worker* which was created using pop reggae elements. Lahiru described that he also used the same instruments of *Miracle Worker* and created a new composition. Accordingly, Lahiru added a violin part to his concept in a slightly different way. The percussions consisting of an electric drum set, shakers, and bhangra drum, were added to accompany the riffs. The bass plays a leading role in

<sup>8</sup> It is called skank or the "bang". It has a very dampened, short and scratchy chop sound (Hombach 2012: 21).

<sup>9</sup> To compare this, one can listen to the reggae song *Freedom Fighters* by Delroy Washington. Observe the repeated bass line, the rim shots and the bass drum playing on beats 2 and 4.

<sup>10</sup> *Bhangra* is a traditional form of dance and music which was developed in the Punjab region of India and Pakistan.



**FIGURE 4.** Seen in the entire spectral picture for the rhythm description that should help to overview the process. The most active moments in the song are the bright spots. Also, the steady beats in the less active spots are clearly visible. Melodically, the main frequency changes appear between 40 and 200 Hz, which is not very high.

reggae music. Sonically, the sounds of *Mottu*'s bassline is seemingly good enough with the reggae bassline that consisted of a heavy, thick tone and was equalized so that the upper frequencies are removed and the lower frequencies emphasized. However, as to Lahiru's explanation, he has imitated the tone and the colour of the bassline from *Miracle Worker*. Lahiru declared that «My music is more about live instruments. I don't use samples». Lahiru may have used live instrument without using digital sampling and then reproduced the bassline approximating to *Miracle Worker*'s bass line. Based on the *Miracle Worker* he used a traditional reggae beat which is called "one drop beat"<sup>11</sup> with the drumset fills beats to the verses and adds exactly the same tempo to the composition (Fig. 4).

However, Lahiru does not know the insider naming of the beat pattern which he applied to the composition.<sup>12</sup> He has been imitating the beat patterns from the song *Miracle Worker*. In this case, one can argue that Lahiru has been using digital sampling. However, it is not identifiable that he has used samples for the bassline or the beat pattern (Fig. 5).



**FIGURE 5.** Beat pattern used.

The toasting vocal style,<sup>13</sup> which is resplendently used in the *Miracle Worker*, is unique to reggae. This feature has not been used in *Mottu*. However, the applied melodic tremolo which is an unusual aspect of reggae singing is not notably included in the vocals of *Mottu*. Vocal harmony parts are frequently used in the reggae music style, either all through the melody or as a counterpoint to the vocal section.

<sup>11</sup> One Drop Drum Pattern: Whether beats two and four or three, the snare and the kick are both hitting a beat at the same time in "one drop beat".

<sup>12</sup> Lahiru Perera, phone communication, 13 February 2015.

<sup>13</sup> The toasting vocal style originated when DJs improvised spoken introductions to songs (or toasts) to the point where it became a distinct rhythmic vocal style, and is generally considered to be a precursor to rap. It differs from rap mainly in that it is generally melodic, while rap is generally more a non-melodic intended spoken form (Hombach 2012: 22).

The composer has been using more live instruments to compose the track rather than looping some of the sections. Nevertheless, the horn sections are frequently used in reggae music. The instruments in a reggae horn section include the trumpet, the trombone, or the saxophone to play introductions, short riffs or countermelodies in contrast to the vocals. In *Mottu*, there is no countermelody in the instrumental part. However, that can be found along with the vocals.

Lahiru Perera's capability of recording and mixing musical features seems being excellent throughout the track *Mottu*. As a sound engineer, he has attempted using a high-quality sound system to deliver a splendid tone<sup>14</sup> though this is highly culturally implied through the experience of Sri Lankan audiences and their expectations.

Taking everything into consideration, Lahiru Perera's song *Mottu* which was awarded as the Best Sri Lankan Reggae Video in the Derana Music Video Awards 2013, is not absolutely related to the reggae music genre as it is imagined in the realm of the world music industry. In the video part he has worn a costume, putting emphasis on the reggae's national colors red, gold, and green. Yet, when wearing these colors, it couldn't be stimulating the imagination of a reggae song. However, some elements of reggae music are indeed found only in the beat and the bassline, which are only played in the parts of the main sung verses. Some characteristics of a very soft pop music can be seen in the rest of the composition. According to Lahiru Perera's personal interviews, he detailed two specifics about the style of *Mottu*, which seems different from each other. Those are:

- During his first interview held on 26 September 2014 Lahiru answered that *Mottu* is absolutely a reggae song. A little amount of Indian bhangra music is also added in.
- In the second interview held on 13 February 2015 by phone, he voiced that *Mottu* is a song that is mixed up with two genres, pop and reggae.

