

# Let's Jam!



BY JAIMIE KIM FARINAS  
PHOTOS COURTESY  
'UKULELE PICNIC  
IN HAWAII'

nic will kick off at 9 a.m. Sunday (Feb. 11) at Kaka'ako Makai Gateway Park — and it's got quite the impressive lineup.

"It's a great way for people to come together and really just enjoy the beauty of the 'ukulele," says Kamisato.

**S**ekiguchi has been playing the 'ukulele for about 25 years now, though he might best be known as the bassist for popular Japanese rock group Southern All Stars. He was first drawn to the instrument after watching Mia Farrow



Kazuyuki Sekiguchi

play it in *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, and hasn't been able to put it down since.

It's a small but mighty instrument — and one that Sekiguchi believes can change lives.

"When you play 'ukulele, you don't feel aggressive. You feel nothing but joy," he says. "This tiny, humble instrument heals irritation and brings happiness. 'Ukulele even affects the lifestyle of people."

It's a bigger picture like this that makes the 'Ukulele Picnic

one component of a much larger goal Sekiguchi has: to eventually open an 'ukulele museum in Hawai'i.

His vision for it, while simple, is profound. Once open, the 'Ukulele Museum will not only serve as an homage to the musical instrument but also may be used as a facility



Jody Kamisato

where local children may learn. As Sekiguchi puts it, the 'ukulele museum will be a place of entertainment and education.

As such, all proceeds from the 'Ukulele Picnic go toward supporting its construction.

"The popularity of 'ukulele is getting bigger in the world," he says. "I would like to share that with others. I believe it will come back to Hawai'i and benefit our local community."

**T**here will be no shortage of 'ukuleles at this weekend's festivities.

Performers will take to two stages, and include headliner 1933 'Ukulele All Stars, which is comprised of five Japanese celebrities: Boo Takagi; Yoshio Nomura, better known as Yochan; 'Ukulele Gypsy, aka Kiyosaku from Mongol 800; 2007 world

champion whistler Kimiko Wakiyama and Sekiguchi. Mike Maki, Hiroshi Okada, Kawaihae Friends and Keiko (otherwise known as Ao Aqua) round out the talent from Japan. Paul Hemmings will be coming in from New York, as well as StarWish from Taiwan.

Local musicians are joining in on the fun, too, with Herb Ohta, Herb Ohta Jr., Bryan Tolentino, Kalei Gamiao, Honoka & Azita, Hoku Zuttermeister, Kuana Torres Kahele, Waipuna, Nathan Aweau and Kuuipo Kumukahi all slated to participate. Kamisato also will share his musical talents, as will about 100 students from his 'ukulele school, 'Ukulele Hale.

But it isn't only about music. The event also will feature a Japanese-style fair with games, activities, food and Hawaiian crafts. There will, in other words, be something for everyone — all in the name of fun, unity and good music.

"When I play in the islands, I always send my gratitude to this special place that brought us the 'ukulele, which is such an amazing instrument," says Sekiguchi. "It is my hope that the 'ukulele can be recognized as an important instrument with potential outside of Hawai'i as well."

For more information, visit [ukulelepicnicinhawaii.org/en](http://ukulelepicnicinhawaii.org/en). For updates, follow the event on Twitter and Instagram (@ukulelepicnic), and visit [facebook.com/ukulelepicnic-hawaii](https://www.facebook.com/ukulelepicnic-hawaii).



Honoka & Azita



## For Love of 'Ukulele

With so many local musicians participating in this weekend's 'Ukulele Picnic in Hawai'i, *MidWeek* tracked down a few for their thoughts.

• "The 'ukulele really is my best friend. It's taken me around the world, and I've had opportunities to teach and perform with my group, Heart & Soul... I've just seen the possibilities of 'ukulele and what it can do and just seeing people smile. Putting a smile on someone's face, it's really priceless — and that's the power of music and the power of the 'ukulele." — Jody Kamisato

• "It's all part of sharing our culture, and the 'Ukulele Picnic is very popular with our Japanese visitors. It supports our tourist industry... I'm actually surprised that many of the locals don't know about this yearly event. Everyone that loves the 'ukulele should come out and even bring their 'ukuleles." — Nathan Aweau

• "The 'ukulele is special to me because it's a way of expressing myself... The 'ukulele is quite magical, and it'll always be an important and significant part of my life." — Honoka Katayama

• "I've had many opportunities to travel the world and meet so many wonderful people. The 'ukulele is such a beautiful and humble little instrument that can bring people together."

— Azita Ganjali



Hiroshi Okada