

Hong Kong through an Artist's Eyes: Music That Cannot Be Taken Away

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Mr. Wally's daily routine starts with a refreshing walk. In the mornings, he engages in musical composition and video production, and in the evening, he performs as a vocalist at various venues, such as pubs and restaurants. His lifestyle seems to be characterized by a minimalist approach. Any factors that might hinder creativity are effectively eliminated. However, his professional activities are constrained by the Hong Kong National Security Law, which was implemented in 2020.

In June of 2023, the Hong Kong authorities denied the artist's request for entry, thereby prohibiting him from performing and precluding any opportunity for him to interact with his fan base in Hong Kong.

Come to Hong Kong!

Mr. Wally started his career in Hong Kong because of a spontaneous invitation. During the summer of 2015, while traveling in Taiwan, he was performing on the street one day when he encountered a group of travelers. “Come to Hong Kong,” they urged. “There are people from all over the world here, and street musicians from many countries. I’m sure you’ll like it.”

They were from Hong Kong. While he was initially hesitant due to his misconceptions about the Hong Kong mafia, Mr. Wally ultimately decided to proceed with the endeavor. He reflected that had he not had the opportunity to meet Hong Kong people in Taiwan at that time, he would not have visited the city. He did not anticipate that this journey would result in him becoming a renowned figure there. In fact, Mr. Wally became a conspicuous presence in every urban center in Hong Kong.

“One of the interesting things about Hong Kong is how small it is. If you compare it to Japan, it’s about the same size as Sapporo in Hokkaido. There are a lot of stations in this tiny area, and it’s fun to move around. People live in different areas, and they have different atmosphere depending on the station. Some stations are small, and some are larger. The area is small, so it’s easy to get from one station to another. It’s interesting to see the unique features of each station.”

He observed that J-pop has been well-received in Hong Kong, with songs from around 1990 in particular being covered by local artists. While some of the songs he performs are his own creations, he likes to perform songs with melodies that Hong Kong people will recognize. “I learned all such songs from my friends in Hong Kong and then practiced them.” He expressed a desire to sing songs that would uplift citizens returning from the demonstrations.

“Back in 2019, I made it to around 50 stations. I hit up more stations than the Yamanote Line, and I sang in a bunch of places. I was doing this every day for a whole year. ‘Yuki 100%’ from the anime ‘Nintama Rantarō’ is super famous, and pretty much everyone in Hong Kong knows the song. I used to sing this a lot. The Hong Kong people sing this in Japanese. I was happy and surprised.”

The Presence of Artists as Hong Kong Allies

What happened to Mr. Wally during the 2019 protests in Hong Kong?

“A lot of young people in Hong Kong got arrested, and there was also police violence. It was heartbreaking to see that on social media. I thought

that if everyone was going through a hard time, I would sing a song with the slogan, ‘香港人加油! (Hong Kong people, Go for it!)’ But I was really scared. When you are singing, you are helpless if you are attacked.” Some citizens reported him to the authorities, citing unspecified concerns and instructing him to vacate the premises. However, they made no reference to his affiliation with the “香港人加油” or his support for the pro-democracy group.

Some of the world’s most renowned artists frequently visit Hong Kong and perform concerts there. I asked Mr. Wally if he felt any regret about supporting pro-democracy groups as an artist while he was in Hong Kong, given that he has been denied entry into Hong Kong by the authorities.

“While I am disappointed that I am no longer able to visit Hong Kong, I have no regrets regarding my actions. As a singer with a fan base in Hong Kong, I was able to contribute to the community in a meaningful way. I was able to dedicate the entire year of 2019 to this initiative, and I believe it was a valuable experience.”

Mr. Wally’s vocation is to enhance the well-being of his audience. He takes pleasure in the happiness of others and is a renowned singer and songwriter who consistently speaks out about his views. It is generally deemed disadvantageous for artists to discuss the deteriorating freedom in Hong Kong in their social media. Nevertheless, he continues to share his message because he wants to help the people of Hong Kong and Myanmar who are unable to return to their homeland and continue the democracy movement abroad. In addition to providing political support, he is dedicated to ensuring that their stay in Japan is as fulfilling and enjoyable as possible.

What makes Mr. Wally happy now that his activities in Hong Kong have become more difficult?

“When I play and sing, I am happy for the moments when people feel joy. At the moment, I am recording new songs, and I enjoy creating sound with my colleagues. When we make recordings as a team, I feel like a musician when I see the process of completing a piece. Recording is hard work. It is time-consuming and expensive, but the songs are worth it because they will last forever. When I come back to Hong Kong, I want to perform live. I want



everyone in Hong Kong to hear me play and enjoy it.”

【Translated by】

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Mr. Wally Profile

In 2015, Mr. Wally started performing on the streets of Tokyo and then performed in Taiwan and Hong Kong. While performing on the streets of Hong Kong, his bag with all of his money was stolen, leaving him penniless. However, when he posted about the incident on Facebook, it was shared by a prominent figure in Hong Kong, which led to his fame throughout the city.

Following this incident, numerous Hong Kong residents offered their support, and he was able to return home safely. He was deeply grateful for the support he received and decided to perform music in Hong Kong to express his appreciation. The following year, 2016, he visited Hong Kong again and performed on the streets of the city. He was granted a working holiday visa and appeared in commercials for various companies, including Haagen-Dazs, Zoff, and Ippudo.

During the significant demonstrations in Hong Kong in 2019, he actively participated by performing on the streets of the city daily. His performances included a sign that read “香港人加油! (Hong Kong people, Go for it!),” cheering and encouraging Hong Kong citizens.

In 2020, he was forced to return home because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On June 12, 2023, he returned to Hong Kong for the first time in three years but was stopped by the Hong Kong Immigration Department, informed that he was denied entry, and then deported.