What is interesting in these different statements is that there is a clear difference. However, the mixing of genre features is also a trend in the current music industry. The combination of two music styles has formed the sound of *Mottu*.

The crucial point made so far is, at the time Lahiru Perera started to compose *Mottu* departing from a reggae style, he had no primary education/knowledge on the subject; he created this only by listening to the song *Miracle Worker* of SuperHeavy band.

Furthermore, the musical make-up of *Mottu* provides a conservative impression.

And this was how the jury decided on the award for the Best Sri Lankan Reggae Video for the Derana Music Video Awards 2013.

However, Lahiru Perera stands forthright among other young artists in the Sri Lank-

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<sup>14</sup> Lahiru Perera, personal interview, 26 September 2014.

an music industry with a personal dominance and his natural ability to entertain them with a difference. One cannot deny Lahiru Perera's inherent ability to produce interesting and awe-inspiring music tracks. Speaking with Lahiru Perera, he shared his aim to compose high quality music videos and to approach the international music industry with demanding Sri Lankan flavor.<sup>15</sup>

## Best Sri Lankan Hip Hop Video

The song *Atha Mita Kasi* by Big Harsha and Kaizer featuring Iraj and Peshala has won the Best Sri Lankan Hip Hop Video category at the ceremony of Derana Music Video Awards 2013.

The lyrics and the music of this song are written by Iraj Weeraratna who has also worked out the video ([Video example 2](#)).<sup>16</sup> Iraj has described his music style as Sri Lankan hip hop arguing that it has «Sri Lankan colour in it. It's a blend sort of thing. But what is more important is that it definitely comes under the category of hip hop. We need to develop the section of rapping in Sinhala to be included in the tracks to add more colour. I admit that it is difficult. But it should happen» he said in a public interview.<sup>17</sup>

Big Harsha, who collaborates with Iraj and his crew, is a talented Sri Lankan music artist, focusing on the genres hip hop and rap<sup>18</sup> and *Atha Mita Kasi* was his first song. Peshala Manoj who is a musician become lecturer in the field of Hindustani classical music and its contemporary applications, and Kaizer Kaiz, a Sinhala rapper, were the other representatives who supported the vocal and rap parts and who shaped the song.

Many hits such as this one feature a guest artist in addition to the performer by whom the song is sung. Mingling the sounds of two musicians, or an established artist with a newcomer, who can create a great blend and a very unique musical opportunity. This collaboration may attract fans and exhibits new connections of both artists. The trend of featuring an artist can be seen in *Atha Mita Kasi*.

The lyrics of the song are as follows:

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<sup>15</sup> Perera Lahiru, personal interview, 22 September 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Iraj Weeraratne is a Sinhalese r&b and hip hop artist and music producer in Sri Lanka. Among the tracks *Alankara Nagare* with Ranidu Lankage, *Suragana Kirilliye*, *Saara Sadisi*, *Mata Sithanna Be*, *Mata Aaloke*, *Ran Ran*, *Ninda Noyana Henadewe* and *Mathaka Mandira* yielded by him having reached economic hit status and Iraj has also made his music internationally known with the track called *Roots* that was featured on BBC radio. In addition, he has said that he learnt music in his childhood and further he learnt hip hop music through the internet only by self-experimentations and all his songs were created with a touch of Sri Lankan music fragments, though he was not specific about in which way. Further details can be found via <http://archives.dailynews.lk/2008/01/12/fea20.asp>, <http://lankahelp.com/athamita-kasi-package-song-by-iraj-peshala>, <http://srilankatowns.com/irajonline/home.html>.

<sup>17</sup> Further details can be found via <http://archives.dailynews.lk/2008/01/12/fea20.asp>.

<sup>18</sup> Further information can be found via [https://www.facebook.com/bigharsha/info?tab=page\\_info](https://www.facebook.com/bigharsha/info?tab=page_info).

# THE "WORLD" IN SOME SINHALA SONGS

[Chorus]

අනම්ම කාසි ලැබුනාම බෝසේ  
වැඩි වෙයිලා ලො අහනුන්නෙ ආලේ  
කාසිය කරකවයි වැල්ලෙ බිම්බේ  
අනම්ම කාසි ලැබුනාම බෝසේ

[Rap 1]

