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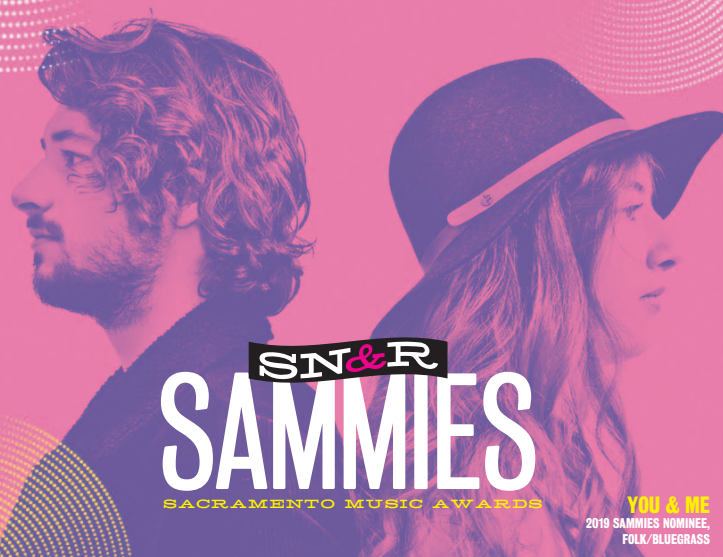
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Psychedelic trek

Kikagaku Moyo's global rock for Western ears

BY BECKY GRUNEWALD



PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMIE WOZNIOSKI

This band opted for the sitting-on-a-rock picture. What kind of music do they play? Hint: same word, different meaning.

With Guruguru Brain, Go Kurosawa made a dream reality. The Japanese drummer started the record label in 2015 to showcase Asian bands to Western audiences, and with success. Acts such as Khana Bierbood from Thailand, which recently completed its first European tour, have sold out on vinyl.

"We want to change the dynamics of the music and bands that people listen to or consume," Kurosawa said. "Rock is a very Western thing, but it's 2019. I think people are ready to experience the rock that is available from different countries and areas ... I want to contribute to that. We wanted to question this very English-oriented industry."

Enter Kikagaku Moyo, a Tokyo-based psychedelic rock band gearing up for a series of tours to Europe and the United States, landing them in Sacramento on March 8.

Kikagaku Moyo was formed in Tokyo in 2012 by friends Kurosawa (also a vocalist) and guitarist Tomo Katsurada, who started out busking. Enigmatic, virtuoso guitarist Daoud Popal and bassist Kotsu Guy were added, and Kurosawa and his brother Ryu rounded out the lineup with sitar and keyboards.

The sitar is prominently featured in "Entrance," the first track on their 2018 album *Masana Temples*, self-released on Guruguru Brain. Album producer Bruno Pernadas, a Portuguese musician and composer, pushed them to create a raga-like feel on the track. Kurosawa says they initially resisted, knowing that the sitar, with its aura of '60s nostalgia, can overtake a song. "The instrument is so strong," he says. "It can create a mood very easily, but it is easy to take away from a song because it's so powerful."

It turned out to be the right gateway to start the journey on which *Masana Temples* leads the listener, from psychedelia to fuzzed-out, driving guitar, to gentle, bouncy Stereolab-like jams. It ends with "Blanket Song," a folky, finger-picked tune that harkens back to the heavier folk influence on Kikagaku Moyo's earlier albums. This sonic trek is intentional on the part of this oft-touring band, who consider *Masana Temples* to be a concept album about travel.

Kurosawa says he likes to think of an album as calling up sensory images for the listener. In the case of this latest, he hopes listeners are thinking of being in "different locations: rainy, sunny, cloudy, cold and warm, different climates, different smells."

"If you're from the West Coast, and you're in Asia, you realize it's going to smell different, and have a different energy," Kurosawa says. "You might feel familiar even though you've never been there. That sense is important so that you can connect." □

"I think people are ready to experience the rock that is available from different countries and areas."

Go Kurosawa
drums/vocals, Kikagaku Moyo

Check out Kikagaku Moyo March 8 at Harlow's Restaurant & Nightclub. Show starts at 9 p.m. Tickets are \$15-\$18. For show info, visit harlows.com.