



## Chiemi's Corner

## Music Reviews & Events

# Ryo.K shares his folk - Japanese Style

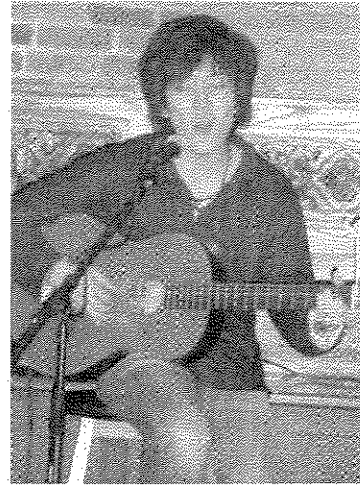
By Chiemi

Aching beauty emanates from the music of Japanese exchange student Ryo Kato ("Ryo.K"). This is no Japanese pop music. It is something very different, almost American-like folk --Japanese Style. Ryo.K performs with quiet dignity, a colorful pinwheel stuck through the taut strings at the head of his guitar. He relates that his girlfriend gave him this toy -- a reminder to keep joy and play (as the wind can cause the foil floret to spin) with him, wherever he is, even though he is far away from her and from Japan. Ryo.K's demo, recorded in February 2005, contains seven intriguing pieces with both Japanese and English lyrics. He sings and plays guitar and piano.

Ryo.K's Californian friend of eight years, Yu Morimoto, plays the violin and sings on nos.

"For You" and 3 "aitai" (translated, "I'd give anything to see you"). Most compelling to these ears are "February," no. 1 and no. 7, called "chiisana okuri-mono-friends," ("a tiny gift").

The instrumental with guitar and violin, "Kokoro" ("means.. hearts"), no. 5, also has a mysteriously strange, serene appeal. Ryo.K's guitar and piano are both tender and spare, as are his arrangements. Every note has its place -- yet not where they are necessarily expected. Ryo.K's range and exquisitely controlled high notes are impressive.



The vocals are modulated and passionate, especially in "aitai," the duet with

Morimoto, where the double male voices are well matched.

Ryo.K's titles themselves mix Japanese and English. However, he also provides additional English explanations for them, laboring over "picking more words" to clarify their "closest meaning." He hopes they "work." Either way, in live presentation, Ryo.K needs no translation. Ryo.K recently played his originals at The Independent in Union Square and his music can be heard at The Burren Open Mic Tuesdays. Also, he has started playing at "Cafe Nation" in Brighton Center, collaborating with a flute player named Adam Friedman, who performs at the Café every Sunday. Friedman and Ryo.K met at Park Street where Ryo.K often sings with his guitar. For more information, Ryo.K can be contacted at [ryogokiso@ybb.ne.jp](mailto:ryogokiso@ybb.ne.jp).