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# NEVER A DULL MOMENT

Guitar virtuoso  
Hucky Eichelmann talks about finally making the album he wanted to record 30 years ago

Story by  
KANOKPORN CHANASONGKRAM



**H**is guitar virtuoso and best-selling album of the Majesty the King's compositions, *Giandolito Blues and Sunset Wonders*.

Working on the new album, he interprets traditional Thai music in a contemporary fashion, learning how versatile it can be, for instance it can be played in Baroque and Renaissance styles and sounds just about perfect.

Previously, he had to fly to Europe for recording audio-quality discs. The new Karma Sound Studios in Bang Suey, Chon Buri, however, offers world-class facilities and it now takes a one and a half-hour drive for him to go to do his recording.

"In a city studio, it's like a dead refrigerator, it's so cold and dark, there's no life. At the Karma Sound Studios, you can see the sun and the tropical gardens and that gives you a totally different inspiration," said the guitar virtuoso.

"Moreover, the superb audiophile recording equipment can really capture the original sound quality of your musical instruments and even some small finger movements, your breathing and, some people say, even your heartbeat."

"A high quality of recording was needed to fully represent the sound from his favourite Australian guitar, which he considers an extension of his arms, used for the new album. The guitar has a powerful sound and long sustaining notes, almost like a piano, that cannot be captured in normal studios.

The recording takes just about one hour for a song, but much more time is spent listening to it and choosing the preferred takes. "Normally we would go for the 200 percent most perfect take but what's even more important for this album is the thickness and to choose one that sounds the most Thai."

"For example, the song *Sun Mai* played with a typical tremolo on second and fourth strings and so I had to adjust the classical guitar playing technique to make it sound Thai," he explained.

"Magical Melodies of Thailand brings music from all over the country: North, South, Northeast and Central regions. They all perfectly go along in harmony. It's a shame that while it works in the music world, we as humans beings are incapable," he said. "Lighting each other will inspire any artists but only if you do it right, that people will listen to more music and get into the style of peace and harmony."

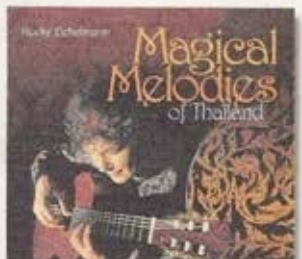
While harmony may overlook listening to music, Hucky's Persian cat, Shiki, happily purrs to classical and pop melodies. And when Hucky practices songs from the new album, the feline music lover always sits close to him and nuzzles away.

"It is strange that when listening to my hi-fi system, Mikki always finds the perfect centre spot between the speakers before he lays down to listen... Sometimes I wonder whether it would be good to have his seat," Hucky said of his beloved pet.

"Magical Melodies of Thailand marks three decades of his life in Thailand. Living in a foreign land, Hucky has kept his systematic way of thinking and discipline in work, typical for Germans but how has he picked up Thai-ness?"

"Sometimes I feel it has been only 20 weeks or months. Having been based in Thailand for such a long time, I truly treasure the fact that I had a chance to look at things in different [Thai] ways, making me flexible and giving me the ability to adjust to almost any situation," he said.

"I enjoy that great warm feeling of being part of Thai society, of being called *song...* *song...* that was before... and *pl...* that's more like it these days."



## Sounds familiar

**H**ucky Eichelmann's *Magical Melodies of Thailand* features 18 Thai songs. They may be familiar melodies but do you know of their original lyrics are some fun facts about some of these fabulous tunes.

**Somern Phra Baramee (Thai Royal Anthem)**  
The Royal Anthem was composed in 1868 by Russian composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. 1001 Prince Narisara Nuwattivongse wrote the original lyrics; later, in 1912, King Rama VI revised the lyrics to the current version.

**Khang Khaw Kin Khay (Bats Feeding on Bananas)**  
This upbeat song was originally named *Ling Thak Krador Sae* which has a naughty connotation; perhaps this is why the name was changed to *Khang Khaw Kin Khay*.

**Nam To Saeng Tai**  
It was originally composed for the play *Namtingkat*, which was first performed in 1944. Khru Sa Nga Ananaphone wrote the music and Marat-Narasin, the lyrics. *Nam To Saeng Tai* describes Norkadiga's sorrowful farewell to his wife Nuan as he left for duty as a royal horse silversmith, from which he never returned.

**Lao Duang Duon**  
Composed by HRH Prince Pibchan Malakulrajavidyalongkorn, it was first named *Lao Duang Duon*. *Kasidat* is an old Burmese passage describes the beauty of the moon, the song is best known to Lao Duang Duon.

**Soo Mai (Spinning Silk)**  
The Lanna-style fiddle folk song comes from Nan province. Later it was adapted for a drama-dance with the dance theatre troupe around silk production and it shows dancers miming the different movements of spinning and weaving silk. The song wittily reflects how difficulties in life can be overcome in terms of a snag in the silk-making process.

**Lao Krathong Mai**  
Composed by Achann Mueen Trairatan as a bamboo-based dance, it was later adapted for several *luk thung* songs. This style of bamboo-dancing is common across Southeast Asia, and involves tapping a pair of long bamboo poles together, while dancers jump in and out of the sliding bamboo trap on the ground, making sure they don't get caught.

**Khmer Sai Yote**  
This beautiful song was composed by HRH Prince Narisara Nuwattivongse after he accompanied King Chulalongkorn on a visit to Siem Reap waterfall in Kampong Speu province. The composer was inspired by the natural sound of the waterfall as well as the birds chirping that he heard.

Information, courtesy of AMI Thailand. From Feb 15, *Magical Melodies of Thailand* will be available in all fine record shops and book stores throughout Thailand. Starting mid-March, the AMI catalogue will be available for digital download from iTunes and most other major online stores. For more information, please visit [www.amithailand.com](http://www.amithailand.com) or call 02-962-1826.



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