මගෙ නම ලොකු හර්ෂ - චිකුණුවෙ අල බකල  
ත්‍රිවිල් පැලෙනවා යකො මගෙ බරට  
හොටල්කාරයො මට හුල් ලවු  
මත් කනවනෙ හුරත් උන්නෙ වලන්  
පොඩි කොල්ලන්ගෙ මම හිත මිතුරා  
උන් බඩ යට ඉන්නව වහින තුරා  
එමයි පැන්නේ බැස්සොත් කෙල්ලො ඔක්කොම දුටුවා  
ටි ශර්ට් එක ගැලවුනම කොල්ලොත් දුටුවා  
එහෙමවෙන්නේ ඇයි මං සෙක්සි හින්දද  
මය ඇහ කොල්ලන්ට වඩ මගෙ {කොබ්ලේ} මදිද  
චිකුණුවා ඉඩමක් ගැනුවා සිත්දුක්  
ටිටි ප්‍රසන්න එකේ ලිස් එක ලක්ෂයක්  
[Dialogue 1]  
ඉරාජ: මේ දවස්වල කොල්ලෝ හොඳට අඩන්න ඕනි මල්ලි,  
එකකොට කමයි  
විඩියෝ එක යන්නේ  
බිත් හර්ෂ: ඔව් අයියෝ හොඳටම අඩලා තියෙන්නේ  
ඉරාජ: මාසෙකට ලක්ෂ පහයි, මය පල්ලෙහා කඩෙට වෙලා  
ශේජ එකේ මට සල්ලි දෙන්න, මම මාස තුනක් ගහල දෙන්නම්

බිත් හර්ෂ: අනෙ තැන්ක්සු අයියෝ

ඉරාජ: අපි ඕන ජරාවක් හිට කරනවා මල්ලි සල්ලි වලට

[Rap 2]

හිටපන් අපටත් සල්ලි තිබුනානම් ඉස්කෝලෙදි මම දානවා රජකම්

[Dialogue 2]

කයිZර්: තාත්තේ තාත්තේ ටීවර් මට ගෙදර වැඩ කලේ නෑ කියලා  
ගැනුවා

ඉරාජ: බයවෙන්න එපා පුතා හෙට උදේම දන ගස්සනවා

[Rap 3]

පන්නියෝ ඇතුලෙදි හිනෙත් දැක්කා  
කැරම් බෝර්ඩ් එකේ මම රතු ඉන්නා  
කලු සුදු කෙල්ලෝ මගෙ වටේට පිරිලා  
ආතල් වැඩි මු සෙනහ උඩට පැන්නා  
හතර දෙනෙක් පුරු සෙට්ස් එක කුඩු  
උඩින් ආවා කුඩු ලේ එනව රතු  
මම ගිහස්ටා දැමිමා ජඩ්ස් බෝර්ඩ් එක මගෙ කුක්කු ඉල්ලුවා

[Dialogue 3]

අන දරුවෙක් වෙලා ඔයාගේ කුක්කු ටිකක් බොන්න තිබුනනම්  
ෂාන්...

[Verse]

පිට ඔපයෙන් නම් බැහැ මැන ගන්නට  
හර්දයේ ඇති කෙද ගති අහනුත් හට  
දිලිසිමට කර පලඳින මාලේ  
නාරි චිත්තේ වෙයි විපරිතේ

[Chorus]

The song text in Latin script

[Chorus]

Peshala:

Atha mita kasi lebunama bose  
Wedi weilu lo anganunge aale  
Kaasiya karakawai welle bambare  
Athamita kaasi lebunama bose

[Rap 1]

Big Harsha:

Mage nama loku Harsha – Wikunuwe ala bathala  
Three wheel pelenawa yako mage barata  
Hotal kaarayo mata full love  
Mama kanawane hooran unge walan  
Podi kollange mama hitha mithura  
Un bada yata innawa wahina tura  
Mc patththe bessoth kello okkoma duwanawa  
T shirt eka gallewuwanam kollothu duwanawa  
Ehema wenne ayi man sexy hindada  
Oya enga kollanta wada mage [papuwa] madida

[Dialogue 1]

Iraj: me dawaswala kollo hondata andanna oni  
malli ethkata thamai video eka yanne  
Big Harsha: Owu aiye hondatama andala  
thiyanne

Iraj: Maaseta laksha pahai oya palleha kadeta wela  
shape eke mata salli denna, mama maasa thunak  
gahala dennam

Big Harsha: Ane thank you aiye

Iraj: Api ona jarawak hit karanawa malli salli  
walata

[Chorus]

Rough translation into English language

[Chorus]

Peshala:

Once money in hand  
The love from the ladies will be increased  
The coin will twist the twister on the sand  
Once money in hand

[Rap 1]

Big Harsha:

My name is Big Harsha – sold potatoes and sweet  
potatoes  
Three wheelers get cracked for my weight  
Hotel people love me very much  
I eat everything in their containers  
I am the loyal friend of small boys  
They cover themselves under my belly while raining  
When I appear at the Majestic City, all the girls run  
away  
When I remove my T shirt, boys also run away  
Why it happens? because I am sexy?  
This body is not handy enough?

