

Week 7 (2/26). Into the 1990s. Discussion Leader prep

Viewings: Episodes 17-20 | Case studies: Kim Wansön (1969-), J.Y. Park (1971-), Seo Taiji (1972-)

Lee Juck (1974-)

Readings:

- Hyunjoon Shin, “Itaewon Class, Gangnam Style, and Yeouido Star: The Industrial Revolution of

Korean Pop in the 1990s,” in *The Cambridge Companion to K-Pop*, edited by Suk-Young Kim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 28-48.

- Eun-Young Jung, “Seo Taiji Syndrome: Rise of Korean Youth and Cultural Transformation through

Global Pop Music Styles in the Early 1990s,” in *Made in Korea: Studies in Popular Music*, edited by Hyunjoon Shin and Seung-Ah Lee (New York and London: Routledge, 2017), 143-154.

- Keith Howard, “Coming of Age: Korean Pop in the 1990s,” in *Korean Pop Music: Riding the Wave*, edited by Keith Howard (Folkestone, Kent: Global Oriental, 2006).

I. 요약 정리 간단

The 1990s marked a turning point for the Korean music industry, laying the foundation for modern K-POP. Hyunjoon Shin discusses how entertainment agencies like SM, Line, and Yoyo Enterprises transformed from production companies into full-scale management systems, shifting power from TV networks to agencies and formalizing the idol training system. Eun-Young Jung explores Seo Taiji and Boys' revolutionary impact, highlighting how they localized global music styles (hip-hop, rock) while addressing youth discontent with Korea's rigid education system, making their music both musically innovative and socially influential. Keith Howard examines the genre diversity of 1990s Korean pop, where hip-hop, dance, techno, and ballads coexisted, and how visual aesthetics and performance elements became central, foreshadowing today's K-POP industry. Together, these readings illustrate how the 1990s shaped K-POP's structure, sound, and global potential, blending industry strategies, musical innovation, and cultural shifts.

II. 토론 질문

1. Seo Taiji's Musical Innovation and Message Delivery

☞ "One of the most interesting aspects of 'Come Back Home' is how Seo Taiji shifts from 'I' to 'We,' creating a strong emotional connection with youth. By alternating between the voice of a runaway and himself, he fosters solidarity rather than just telling a story. This makes the song's message more impactful. Do you think this approach enhances the song's effectiveness?"

2. Seo Taiji's Kyosil Idea : A Different Approach to Music Promotion?

- 서태지와 아이들 Kyosil Idea (라이브 공연 영상)

💡 *"One point that stood out to me was that the official music video for – Kyosil Idea was never commercially released. Instead, live concert footage was used in their 'Goodbye Music Video' in 1996 before their disbandment. Was this a strategic decision, or was it simply a different promotional approach in the 1990s?"*

3. The Impact of Digital Technology on the Music Industry

💡 *"In the reading, there was a sentence stating, 'Technology and music became common aspects of many young people's day-to-day existence.' This highlights how cassette players changed music consumption in the 1990s. Today, streaming platforms and social media play an even bigger role. How has the advancement of digital technology changed the way music is created, distributed, and consumed?"*

4. Censorship & Artistic Freedom in K-pop

💡 *"In the 1990s, broadcasting censorship was strict but began to ease. However, modern K-pop faces new challenges—self-censorship by companies, government regulations, and even pressure from fandoms. Has K-pop today gained more freedom of expression, or is it restricted in different ways?"*

Additionally, does an agency-driven system limit artistic creativity, or is it an efficient way to nurture stars? How does this balance between control and creativity shape modern K-POP?"

H.O.T. - '전사의 후예' (1996)

1 세대 K-POP 아이돌 그룹의 탄생을 상징하는 곡으로, 기획사 중심의 아이돌 시스템이 본격적으로 자리 잡기 시작한 시기.

III. 그 밖 공유하고 싶은 영상이나 음악

In the 1990s, experimental music by Seo Taiji, the rise of idols, and emotional ballads coexisted, showcasing the diversity of K-POP.

🎵 Examples of Emotional Music from the 1990s:

- Kim Kwang-seok – 'My Song' (나의 노래)
- Park Ki-young – 'Beginning' (시작)

ETC.

"How have the 'Korean elements' from the 1990s been maintained or transformed in today's global K-POP?"

➔ This question directly connects to our discussion from last week. In the 1980s–90s, Korean pop music adopted Western styles while incorporating Korean sensibilities, expressions, and industry structures. Examining whether and how these elements continue to exist in modern K-POP is a compelling topic.