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Ukulele Sensation Coming to Cal Poly Oct. 14

SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA – Dubbed the “Ukulele Sensation,” Hawaiian musician Jake Shimabukuro delivers “jaw-dropping instrumental music with the touch and phrasing of a master. Jake is challenging every last preconception about the ukulele.” (FRETS Magazine)

Audiences will experience Shimabukuro’s lightning-fast fingers and innovative style when Cal Poly Arts presents the 28-year-old virtuoso at 8 p.m. on Friday, October 14 in the Spanos Theatre as part of Cal Poly Arts’ innovative Director’s Choice Series.

Known for revolutionary playing techniques, Shimabukuro shatters musical boundaries. While he has great respect and love for traditional Hawaiian ukulele music, Shimabukuro’s mission is to demonstrate that the ukulele is capable of much more.

At just four years of age, Shimabukuro’s mother gave him his first ukulele lesson. “When I played my first chord, I was hooked,” says Shimabukuro. “I fell in love with the instrument.”

Shimabukuro views the ukulele as an “untapped source of music with unlimited potential,” whether he’s performing a rendition of Jimi Hendrix’s “Little Wing” or Beethoven’s “Moonlight Sonata.” His ever-expanding repertoire includes jazz, blues, funk, classical, bluegrass, folk, flamenco, and rock.

Countless hours of practicing, three award-winning solo albums and two music DVDs later, Shimabukuro continues to strum, pluck, distort, and tap into the ukulele’s potential.

A true showman, Shimabukuro’s performances captivate audiences with intricate strumming and plucking techniques, electrifying, high-energy grooves, and smooth, melodic ballads.

By experimenting with various guitar effect pedals, Shimabukuro generates a heavily amplified sound likened to guitar legends such as Hendrix and Van Halen. When unplugged, Shimabukuro masterfully extracts the pure natural acoustic sound of the ukulele, able to delicately make a single note virtually emote.

Shimabukuro is recognized as a master by fellow musicians. Shimabukuro has opened for and performed with Grammy Award-winners Bela Fleck and the Flecktones on several occasions and recorded on the band’s latest album, “Little Worlds.

Shimabukuro has also had the opportunity to perform with and/or open for artists such as Bobby McFerrin, John Hiatt, Les Paul, Fiona Apple, Diana Krall, Jamie Cullum, Kaki King, Take 6, Stanley Clarke, Blues Traveler, Toto, Jimmy Buffett, and Stephen Bishop.

He has played venues such as the House of Blues and The Knitting Factory in Los Angeles, B.B. King’s Nightclub in NYC, and the Fuji Rock Festival in Japan.

In June 2002, Shimabukuro became the first ukulele player from Hawaii to sign with Epic Records International, a division of Sony Music International. Most recently, Shimabukuro acquired a national distributor deal and signed with William Morris Agency, the world’s largest and most diversified talent agency.


In 2004, Shimabukuro was named Hawaii’s Goodwill Ambassador to Japan and received the Japanese Foreign Minister’s Commendation for being an active voice in U.S.-Japan relations at the grassroots level.

Tickets for the performance range are $28 and $34, with student discounts available, and may be purchased at the Performing Arts Ticket Office, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays. To order by phone, call 805/756-2787; to order by fax: 805/756-6088. Order on-line at www.pacslo.org.
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