

Jakarta Calling

INDONESIANS EAGER TO HOST INTERNATIONAL MUSIC STARS

BY WAHYUNI KAMAH

JAKARTA, Indonesia — A promoter needs to take care of thousands of tasks to produce an international concert in Indonesia, and it doesn't always pay off. The enormous energy and hard work he expends can often end in the cancellation of a show, most often due to violent political situations in the fledgling democracy, such as the bomb that exploded at a downtown Marriot hotel in Jakarta in August killing over a dozen people.

Peter Basuki of Buena Produktama began to promote artists in 1969. "In the past, the hurdle was the equipment, now it is political climate," said Basuki who promoted Deep Purple in Jakarta in 1975, and Ike and Tina Turner in the following year. Twelve permits are required to bring foreign artists to Indonesia's stage. "These cost money, too," he said.

Promoter Adrie Subono, who started his business, Java Musikindo, in 1994 by bringing in band Saigon Kick, said the promoter's challenge is to sell Indonesia as a viable market for overseas artists. "We really have to convince them by referring to the groups that already played in Indonesia," he said. "I even contact the embassy of the band's country to ask them to explain to the band the situation in Indonesia," said



Adrie Subono

Subono, who has promoted 30 concerts, 90 percent of them international. "The jobs and challenges of an Indonesian promoter cannot be compared with the ones in the U.S. or even in Singapore," said Subono.

"The show must go on" motto often does not fly, since some shows have been cancelled though the tickets were already sold out. Deep Purple concerts in 1999 and 2001 in Jakarta promoted by the third big player, Tommy Pratama of Original Production, were cancelled for security reasons.



Promoter Peter Basuki, second from right, and band Level 42 at the Tennis Indoor Stadium in Jakarta in June

Political tension in Jakarta made Subono cancel Ricky Martin's show in 1998. And Basuki suffered a \$120,000 (U.S.) loss when La Toya Jackson's concert in Jakarta was cancelled in 1994. The rumor of Jackson's role in a pornographic film was behind the decision of the Censorship Body and Indonesia's major political party to ban the show.

Indonesia, an archipelago that connects the Asian and Australian continents, is a prime potential market in Southeast Asia for any international artist when taking its current 200 million people into account.

The management of Taiwan's boy band F4 admitted that the ticket sales of its concert in Indonesia in January this year was the highest in Southeast Asia with attendance of 70,000.

Indonesia is not a new territory for international singing sensations. In the early 1970s, singers like Suzi Quarto, Cliff Richard, The Bee Gees and Uriah Heep held their concerts in Jakarta. Miami Sound Machine, Al Jarreau, Stevie Wonder, Mick Jagger and Richard Marx followed in the 1980s.

In general, Indonesian promoters do not worry about whether a band is a chart-topper at the moment. "As long as the groups [were] once popular in Indonesia and have hits, we do not worry about the ticket sales," said Pratama. The VVIP tickets (\$122) for a May 7 Dionne Warwick concert in Jakarta, which drew 700, were sold out within two weeks. However, the most phenomenal concert he promoted was a Deep Purple concert in 2002 that cost around \$240,000 to produce. The 5,000-capacity Istora Senayan (Soccer Stadium) in Jakarta sold out. "The people were enthusiastic. Two weeks before the concert, the tickets — the VVIP cost around [\$75] — were sold out," said Pratama, who began his show biz career in 1991.

Subono successfully promoted the Westlife concert in 2001 in Kuningan soccer

stadium in Jakarta where the attendance was 15,000. He attributes success to strong promotion with flyers, radio and magazine ads. His Spirit of the Dance one-off in April was also successful, selling out a 4,000-seat Jakarta Convention Center.

According to Basuki, who also chairs the Association of Impresario Companies of Indonesia, his most successful run was a recent Level 42 tour of five cities in Java and Bali. In Jakarta, 2,400 tickets at \$12-\$42 sold out one week before the concert. In Bandung, Jogjakarta, Surabaya, and the Hard Rock Hotel in Bali the tickets of 1,500 to 3,500-capacity venues were also sold out.

Basuki surveys a market at least six months before inviting a band. The album sale is not his main criterion. Popular artists that are on Asian tours are his target. "I tend to segment the market to jazz/fusion bands as the artist fee is not so expensive; the audience is limited but definite," explained Basuki, who has promoted 200 groups.

Most promoters book bands who are already on Asian tours. "The artist management informs us three months earlier," said Pratama who promotes two to three artists a year.



Tommy Pratama

Promoters prefer Jakarta to other cities. "Jakartans earn better income," said Basuki, who will offer David Benoit in September and Manhattan Transfer in October. "The tax in Jakarta is less than in a neighboring city like Bandung," added Subono.

"Nothing is free in Indonesia. There is always cost," said Subono, who holds an average of five concerts a year. Therefore, sponsorship has an important role in a concert. "Ticket sales alone cannot cover the production cost," said Pratama, who will bring in Toto in September. "Sponsorship can cover around 50 percent of the production cost," he said of the current trend. In the past it only covered 10 percent, he said.

Pratama also admitted that a big part of a promoter's job is public relations for his country, especially since the bombing of a Bali nightclub late last year. "They tell the world it is safe to play in Indonesia," he said. VI