Sold a piece of land and produce a song  
The lease presenting a TV show is hundred thousand

[Dialogue 1]

Iraj – These days, boys should cry well, then only their  
video song becomes famous

Big Harsha - Yes brother, well cried

Iraj – Five hundred thousand per month, give me  
money sitting in the show down there, I will do that for  
three months

Big Harsha – Thank you brother

Iraj – We can make any bad thing hit for money

[Chorus]



[Rap 2]  
 Kaizer:  
 Hitapan apatath salli thibbanam  
 Iskoledi mama danawa rajakam  
 [Dialogue 2]  
 Kaizer: thathe thathe, teacher mata gedara weda  
 kale na kiyala gehuwa  
 Iraj: Bayawenna epa putha heta udemo dana  
 gassanawa  
 [Rap 3]  
 Kaizer:  
 Panthiye ethuledi heenen dekkā  
 Keram board eke mama rathu iththa  
 Kalu sudu kello mage wateta pirila  
 Athal wedi mu senaga udata panna  
 Big Harsha:  
 Hathara denek churu setup eka kudu  
 Udin awa kutu le enawa rathu  
 Mama gigasta demma  
 Judge board eka mage kukku illuwa  
 [Dialogue 3]  
 atha daruwēk wela oyage kukku tikak bonna  
 thibba nam a.. shaa  
 [Verse]  
 Peshala:  
 Pita opayen nam be mena ganta  
 Hirdaye ethi theda gathi anganun hata  
 Diliseemata kara paladina male  
 Naari chiththe wei wipareethe  
 [Chorus]

[Rap 2]  
 Kaizer:  
 If I had money, I live like a king in the school  
 [Dialogue 2]  
 Kaizar – Father! Teacher punished me for not doing  
 homework  
 Iraj – don't be afraid, you will be kneeled tomorrow  
 very morning  
 [Rap 3]  
 Kaizer:  
 I dreamt in the class room  
 I am the red coin on the carom board  
 I am surrounded by black and white girls  
 Crazyly this guy jumped in the crowd  
 Four persons crashed the setup  
 Big Harsha:  
 The chairs came from the above and coming red blood  
 I put Gigesta and the judge board asked for my boobs  
 [Dialogue 3]  
 I wish I could drink milk from your boobs becoming  
 an infant, shah!  
 [Verse]  
 Peshala:  
 The strong nature of the women cannot be measured by  
 the glamour of the outer look  
 The disaster is the necklace and the ladies' cloth  
 [Chorus]

**FIGURE 6.** The song text of *Atha Mita Kasi* as used in the composition is presented in Sinhala and Latin script, and as a rough translation into English language. Lyrics, music and produced by Iraj Weeraratne. Artists: Big Harsha, Iraj Weeraratne, Peshala Manoj, and Kaizer Kaiz. Chords: D<sup>m</sup> (the whole song is based on the same chord pattern).

This is how the words flow in *Atha Mita Kasi*. The structure belongs to a chorus-verse form. The lyrics though said to have been written by Iraj Weeraratne, show that there are some signs indicating the lyricist of this song might not be only one person. The words have been written in a humorous way related to the body shape of Big Harsha which brings also a hidden meaning of the bitter truth of the present-day music industry where people who have no talent, but money, get popular by spending their money to promote their songs. It was an authentic story that was experienced by Big Harsha.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, some dialogues also speak up to the political power of Sri Lanka at the time the song was composed.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> As said by Peshala, «there was a boy named Harsha, and he came us telling that he went to one of the tv channels requesting to telecast his music video and that channel has informed him that it will only be done with a package show. So, I and Iraj were also distressed about this system at the time and we together created this song putting emphasis on this dishonorableness of media. We are the persons who titled him as big Harsha». Manoj Peshala, telephone communication, 21 February 2015.

<sup>20</sup> The conversation that is found in the middle of the rap part 2, Big Harsha: «thathe thathe, teacher mata gedara weda kale na kiyala gehuwa» – Iraj: «Bayawenna epa putha heta udemo dana gassanawa».

The song of this kind has been a great vehicle for political and social criticism. Hip hop has not been a definite music genre but it has rather been an idiosyncratic and dynamic music culture. Therefore, these musical expressions which are distinctively based on lyrics and hidden messages provide specific ways for the youth to express themselves. Mostly, the text meanings of the lyrics of hip hop music are related to power, violence, alcohol, sex, drugs, and money in an immediate society. These conditions are occasionally said to have a negative impact on any society, depending on the perspective of those who represent this opinion. Consequently, bearing in mind these points, with the effort of criticizing the current condition in the music industry, as well as speaking up to the political power of Sri Lanka, the song *Atha Mita Kasi* has been able to balance the lyrics with those values and the main themes of an imagined hip hop music style. But here, the rap lines are almost too straightforward to be taken as satire on their own. Lyrically, it was just as the rappers twisted disrespectful words and used it as a suggestive way to express this view.<sup>21</sup> The songs are written in the vernacular language of the target audience, which is one characteristic of a hip hop song. However, this characteristic trait can be found sometimes in gangsta rap style.

