

hegemony, they worked to bring out the absurdity of everything Javanese, hence deflating, to some extent, Java's position in Indonesia.

GHOSTS, HOLES, AND *SOTO* REBORN

By explicitly resurrecting the Warkop troupe in 2016, *Warkop DKI Reborn* returns to the regional history of intermedial, stage-screen convergence and to the deconstructive, self-reflexive approaches to cinema and globalization it popularized from the 1950s to the 1990s. In doing so, *Warkop DKI Reborn* refers especially to the earlier Warkop movie *CHIPS* (dir. Iksan Lahardi, 1983), which satirizes the hit U.S. motorcycle-cop TV series *CHiPs* (NBC, 1978–83), poking fun at the absurdly gleaming, heroic masculinity of the American show. At the same time, *CHIPS* characteristically lampoons itself while suggestively highlighting the foibles of the less-polished and often equally bumbling actual Indonesian police (fig. 35). In both the “original” *CHIPS* and in *Warkop DKI Reborn*, however, the characters are presented as a private security force that only look like police, avoiding the perception of directly targeting actual officials. Doing so would almost certainly result in heavy censorship or bans.

As I will show, the explicit return of vernacular theaters with the rebirth of Warkop in 2016 was important not only because it followed earlier patterns of “backward” convergences between older and newer media. The film’s fragmented, archipelagic style was premised on literally opening a hole in its onscreen diegetic world—one that would symbolically (and actually) usher other, even more impactful, elements of the past into the postreformasi present. It was not simply the Warkop characters who emerged as if reborn through this temporal portal; a number of other screen icons from the 1970s and 1980s made hilarious and haunting returns. Most crucial, I argue, was the reappearance of one particular *sundel bolong*, the female ghost with the bloody hole in her back discussed in chapter 5. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it was the one played by the actress Suzzanna in the 1981 hit *Sundelbolong*.

The way she is introduced into *Warkop DKI Reborn*’s modern, postreformasi, comedy-drama diegesis is also telling. Her entrance occurs in part 2, which was released the following year in 2017 and continues the narrative of the first installment. Dono, Kasino, and Indro Warkop, now played by established contemporary stars Abimana Aryasatya, Vito J. Bastian, and Tora Sudiro respectively, have been falsely accused of destroying and burning a fancy Jakarta gallery and the expensive artworks within. Following a series of strange occurrences as they scramble to try to clear their names, the troop finds themselves in Malaysia, where they team up with a woman named Nadia (Nur Fazura).

Chased and caught by a strange transnational criminal gang led by a flying man in a dragonfly (or perhaps a cricket) costume (Babe Cabiita), the reborn Warkop team is told they will be frozen with a special machine that turns people



FIGURE 35. Poster for *Warkop DKI Reborn*, which emphasizes the names of the original Warkop troupe members, played by famous contemporary actors whose names are listed below in smaller type. The film is also loosely based on the original Warkop film *CHIPS*, which sends up the American TV show *CHiPs*. Courtesy of KAFEIN.

into iconic, life-size, relief-style painting-sculptures. Like its theatrical and cinematic predecessors, the film imagines itself in a heterogeneous regional dimension combining Indonesia and Malaysia, which is also humorously shot through with transnational elements. Once frozen as icons, Dono, Kasino, and Indro will join the likes of Elvis, Bob Marley, Michael Jackson, Bruce Lee, and Marilyn Monroe, whose motionless bodies already hang on the walls of the gang's lair. Legendary Indonesian figures whose films were, at the time of their release, generally not known or distributed internationally, are winkingly placed on par with major international stars. Riffing on this theme, as the young Indro is about to be transformed into a painting, he is confronted with the older version of himself (played by Indro Warkop, the only surviving original member) climbing out of a TV screen, looking like a portly Rambo with a machine gun. While this mocks Sylvester Stallone's eponymous character from the U.S. *Rambo* franchise, the most important result is that the introduction of the porous television opens a visible hole in the onscreen space of *Warkop DKI Reborn*.

As the bad guys look on in confusion, the Warkop trio, now a quartet with their senior member, escape back into the TV set along with their Malaysian accomplice, Nadia. It is not just old Indro who has been "living" there, however; the TV is home to ghosts and media phantoms from disparate eras. As the group ventures through the various channels, they encounter a number of

famous characters who appear to be living inside their old movies. To realize this idea technically, *Warkop DKI Reborn* takes advantage of then-recent transfers of numerous classic Indonesian films to high definition—actual rebirths into the digital present. Scenes are taken from these films, against which the new Warkop crew is placed in reverse shots with matching backgrounds. This makes it seem as if they are facing the classic characters they encounter within the same, heterogeneous media time-space created by “opening” the outdated TV in the digital present. A comedy of errors ensues as Dono, Kasino, the two Indros, and Nadia attempt to communicate with the old characters, whose responses are limited to the lines they spoke in the past. Each change of the TV’s channel lands them in a different classic scene.

