

AROUND TOWN

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Every man's bluesman

American blues musician Joey Gilmore brings his modern blues and R 'n' B sound to Taiwan. He kicks off a nine-day run of shows this weekend in Taipei



American blues guitarist and vocalist Joey Gilmore kicks off a nine-day run of shows this weekend at Capone's in Taipei. He also appears at the Taichung Jazz Festival next week.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOEY GILMORE

BY DAVID CHEN
STAFF REPORTER

Joey Gilmore is best known as a bluesman, but the 65-year-old American singer and guitarist loves and plays many styles, from reggae and calypso to soul and R 'n' B, and even country.

"I feel blessed and fortunate that I came up in an era where you weren't just pigeonholed into one type of music," he said on the phone from his home in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Gilmore, whose nine-day tour of Taiwan starts tomorrow, follows a modern tradition of greats like B.B. King, Bobby "Blue" Bland and Little Milton — artists that incorporated gospel, soul and R 'n' B into their brand of blues.

At the start of his career, which spans more than 40 years, Gilmore was already branching out beyond the folk-based sound of Chicago-style electric blues. He played in bands that performed classic soul hits by Motown and Stax Records artists like The Temptations and Booker T and the MGs.

Also proficient on bass guitar and drums, Gilmore developed a reputation over the years as the "go-to" backing musician for big-name acts in his home base of southern Florida. He has opened for and shared the stage with soul legend William Bell, blues singer Etta James and James Brown.

Gilmore recently gained wider recognition and a wider fan base after winning the 2006 International Blues Challenge, a major competition held by the Blues Foundation in Memphis.

One immediately hears B.B. King's influence in Gilmore's guitar playing and deep, soulful voice. But he also cites another "King" as an inspiration: Elvis Presley.

"Man, he was my ultimate idol, as far as somebody that could get on the stage and just command and demand total attention from an audience," Gilmore said.

Gilmore fell in love with the stage from the moment he first played in public. "What really got me goin' was the reaction from the fans ... and you could see the joy in their faces when you were performing," he said. "I see that today — people really admire what you're doing, and to me that's

the greatest gift on earth."

"And most importantly, they *pay* you for doing it," he laughed. "How many people can say 'I love what I do and get paid to do it?'"

But it wasn't all smooth sailing as far as Gilmore's recording career is concerned.

In the 1970s, he recorded a set of 45-rpm singles that were sold outside of the US, but never received any royalties.

After the release of his first full-length album, *So Good to Be Bad, Blue Angel*, was released in 1989, he suffered a streak of bad luck with managers or producers who "didn't have my best interests at heart," he said. Gilmore found himself in a cycle where he would fall into debt from making an album, decide to give up recording, then decide to try again a few years later.

He says things have changed with his ninth and latest release, *Bluesman* (2008), which he managed to produce without "the middle man." He is proud of the recording and glad he tried again.

"Because of the fact of your love for the music and the art, you can't stay away. You have to come back. You can't

stay away. You have to get knocked down and come back and try it again."

Gilmore's visit to Taiwan has been long anticipated by local blues fans. He forged a connection with the local scene when the Blues Society on Taiwan sponsored his first attempt at winning the International Blues Challenge in 2005. (He actually won, but was later disqualified on a technicality).

Tomorrow night and Sunday, he performs at Capone's backed by electric blues outfit BoPoMoFo (ボポモフォ). On Sunday, Gilmore will offer a Master Class, which will be hosted by ICRT DJ Bill Thissen. All are welcome to attend and bring their instruments.

Gilmore hesitates to offer a definitive description of the blues. But he says "every style of contemporary music, including jazz, R 'n' B, hip-hop, and rap — all of it is based in the blues. The root of all that music, the good popular music that you listen to, came from the blues."

"Everybody tries to simplify the blues by saying 'oh, it's just a three chord change,'" he said. "It's a lot more than what meets the eye — a lot more than what meets the ear."

