

Mp3 Saiichi Sugiyama - So Am I



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Hailing from Surrey, England, the guitarist Sugiyama's songs are bluesy but melodic with an echo of British rock music of the late 60's/early '70s, nurtured and amplified with his Japanese sensitivity. Pete Brown, the lyricist with Cream, now co-writes with 14 MP3 Songs BLUES: English Style, ROCK: Classic Rock Details: SAIICHI SUGIYAMA/SO AM I Written and Produced by Pete Brown (the Cream lyricist) and Saiichi Sugiyama This album was released in Japan in July 2004 and won critical acclaim by the Japanese rock and UK blues press. It is now being released in the US in August 2006 through CD Baby.

THE SESSION:- Following directly on from 2002 collaboration with Pete Brown on the Japanese Sunshine of Your Love project, the work commenced on the recording for Saiichi's second solo album, "So Am I" in the spring of 2003. The sessions at Chapel Studios in Lincolnshire and also Fortress, Livingston, and Mark Angelos Studios in London were co-produced by Pete Brown and Saiichi. The band consisted of Zoot Money (keys and vocals), Dave 'Clem' Clempson (rhythm guitar), David Hadley-Ray (bass), and Simon Edgoose (drums), with Pete on percussion and backing vocals. The resultant album is essentially about songs. The 14 tracks on the album show Saiichi expanding beyond the blues guitarist mode to embrace his Beatle and West Coast influences and give a nod to American R&B and Japanese ballads. The opener, A Cellar Full Of Noise, is bursts out with a cacophony of vocals by Saiichi, Jim Stapley of the up and coming London rock band Dekko, and the amazing Rietta Austin as well as twin lead guitar by Ben Matthews of Thunder and Saiichi; not to mention some neat blues harp by John OLeary of the original Savoy Brown Blues Band. Student Susan is essentially a Mersey Beat number with Pete Browns lyrics based on his real life encounter with a former girlfriend of the Beatles in his Liverpool days in 1964. There are also some blues guitar moments, notably one fiery blues instrumental featuring Saiichi, Clem, and Zoot playing lead in turn. Saiichi and Pete flew out to Tokyo in May 2003 to capture

harmony vocals by Mark Horiuchi, the former member of the legendary early '70s Japanese acoustic rock group GARO, who had a formative influence on Saiichi. Mark sang on five tracks, and the acoustic track Seagull in particular captures the magic of the CSNY era, Mark playing his signature acoustic lead guitar over the open tuning guitar texture laid down by Saiichi. The title So Am I has a reference to the centerpiece of the album, the epic 8-minute Old Samurai.

THE ARTIST:- Diana Luke of BBC GLR aptly described Sugiyama as a "blues singer/songwriter". Born in Tokyo, Sugiyama has been based in England for most of his life. Sugiyama's songs are bluesy but melodic. They have an echo of British rock music of the late 60's/early '70s, nurtured and amplified with his Japanese sensitivity. They are eclectic in style but they all retain a distinctive melodic identity that is his own.

REVIEWS AND COMMENTS:- Dear Saiichi -- Being able to play your fine CD on my program is a privilege. - Mick Martin 88.9 KXJZ Sacramento, California You played I Never Turn live with me in the studio recently at Resonance FM am I wrong or is that one hell of a song? The mix of electric and acoustic on this CD is very satisfying. - Pete Sargeant, Blues Matters The album captures and re-activates the essence of the early 70s British Rock that has long been lost even in Britain itself. We can be proud that it was a Japanese man who achieved this feat.

Strange Days September 2004 issue (original text in Japanese) Sugiyamas music manages to combine the blues feeling and catchy melodies In a nutshell, it is classy songwriter stuff in the bloodline of the 70s (particularly British) rock and popular music. - Record Collectors, August 2004 issue (original text in Japanese) Keep a watch on how the audience in America and Europe are going to react to this music - The DIG (by Shinko Music), summer 2004 issue (original text in Japanese) Sugiyamas husky bittersweet vocals and weeping guitar against the backdrop of a gorgeous full band sound makes a satisfying 14 tracks/70 minutes+ listening. I get a vision of his soul on fire burning brightly through the tapestry of sound. Player magazine, Sep 2004 issue (original text in Japanese) Your CD is here! Thanks a lot for very fine music! - Vasja Ivanovski 103 FM, Macedonia

