

SAIICHI SUGIYAMA BAND

EPK

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British blues-rock guitarist Saiichi Sugiyama and his band are touring the UK in September 2016 ahead of their new album release next year.

Saiichi Sugiyama Band is a group of musicians hailing from Surrey/London that harks back to the halcyon days of rock and soul, 1965-1974, brought together in 2010 by the guitarist/composer Saiichi [pronounced: “sigh-eee-chee”], who has a career spanning 25 years as a solo artist in the British blues scene.



The core of the group is Rietta Austin (lead vocals), Saiichi Sugiyama (guitar/vocals/composer), Ben Reed (bass guitar) and Mune Sugiyama (producer/arranger/drums).

When playing live, the group are augmented by touring musicians including Stuart Dixon (rhythm guitar), Katrin Yr (lead vocals) and Wez Johnson

(drums). The former members Lizzie Hibbert (lead vocals) and Dave Munch Moore (keys) also record with the group in studio.

The group has been spending the past months working on their new studio album in various recording studios, a follow up to the studio live album “the Smokehouse Sessions” from 2014.

The new album will include a track entitled “Melting Away”, written by Saiichi and featuring the late bass hero Andy Fraser, ex-Free and composer of the 1970 smash single, “All Right Now.”



The initial inspiration for “Melting Away” came to Saiichi while on a trip to his native Japan. To Saiichi the melody was reminiscent of Free guitarist Paul Kossoff, who died in 1976. Creating a demo when he returned home to the UK, Saiichi came up with bass parts that brought Free bassman Andy Fraser to mind.

In 2014, Saiichi met Andy Fraser and they agreed to work together, with the idea that Fraser would produce the final album. Fraser loved ‘Melting Away’ and put his own spin on it with his signature bass line, synthesiser and vocals. Sadly, Andy Fraser died on 16 March 2015, which meant that ‘Melting Away’ become one of his last recordings. Today, ‘Melting Away’ lives on as a powerful, poignant track proving that Andy Fraser’s legacy is enduring.

It is apparent that Saiichi’s Les Paul tone is endowed with the passion and flair of British Blues groups such as Blues Breakers, Cream and Free. His songwriting is another class act that draws from a wider range of influences of CSN&Y, Ann Peebles, Aretha, Motown Funk Brothers, Dave Mason, Carole King, Debussy, Chuck Berry, Herbie Hancock, George Harrison and more. It is this cross pollination of pre-1976 music that makes the Group’s musical core.

Giving a perfect foil to his father’s music is the production of Mune Sugiyama, a latter day Renaissance polymath of a painter, film maker, physicist, orchestral arranger, music producer and groove drummer all in one, playing the role of the Creative Director of the band.

The quiet mysterious figure towering in the background and a walking encyclopedia of music, Ben Reed’s gigantic musical prowess is well-hidden under his boyish demeanor and quintessentially British eccentricity, but listen carefully and he is as much a bass monster as John Entwistle.

The life and soul of the band whose vivacious character belies the super singing brain that is sharper than a scalpel that she is, Saiichi gave up singing his own songs when Rietta told him that she believed in his songs. Simply, Rietta is music.

Together, they recorded an album full of songs which gives a new lease of

life to the familiar elements of the music's golden years and transform them into songs that are at the same time so new and yet familiar and above all, have a heart, like coming home to a place that you have never been before. So, welcome. Come and meet Saiichi Sugiyama Band.

RELEASES:

Melting Away feat. Andy Fraser (2016) CD single

The Smokehouse Sessions (2014) Vinyl, CD and downloads distributed by CADIZ Music

REVIEWS:

of *The Smokehouse Sessions* (2014)

"All in all it is a terrific session" - **Blues Matter**

"If you enjoy Cream, Savoy Brown or John Mayall then you do indeed need this album. Rietta Austin, who sounds like Christine Perfect, Etta James adds a markedly soulful touch." - **R2 Magazine**

"This album is too short but he still shows Joe Bonamassa a thing or two"
- **Hifi World**

"Recorded live with bite and swagger" - **Guitar & Bass Magazine**

"His guitar sound is all about a Les Paul into an overloaded Marshall amplifier, and his phrasing is very much taken from early Clapton but with Paul Kossoff's vibrato. If you can imagine a female fronted version of Cream that had decided to get funky and employ Lenny Kravitz, you'd be in about the right place. It's familiar territory, but unlike the other players who take a similar approach, none of this seems slavish or forced. It doesn't seem like a conscious attempt to recreate something that's already

been done. It flows and it's fiery just like the original article...this is a band that aren't afraid to blend and innovate. ... It is readily apparent that they stand out from the pack." - **Tonemonkey**

