

# *On the Cultural Connotation of Chinese Urban Folk Songs*

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**Keywords:** Folk songs, Urban folk songs, Urban culture, Image construction

**Abstract:** In recent years, a new artistic style-city folk songs has emerged in the history of the development of Chinese pop music. The most outstanding masterpiece is Chengdu, which Zhao Lei sang in 2017. It was quickly sought after by the public with its beautiful melody and catchy lyrics. Chengdu, the important place chosen by the folk songs, has become a “paradise” that many people yearn for, and Yulin Road and bistro involved in the lyrics have also attracted public attention. It can be said that urban folk songs have built the city image and spread the city culture to a certain extent.

## 1. Introduction

Looking into the history of contemporary Chinese pop music with a cold eye, it is not difficult to find that the Chinese pop music market is a huge star-making machine. More and more stars have been released by professional companies for a long time. They sing the same platitudes and send out decadent voices. After a moment of popularity, they quickly reap the public's eyes and money. Apart from becoming famous masterpieces, these singers and stars slowly turn to disappear and disappear into the public's field of vision. The reason is that their singing style and attitude towards life are not close to the public.

Looking at the singers of folk music, most of them come from the bottom of society, and they are marginal figures who are free from the mainstream society in China. They have the most practical experience of survival in the bottom society. In the tide of great changes in the times, too many young people are free from the city and can't find a spiritual habitat. The songs created by these singers with grass-roots status and common people's position will surely arouse public attention. As Yan Jun said, “Can a person who has never sung in an underground passage be called a folk singer? Of course not. Any public place where rogue harassment, uniform violence and eye discrimination may occur is an underground passage. From the station in the county to the lawn in the capital, any singing at the bottom, nameless and creative is a folk song, provided that it is the singer's life. “ ? [4] In a considerable part of urban folk music, most of them take the first person “I” as the main object, just like the opening words of Chengdu: “It is not only the wine last night that makes me cry, but also makes me reluctant, not only your gentleness.” Another example is “We can't say goodbye and you love me very much” in Goodbye Shijiazhuang. As far as music art is concerned, this gentle way of telling narrows the distance between the singer and the listener. The so-called “I” comes from life,

grassroots, bottom and civilians. This way of telling can arouse the resonance of many “grassroots” in the city, which is why Chengdu, a city folk song, can quickly hit the whole network and get millions of broadcasts. In addition, the creation tendency of civilian position held by urban folk songs can be said to be a positive response to the trend of the times. It is rooted in every corner of the city and is the most grounded citizen culture in urban music culture, which naturally reflects the people's nature of music and the people's musicality.

## 2. Searching for Spiritual Habitat

City, a rapidly expanding field after the reform and opening-up, a vocabulary corresponding to the countryside, is the place where people live without agricultural production. However, city is not a simple geographical term, but a series of factors, such as economy, culture, politics, etc., blend behind it, and multiple factors together build a civilized field completely different from the countryside. With the development of industry and commerce, the habitat of the masses has become an inescapable link in the consumption chain, so the interpersonal relationship and the dependence on human survival in traditional farming civilization have undergone drastic changes. In the process of China's modernization, the annexation of villages by cities has become the necessity of development, and the influx of rural people into cities has become a reality, which undoubtedly has a severe impact on the people who have lived in rural areas for a long time and have to be forced to integrate into cities.

On the other hand, modern cities construct beautiful and illusory dreams one after another, and a large number of rural members go into cities to try to earn money and succeed. The prosperity of the city makes people enjoy the increasingly rich material civilization, but it seems that people are becoming more and more utilitarian and impetuous, and it is increasingly difficult to find peace and comfort of mind; The expansion of the city makes our living space bigger and bigger, but it seems that our living space is getting smaller and smaller, and the colorful city life is slowly subverting the essence of our life. However, different from the traditional farming civilization, the living style and living habits make this group of people from the countryside become “the bottom class”, and they have to bow to the urban civilization. However, the hustle and bustle of the city makes them unable to cope.

As “grassroots” urban folk singers, most of their songs imply the search for spiritual habitat. After combing the urban folk music, it is not difficult to find that “girl” has become the most frequently used word in folk songs, and she can be seen in urban folk songs such as Chengdu, Anhe Bridge and Gulangyu. In addition, “wandering” is also the most frequently used word, and the meaning of wandering can be felt in Goodbye Lanzhou, I Love Haikou, Henan and Goodbye Shijiazhuang. In addition, the related content about father and mother has become the content of repeated eulogizing in urban folk songs. Such image selection is undoubtedly a major feature of urban folk songs, and their constant pursuit of spiritual habitat is an important signifier of urban folk songs.

## 3. The Expression of Real Life in the Times

Liao Weitang believes: “Truth is the most prominent advantage of folk singers, and even the prerequisite for singing folk songs, followed by beauty and kindness.” [5] Inclusiveness and interaction are the themes of the times, and in the social field, they must be inclusive and interactive in line with the spirit of the times. The broad inclusiveness of works of art can have a very large audience, and the interaction between creators and audiences can also bring the distance between them closer. In today's era, art is not profound and beyond the reach of ordinary people. The masses can integrate into the process of artistic creation and learn, appreciate and spread the art forms they

love. Urban folk songs have always expressed the hearts and voices of the masses.

From the moment when the city folk song was born, it decided that it was a private narrative and a personal memory. Just like the sentence in “Killing the Shijiazhuang Man”: “Get off work at 6 o'clock in the evening, change the clothes of the pharmaceutical factory, my wife is cooking porridge, and I will drink a few bottles of beer”, such a simple personalized narrative seems to be a dull life of a person, but it is not, but it reflects a culture of the times. It can be said that the most important significance of urban folk songs is that they depict the interpersonal relationship, living appearance and living state of the young people/riff-raff people to a certain extent, call out the accurate inner voice of the people born in the city, and strengthen the public's cognition of those who are free/living in the society and strive for progress. From the perspective of the creative identity of urban folk songs, their grassroots identity and civilian class determine the songs they create and sing, which is a reflection and presentation of the life of contemporary grassroots people. There is such a lyric in Anhe Bridge sung by Donye.S: “I know that I will laugh with my youth and make me trapped in the city ... I know that there are too many regrets in this world every day”. This is a reappearance of the daily life of ordinary people in the present society, and a reappearance of the anxiety of people's survival under the background of times change.

Looking at the music that is popular in the market in China at present, most of them chant love with a cliché, leave love and deeply create “I love you”. This phenomenon leads to an embarrassment of Chinese music pattern, and its aesthetic function is not perfect. We should know that music is an art product, and the essential requirement of art is to present contemporary social and cultural symptoms. Under such circumstances/horizons, urban folk music is born. With the chanting of life, the description of life and the writing of anxiety, it has become a clear stream in the history of Chinese pop music. It can be said that the expression of real life is a major feature of urban folk music.

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