

Balawan release

Balinese guitarist I Wayan Balawan grew up in the arts village of Batuan in Bali, Indonesia, performing on gamelan – the ensemble of gongs and metallophones well known for its scintillating sound and tempo. As a young man, he was drawn first to the guitar and then to the style known in the 1980s as speed metal and the music of bands such as Deep Purple and Van Halen. He was later attracted to jazz, particularly the jazz-rock styles of John McLaughlin, Chick Corea and Stanley Jordan. He was invited to study at the Australian Institute of Music in Sydney in the 1990s, and honed his jazz skills during that time to become one of the leading and most virtuosic players in Australia.

When he returned to Bali in 1997, he had mastered the tapping style of guitar playing and had mixed it with jazz harmony, rock rhythms, and Balinese gamelan sensibilities to create an entirely new sound. He founded the Batuan Ethnic Fusion band and has since toured throughout Indonesia and most of the world. He soon became famous for playing two guitars at once or two necks of a 12-string guitar at once through using all of his fingers over two fingerboards.

Batuan Ethnic Fusion has released three CDs with a fourth planned for later this year. The 2008 release, *See You Soon*, won an award as Best Instrumental Jazz Album in Indonesia. Balawan has also released a solo CD and was three members of *Trisum*, a recording project featuring superstar guitarists in Indonesia. In addition, Balawan produced a CD featuring the Bali Guitar Club, an organization he founded several years ago that is now 300 members strong.

He is touring the United States for the first time in spring, 2011, bringing with him two members of Batuan Ethnic Fusion to play gamelan instruments and picking up jazz drummers and bass players at every stop. In the United States, the band will play a combination of jazz standards and Balawan's eclectic hybrid originals that fuse gamelan, metal, and jazz into a synthesis. Each concert will be an unforgettable and high-powered experience!