

The Sam Hooper Group From China to Mass...and back again

The Sam Hooper Group ("SHG") has returned from Shanghai. SHG is comprised of Sam Hooper (lead and rhythm guitar, vocals), Jordan Scannella (bass, background vocals) and Akira Nakamura (drums).

Hooper, still a Somerville resident notwithstanding his international acclaim, recently played at The Burren in April. He was featured in solo acoustic style at the Folk Blues Show with Bill McQuaid, Marylou Ferrante and the host, Mike Aldrich, who had just played with Hooper in China a few weeks prior. Upcoming, he will be at Ryles in Cambridge on May 30th with a band that includes Berklee student Aine Fujioka (drums).

(Scannella and Akira now live out of state).

We haven't seen Hooper in a while, since SHG toured China and Japan in

2004, and came back to Somerville to release their latest CD, "East." "East" was recorded and mixed in China at the Shanghai Broadcast Centre and remastered here in Roslindale at Futura Productions. If you have not experienced it, you should. It contains a spectacular, intense and multi-toned version of "All Along the Warchtower" with truly magical drums as well as a

rocking, funky one of "Under My Thumb," a grooving "Celtic Blues" (by Gordon J. Stevenson, SHG's friend from Scotland who helped with the recording) and three bluesy originals by Hooper -- "You Heard Me Crying," "Leaving Me Too" and "Lick the Bowl."

Due to their popularity, SHG was invited back to the House of Blues & Jazz in Shanghai for a three-month gig last fall by the owner, Chinese actor and television personality Lin Dong Fu. Fu is also known for portraying the Chinese voice of Darth Vader in Star Wars for the translated, dubbed version. They were so loved, that their stay was extended to five months. For the final show, Hooper said that Scannella, who sometimes performs rap as "MC Jorscan," wrote a rap piece which they performed called "Shanghai."

According to Hooper, there are not many places like this venue, where a band can play and stay six nights per week for five months. During the gig, Hooper said a new song came together for him called, "My Turn." Hooper describes it as a coming of age song "inspired by this second trip to China with his SHG, "bringing things to a new level and with each level contin-



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uing to grow." SHG performed the song live during their residency.

"There were not many other blues clubs in Shanghai," remarked Hooper. He noticed that clubs were more jazz than blues. He described the audience as "very international—people from China, Brazil, Australia, Taiwan, Japan, Germany, France, etc. coming together in that place for music." Many told him they had come to see SHG because they missed that sort of live sound and the SHG sound "reminded them of home."

SHG has plans to return to China, this time to Beijing, pos-

sibly in the fall. "We found something that works. We have to go with it. What else can you do? If I can't get a gig at, for instance, the Paradise, and I can get one at a comparable or larger venue in Beijing, I'll go to Beijing. With going to China, the whole world opened up for SHG," said Hooper.

For more information check out <http://samhooper.com/>



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