"A very enjoyable release" - **Zeitgeist – the rocker**

"The performances are very good, particularly Saiichi Sugiyama and the singer Rietta Austin, who are both superb throughout". - **Musicriot.com**

"All four originals prove that Sugiyama has a great knack for writing and collaborating on top tunes. They are instantly catchy and feel like long lost family members turning up on your doorstep. Likewise, the three covers are extremely good with just enough individuality thrown in to make them a little different. No mean feat in the blues genre". - **Metal Discovery**

"A proud homage to the sound of the 60's & includes a fine version of Freddy King's Hideaway". - **Pipeline Blues News**

"There is no doubt he is a virtuoso guitar player. The band's arrangements are energetic & laid back & it is easy to see why Saiichi is gaining more recognition. Recommended." - **Blues in the South**



ABOUT SAIICHI

Saiichi Sugiyama, born in Asakusa, Tokyo, is a British-based guitarist, composer and singer, best known for his writing and performing collaborations with Pete Brown, the lyricist for Cream, since 2002 to date.

Sugiyama released his eponymous first album in 1994 backed by Mike Caswell and Phil Williams of Walk on Fire, Andy Smith of Hot chocolate, Cutting Crew's rhythm section and Zoot Money. Playing on the London blues club circuit, Sugiyama's on stage bands in 1990s at various times featured Boz Burrell of Bad Company, John Cook of Rory Gallagher Band, Sam Kelly and the guitarist Paul Wassif. The album received airplay by Paul Jones and Sugiyama supported Eric

Bell, appeared on Live TV and jammed with Otis Grand and members of Jeff Healey Band at Roadhouse in Covent Garden.

After three year hiatus, Sugiyama began playing the London circuit again with David Hadley-Ray, Darby Todd and Vic Martin backing him. In 2001, Pete Brown, whom Sugiyama met through David Hadley-Ray, began appearing on Sugiyama's shows playing percussion and singing Cream numbers that he had written. After recording four Cream songs with Sugiyama for a Japanese label for its tribute compilation in 2002, Brown toured Japan with Sugiyama in 2002 and 2004.

Brown co-wrote and produced Sugiyama's albums "So Am I" (2004) and "SAIICHI" (2005). The studio band featured Clem Clempson, Zoot Money, Pete Brown, David Hadley-Ray and Simon Edgoose. Ben Matthews of Thunder engineered the albums and made a cameo appearance. Rietta Austin, Jim Stapley, Malcolm Bruce, Henry Lowther and Dave Moore also played on the albums. Pete Brown, Zoot Money, Paddy Milner, Ed Spevock appeared on London shows promoting Sugiyama's albums, which included a party at Hard Rock Café in Park Lane in May 2005 following the last of Cream reunion shows. Sugiyama opened for the Yardbirds, Stan Webb's Chicken Shack and played Ealing Blues Festival, Colne Blues Festival British Stage, Respect Festival, etc.

Sugiyama since 2002 also collaborated with the late Mamoru "Mark" Horiuchi, the former lead singer of the Japanese rock band GARO, who had a number of chart hits in the Japanese in the early 1970s and was a formative influence on Sugiyama. Mark sang on several tracks on the album "So Am I" and Sugiyama appeared in his concerts in Tokyo in 2000s.

Sugiyama played guitar for Shana Morrison, the daughter of Van Morrison in UK tour band in 2006 and 2010 playing the Borderline, Robin 2 and New Roscoe, Leeds among others.

Sugiyama began working with a female singer to front his band in 2010, most notably Rietta Austin. The band have so far featured at various times Wayne Proctor, Sam Kelly, Dave Moore, Ben Reed, Lizzie Hibbert, Jade Foreman, Malcolm Bruce, Stuart Dixon, Will Johns and his son, Mune Sugiyama. The band supported Spike's Full House tribute to Andy Fraser featuring Simon Kirke and Luke Morley at the Borderline in 2014, Kirk Fletcher's 2015 UK tour and has been invited to play supporting Sharks at Annual Free Convention in November 2015.

Saiichi Sugiyama Band consisting of Rietta Austin, Ben Reed, Mune Sugiyama and Rick Biddulph released a studio live album "the Smokehouse Sessions" in 2014 to a critical acclaim [URL to the Review page]. After its release, Sugiyama began work on the band's studio album with a working title "Night Indigo" immediately with the help of Pete Brown on production. The sessions so far featured one of last recordings by the late Andy Fraser on the bass and also strings written by John Shipley, MD of Jack Ashford's Funk Brothers. The album is scheduled for release in 2016.

