

## Greg Chako Biography

(Complete Version)

In 2003, after finishing a successful, steady jazz gig in China with singer Dee Dee McNeil, pianist Jack Holland, and bassist Donald Jackson, American guitarist Greg Chako moved to Japan with his Japanese wife (of 3 years) to start a new life. However, shortly after arriving in Japan, he discovered his beloved wife had terminal cancer. The shocking, all-consuming experience that followed caused a 2-3 year playing and recording hiatus. However, after the death of his wife in 2004 at age 37, he began slowly to get back into his music.

In 2005/2006 he released 2 new CDs, the first a double CD containing all-original compositions called "Where We Find Ourselves", dedicated to his late wife. Played by a tight, swinging horn ensemble, the fresh, varied arrangements are mostly mainstream, with splashes of Latin and World music, and even a couple vocal tracks showing off Chako's own lyrics, which are as thoughtful and supremely lyrical as his improvising. Shortly thereafter, he released his 7th CD, "Two's Company, Three's a Crowd", a series of swinging duets of guitar/piano and guitar/vocal covers, some live. Seeming content to stay and develop his performance contacts in and around the Tokyo area, Chako is now focused on promoting and extending his prolific composing and recording career, with two new CD releases planned for 2007/2008.

From 1994 up till his China gig in 2001, Greg Chako resided in the sunny, tropical island of Singapore, where he recorded 4 CDs ("Sudden Impact" in 1996, "Live at Raffles" in 1998, "Integration" in 2000, and "Integration II" in 2001), released 6 videos, a documentary movie, and appeared on TV and at major Jazz Festivals in the area. His first steady gig there began in March of 1994 with The Greg Chako Trio, featuring drummer Redd Holt and bassist Belinda Moody. Then he worked with NY singer Jean DuShon and bassist Vistor Gaskin, and finally in 1995, landed his dream gig which was to last for almost 7 years, leading his own trio at the famous Raffles Hotel.

While there, he also founded and ran as Managing Director, an entertainment company that organized jazz and other kinds of performances for public and private business entities, including Ministry of the Arts, World Gourmet Food Summit, American Association, Singapore Airlines, Ritz-Carlton, Four Seasons, Westin, The Oriental, US Navy, and many, many others. Chako's Singapore stint culminated in a three month engagement with his

quintet, co-led by soul-jazz singer Coco York and pianist Michael Stanton, and then finished in late 2002 with his 7-piece "Integration" bands' performance in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia for the Heineken Jazz Festival.

Born in Cincinnati Ohio in 1958, Greg took his first music lessons at the age of 9 on the accordion. However, guitar soon became the instrument of choice with Hendrix being an admired hero. After just one year of guitar lessons, Greg won 2nd place in the American Guild of Music contest, involving more than 1,000 contestants. The following year he also placed first in a local contest. Greg then attended Berklee College of Music for three years in 1976 on a partial scholarship. During the next few years he played with top artists like Junior Cook, Bill Hardman, Othello Molineaux, Johnny Lytle, Bobby Watson, Herb Ellis, Jimmy Raney & others. He also gained "hands-on" experience as a promoter and organizer, founding a non-profit Jazz Society and launching its inception with an outdoor jazz festival featuring Slide Hampton. His efforts to promote jazz won him a grant from the Massachusetts State Council of the Arts.

Although Greg Chako has always been a music and jazz lover, his performing career had been sporadic until he moved to Asia in 1992. At one point in the 1980's, Greg even quit playing guitar for several years and became an industrial real estate broker in New York City. However, the lure of the guitar and the lack of artistic expression in a corporate world eventually led to Greg playing as a hobby again, which led to several hours of serious practice, and finally the move to writing very complex solo arrangements. The results were impressive! Unfortunately, this upward trend had to stop, in 1990 when Greg was diagnosed with carpal tunnel syndrome, a repetitive motion disease affecting the wrist. The little bit of playing he did while fighting the disease, he did without a pick, using only his thumb to pluck the strings. He liked the warmer, percussive sound he got with his thumb, and from then on Greg adopted this style of playing, perfecting it over a long period of time.

In 1992, Greg moved to Hong Kong, and having controlled his carpal tunnel syndrome, resumed performing as a professional musician. Chako's career blossomed, playing in Broadway musicals including West Side Story, a concert with the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, performing in clubs with Jazz greats Curtis Fuller and Richie Cole, and recording his first CD "Everything I Love" in 1994, just before moving to Singapore.

Greg's rocky life history has enhanced and matured his music, and except for his first couple years in Japan fighting cancer, he has not stopped playing since 1992. Now, with his most

recent CD releases, future CD plans and growing reputation, he seems keen to stay on the scene for good, growing, teaching, producing, promoting, recording and playing Jazz!