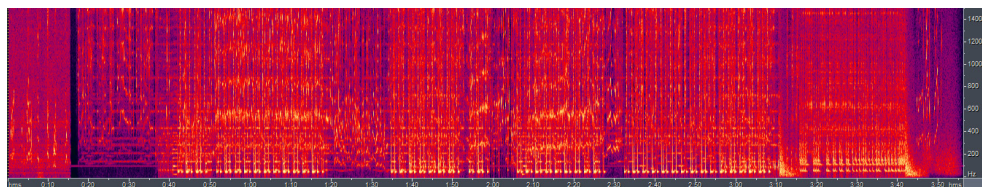
The writer in hip hop music is known as a rapper or an MC. Rap is a fundamental part of this cultural expression that did not evolve or exist in separation from its other major components (Krimms 2000). According to Big Harsha, he is the one who created the rap parts in the middle of the song that was sung by himself. All involved rappers created the rap parts individually.<sup>22</sup> It seems to be a complex and collective creation and that is the significant fundamentals of this production mode. This is because, the styles, techniques, methods, and suggestions which were created by hip hop artists all come directly from them. Playing as an MC, Big Harsha raps the lyrics fitting over the steady beat, which is known as his flow of a hip hop song. He presents his flow confidently as an MC with the role of dissin'. However, it is very difficult to understand what the rapper is saying within the first few hearings. Some words also are not clearly pronounced. Besides, the words were created by mixing Sinhala and English. Conversely, it may also happen when he attempts to match the words to the rhythm or beat (Figs. 7-8).

Peshala Manoj specified that rap and hip hop music styles are possibly equivalent music forms. As far as could be observed, he is not entirely clear about some newly introduced world music genres even though he has played a part in the song. His ideas seem to be quite uniformed and purely based on imagination.

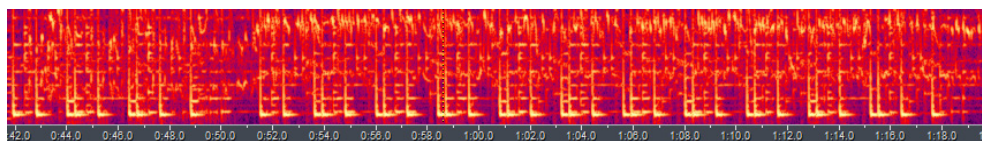
Musically, the *Atha Mita Kasi* cannot be seen as purely belonging to the hip hop genre since there can be found some similar traits of Indian, r&b, and Sri Lankan Nurthi theatre music. The parts of the chorus and the verses are composed by using a music

<sup>21</sup> Some of the words, such as *huran kanwane unge walan, yako, un, hitapan, mu, and kukku illuwa*.

<sup>22</sup> Big Harsha, communication, 21 February 2015.



**FIGURE 7.** The spectral picture of rhythmic structure in the entire song shows the underlying constant accompaniment that is interrupted in specific intervals, which become shorter and shorter. The end is in double speed and the main frequencies used are in lower register (40-120 Hz only).



**FIGURE 8.** A zoom cut from the rap section shows that the speed of speech integrated is steady and fast. Heavy and lighter beats can be clearly distinguished, yet the speech emphasis is continuing in the same register.

style often applied in Nurthi theatre, which were performed by Peshala Manoj. Peshala Manoj has put the melody for the chorus and verse taking an imagination from Nurthi performances he experienced.<sup>23</sup> So, the first chorus has been sung by Peshala with the accompanying instruments harmonium and keyboard. The keyboard has been used only for changing the chords while the harmonium is playing the complete melodic line of the first chorus part. It seems that chorus and verse both have been composed by using the effect of so called “gramophone sound” (notching around 100 Hz) enhancing old song aspects with a limited melodic range. Nowadays, this effect is considered an improvement through modern technology. However, concerning the verse, some similarities with the Sinhala song *Ran Wan Dun Karalin Pesila Nemila Baraweela* and the Hindi song *Udein Jab Jab Sulfain Teri* can be found in this interpretation.

Instrumentally, the composers have used the *dholki* (small *dhol*), harmonium, Carnatic drums, and reverberating *thalam pota* (gongs). In addition, electronic musical instruments have been played using synthesizer while also adding some special effects through this tool. At the end of the song, a drum piece has been played, using South Indian drums and reverberating gongs which add ultimately an imagination of Carnatic music. It seems that some aspects of Tamil film songs have been imitated. Looking at other types, there are very few musical instruments used in order to create hip hop music. Most of the sounds are artificially produced which come out of synthesizers, drum machines, turntables, or samplers (Schloss 2004).

