

# BOLIS PUPUL LETTER TO YU



LETTER TO YU  
COMPLETELY HALF  
GOODNIGHT MR YI  
FROGS / 青蛙 / CHING WA  
DOCTOR SAYS / 醫生話 / YI SANG WA  
SPICY CRAB  
MA TAU WAI ROAD (FEAT. SALAH PUPUL)  
CAUSEWAY BAE / 銅鑼灣 / TUNG LO WAAN  
CANTONESE / 廣東話 / GWONG DUNG WA  
KOWLOON / 九龍 / GAU LUNG  
COSMIC RENDEZ-VOUS

**Yu Wei Wun, my mother, passed away in 2008 in a traffic accident.**

**She was born in Hong Kong in 1959 and lived there until she was 7 years old.**

**Her parents left her and her two sisters with her grandmother because they saw an opportunity to come to Belgium and start a Chinese restaurant. When my mother was 7 she came to Belgium with her sisters.**

**When we were kids she talked about Hong Kong once in a while, but we didn't like anything about being Chinese. It wasn't something I was particularly proud of, it was a motive for unpleasant remarks throughout my childhood. It was only after she passed away that I really wanted to connect with where she came from. It was painful to realize we never took the time to go to Hong Kong together.**

**I started working on this album when I was traveling to Hong Kong for the first time in 2018. Everyday I wrote something, sometimes it was a melody, the next day it could be a rhythm, I walked around with a field recorder, recording everything around me...**

**I wrote a letter to my mother when I visited the street where she was born.**

**It was a very busy street with a lot of buses and cars passing by the whole time. A lot of loud noises sounded muted to me. Partly because I was so moved to finally be there but also partly because Hong Kong sounds muted because of all the tall buildings. When I crossed the pagoda in the street, I was so overwhelmed by the scent of incense that it really hit me. The chanting of the monks and the smell made me break into pieces. I missed her so hard but strongly felt her presence in that moment. Gratitude and regret, hand in hand, far away from home, picking up on our conversations.**

**Writing to her made me feel like she was more present, closer to me. You can hear the trucks and cars pass by in the first seconds of the opening track, the music sounds diffused and slowed down, similar to the woozy feeling after a 12-hour flight. It was only much later when it became clear what this album would be about that I remembered I had written this letter. It became the centerpiece of this album.**

**Bolis Pupul**

**BOLIS PUPUL**

**TRACK  
BY  
TRACK**

**LETTER TO YU**

# LETTER TO YU

I was never aware of the importance of my roots  
Until you passed away  
My heart is in my throat  
My eyes filled with tears  
This is where you were born  
59 years ago  
And I'm finally here  
Why did it take me so long?  
La Yu as we liked to call you  
Looking for the essence  
But also searching for your roots  
Your ancestors  
The things you once left behind  
I feel so lost  
Being here on the corner of Ma Tau Wai Road  
Without you looking for my roots  
My connections  
I feel so sorry we couldn't do this together  
Enjoying this moment  
My thoughts are with you  
Walking down this road



# COMPLETELY HALF

Built around field recordings I made in the subway, you can hear people scanning their Octopus cards when entering or leaving the MTR station.

This song is about the feeling that no matter where, I'll always feel like some kind of an outsider. It's also a naïve and hopeful song where I think I will find something that will make me feel more at home. Looking for my mother, hoping to find parts of her, of her parents and at the same time hoping people would see me as one of them.

Sometimes I see people who remind me of her and for an instant I believe it's her, although it's a sad feeling I also see some beauty in it, as if we are all connected to each other.

I'm on a train  
A train to you  
Not really knowing what I'll do  
I'm passing through  
Looking at all these faces  
I've never met  
Stepping into this world  
Thinking it took me way too long  
I thought that I  
Would fit right in  
I'm on the border of the state I'm in  
100% 50%  
Completely half on my behalf  
Wait who do I see  
Is that you?  
Or someone who looks a lot like you?  
Each and every time  
People talk to me like I'm a local guy  
A sense of shame  
Is my part  
But I know I can take the blame  
I wish I spoke  
What they speak  
So I could blend in easily  
Maybe I should  
Learn what is good  
I don't want to be misunderstood  
100% 50%  
Completely half on my behalf  
Wait who do I see  
Is that you?  
Or someone who looks a lot like you?

# GOODNIGHT MR. YI

When I was working on the music of this track my sister sent me a video of a tribe called the “Dong” (as we once had a band called Hong Kong Dong this wasn’t a complete coincidence). The Dong are a minority group living in China passing on songs from generation to generation for more than 2500 years.