When the crew suddenly finds themselves in a darkened setting facing a cart selling *sate* (barbecued skewers of meat) and *soto* (a local variety of soup), Kasino innocently quips that they “must have landed in a cooking show.” Since the group hasn’t eaten in some time, the setup seems ideal, except for the spooky, nondiegetic music, which the characters are also able to hear. As they are about to dig in, the older Indro has a premonition: “don’t eat that meat, it belongs to *sun*—” Just then, a woman in white robes with long black hair appears in front of the cart with her back to the camera and issues a one-word command: “*sate*.” Although startled, Dono, Kasino, and Indro are quickly taken in by the woman’s beauty and begin arguing over who will serve her, while she repeats her order: “*sate*.” Reverse shots composed of digitized celluloid reveal to the audience that she is the *sundel bolong* played by Suzanna in 1981, which many would likely have recognized from the opening seconds of the scene. Using the smoothly matched and intercut shots from the older film, Suzanna’s ghost is shown rapidly devouring three skewers at once in single bites, continuing until the cart’s stock of *satay* is finished, much to the amazement and dismay of her old and modern onlookers.

“By the way,” asks the junior Indro flirtatiously, “what’s your name?” The answer, “*soto*,” at first confuses them, until they realize that that will be the woman’s response to any further questions. Still seemingly unaware that she is a dangerous monster, they decide to have some fun at her expense. “Name an Italian food,” offers Kasino. When the *sundel bolong* answers “*soto*” in the same, flat, expressionless tone, they laugh uproariously and begin competing to come up with the most far-flung juxtapositions: “Thomas Alva Edison invented . . . *soto*; America attacked Hiroshima and Nagasaki by dropping . . . *soto*; the best contraceptive is . . . *soto*.” Each answer brings even more laughter from the young Warkoppers. When quizzed about the birthplace of Indonesia’s then-current president, however, the once-touted political outsider and democratic reformist Joko “Jokowi” Widodo, the otherwise automaton phantom facing the expanded Warkop gang suddenly breaks from her classic script and answers correctly: “Solo” (which conveniently sounds a lot like *soto* and hence smoothly synchronizes with the lip movements of the *sundel bolong* from 1981).

As the questioners' laughter abruptly stops, Suzzanna's *sundel bolong* helps herself to a huge pot of boiling soto, which she easily lifts and drains, this time casting a sinister glance in the men's direction in answer to their calls for her to leave some for them. The scene then cuts to the original *Sundelbolong*'s reveal of the soto's broth pouring out from the bloody, maggot-filled hole in the ghost's back as she drinks. Among the TV's spectral movie-residents, it is only Suzzanna's *sundel bolong* who appears to be able to break out of the looping, diegetic-historical confines of her New Order golden age hit. Like the Warkop characters, she has come to life again in the digital present. But unlike them, she has done so without changing her iconic appearance: she returns, I suggest, not as *sundel bolong* per se but also as a manifestation of Suzzanna, the queen of supernatural horror, who died in 2008.

Always already an agent of convergence and heterogeneous time, Suzzanna's posthumous reentrance led (or perhaps possessed) *Warkop DKI Reborn*'s director, Anggy Umbara, to create a series of films in which a ghostly, reanimated version of "Suzzanna" is the central figure. I argue that Suzzanna's rebirth, and the trend of higher-budget 1980s-style supernatural horror that it contributed to, was a key, if largely unacknowledged, turning point in Indonesia cinema—one that mirrored similar shifts around the region in the years after the Asian Financial Crisis but, in this case, eventually led to a Guinness world record for the "most horror-focused film industry" in 2023 (Guinness World Records 2023). As I will show, Suzzanna's reentrance coincided with the emergence of a new, but typically backward-looking, approach to the alienating political economic and aesthetic regimes of neoliberal democratization and digital postmodernity.

THE NEOLIBERAL POWER COUPLE

The flood of remakes of 1980s horror that followed Suzzanna's return in *Warkop DKI Reborn*, continuing until the present, made room for further experimentation with theatrical-interactive and mediatized spiritual pasts, transforming *sundel bolong*, *phi krasue*, *manananggal*, and other regional phantoms into a deceptively new kind of transnational representative. Because of their increasing presence on mainstream global streaming services like Amazon Prime, Disney Hotstar, and Netflix, these spirits would become far more difficult for international audiences and critics to dismiss as "cult" fare with supposedly small (albeit global) niche audiences as they had in the past.⁴

If the post-New Order reawakenings and the digital spread of *sundel bolong* and other female spirits could at some level have been predicted or "expected" owing to the endurance of structural-ideological mechanisms like syncretic, animist-inspired rituals that support them, the same could be said for the shadowy owner of PT Indomarco PrismaTama and dozens of other influential companies shaping contemporary life in Indonesia in countless areas. The huge, related increases in homogeneous, corporate mini-markets can be seen as a symptom of