



# YUTO KANAZAWA ON “EARTHWARDS”

The images on the internet and television were paralyzing. The massive tsunami on March 11th, 2011, killed thousands in Japan and tore giant holes in the lives of survivors. It was an event of unparalleled physical and emotional devastation. On that dark Spring evening, 24-year-old **Yuto Kanazawa** sat with friends in Boston, Massachusetts, taking in the horrific news. In that moment, he never felt so far from home. While there is certainly no 'preferable' time for any disaster to strike - this came at a particularly difficult time for Yuto. He was having difficulties securing his US visa and was also in the midst of taking key exams. And now... this.

As so many have done in the face of grief, Yuto chose to rise to the occasion. While juggling school applications, his day gig, visa work, and practicing, Yuto managed to work overtime in the ensuing weeks to help as best as he could. Within a few days of the event, he fortunately learned that his parents and grandparents were safe - albeit still afraid of how the situation would play out. And Yuto did his best to support and coordinate the effort of his fellow students and friends in the Boston area.

A group from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology developed an internet project linking social media data to Google's "Crisis Maps". This provided crucial information to survivors in the days following the event. Yuto volunteered his time to help input data and assemble information which would directly assist those in greatest need.

Yuto's girlfriend, saxophonist Nagi Okamoto, organized a Facebook page to consolidate support. With her support, Yuto put together a fundraising benefit concert at All Asia (a venue in Cambridge, Massachusetts) entitled "Jazz for Japan". The event featured Yuto's trio with celebrated flautist Hiro Honshuku, and it successfully raised funds for disaster relief efforts. Every bit helps, even from afar.

Such an uncontrollable, immense event like the 2011 tsunami cannot help but make a profound mark on the soul of any artist. They say that a crisis reveals a person's true character. Artists can be especially sensitive people. The art they create is a reflection of how they 'feel' the world... perhaps this is why great beauty often arises from great hardship.

Two years later, Yuto's family is doing well, and still living in the Fukushima area. And, in 2013, Yuto Kanazawa has finally released his debut album, "Earthwards". It is a soulful and powerful statement in contemporary jazz - and, a potentially intimate one. Through his compositions, Yuto Kanazawa has offered his listeners a glimpse into his life story - with the hope that they make his music part of their own. Fittingly, the album includes a composition of his entitled, "The Ocean".



Yuto was born in Tokyo in 1986, and moved north of the capital when he was ten years old. But Yuto started his relationship with music just the age of three: singing, dancing and playing percussion or piano. As a young boy, he adored singing, prompting him to join his school's choral groups. By the time he graduated from middle school, he knew for sure that he wanted to become a full-time musician.

Yuto found his father's discarded nylon-string guitar in the attic at age 14, and promptly started learning how to play it. This opened up a world of musical exploration to him. He surveyed multiple genres in various groups - playing folk, pop, rock, and heavy metal with friends - before finally getting bitten by the "jazz bug".

At age 18, Yuto enrolled at the Koyo Conservatory in Kobe. Due to its close proximity to American naval facilities, the area was filled with jazz clubs and musicians. It was in this environment that Yuto began his professional career. At only 19, he was playing pop and jazz standards with various groups throughout the west side of Japan. In 2006, he performed at the famous Blue Note Osaka. The following year, he played the Hamamatsu Jazz Festival - sharing the stage with renowned saxophonist Toshio Miki. It was the perfect gig for his graduation year.

Yuto then embarked on a new phase in life by moving to Boston, Massachusetts to attend the prestigious Berklee College of Music. There, he learned from many highly acclaimed musicians - Mick Goodrick, Tim Miller, Hal Crook, Dave Santoro, Greg Hopkins, and Grammy-nominated arranger Phil Wilson - to name a few. After graduating from Berklee in 2009, Yuto launched his original jazz trio, "Yuto-Trio", with Jonathan Pinson (Monk Institute) on drums and Zwelakhe-

Duma Bell le Pere (New England Conservatory) on bass. This powerful arrangement presented numerous standout shows throughout the East Coast.

In the Fall of 2011, Yuto embarked on his first tour of Japan, playing in eight renowned venues across his homeland. Upon his return to Boston, Yuto put together plans to record and release his first full album of original jazz compositions. In this endeavor he partnered with Interrobang Records, a boutique production label headed by bassist Dave D'aranjo. He also reformulated his band, expanding it to a quartet. He renamed the group "Earthwards Group", and added fresh, up-and-coming jazz cannons such as saxophonist Mario Castro from Puerto Rico and clarinetist Felix Peikli from Norway.

These are musicians worth watching in the years to come. In 2012, Felix began gigging with the great drummer, Ralph Peterson, Jr. In March 2013, Jonathan joined jazz legend **Wayne Shorter** on his tour of Japan, to great acclaim.

The "**Earthwards**" album also features a guest appearance by Grammy-award-winning jazz vocalist **Kurt Elling**. Elling's rich baritone spans four octaves and features both astonishing technical mastery as well as true emotional depth. In the song "Truth & the Abstract Blues", Kurt showcases his immense talent and sensitivity in the context of Yuto's striking compositional skills.

With a great album in tow, things are looking good for Yuto Kanazawa. The depth of experience over the past few years is so apparent in his writing. The release of "Earthwards" also marks a new chapter in Yuto's life, as he moves to New York City to support his release and develop his career as a preeminent improviser, composer, musician, and guitarist.

"Earthwards" is a standout debut album for all jazz lovers to check out. A 2013 tour supporting the CD will include dates in Boston, New York, Tokyo, Osaka, and other cities. Please check out [www.YutoKanazawa.com](http://www.YutoKanazawa.com) for updated details.



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