

WaKin World Party

Taipei, Taiwan

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By Kristy Davis

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“There are going to be many surprises,” Jenny had said with a knowing smile the night before, as we passed the door of the EZ5 club on our way back to the hotel after a tour of Taipei’s famous night markets.

As we approached the door of the tiny Western-style pub in the drizzling rain on that Sunday afternoon in Taipei, I thought to myself... *WaKin is going to be there and he’s going to sing. The small setting of the club will make the concert cozy and private. What could possibly top that?*

Almost as soon as I walked in the front, I found myself face to face with Mr. WaKin Chau!

He welcomed us to his party and walked back into the club to visit with more of his guests, leaving me with my mouth on the ground. Ha ha! After we had paid the entry fee, Jenny found us and ushered us to the front of the room, where she had saved us seats off to the left of the little stage, now covered with instruments and sound equipment.

Excitement buzzed from person to person like so many fireflies. There was a vibe, an air of expectancy that penetrated the small, packed house. Something wonderful was going to happen. Band members, business associates, family and friends of WaKin mingled with fans as the party began to get underway. We spotted several well-known faces in the crowd, including this one:



Which is of course, Taylor! The man responsible for the fact that WaKin has never had a ‘bad hair day’! Ha-ha!

I clicked my camera excitedly into the crowd—too excitedly, as it turns out. My pictures were all pretty bad. But this one turned out a little better than the rest:



Okay, so it’s dark, but at least it’s not blurry!

Hali from Taiwan (left) and Qianling from Singapore (right) took to the stage soon after we found our seats, our MC's for the evening:



First item up on the list of the afternoon's entertainment was a slide show presentation—pictures of WaKin's life and career, set to the tune of "Direction of the Heart", his first big hit.

Immediately following was a slide show of fans from all over the world, holding signs wishing WaKin a happy birthday! Both slide shows were beautifully done.



Then WaKin himself took to the stage. He recruited his son Andrew to translate his Mandarin into English, his manager Yung An to translate into Cantonese, and Andy to translate into Japanese.

Andy hesitated, asking WaKin if a native speaker could do it. WaKin tried to recruit another translator, but no one was willing. "Andy, I think we need your help," he said finally in English, "Pleeese!"

At that point, Andy found she couldn't say no, and reluctantly took the stage.



She did a beautiful job!

After each few sentences, WaKin would pause and let his three translators repeat his statements into three different languages. Every time Yung An would translate, people would laugh as WaKin would give him an incredulous look, as if to say, “I said WHAT?” So we English-speakers ascertained that Yung An must be embellishing on what WaKin was saying just a smidge.



Too funny!

WaKin expressed his gratitude to everyone for coming, talked about the future, saying with a knowing smile that there would be “something” to look forward to coming up in 2005.

Then he made a statement that remains vivid in my mind as an abiding memory of the World Party. He said that in the past, he had always attended parties that fans had thrown for him. This time, he threw the party, and was amazed at all the people who had come!

As Andrew translated this into English, WaKin stood away from the mike, with his hands folded behind his back. His eyes were downcast somewhat, watching the tips of his shoes. It was a statement from the heart. I found such humility in such a big star to be truly amazing. What a sweet thing to say!

After his talk, it was time for cake and presents! The cake was brought out and placed before WaKin and his family (family not pictured):



The cake was made in the shape of the new Taipei stadium that is currently under construction:



Why, you ask, did his cake resemble a stadium? Because—WaKin will be the first artist to have a concert there! (Naturally! I mean, like who else should even be in the running, right?)

One representative was chosen from each country to take that country's gift to the stage and present it/them to WaKin and Constance. As Kel and I were the only ones there from the USA, it naturally fell to me to do the presenting. *Gulp!*

I had nothing really special to give them, only some NFL caps for the Houston Texans. I had picked out a nice red, white and blue cap for WaKin. I think it may have even been the official cap. For Constance, I had selected a pretty ladies version in powder blue.

