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An Interview with Jazz-Electonica Artist SIENNÁ

Posted by [robert graham](#) on November 2, 2013 in [Interviews](#) No Comments

SIENNÁ, please tell us a bit about yourself and your background?



Photographer: Annelie Rosencranz

My name is Sienná. I'm a crossover jazz-electonica artist from Japan, based in Norway today. I'm writing and performing a weird blend of music, something in-between West and East, modern and traditional. That's probably why people calls me a contemporary traditionalist. I was born in Kyoto. My parents encouraged me a lot to develop musically – they bought me a piano, a huge stereo system and many classical LPs that I grew up with. I had private classical piano lessons for a several years, even though I was not so good student. As a teenager, I was drawn in the rock music and played the lousy el-guitar in rock bands as well. There was always music around me – everything I did at that time was something to do with music – that was the only thing that truly excited me. However, I faced the giantic wall when I told my family that I wanted to be a professional musician when I was around 18. After a massive protest from them, I gave up on my dream and moved to Norway to study something else at the University of Oslo when I was 23. As a result, I am ironically a master in cultural science, not in music. Musically there had been a long pause until I met Abòn later, a Norwegian guitarist and producer. Obviously he saw potential in me and introduced me Emagic's Logic program. Since then, I have been Logic's faithful "slave". I had released 1 EP and 3 LPs so far, and feel so lucky to be able to work on music now. I made it on time at last.

What inspires your particular style of fusion music?

Most importantly, I like to write music that means a lot to me personally in the first place. For instance, the track named "Fontebranda Di Siena" on my new album is something I wrote by the fountain "Fontebranda di Siena" itself in Siena, a beautiful medieval town in Italy. It is such a magical and peaceful place. I wanted to capture it and keep it in my music album, exactly like taking a photo and keeping the memory on a photo album. The track is a fusion of electronica, jazz, Cuban beats and Gregorian choir. I have no rule to make any mixtures as long as it sounds cool to my ears. It is really not my intention to make fusion, but I certainly do anyway. Probably it comes from my scattered taste in music – I love anything and everything that I think is fabulous, regardless of genre. Hypothetically speaking, I may think it's fun to do an ambient-house track based on something similar to Mozart, blending something similar to Miles Davis, Snoop Dogg and Eddie Van Halen. I may not be that extreme, but I enjoy songwriting in this way. Also, I tend to find beauty in situations where cross-cultural or diverse elements are successfully harmonized. I was very close to the terror-site in Oslo in 2011, and saw a joint Christian-Muslim memorial ceremony for the terror victims. I remember it as a stunning moment. Maybe, I am trying to create the same kind of beauty in my music too.

You've performed in various places around the world, Italy, UK, and Japan to name a few. What's that like?



© Annelie Rosencranz

Thomas Edison said "The three great essentials to achieve anything worth while are hard work, stick-to-itiveness, and common sense". Performing original music as an indie artist is not just a piece of cake. Edison's wise words describe exactly how I work. It has been all hard working except sleep for many years. So, you know I am the happiest person in the world whenever or wherever I'm allowed to perform my own music live. I really feel that I'm having a good time when I am on tour. That is absolutely worth living for. People ask me about the audience in every each country. However, I really don't see there is a border when music makes people get together. It is undescrivable to see smiling faces and their feets moving to my music. One thing I remember well in Italy is that the audience shouted "Yes" back to me whatever I said on the stage. Even though I asked them "Are you ready to go home?" – "Yeah!", "Are you sure you want me to stop?" – "Yeah!" while they were clapping hands for the new encore. It is a well-known situation that occurs often in Japan, where people speak little English. I used to be a part of the audience, doing the same thing towards foreign artists on stage earlier. Now the tables are turned. I think it's hilarious.

You have a new album being released called "Japonesque" in September, how long did it take you to develop?

The concept of "Japonesque" was all set from the very beginning – I knew that I wanted to tell more personal stories, personal experiences and my cultural background through music this time. However, I spent around 2 years to write every material for this new album. After I released an album named "Essence" in 2009, I went through a tough time in my personal life and had trouble concentrating and staying focused. However, I noticed that songwriting tends to go much better in difficult times, so I saw the obstacles as a gift to write better music even though it took time. Some tracks went very fast though, like "Beauty" – a song I wrote for my best friend who passed away. It was finished within 3 days. On the other hand, I had to go into meditation-like state to write the four tracks based on my hometown Kyoto's four guardian creatures. It was a step by step writing process. My producer Abòn and I spent a whole year to record and produce the album. It was fun arguing back and forth in a friendly manner, discussing how the sound should be. I have a lot to learn from him sound wise. The new album is finally out this September. I was a bit surprised to receive so many positive comments and reviews. I feel that all the work has paid off.

You've also got an awesome live line up with 2 Norwegian musicians named Hallvard Gaardlios and Fredrik Karwowski. What's it like working with them?



Hallvard Gaardlios is the bassist I have been working with since 2009. He was only 14 when Abòn discovered him, and he was 16 when he joined my team. So, he is like a family member to me. He is a natural-born grooving monster and one of the most talented bassists I know in the whole world. It's almost too scary to see how fast he has developed himself. He's just getting better and better – I can tell the difference every time we perform together. In addition, he plays key role as an adviser. He is gentle, but honest, objective and straight forward. I'm appreciated that he is not afraid to talk about anything to improve what we do. Fredrik Karwowski is a guitarist whom Hallvard performs with in another band. I had heard about him many times before we performed together in England for the first time this October. Now I know why he was mentioned so often. Fredrik is keen, creative, spontaneous and is almost too good to be true. He is an avantgarde multi-fixer who does literally anything from intelligent jazz, groovy funk, hard rock to scratchy noise and soothing ambient – exactly as I like and need. I'm so looking forward to work with him more, because his sounds and what he does on his guitar inspire me deeply. Hallvard and Fredrik are also my very good travel companions. We talk, take drinks, even dance together. I'm really enjoying their company. I have got several offers to perform as a DJ earlier, but I cannot imagine performances or tours without them.

Where can we find out more about your up coming shows, and albums?

I'm everywhere on internet, but I would suggest you to check out my official website [www.sienna-web.com](#) which is always up-to-date. But I like to receive any messages from anybody, so write me and say hi, for instance on Facebook [www.facebook.com/siennamusic](#).

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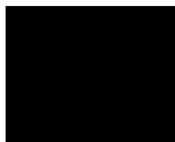
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