



Goh Kurosawa Photo © Goh Kurosawa

GOH KUROSAWA: HITORI

by Josh Hastings

Flamenco, Classical, Jazz, Brazilian, Tango, North Indian, Free Improvisation, Rock, Balkan and Afro-Beat music – it all adds up to Global Fusion and a deep interest and talent for both acoustic and electric guitar. A finger-style guitar player, Goh Kurosawa's wood and strings becomes an entire set of instruments, much like the cross-sections of the places he has performed: the United States, France, South Korea, Canada, Mexico and Japan. The common thread between it all is the Orient.

Kurosawa's homeland is Japan. From ages three to six, Kurosawa lived in the United States. He came back in 1996 to study at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri and at

the California Institute of the Arts. Kurosawa blends a cultural mix of world music into each stroke and hand tapping. He lets the guitar tell an intimate story of foreign lands in a familial tie to American Jazz. He fingerpicks his way across florals brought to life by musical notes. It might be better said Hitori is an experiment on Global Infusion.

MAJ: *What does Hitori mean?*

KUROSAWA: *Hitori simply means "Alone" in Japanese. I composed this solo work right before I went to a week long festival in Mexico back in 2005. The festival presenters were initially interested in having me come down with my brother (Kai Kurosawa – featured member of Sharp Three) to perform duets, however at the end*

they decided to book me as a soloist. Rather than feeling bad or sad about this decision they made, I took this experience as a chance to make a piece that stood strong on its own alone. Hence the title Hitori came to mind. There are two major sections: the first is a slow and free intro; the second is a powerful funk-like groove which makes your body move. A friend of mine suggested that I divide the composition into two tracks for the CD to make things radio friendly. It was a good idea, since these days DJs seem to prefer shorter songs to be played on air whether if listeners prefer that or not. This song without words has been serving me as an opener at concerts and events for many occasions, and is one of my most well known solo tunes today.



Hitori by Goh Kurosawa Cover Image © Goh Kurosawa

MAJ: *Why did you choose to come to the States to study music when your native Japan is so rich with music and culture?*

KUROSAWA: *First of all, thank you for mentioning that Japan is rich with music and culture. This is so true, however I think lots of Japanese, especially the younger generation today, do not realize this fact. Honestly speaking I was once blind myself, but living far away from home has been helping me awaken to the unique and beautiful things only Japan has to offer. My initial visit to the States occurred when I was just three years old, and I stayed until I was six. I came back to go to school at Washington University in St. Louis in 1996, moved to Los Angeles in 2001, and have been living here ever since. When people ask if I am bilingual, I answer by saying that I am bicultural. Although I was not completely certain what I would be pursuing at that time, my decision to come study here was a natural move. I*

simply like the States, and as a result, the time I have been living here could be evenly divided, making myself natives of both Japan and the States.

MAJ: *Why have the Balkans had such an impact on your music?*

KUROSAWA: *I relocated to California for one reason, and that was to study with Miroslav Tadic who is a well-respected musician and guitar monster. He could play anything, and I mean anything, and is also a pretty good chef who likes to cook Thai food, don't ask why, for his friends and neighbors from time to time. Miroslav is the one who introduced me to Balkan music, and what fascinated me the most were the rhythms of this culture. More than 90 percent of the songs played on American radio stations are constructed in the meter of either 4/4 or 3/4. Some of the meters in Balkan folk songs happen to be 5/8, 7/8 and 11/8, for example. These are roughly categorized as odd time signa-*

*tures in musical terms. This could seem confusing to any American or Japanese who has never thought outside the box before. However, the flip side of the coin, stunning. As a composer and improviser, I have realized the possibilities to mix and twist these Balkan grooves with Japanese and American musical elements. Track number six on my recording, *Things That Matter We Tend To Forget About*, is an original composition written in the meter of 7/8 with reflective sounds of Japan, jazz and rock chords.*

MAJ: *Why did you choose to cover Like The First Day We Met, the theme song from the Korean TV series All In?*

KUROSAWA: *As indicated at the beginning of my liner notes in the CD, this is not my original composition. However, what I have recorded on my album is my original instrumental - yes, the original has Korean lyrics - arrangement for solo guitar in altered tuning. I was visiting Japan a little before I was getting ready to record my solo CD, and I got a bit hooked with watching *All In*, which was being broadcast on Japanese TV. My mother told me later on that Korean soap operas started becoming quite popular in Japan several years back. Regardless of popularity, however perhaps because I was hooked, I started arranging the song by ear on my steel-string guitar. At the end it seemed quite appropriate for me to include my version of the theme on the CD that also includes my original arrangement of *You don't Know What Love Is*, an American jazz ballad, making the album a salute to both sides of the globe. Interestingly, my take on "Like The First Day" has been another work to get attention here in the States, as well as one of the audience's favorites in concerts in Japan.*

GOH KUROSAWA

Conducting, directing, orchestrating and arranging for his High School's Guitar and Mandolin Orchestra, Kurosawa won an award as a "phenomenal conductor" from

the Japanese Tadashi Aoyama Regional Festival. The award was created for him because he displayed deep talent for his age. He currently resides in Los Angeles.