Some similarities to an r&b music style can also be found, since the melody of this composition goes synchronized with the rap parts. However, hip hop, r&b and rap are musically closely connected in the imagination of some musicians.

<sup>23</sup> Peshala Manoj, phone communication, 21 February 2015.

A unique beat pattern is the fundamental element of a hip hop production. Being consistent with the feedback given by Peshala Manoj and Big Harsha, certain samples added to the drum beat can be found. The beats are sampled or created by drum machines. Any music could be combined with the drum patterns and in the same way any musical technique or its sampling can be used more or less obviously. Usually, rap recordings are rich in sampled drum and percussion loops. Apparently, the music producer Iraj, has also set some loops and stabs to this operation. According to him, the production team has used sampling for the drum section only. Even then, it seems that sampling has been used at a certain moment in a work of other music instruments, too, and not only in the percussion section. So far, it can be categorized as a form of sampling-based song production.

The rap vocals of Big Harsha and Kaizer Kaiz, indicate that they are not professional musicians of this type of music. Considering their style of singing, there can be heard an intonation problem. Nevertheless, the pitch balancing is a less defining characteristic of the hip hop than the rhythm and the flow.

Considering all these facts, the song *Atha Mita Kasi* can be categorized as a hip hop or rap song featuring a specific gramophone singing style. It is mainly sample-based using synthesized instrumental sounds and effects, funny expressive lyrics and dialogues that are associated with social criticism. However, the integrative connection between the lyrics and the music is just about an upbeat pattern which gives no less than a joyous mood.

## Best Sri Lankan Pop Video Award

The song *Mal madabasa* by Randhir featuring Bathiya and Umariya won the Best Sri Lankan Pop Video category at the ceremony of Derana Music Video Awards 2013 ([Video example 3](#)). To start with *Mal madabasa*, it is necessary to identify the musicians producing what is understood as world music in the current Sri Lankan music industry. They seem to be trendsetters.

Randhir Yasendra Witana is a Sri Lankan song composer and a singer of hip hop and r&b music.<sup>24</sup> When talking to him on this topic, it seemed to be obvious that he has a clear knowledge about the background of hip hop music as well as the history of hip hop culture.<sup>25</sup>

Umaria Sinhawansa is a versatile female vocalist. She sings her vocal parts ranging from jazz to pop and from hip hop to r&b. She joined Bathiya and Santhush (BnS)

<sup>24</sup> He entered the Sri Lankan music industry as a hip hop artist with the pop group Bathiya/Santush featuring their first hip hop/fusion song *Siri Sanga Bodhi*. Under Randhir's guidance, he was known in Sri Lanka as a "rap artist". According to Randhir, Bathiya, Santush and he were the persons who introduced the hip hop music style to the Sri Lankan song repertoire through the song *Siri Sanga Bodhi*. Further common information can be found via <http://www.thesundayleader.lk/2014/04/27/baggy-pants-to-skinny-jeans/>.

<sup>25</sup> Withana Randhir; Weeraman Santhush; Jayakody Bhathiya, personal interview, 24 August 2014.



FIGURE 9. While singing the song *Mal madahasa* at the ceremony of Derana Music Video Awards; <<http://www.sundaytimes.lk/140608/magazine/and-the-winner-is-102210.html>>.

in a duet which got to be known as *Pethu Pem Pethum*, for her debut in Sinhala music (Fig. 8).

Bhathiya Jayakody is a trained singer of European classical repertoire, piano player, and melody composer in pop and rap genres.<sup>26</sup> Santhush confirmed that they have been experimenting with all accessible music styles in the world and they tried to mix those with Sri Lankan music.<sup>27</sup>

When talking to Bhathiya regarding current music trends, he explained that «usually in Sri Lanka, from the level of school teaching, there is only taught some North Indian and South Indian music with a strong emphasis on instrumental music. So, being influenced by this musical education, our Sri Lankan classical music can be categorized as *sarala gee*.<sup>28</sup> There are lots of varieties of music styles in this world which haven't been taught, such as reggae, pop, classics, jazz, blues and many others. And about a universal language, music is just like a food that we eat. We have to be accustomed to its taste. Then only can we enjoy it. At present that sense of taste is processed here through the YouTube channel and all the other Internet facilities. I guess after moving forward for some ten or fifteen years, the public audience of Sri Lanka will be used to enjoying all these varieties of music styles. Let's wait until then. As it will happen someday».

The song text of *Mal Madahasa* by Randhir featuring Bathiya and Umariya released on 2 August 2013:

<sup>26</sup> Bhathiya is known to the Sri Lankan musical scene since the 1990s along with Santhush Weeraman, mixing Sinhala, Tamil and English lyrics in their originals, bringing out their contemporary style and revolutionizing the music industry in Sri Lanka through this kind of text application. Further information can be found via <<http://www.sinhalachord.com/2011/01/sinhala-artist-profile-bathiya-and.html>>.