SAIICHI SUGIYAMA/STORY SO FAR:- As a young child Saiichi was an inveterate "song inventor," singing songs he made up to amuse himself. One of his earliest memories was singing cartoon title-songs on stage with a full band behind him at a function to which he and his father were invited. Well before he took up the guitar, Saiichi wrote "radio" plays complete with soundtracks, and directed his school friends in recorded productions of them. The Beatles' music was constantly in the background then, even in Asakusa, downtown Tokyo where Saiichi was born and raised. This abiding creative activity with all that wonderful music as the background fabric of his

existence was a harbinger of things to come... In 1972 when Saiichi got his first guitar at the age of 12 (a Yamaha acoustic), he was wanting to emulate the sound of Crosby Stills Nash Young, which obviously took him a bit longer than if he was aiming at something a little more straight forward - but he says he has always followed his heart even from a young age. Saiichi straight away started making up what he later learnt to be open chords right up the neck before he mastered the lower position chords. He then befriended the late Tommy Hidaka, a member of the Tokyo group GARO who had major chart hits and were well-known for their impeccable CSN&Y covers. Tommy showed him a few more open chords and tunings and Saiichi was on his way. Saiichi then "met the blues" when he heard the track "Go Back Home" on Stephen Stills' first album, on which Eric Clapton was playing alongside Stills. Saiichi's quest for more of that "certain something" he found in that track led him to the Layla album, live Cream tracks, and finally to John Mayall's Blues Breakers album, with which the 13 year-old Saiichi found an immediate empathy. He started digging deeper into the blues, via B.B. King on Kent, Freddie King, Albert King, right on through Howlin' Wolf to Muddy Waters. Saiichi saw Clapton perform at Tokyo's Budokan in 1975 and formed his first blues band immediately after. Not satisfied playing with Japanese musicians of the day, Saiichi made plans to live abroad--England was calling. After a couple of summers spent in sunny California, Saiichi bit the musical bullet and moved to this green and pleasant (and rainy) land in 1980, home of his earliest musical influences, and decided to live in Surrey. Since then, Surrey has been his home. In 1990, Saiichi teamed up with the ex-Graham Bond Organization drummer, Paul Olsen, and the former X-Production bassist, Marco Frangos, in a power blues triumvirate known as Bluewater, playing the London blues club circuit. The Bluewater partnership with Maggie Ryder (ex-Eric Clapton), however, never went beyond the rehearsal studios as Maggie moved to New York. In 1993, after the dissolution of Bluewater, Saiichi started playing "solo" gigs backed by the ex-Walk on Fire partners, Phil Williams and Mike Casswell (of the late Cozy Powell Band fame) with Justin Hildreth (ex-Joan Armatrading) on the drums. It was with this line-up, augmented by the veteran of the British blues scene Zoot Money and the rhythm section of erstwhile Cutting Crew, that Saiichi recorded his eponymous album "SAIICHI SUGIYAMA" released in 1994. The album boasted seven of his compositions which, while firmly rooted in the blues and R&B Saiichi absorbed in his formative years, featured his unique sense of melody, particularly in the guise of "China Doll," reputed to be a closet classic for those who are appreciative of his particular style of music. The album was well received and got airplays on Jazz FM and various regional

stations. His interview with BBC GLR and the appearance on Live TV alongside James Brown ensured that his gigs were packed out. His memorable jams from the nineties included appearances with the rhythm section of John Healy Band and Otis Grand as well as an evening of blues with Zoot Money. Saiichi's ever-evolving band in the 90's featured Boz Burrell (ex-Bad Company), John Cook (ex-Rory Gallagher), Terry Peak (ex-Champion Jack Dupree) and Sam Kelly (multiple-winner of the "best blues drummer in London" prize in the late nineties) among others. The last incarnation of his band featured Tim Weller and Paul Wassiff who went on to support Eric Clapton's Pilgrim US Tour as Distant Cousins. However, Saiichi was unable to get a record company backing, the typical response being "Great music but don't know how to market it" and the business side took its toll - Saiichi practically stopped gigging in 1996 - concentrating on writing just for himself. Saiichi's knowledge of vintage guitars also landed him the role of adviser to Richard Chapman, Christie's guitar consultant, in the auction sale of Clapton's guitars in 1999. This work resulted in Saiichi being commissioned to write various Clapton guitar related articles by Japanese publishers and eventually, his appointment as a consultant for the 2004 Eric Clapton Crossroads Guitar Auction at Christie's. His love of vintage Marshall amps also led him to the 1999 Ampaholics project, demonstrating the sound of various Marshall amps from the 60's on the Ampaholics CD. In 2001, Saiichi started performing on the London and Surrey circuit again with his own band, featuring new material and a new band with David Hadley-Ray, a bassist from Philadelphia, US, and Darby Todd on the drums. Saiichi first saw David play at a local blues jam when he accompanied his friend's young son, Andy Cortes, still learning to play, for moral support. Saiichi was seen gigging around Kingston and guesting on stage with his friends, John O'Leary--founder member of Savoy Brown, Gary Boner of Roadhouse, and Robin Bibi. Soon, Saiichi was rejoined by Sam Kelly on the drums, who played with him in the early '90s, and Saiichi Sugiyama and His Band was back in business. It was in 2001 through David Hadley-Ray's introduction that a collaboration which was to form the foundation of Saiichi's musical activities in the 2000s came into existence. Saiichi met and performed with the Cream lyricist, Pete Brown, at David's wife's birthday party held in the upstairs room in Paradise Bar, Kensal Rise, coincidentally the venue for the launch party for his first album on his birthday 30 November 1994. Pete began appearing at Saiichi's shows in 2002 playing percussion, singing backing vocals, and performing Cream classics with Saiichi. Through David's introduction, Saiichi also met Malcom Bruce, Jack Bruce's son, who played keyboards in Saiichi's band for a short period before his solo project took over. A