GOH KUROSAWA & SHARP THREE

August 8, 2008 6pm
Friday Night Concert Series
25 South First Avenue
Arcadia, CA 91006
Performance by Sharp Three
Adults 13 and up: \$15,
Children 6 - 12: \$8,
5 and under: Free.

September 2008
Enoshima Music Festival
Enoshima, Japan

October 12, 2008
TENON
Osaka, Japan

Date TBA
Europe Tour
London, UK

Date TBA
Veronique's Red Velvet Vaudeville
Variety Show
Hollywood, CA

Ongoing Engagement:
Tuesday Evenings, 6:30-8:30p.m.
626 Reserve Wine Bar
626 S. Spring St., #B
Los Angeles, CA 90014
Duo performance:
Goh and Kai Kurosawa
(Info: 213.627.9800)

Sharp Three

by Josh Hastings

MAJ: *Where does the cross-cultural, Global Fusion influence come from in your works?*

KUROSAWA: *Most recently in short, I have been describing Sharp Three in the following way: Asian harmonies and melodies alongside Eastern European folk music infused with modern and traditional twists. All the songs recorded on the CD are my original compositions with much input from the band. I spent the majority of my youth listening to Western classical music recordings and concerts due to the interest of my parents. However, I've always been a big fan of rock music - who isn't? During high school in Japan, I conducted and directed the school's guitar and mandolin orchestra. Moving along, I started expressing interest in the art and music of flamenco shortly after my studies began at Washington University, later where I also started studying Jazz and performing in Jazz combos. This was also where I had a traditional four-year education in classical guitar. As I mentioned earlier, relocating to California brought Balkan music into my life. My objective is not to be a mere walking dictionary of various musical cultures but to reach out to new boundaries while maintaining respect*

for each of the traditions I have encountered and learned. What I have brought out here is only the tip of the iceberg, of course. In fact, both my band members, Kai and Nick Terry, are also musical travelers in their own shoes with different valuable experiences to share. Thus needless to say, the music we create together is very organic and naturally has become cross-cultural in a global sense.

MAJ: *How did you come to include in your group such a unique set of instruments?*

KUROSAWA: *On one hand, when it comes to the number of strings on a wooden box and deep low notes, Kai is the extreme. He is a self-taught multi-string player wizard who gets the message across no matter the number of strings. His main axe BMB, Big Mama Bear, a 24-string giant, was designed by himself and put together in 2007 by a builder living in Europe. Most frequently with our group, he has been performing on BMB, 6-string electric and acoustic bass guitars, and the Warr guitar. Kai's connection with radical string instruments seems to be within his nature, and he is considering another original to be built in the near future. On the other hand, when it comes to things you could hit on, Nick is the man. This guy is one of those crazies who practically know how to get a beat from anything he touches, and without force. Nick continues expanding his arsenal of percussive weapons. In a way, Sharp Three is an orchestra because we have many colors available on our pallet, but do not necessarily use them all at once. As for the CD, I wanted to create an album that showcased the various instrumentation and possibilities of Sharp Three as a trio performing in real time, nothing was overdubbed except two. Therefore as a composer and arranger, having the two*

Sharp Three



"A unique blend of jazz, rock, Western classical music, infused with Asian soundscapes alongside Balkan rhythms."

Sharp Three Photo: © Sharp Three

in the band gave incredible flexibility and creativity to the music. Long story short, Kai and Nick have a genuine interest in musical toys. Me? I just play guitar. Six strings is enough for me.

MAJ: *What is next for Sharp Three? Tours? More CD's?*

KUROSAWA: *We've been working on putting a tour of Japan together, and it'll be happening next year along with our other performances. Kai and I however, will be going to Japan and Asia for concerts and events during this fall for four to five weeks. We have about twenty shows booked so far. As far as new recordings, we do have enough material. Kai is also*

composing for the band now for a new CD, or perhaps two. But more immediately and more importantly, our focus is on making an educational book/DVD on odd time signatures and rhythms. And as for my solo career, although I already have plenty of new songs I could record, I'd rather give enough time for myself to grow into a new level of a musician before I put it out into the world as a album. It may not be much longer, but no reason to make haste. In the mean time, please support by coming out to shows and clinics. The next event will be on Friday, August 8, 2008 in Southern California. For more info go to <http://www.happysad.org/goh>, or, <http://www.sharpthree.com>, or enjoy my CDs.

**GOH KUROSAWA &
SHARP THREE
CD PURCHASES:**

<http://www.happysad.org/goh/>

M

ARTS JOURNAL®

<http://www.malibuartsjournal.com>

Malibu Arts Journal 61