



SXSW 2006 JAPAN NITE 10th Anniversary

Japan Traditional Nite ~ Everything about Shamisen ~



1. Mika Uchizato

Born in Minamidaito Island, Mika has learnt Shamisen and singing as a child and went on to win numerous Japanese Folk song (Minyo) awards and contests. Her first album "Tabidachi" was released upon her high school graduation. Mika's mature voice began to gain popularity. On 2003 her single "Akiramenaide" was released. Mika began to collaborate with non-folk artists such as the DJ Unit "Ryukyu Underground" and displayed her depth of musical talent. The 2004 album "Kaze no Shonkaane" featured two hit songs, "Kaze no Shonkaane" and "Kawa". The former was used for a sake TV commercial while the latter was used for a Milk Commercial and became popular among the Okinawans. The following year she participated in the Toru Yonaha-produced CD, "Uchina Warabeuta". Overseas Mika has performed in Lebanon and Jordan, spreading her name across the Middle East. Mika's musical journey continues as the Shimauta vocalist begins to perform across the borders.

Artist photo Download http://sxsw-asia.com/shamisen2006press/MikaUchizato_photo.jpg

2. Umekichi: Geisha, Ozashiki-gei, songs and Shamisen

Umekichi displays the true art form of "Geisha", a term that is often misinterpreted in western countries. Geisha are women who have the rare skill of entertaining customers through creativity, musical prowess and wit. An art form that developed through such combination was "ozashiki-gei", where singing and Shamisen performances are combined in a unique way. Umekichi presents the historical art to the contemporary crowd by utilizing a pop-taste to it. Currently she is one of the most popular artists of her genre.

Umekichi review in English

<http://metropolis.japantoday.com/tokyomusicconcerts/japanbeat/383/tokyomusicjapanbeatinc.htm>

Artist photo Download http://sxsw-asia.com/shamisen2006press/UMEKICHI_SX02_photo.jpg



3. Takeharu Kunimoto -A roukyoku storyteller, shamisen player, singer and songwriter-

Roukyoku artist Takeharu Kunimoto studied Bluegrass and country music at East Tennessee University last year as the Japanese delegate for cultural exchanges. Takeharu has been awarded countless times throughout his career, most notably by the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs (which also sponsored his exchange program) and by the Minister of Education. In spring 2003 he handled the narration and shamisen in "Mt. Head", a short animated film by Koji Yamamura which won numerous film festival awards and was also nominated for the Grammy Awards.

<http://www1.accsnet.ne.jp/~ball/kt/>

Artist photo Download http://sxsw-asia.com/shamisen2006press/05TakeharuKunimoto_photo112.jpg

4. Yasukatsu Oshima

Yasukatsu Oshima is a singer who comes from the Yaeyama Island of Okinawa prefecture. Born in Ishigaki Island in 1969, the island was renowned for the singers and Yasukatsu was literally surrounded by such music throughout his childhood, especially the San-shin (three-string Okinawan instrument). Highly regarded as the young bright hope of Okinawan Music, his combination of songs and San-shin displays the true beauty and quality of Okinawa's nature-bred music. Whereas most traditional music is taught within a strict code of masters and certified teachers, Okinawa allows more freedom and self-expression.

That has led to the birth of Yasukatsu's distinctly original (yet still traditional) style that has already garnered high acclaim from professionals across the globe.

Artist photo Download <http://sxsw-asia.com/shamisen2006press/Oshima-1.jpg>



5. Keisho Ohno

Born 1975 in Niigata prefecture, Keisho was named the "Natori" at age 12 and at age 14 was permitted by the Takeyama Takahashi the second to succeed the Takeyama Fushimoto School. In 2000 he moved his base of operations to Osaka and began performing at live venues around the city. In 2004 Keisho started "JK-SOUL", a group that mixes together traditional Shamisen with modern music to create a dramatic, groovy music. On top of preserving the traditional as the successor of the Takeyama School, he also works to further evolve its form by collaborating with artists of different fields such as BB Mofflan (African Percussion), Jon Umiyama Neptune (Shakuhachi) and Ryota Komatsu (Bandneon). His motivation and passion for music have gathered the attention of many.

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SXSW Asia / Rightsscale, Inc. Representative: Hiroshi Asada

3F EBISU-WEST 1-16-15 Ebisu-Nishi Shibuya-ku Tokyo. 150-0021, JAPAN

Phone +81-3-5428-3923 Fax +81-3-5428-3962 <http://www.sxsw-asia.com/> contactus@sxsw-asia.com