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

WHAT: Joey Gilmore

WHEN: Tomorrow from 9pm to 12pm. Master class is 3pm Sunday, followed by a performance from 8pm to 11pm. See below for next week's schedule

WHERE: Capone's Restaurant, 312, Zhongxiao E Rd, Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市忠孝東路四段312號)

ADMISSION: Free

ON THE NET: www.joeygilmore.net; www.blues.org.tw

BLUES AND BARBEQUE

Joey Gilmore is the feature music act in "American BBQ and Blues Month," a series of events sponsored by the American Institute in Taiwan's Agricultural Trade Office. Promotional specials on American-style barbecue meals will be available at selected restaurants in Taipei and Taichung (see schedule), and there are lucky draw prizes that include airline tickets. For more information, visit www.blues.org.tw

JOEY GILMORE SCHEDULE IN TAIWAN

- ▶ **Oct. 12:** 9:30pm, at Alleycat's Pizza Tianmu, 31, Ln 35, Zhongshan N Rd, Sec 6, Taipei City (台北市中山北路六段35巷31號)
- ▶ **Oct. 13:** 9:30pm, Alleycat's Pizza Huashan, 1, Bade Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市八德路一段1號)
- ▶ **Oct. 14:** 7:30pm, Li Bai Lounge, Far Eastern Plaza Hotel Taipei (台北遠東國際大飯店), 201, Dunhua S Rd Sec 2, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路二段201號)
- ▶ **Oct. 15:** 7:30pm, Li Bai Lounge, Li Bai Lounge, Far Eastern Plaza Hotel Taipei
- ▶ **Oct. 16:** 8:30pm, American Club, Taipei (private party)
- ▶ **Oct. 17:** 7pm and 10:30pm, Taichung Jazz Festival
- ▶ **Oct. 18:** 7pm, Taichung Jazz Festival

Some events charge entrance fees. For event details, visit www.blues.org.tw

Hiroaki Umeda: god of small spaces



PHOTO COURTESY OF LAURENT PHILIPPE

Hiroaki Umeda's path to critical acclaim was as unconventional as his performances

BY DIANE BAKER
STAFF REPORTER

Japanese avant-garde choreographer and multimedia artist Hiroaki Umeda is a one-man show. The 32-year-old choreographer, produces the score, creates the videos, designs the lighting and dances in his pieces, which combine classical ballet with elements of hip-hop, street dance and Butoh theater. All he needs is himself, his computer and a space to perform.

His work is both sparse, yet radical, ranging from the subtlest of movements to violent reflexive jerks, echoing both his electronic scores and the

simple linear images projected behind him. Most of the time he barely moves, spatially that is, from the center point of the stage. Yet within the small space that he creates can be found an entire universe, just the way a photograph captures an image of a specific time and place.

The reference to photography is perhaps deliberate, given that Umeda, whose father was a photo-journalist, started out studying photography at Nihon University. He has said he quit after about a year because he wasn't interested in maintaining a photographer's objectivity — he wanted to find an art form that would allow him to be more expressive.

A lack of a dance background proved to be no hindrance, though he has said he felt his lack of a "dancer's body" was. However, he had been an athlete, playing soccer through junior high and high school, which must have made the focus on the physicality of movement easier. He took a variety of classes at the PAS

dance school — ballet, jazz, hip-hop, African movement, Merce Cunningham — but again felt these weren't for him. He still wanted something different.

In the end, he decided he had to create for himself, working in his room with just his computer. He established his dance company, S20, in 2000 and within just two years was gaining critical attention and the notice of international dance festivals, starting with his piece *While Going to a Condition*, which he will perform, along with *Accumulated Layout* at the Experimental Theater for four shows this weekend.

In *While Going to a Condition*, a silhouetted Umeda appears in front of crackling screen of black-and-white graphics as his pulsating legs and body reflect the driving electronic beat of his score.

Accumulated Layout, as the name implies, builds upon a complicated construction of sounds, images and movements.

Umeda's compact show may be the smallest, in terms of space, of the National Theater and Concert Hall's 2009 World View Series on Japan, but it packs a punch that will keep Taipei's dance and art world talking for months.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

WHAT: Hiroaki Umeda, *While Going to a Condition*

WHEN: Tonight and tomorrow at 7:30pm, tomorrow and Sunday afternoon at 2:30pm

WHERE: Experimental Theater (國家戲劇院實驗劇場), 21-1 Zhongshan S Rd, Taipei City (台北市中山南路21-1號)

ADMISSION: Tickets are NT\$500, available through www.artsticket.com.tw or at the NTCH box office