

# NIKKEI VOICE

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## Musical Trio “Kano, Tosh and Ken” to Play at Toronto JCCC

By EVAN MACKAY

TORONTO—Before Toronto-born Christopher Kano appeared as “Sniper #1” in the recent film *Resident Evil: Afterlife*, (Kano laughs that he delivered his Japanese lines in a low voice “to sound like a samurai”), he had already been on the big screen—as a musician. Kano was playing *taiko* with the Toronto group Yakudo when they appeared in the 1998 film *Deep Rising*, as well as in TV ads for Suzuki cars.

This self-taught 37-year-old multi-instrumentalist doesn’t read music, but he is a showman. At the head of the band Kano, Tosh and Ken, which will perform at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre in Toronto on December 11, Kano plays keyboards, percussion and sings, and between songs he jokes charismatically with his bandmates and the audience.

Performing recently at the intimate and unpretentious bar “460 Spadina” in Toronto, Kano got the music going informally, singing a bluesy jazz take on the Beatles’ *All My Loving*, comped on guitar by skilled but taciturn Toshiki Tsukuda. Kano credits Tosh with making him a better musician, adding, “I call him *sempai* all the time.” Together their sound immediately called to mind the jazzy pop duo *Tuck and Patti*, especially Tosh’s multifaceted technique when on acoustic guitar. The newest member of the band, Ken Yoshioka, is as versatile as the other performers, playing harmonica robustly and sensitively on such favourites as *Piano Man* and a surprisingly comprehensive instrumental version of Michael Jackson’s *Human*

*Nature* backed by Kano on bongos. Ken opened the second set solo, playing slide guitar and singing, with spot-on renditions of classic blues numbers by John Lee Hooker, Muddy Waters and Robert Johnson.

Tosh also took a turn soloing, playing a minstrel song and gradually transforming it into jazz and then pop rock. Without so much as getting out of his seat, he whipped the attentive crowd into a frenzy. He didn’t speak a word all night, but he sang backup when needed, particularly for Japanese pop songs and ballads.

Although Kano is also fluent in Japanese, he laughed off some flubbed lyrics saying, “It’s Japanese so sometimes I forget.” The freshness

of their playing conveyed the impression that solos and setlist alike were largely improvised, making the show feel very alive. Kano’s voice, a clear, unencumbered tenor, covers Sting and Bono as easily as Marley and Clapton. With Kano sometimes contributing percussion or even filling in with vocal percussion a la McFerrin, and Tosh throwing jazz, reggae and even samba into familiar pop songs, the band often sounded like it had more than three members.

An evening with Kano, Tosh and Ken is guaranteed to be both comfortably familiar and full of surprises. They will be performing at the JCCC on Saturday, December 11, 2010. See the listing on P. 6 for more details.



From left, Kano, Ken, and Tosh, performed at the JCCC in July. They will be back for “Ginza Night 2” in Dec. Photo: Yosh Inoue