<sup>27</sup> Withana Randhir, Weeraman Santhush, Jayakody Bhathiya, personal interview, 24 August 2014.

<sup>28</sup> A mixture of mainly Hindustani and some cases Carnatic classical music with Sri Lankan common songs in Sinhala language.

## THE "WORLD" IN SOME SINHALA SONGS

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The song text in Latin script	Rough translation into English language
[Chorus] Randhir: Mal madahasa peedena Nil nethu ege wasana Senehasa pewa lanweela haha Bhathiya: Dutuwama desa paa sina Hada rendi shoka wedana senakin yaawi hangeela [Verse 1] Randhir & Bhathiya: Aya mage jeewe pem loke Eka maga aawe sansare Bhathiya: Nidelle saranne ma ha wasanthe pemin lanweela [Verse 2] Randhir: Ruwa deka ege mal waare Bamarun ewi sanchare Bhathiya: Gayanne raganne Bingun a ruwin math weela	Blooming flowery smile her blue eyes bring fortune showed love closely ha... ha... looking at the smiling eyes the sorrow of life will have been disappeared  She is my life in the world of love came together in the same road from the passed life hanging around me staying attached in the spring  After seeing her look in puberty bees will come to visit singing and dancing with her bees will be stimulated through that gaze

**FIGURE 10.** The song *Mal Madahasa* is presented in Sinhala and Latin script, and a rough translation into English language.

The format of this song belongs to the chorus-verse form as well as the common employment of repeated choruses. The fundamental medium for pop music is the primary song containing verse and repeated choruses. The song *Mal Madahasa* has three parts with four line stanzas in each and the length of the song is 3:42 minutes.<sup>29</sup> The song text has

<sup>29</sup> Most often the songs are between 2 ½ minutes and 5 ½ minutes in length. But the pop music in its purest form consists of relatively brief duration (not over 3 ½ minutes).



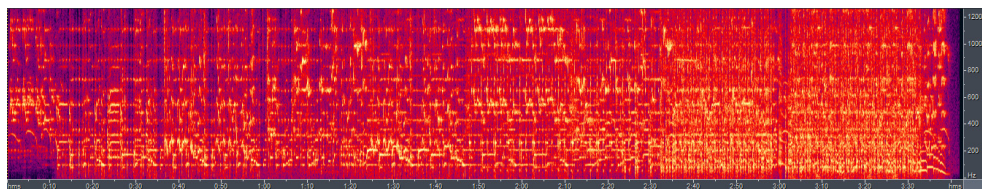


FIGURE 11. The entire spectral picture can provide an overview of the rhythmic flow of *Mal Madahasa*.

been written by Chandradasa Fernando. It is a romantic type of song since the lyrics are focused on love and attractiveness around a lovable couple. The lyrical themes of pop songs are seemingly often based on love and romantic relationships. The complex musical form and aesthetics are not a concern in the writing of pop songs. The arrangement of words has been constructed in a simple and a rhythmical way. Looking at the expected balance, the structure of the song *Mal Madahasa* seems successful to the judges.

The trendy featured artists can also be seen in this song. It seems to be an applicable way of promoting and combining individually different interpretations in a creative way.

With reference to the music of this composition, some elements of soft pop and reggae music can be found. Pop music has been assimilated from a wide range of musical fragments taken from different genres, styles, or any known shape of musical construction, such as rock, r&b, country, disco, punk, reggae, and hip hop in various ways for more than five decades. This mixture is, therefore, nothing surprising in a world context (Fig. 11).

The guitar is played from the beginning. Then the other percussion instruments and electronic musical sounds are added from the middle of the song maintaining the step-wise filling towards a broader sound. The music gives an exotic feeling to the song from the perspective of familiarity with some fragments of Western classical music that is often played and heard in public spaces. Reggae elements are incorporated into the rhythm, and guitar chords. Sometimes this also can be heard from the main vocal parts and vocal counter-melody sung by Umariya. She produced it with a specific vocal style. Harmonic progressions are used in all parts of the song. There is an emphasis on romantic love with livelier rhythmic and harmonic features. These are some consistent patterns that can be identified as pop music.

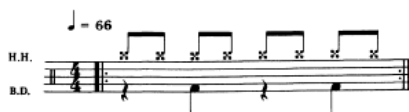


FIGURE 12. The stanza shape is ||: A<sup>1</sup>+A<sup>2</sup>:|| B<sup>1</sup>+B<sup>2</sup>+ Coda.