I was very nervous. Wallflowers like me by nature detest the spotlight, yet here I was, approaching the tiny stage to present my little unimportant gifts to a smiling WaKin and Constance. All things considered, I think I did pretty well. I didn't trip over any wires, or fall into the cake. Haha! I explained about the Texans being our NFL team in Houston, and presented my humble gifts. They accepted them graciously and thanked me over and over again, as if I had just handed them each something really special—like the keys to a new Mercedes. We posed for a picture and that was it. When I perused my pictures later, I was happy to see that Constance was wearing her cap in the photo!

As the other countries presented their gifts one by one, I felt mine was even smaller. Some groups had made him some really beautiful things. Andy presented the Emil Chau mailing list Birthday CD project to him during her turn, and he and Constance both seemed really excited about it. It went over very VERY well!

The last gift given to WaKin was a gorgeous, antique bass guitar for his collection! Someone presented it on behalf of one of WaKin's closest friends and band members, Bassist Liao Shi Zheng, who was unable to attend. I didn't get a picture of it because at that point my camera batteries had run out. ARGH!

After all the presenting was done, WaKin and his band took the stage for the long-anticipated concert. I am eternally grateful to Mikio for loaning me more batteries, so I was able to capture a bit of what happened!

Everyone had told us this concert was going to be special. "Something you won't see in a regular concert," Alan Wong had confided to us earlier with a smile.

WaKin began his introduction in English and in Mandarin. He also said this concert was going to be 'different'. He explained that the Beatles were his idols...my heart began to race. "Those of you who don't like the

Beatles...just bear with us for awhile,” he said as the band counted off, and I was suddenly catapulted somewhere in the vicinity of Cloud 9.

‘Different’ indeed! I could hardly contain my excitement. The only band I love as much as WaKin is the Beatles!

The little bar erupted into the beautiful, loud and familiar-yet-different‘ guitar and drum lead in to “Get Back”. The Hard Band had been unleashed! Hahaha! You could tell that the band and WaKin had really been looking forward to this gig themselves. They were explosive! And the acoustics in that little place, designed for live band performances, gave it just the right level of volume. It was nice and loud, but not painful. Total bliss!



I spent the next several minutes just thanking God for the gift of hearing and song! It was a slice of sheer fan-heaven! All attempts to describe it with words are inadequate. To say that it was fantastic is a colossal understatement!

Someone had passed out little glowy sticks right before they started playing, and Kelley used two of them to drum with Alan on the table. I waved mine around some I was so excited. Haha! But for me it was sort of an effort. I’m not the glowy-stick kind of person, even though I was enjoying myself tremendously!

The Singapore and Taiwan Baiyou, on the other hand, were! They were standing all in a row behind us, up against the wall of the club, singing, swaying and waiving light sticks and beating light-up tambourines the whole time! Their glowy light sticks were always in unison, and in the dark they looked like a brightly colored school of tropical fish. They were having so much fun; they were a party in and of themselves!



Around the room, you could spot other signs—large ones with WaKin’s name on them in Chinese, lit by chaser lights. And some guys behind the bar on the far side lit sparklers! It was so great! The feeling in that room as they played was just so good!

WaKin and the Hard Band did one of the best treatments of “Get Back” and the others that followed it that I have ever heard! His love of the Beatles poured from every note. Even if he did forget some of the words to “Come Together”!



But hey, who’s counting, right? It would hardly be a WaKin concert if he didn’t forget a few words somewhere, bless his heart! That just made it official. 😊

After a version of “Come Together” that really put Aerosmith to shame, he performed “Something.” If you know anything about the Beatles now, you can see that he was doing one song from each of them. Again,

such a beautiful job he did! Of course, that type of song is really WaKin's specialty, but he sang it so well that it could have been written for him.

That just left Ringo. He asked for requests in Mandarin. Many people shouted out various titles, but WaKin eventually ended up singing "I Wanna Be Your Man."



After the Beatles set was over, Alan Wong took the mike and the vocals for a fast-paced, pounding version of "Johnny B. Goode." Awesome! WaKin himself played his guitar on his knees, in order to give the audience a better look at Alan!

