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Jake Shimabukuro

Holidays in Hawai'i

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About Jake Shimabukuro

Since gaining prominence in the early 2000's, ukulele marvel Jake Shimabukuro has mesmerized audiences with his innovative and dynamic style, taking the instrument to dizzying new heights. Over a dozen solo albums, Shimabukuro has shown a knack for moving effortlessly between genres, sometimes in the same song. After being taught the instrument by his mother at age four, Jake became a local phenom, performing on his own and in a local group Pure Heart. Early in his solo career he became a YouTube sensation when his cover of George Harrison's "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" went viral. Since then, Jake has gone on to play the world's most venerable venues, from The Hollywood Bowl to Lincoln Center to the Sydney Opera House and The N.O. Jazz Fests and collaborated with some of the world's greatest musicians, including Yo-Yo Ma, Bela Fleck and The Flecktones, Jimmy Buffett, Jack Johnson, Bette Midler, Ziggy Marley, Sonny Landreth, Billy Strings, Lukas & Willie Nelson and Warren Haynes. Shimabukuro has also won his share of awards and, just a few years ago he was nominated by President Joe Biden to serve as a Member for the National Council on the Arts.

One strong thread that runs through much of Shimabukuro's work is that of collaboration. From the *Trio* album to *Jake & Friends* to *Grateful* and beyond, Shimabukuro thrives in the ability to feed off and inspire his fellow musicians. For his brand-new project *Blues Experience*, Shimabukuro joins forces with his friend, drumming legend and founding member of Fleetwood Mac, Mick Fleetwood, to create a fresh new take on the Blues. "I've always wanted to do a Blues album and when Mick and I started talking about working together, I thought who better to work with than Mick Fleetwood?" The result is something exhilarating and unique, as these two titans of their instruments reinterpret some of the greatest songs written by some of their favorite songwriters in a Blues setting.

It's a union whose roots go back to the late 1990s when a young Shimabukuro met and played with Fleetwood at the Hawaiian Music Awards ceremony along with singer songwriter Kenny Loggins. It wasn't until a

few years ago, that the two were reconnected by a mutual friend at a Fleetwood Mac reunion concert in Nashville. That night, the seeds of the collaboration were planted at Fleetwood's suggestion. Not long thereafter the two convened along with Jake's touring bassist Jackson Waldhoff and keyboard player Michael Grande to start work on a new studio album in Maui. Mark Johnstone from The Mick Fleetwood Blues Band plays keys on two songs, "Need Your Love So Bad", and "Rockin' In The Free World".

Over the course of two 3-day sessions, the band recorded 9 songs live in the studio. The only track that was not recorded with all of the musicians playing together was Sonny Landreth's brilliant slide guitar on the Jeff Beck/Stevie Wonder classic "Cause We've Ended As Lovers". This soaring track full of peaks and valleys was a tremendous way to start the album. The interplay between Landreth and Shimabukuro is so seamless, you'd never know that they did not play together in the same room. The Chemistry is due in large part to the two performing the song w www.sarapetite.com | www.fortybelowrecords.com together during a recent tour. In addition, Sonny would often sit in with Jimmy Buffett's Coral Reefer Band back when Jake was a member.

Up next is a truly unique interpretation of the Blues standard, "Rollin' N Tumblin'". The song fades in with a swirling, delay-drenched psychedelic uke over top of Fleetwood's tribal drumming pattern, giving credence to why Jake is often referred to as the "Jimi Hendrix of the ukulele". Then, on a dime, Jake changes his sound and cuts to playing the song's theme which is echoed nicely by the Hammond Organ.

Jake's playing on the track is experimental and otherworldly, at times ascending into a psych jazz rock fusion in the most visceral ways. "Mick's energy when he plays is so infectious. He's such an intense musician. He pushes everyone around him and it's so inspiring to see his facial expressions and watch his movements and the way he hits the drums," says Shimabukuro exuberantly.

About "Kula Blues" Jake explains, "I'd never written anything that sounded this bluesy or a shuffle, so I wanted to take a stab at it and have a song where any musician could sit in without needing a chart". Again, Jake credits Mick Fleetwood with bringing the track to life. "He just got behind the drums and without even counting it off came charging in. You either jump on the train or get outta the way!"

A couple of other standouts on the album are "Whiter Shade of Pale" and "Rockin' in the Free World". Of the former, Shimabukuro recalls "I was so in the moment, I remember just closing my eyes and really forgetting my pedal board and everything and just reacting to Mick and the band."

Fortuitously, The Bridge School Benefit, founded by Neil Young had asked Jake if he would do a cover of "Rockin' in the Free World"; the same week he and Mick were in the studio. The track has an explosive energy that builds to an incendiary psychedelic guitar, 'er make that ukulele solo spurred on by Fleetwood's thunderous drums.

One of the things that really comes across speaking to Jake about this record is the 'spirits in the air' during the recordings. This is particularly apparent on their rendition of Fleetwood Mac's "Songbird". Recorded not long after Christine McVie's passing, the band only did one take. You can feel the emotion in the performance. "I remember Mick took a moment of silence after the song ended and you could see that he felt Christine's presence." Fleetwood's tom tom groove provides the heartbeat for Shimabukuro's floaty, ethereal uke, as he moves naturally between fast strumming chords and lilting melodic phrases. "I felt so fortunate to be able to experience that with Mick. It was very powerful to see the effect it had on him."

Another 'ghost in the machine' or 'happy accident' was the sound of the drums leaking into the ukulele's electric pickup. Because the musicians were so close together, you can hear all the drums on the ukulele track. When the fx are going on the uke, you get this cool subtle layer of the drum fx in the mix, contributing to the overall vibe and cohesion of the record. Not long after the completion of the record, Maui was devastated by historic wildfires. At the benefit concert in Honolulu Fleetwood once again joined Shimabukuro and the band to perform the songs on Blues Experience for the first time. Before the performance, Fleetwood gave a powerful and inspirational speech to the community. Shimabukuro expands on this, , "Mick's like the point guard on a basketball team making everyone around him play better. It's really incredible. He has such a huge presence, charisma and energy. It was such an honor to do this project together.