When I opened her video, my own music was still playing in my studio and when I accidentally heard those chants together with my track it sounded like music to my ears. Although I still don’t know what they are singing about I decided to keep these endearing voices. To me the music sounded like a lullaby for grown ups, hence the title of this track.

# FROGS

(青蛙 / CHING WA)

When I was in Hong Kong I spent a lot of time walking around keeping my ears open for interesting textures or sounds that appealed to me. One of those sounds was the sound of croaking frogs.

When I was a child we had a very small courtyard where we had frogs. My sister and I spent hours feeding them with worms and spiders on a bamboo stick, so much that after a while the frogs attached to the bamboo stick even if there weren’t any insects on it.

In this song I tried to put some sounds that refer to the sound of croaking frogs, but more importantly I would like to make people dance to these crazy frog sounds.





# DOCTOR SAYS

(醫生話 / YI SANG WA)

During my first visit to Hong Kong I made a short trip just across the border to Shenzhen. I had some pain in my back and bumped into a doctor who said he could help me. I recorded his comments about the treatment and what I needed to do in order to stay healthy which resulted into this song.

# SPICY CRAB

An ode to the spiciest crab I ever ate,  
a signature Hong Kong dish.



# MA TAU WAI ROAD

FEATURING SALAH PUPUL

On this track you can hear my sister, Salah Pupul on vocals. It's a song I wrote while I was staying in a hotel room in the street where my mother was born. I found the address on her birth certificate and when I arrived there it seemed the maternity clinic had shifted into an elderly home. I wrote about what I was feeling there, at that moment. Addressing gratitude for being the mother she had been for us, preparing us for life. It also reflects on the observation of a city that is so big and different from where we grew up but at the same time felt familiar. I originally sang the lead vocal myself but it felt like it needed a lighter voice. It couldn't have been anyone else but my sister for this song.

What's inside of me  
Came from you  
These sounds of China  
They belong to you  
Cantonese  
On the streets  
Takes me back  
Back to you  
The sound of the city  
The color of the sea  
Don't know what I'm after  
I'm lost in tears  
The temple around the corner  
Wrapped in haze  
A touch of melancholy  
A soft embrace  
The star ferry  
Takes me closer  
On these waves  
I can feel you

# CAUSEWAY BAE

(銅鑼灣 / TUNG LO WAAN)

Even though this trip was very emotional and at times sad I also had some great times that just made me really happy, this resulted in a very uplifting melody where I felt like I could handle my life.

When I was in Hong Kong I recognized some smells from my past, every time I smelled one I wrote one down. The most important smells to me were mothballs, bleach, tiger balm and garlic. You can hear how they sound in Cantonese in this song.

Piu baak seui  
Fu biu maan gam yau  
Chau Yun  
Syun Tau  
Bleach  
Tigerbalm  
Mothballs  
Garlic  
漂白水  
虎标万金油  
臭丸  
頭蒜

# CANTONESE

(廣東話 / GWONG DUNG WA)

I'm frustrated that I can't speak proper Mandarin but I'm also very proud I can speak a little. Being in Hong Kong mandarin didn't help me much as it is not popular to speak it. In this song I'm addressing my inability of Cantonese (in Cantonese), adding that my Mandarin isn't that good either.

Ngo m ski gong  
Gwong dung wa  
Ngo ge pou tung wa  
Yik dou hou pou tung  
I don't know how to speak Cantonese  
But my Mandarin isn't any better.  
我不懂  
廣東話  
我的普通話  
也很普通

# KOWLOON

My mother was born in Kowloon so I spent most of my time there.

This dance track is inspired by this part of Hong Kong and it contains a recording of a mother with her child, who didn't want to listen to her. They were having a situation on the street.

# COSMIC RENDEZ-VOUS

This song contains snippets of a tape my sister found when she was cleaning out old boxes of my mother. The sound of her voice, she sounded so young and hesitant... I know she was going through hard times.

She was trying to understand things that happened in her life and was uncertain about her future so she tried an astrologist a friend of hers recommended. I was unsure if she would like it or not that I used her personal conversations so I spent a lot of time adding and deleting parts of the tape until it felt right.

One of the most important lines on the tape was the last one where she asks: "But how can you know all of this?".

I think the music works introspective and as we had some uplifting moments on this album before I found it soothing to have a less ecstatic track as the closing track of this album.