However, it is necessary to point out that at all times when this song is performed in any arrangement, in stage shows, or in live programs, Randhir demonstrates that he uses his vocal sounds to produce the instrumental sound of a horn in all parts of introduction



and in interludes. Even though, it is not his actual vocal sound. It is a synthesized music sound. Therefore, it is just to show off only.

When looking at the harmonic progressions in the chords of *Mal Madahasa* it is visible that sustaining chords and chord changing patterns have been used. It seems harmoniously a simple common pop music style. The chord progression is as follows:

Key: A

Beat: 4/4

A/F#m/Bm/Esus2/D/C#m/Bm/A

Umari's vocal part

[A/F#m/Bm/Esus2/D/C#m/Bm/A]

[Chorus]

A

Malmadahaasa peedena

F#m

Nil nethu aage waasana

Bm Esus2 D/C#m/Bm/A

Senchasa paawa lanweela

A

Dutuwama daasa paa sinaa

F#m

Hada randi shooka wedanaa

Bm Esus2 D/C#m/Bm/A

Sanakin yaavi hangeela

[Verse 1]

D Esus2 A A/Bm/A/D

eya mage jeewithen loka

D Esus2 A A/Bm/A/D

eka wage awa sansare

B

Dutuwama daasa paa sinaa

A#m

Hada randi shooka wedanaa

C#m F#sus2 E/E#m/C#m/B

Sanakin yaavi hangeela

D Esus2 C#m F#m

midalle saranne ma haa

Bm E/D/C#m/Bm/A

wasanthe pemin lan weela

[Verse 2]

D Esus2 A A/Bm/A/D

ruwa daka ege mal ware

D Esus2 A A/Bm/A/D

bambarun ewi sanchare

D Esus2 C#m F#m

gayanne raganne ma haa

Bm E/D/C#m/Bm/A

bigun ea ruwin math weela

Key Shift +1[Chorus]

B

Malmadahaasa peedena

A#m

Nil nethu aage waasana

C#m F#sus2 E/E#m/C#m/B

Senchasa paawa lanweela

During the Derana Music Video Awards Show, Randhir expressed that «this song was an experiment and it became a successful experiment». With “successful” could be meant that the song production sells the biggest number of copies, drawing the largest concert audiences, and is broadcasted often in the radio and on television. On 16 August 2013, it has reported that «Bathiya Jayakody has returned to music by featuring in Randhir's new song *Mal Madahasa* along with Umari. Released on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August, *Mal Ma-*

*dahasa* has already attracted more than 31,000 views on YouTube. The lyrics are by Chandradasa Fernando. The cool retro video has elicited a lot of positive feedback from many Sri Lankans». The way how the press reacts to those productions is part of the industrial competition.

## Brief outlook

Taking everything into account, it seems that from the viewpoint of the music industry, the consideration of audience's dynamics, the technical skills and effectiveness of implementing associative features, the contestants investigated here added much to the existing musical experience among Sri Lankan music listeners.

Nevertheless, the analyses also show that many features are judged from an imposed imagination of what the world music industry is looking for. Sri Lankan flavor is seemingly degenerated to become just a stylistic element as well as any other application of rhythmic patterns and imitative ways of placing text rhythmically in line over a steady beat. Prizes awarded in this contest were obviously given for meeting the personal taste of the judges and their imagination of dealing with songs that could become economically successful, which is not always automatically a sign of high artistic quality.

The main critical point is the overestimation of the visual part and the neglecting of the audible part in the competing items. Music productions seem to be irreversibly connected with superimposed pictures, moving scenes, virtually produced colors and moving bodies. These tendencies make any music production rather arbitrary.

Finally, this arbitrariness might be the far most important purpose of these music video productions. They are going to be used in any context regardless of specific circumstances. The label "Sri Lanka" is just to make it sell better or to attract interest.

The world that is associated with those music video productions seems to be abstract, nurturing bias and stereotyping, and alienating from rather than adopting of cultural stimulations brought in from abroad. Many views and interview statements explain a standard of listening that is educated within a postcolonial idealization towards Western values regarding musical skills and their perception among various audiences. A specific feature might be the overlayed structure of a preference regarding North and South Indian musical features either vocally or instrumentally. However, these are only very few moments compared to the wide spread consumption of popular music genres in a localized shape.

## Video examples

1. [Perera Lahiru \(La Signore\), \*Mottu\*](#). [05:38]

Music video. 2 June 2014.

2. [Harsha Big, Iraj Weeraratne, Manoj Peshala & Kaiz Kaizer, \*Atha Mita kaasi\*](#). [03:56]  
Music video. 20 June 2014.

3. [Randhir Withana, Bhathiya Jayakody & Umariya Singhawansha, \*Mal Madabasa\*](#). [03:49]  
Music video. 15 July 2014.

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