Japanese record company executive happened to hear one such performance and requested Saiichi to let him include a live recording of it in his label's Cream tribute project. Instead of releasing live recording, Saiichi and Pete went into a studio with the live set-up, with Malcom on the keyboards and Darby on the drums, to cut four Cream tracks. These re-interpretations of Cream classics, produced and sang by Pete Brown (complete with the previously unreleased extra verses for Politician) were released on "Sunshine of Your Love" by Funai International/Universal Japan in December 2002. Following a spell in Tokyo after his father's death, Saiichi returned to England just before Christmas in 2002 and with Pete Brown's encouragement, started planning for and writing with him his new solo album since 1994. Pete and Saiichi assembled a team consisting of David Hadley-Ray on the bass, Zoot Money and Malcom Bruce on keyboards, Clem Clempson on rhythm guitar. Henry Spinetti, who was originally going to play the drums, was unable to attend due to the extra dates with Roger Chapman and Simon Edgoose took his place. After a week's preproduction in London, the recording session started at Chapel Studios in Lincolnshire in the spring of 2003 with Thunder's Ben Matthews engineering the session. After 10 days, the session moved to London for overdubbing horn sections, cello, flute and backing vocals. Among others, Henry Lowther played the trumpet. The session also saw Pete and Saiichi traveling to Tokyo to capture contribution from Mark Horiuchi of GARO, Saiichi's early musical influence. During the visit, Saiichi and Pete played a one-off gig in Tokyo. This was the first gig in Japan for Pete (and the first since 1978 for Saiichi) and combined with the fact that it was Mark Horiuchi's first recording in ten years, it resulted in much coverage by the local music press. The album production, which took over one year, finished in May 2004. The resulting 14 track album "So Am I" was released from Hendrixx Records in Japan on 20 July 2004 and features Saiichi's compositions and lyrics by Pete Brown. Advance orders on the album resulted in it reaching #604 on the Japanese Amazon.co.jp ranking on 27 June 2004. It received a critical acclaim from Japanese rock press, British blues publications and tracks from the album have been played on US, English, European and Japanese radio stations. In autumn of 2004, Saiichi and Pete returned to studio to cut Saiichi's re-interpretation of Beatle numbers for a Japanese project with Geoff Allen on drums, Clem Clempson on guitar, David Hadley-Ray on bass and David Munch Moore and Malcom Bruce on keyboards. The resultant four tracks were released on a compilation album "Blackbird" on Hendrixx label on 29 November 2004. Saiichi and Pete returned to Japan to play a 5 day mini-tour, starting in Hiroshima, in December to promote the "Blackbird" release. In the UK during 2004, Saiichi with

his band featuring David Hadley-Ray on bass and Paddy Milner on keyboards appeared with the Yardbirds and Stan Webb's Chicken Shack. They also performed a one-off acoustic concert at the Jazz venue, Bull's Head in Barnes which was recorded for a possible release. A 6 page feature in the UK's Blues Matters! and appearing with the Yardbirds at thier Chritmas Party were a fitting conclusion of a busy year that 2004 was. 2005 kicked off with a Surrey date with Zoot Money and Pete Brown in Saiichi's band. In May, a compilation album entitled simply SAIICHI was released in UK featuring more Sugiyama-Brown tracks as well as the Beatles and Cream interpretations from the Japanese Hendrixx compilations. The release coincided with the Cream reunion concerts at the Royal Albert Hall and the album was launched at three London gigs by Saiichi Sugiyama Band featuring Pete Brown. The sell-out gig at the Hard Rock Cafe in London was packed with Cream fans visiting from all around the world. Later in the year, Saiichi started a new World Blues project with Helder Pack, the virtuoso drummer from Mozambique and his friend Mauricio Pena from Venezuela on the keyboard and a percussionist and a trumpet player. This unit with an idea to fuse Latin and African influences with Saiichi's brand of rock music eventually turned into Saiichi's new regular touring band and made its debut appearance to a packed crowd at Ealing Jazz and Blues Festival in August. 2006 saw Saiichi continuing to work with his band as well as performing gigs entirely consisting of Cream numbers as a musical tribute. The idea was hatched by his friend Funky Paul Olsen, an artist, a drummer and a Cream fan. In July/August 2006, Saiichi performed in Shana Morrison Band for the 12 date UK leg of her European tour across the country. The band led by Shana, Van Morrison's daughter and an incredible blues singer in her own right, received fantastic reviews at their gigs around the country including a packed night at the Borderline in London. The tour culminated in an appearance at Summer Sundae Festival at De Montfort Hall in Leicester. After the Morrison tour, Saiichi teamed up again with Pete Brown to plan for his next projects - one involving a three way collaboration with Mark Horiuchi of GARO in Tokyo for a studio album and also Saiichi's next album consisting of his own materials. In a meanwhile, Saiichi is scheduled to perform a set of Cream music in a double-bill concert with Pete Brown's Interocetors at BoomBoom Club in September 2006. The story continues...

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