WaKin again asked the audience for requests. Someone, bless them, asked him for "Knockin' on Heaven's Door". He tried to get his daughter, Anya, to sing it instead, saying she did it much better than he did. But Anya is very shy, and she adamantly refused her father's repeated attempts to coax her into the spotlight. In the end he gave up, and sang it himself. Although I'm sure Anya would have sung it beautifully, I was very happy to hear WaKin sing that song! Another of my favorites! WOW!!! As usual, he never gives himself enough credit for how well he sings. After all of his assertions that he didn't sing it as well as Anya, his live rendition was BREATHTAKING! Whoever asked him for that song, THANK YOU!!!



He finished the mini-concert with “Like to Cry,” from his latest album Love Hotel, and the very appropriate “You All” from Day Lilies.

Then he practically leaped off of the stage and into the audience toward the food! Haha! I was disappointed in a way—I could have heard him sing like that all day and all night. But it was HIS party after all! He deserved to celebrate!

After the concert, WaKin and Constance cut the cake and slices were passed around shortly thereafter, and WaKin and the band began to mingle in the crowd.

To our great shock, we soon found ourselves talking to WaKin himself! He came around to where we were still hanging out next to the stage, a plate of food in his hands. He thanked us for coming, and we talked about the long flight and so forth. Somehow, the subject of our baby son came up, and I soon found myself handing WaKin my photo album of baby pictures. He looked at each one. “Look at those big eyes!” he said almost immediately, then began looking back and forth from Kelley to me as he flipped through the pages. He decided he looked more like Kelley than me, only with bigger eyes, and declared at the end he was beautiful! (No argument here—ha-ha!) What a moment for me! I couldn’t believe he actually looked at my baby pictures! How cool is that?

What a super nice guy!!



Constance also came around to see us, politely thanking us for the hats again. We ended up chatting for a little while. Constance stated it was a shame that this party came before Christmas, because it was going to make Christmas seem a bit anticlimactic. I couldn't have agreed more! She and WaKin have a birthday only one day apart from each other, and she also stated this was the best way of having a birthday she could ever imagine. Wasn't that a sweet thing to say! She was very kind to us, and put me at ease immediately with her easy-going manner. I was totally thrilled to be able to talk with her for those several minutes, and very honored that she allowed us to have our picture taken with her!

Towards the end of the party we got the opportunity to have our pictures made with WaKin, too. That was a really nice capper for the whole party, especially since our MC's had stated up front there was to be no autographing sessions or pictures taken with WaKin that night! I can't remember who it was who came up and informed us of this, but I even remember bringing that up. Kelley just said, "So he changed his mind! Just go with it!" ha-ha! Another thing I thought was so gracious of him to do! Even though Kel and I both look terrible in the picture, here it is:



Oh well, at least we match. Haha!

I am so glad we decided to go to Taipei! We had such a marvelous time. It gave us such a new perspective on WaKin's music, to see the city where it comes from.

We loved it there! The people we met were the warmest and friendliest that I have ever known. But there could not possibly be any sweeter people on the face of the earth than WaKin's fans! We will be eternally grateful to Jenny and Hali from Taiwan, Garfield from Hong Kong and the gals from Singapore for making us feel so welcome! It was as big a privilege and a thrill to meet them as it was to meet WaKin and Constance!



It was literally like walking into a room filled with instant, new friends. Even though we spoke little to no Chinese, everyone else spoke very good English (aHEM—whether they give themselves credit for it or not! JENNY and HALI !!!) We all managed to communicate very well. And even though there were upwards of three languages being spoken at any given time wherever we were, we still felt very much a part of the group. How special is THAT? Next time, I hope to be able to communicate in Mandarin as well as English!



A very special and heartfelt thank you goes to Andy Kurita of the WWS, for convincing me that we needed to go. She was so right! Without her persuasive and encouraging emails, we would have missed out on so much! Thank you, thank you, thank you, Andy!

And of course, thanks to WaKin for throwing such a great party and allowing us to come! Here's to twenty more years!!!! WooHOOO!!