Sugiyama moved from Tokyo to England in 1980 and has lived in Surrey and London since then.



ABOUT RIETTA

Rietta IS music...she lives and breathes it...Truly a voice that needs to be heard." - Kirk Pengilly, INXS

"[Rietta's] vocals...stand on their own merit, and the way they move from the sub-operatic down to a beautiful whisper has to be heard to be believed." - musicomh.com

"Up there with the likes of Joss Stone and Anastacia." - liveformusic.co.uk

Originally from New Zealand, now based in London, Rietta Austin has performed around the globe. Her eagerly awaited debut album, "Cut Me Loose", released on Halo Records UK (produced by Mark Stevens - Gabrielle, Sugababes), has already sparked a lot of interest from the British music scene. Rietta released a worldwide single for Hedkandi following the success of her rendition of "All Night Long" on an international compilation album, alongside legendary artists Luther Vandross, Marvin Gaye, Gladys Knight, Maxwell, Dionne Warwick and Earth Wind And Fire. Rietta has recently signed a track to Ministry Of Sound USA for their Dance Nation America album which she co-wrote and is featured artist on.

With a four octave range, Rietta's vocal versatility is outstanding. As one of Australasia's leading vocalists, she is versed in anything from Jazz, Soul and R'n'B, to Pop and Rock. As well as fronting various bands down under Rietta has been a regular featured artist at the Harrah's Casinos worldwide and has also been seen at Ronnie Scott's & Dover Street Wine Bar in London. Rietta has appeared on the same bill as Bryan Adams at a corporate concert in England, and recorded backing vocals for Dame Shirley Bassey's single as well as performing live with her at Glastonbury Festival. Dame Shirley's dance mix featuring Rietta's vocals went to No. 3 on the US dance charts last year. Rietta headlined the O2 Arena Community Event on June 20th 2007 and recently opened in Russia for Johnny Gill and was support act for Joe Cocker in July in Moscow.

The voice of numerous Australasian television and radio commercials, and the new voice of Virgin Soft Radio, Rietta has recorded with some of the industry's top names, including a charity song for the Australian Tsunami Relief Aid Project with INXS & Diesel. Rietta has recently completed backing vocals for Oscar Nominee Elizabeth McGovern's debut album. Rietta has done session work for Kirk Pengilly (INXS) and live work as backing vocalist for Jerry Harrison (Talking Heads). Other live and session work includes Australian Pink Floyd; Mike Harrison (Spookytooth); Matt Monro Jnr; Bobby Davro, Linda Henry, Cheryl Fergison (Eastenders Cast); The Stylistics; Jon Stevens (Noise Works); Deni Hines (Rock Melons); Virgil Donati (Southern Sons) John Rowles; The Sound of the Supremes; The Jordanairs, D.J. Fontana and Pete Brown (writer for Cream).

Hedkandi, one of UK's biggest dance labels, debuted Rietta's singer/songwriting talents when they released her song "Love Is On My Mind" with Dogsax on their Disco Heaven Album (01.04). The album charted at 25 and this has taken her to recording with various producers in countries such as Italy, Belgium, Germany and Denmark. By demand of DJs & clubbers world wide, Hedkandi are about to re-release the 2007 version of the track as this year's big single. She has had two singles on the dance chart through Greendog Records; "Kiss My Ass" which charted No. 2 on Passion FM and No. 10 on House FM UK and "Don't Give Up" - her latest hit for Fearless Funk & Soul which is No. 5 on Naked Soul and features on Sky Digital Radio.

A featured artist performing her own material at both the Edinburgh Festival and the Southill Arts Park Festival, Rietta was selected to represent New Zealand and lead the world into the New Millennium as the headliner in an internationally televised performance, in front of an audience of 30,000 people, before Dame Kiri Te Kanawa took over the new dawn celebrations. Rietta has also headlined at events such as New Zealand's Annual International Jazz & Soul In The Park, Australian Jazz & Funk Festivals held in Sydney and the Waiheke Jazz & Blues Festival. More recently she was seen singing at a French Music Festival in the South of France and as guest vocalist in Belgium with the international jazz funk fusion group Jazziz.

As a singer songwriter, Rietta has released two original songs on the compilation album for Indigenous Funk Company - a selection of the premier NZ vocalists under the NZ Polynesian Label Tangata Records distributed by BMG. Rietta has also guested on various NZ and Australian albums including sporting extravaganzas for Whitbread Round The World Yachting, America's Cup and The NZ National Rugby and Netball teams.

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