

Natural Healing Express Weekly

Column Volume 76 Vitamin M, The Healing Power of Music, Part III, Lil Chuckie

Starting this week's article has been a little difficult. I want to use words like synchronicity or phrases like, "everything in God's time", and those would directly apply, but I just don't seem to have the exact phrase regarding the fact that I am writing a series on the healing power of music while coping with a tragedy in the music industry. I am just not sure how to start in a clever way, so I will blurt it out and hope you understand.

Last Thursday, I received the news that Chuck Goff, Jr, a close friend and musician, had passed away in an auto accident. This news was shocking, traumatic, hurtful and just plain weird all in one. I had just finishing typing out interview questions regarding our current topic. My heart hurt and the hair stood up on my neck all from one phone call.

But the shocking part wasn't that the call was about Chuckie. Indeed, Chuckie was a bit, well, shall we say, "high risk" due to both his profession and his personality, but in learning that he had passed in a car accident, well, that didn't seem right. Chuckie had definitely been in at least 100 way-worse situations than a car accident and thus far, he had lived to tell about all of them. In fact, they had become darn good stories.

Chuckie was first and foremost a great musician, but he was also a darn good songwriter. And that's what songwriter's do, they write about life's experiences- theirs and yours. It's all fair game. That's the unwritten rule.

As a side note, in today's world you will find that many of our so called Chart Topping Entertainers do NOT write their own songs. They simply sing someone else's songs. There are many and various reasons given for this decision, among them are they simply cannot write a song, or they want to try to make it to the top using someone else's song, the songwriter's prior songs have been proven to work, or because they are young and don't have that many experiences from which to draw. Whatever the reason, great songwriters are a rare breed.

But rest assured, my friend Chuckie had plenty experiences, which alone would have made many great country songs. And he lived life full and on the edge.

While I am on the songwriting rant, look up the writers on Waylon, Cash's or Toby's albums. Yep, uh, huh you'll see either the men themselves or a co-write on the majority. But, I digress.

Chuckie was the go-to guy when you needed advice; sometimes you would get advice that you really didn't want to hear, and sometimes you would get advice you didn't ask for. He was the one that had a way of grounding everyone with a three word sentence. He was also the guy who would quickly point out that the 800-pound pink elephant in the room is something that should be and would be talked about. He was hard like that, but he also created the best party energy in a room. If it was a requirement that someone swing on the chandelier he would begrudgingly oblige.

Chuckie was the leader of Toby Keith's Easy Money band, his bass player and his very good friend for over 25 years. Please send a prayer up for Toby and the rest of the band. And doesn't 25 years seem like a long time for musicians to be together? That's an eternity nowadays, but Toby runs a tight ship and is good to his people. And, he was very good to Chuckie, allowing both to live out their shared dream.

As you may have surmised by now, Chuckie was a little different. He did hilarious things, had an amazingly quick wit and was a bit shall we say, "black and white." He called it like it was. To be on the road for 25 years, you have to build up some tough skin. You must be smart and loyal, and most importantly, you better be a darn good musician. If you're not good, people don't buy tickets or albums (I have recently been chided for using that word) and you don't fill stadiums.

That's how it is in the music industry. You must pay your dues and you better be darn good, but you still may not get your chance. And, even if you get your chance, it may be a heck of a long time coming. Toby and the guys played the honkytonks for 8 years until someone really cared.

Sometimes, before you "make it", when you're singing other peoples' songs at 2am with four people in the audience, you gotta entertain yourself—and Chuckie was that guy. All Toby would have to do is look to his left and get a giggle because chances were that Chuckie was doing something hilarious and unique, all the while playing his beloved bass guitar.

For those of you who have been part of the Lil' Chuckie rodeo for many years, you have undoubtedly witnessed the "Chuckie Dance" at one of Toby's shows. It was that part in the show, more so in the early days, where Toby would take a short break. Chuckie come out strong to the front of the stage and do what he did best – entertain the crowd. I think it's on You Tube and definitely worth the viewing, simply called the Little Chuckie Dance.

While you're at it, check out the two songs Chuckie wrote that Toby included on his albums. They are "Upstairs, Downtown" and my personal favorite "You Ain't Much Fun Since I Quit Drinking." What many people don't know is that there were 63 verses to that song. Toby could only record 3. If you didn't know him, you're now starting to get the picture.

This week's article just took a life of its own and I guess I apologize for that. I had intended to discuss the behind the scenes working of the music industry and ended up honoring a friend. There's probably a song there somewhere.

I could go on and on about Chuckie stories, but most are not printable. So, let's suffice it to say. GodSpeed Chuckie. I know you are at peace. Thanks for the friendship, the laughs and the great music. And to the readers, thanks for letting me indulge. I guess everything happens for a reason, and I guess of all this is part of Vitamin M.

Next week we begin our interviews with musicians and learn of their experiences that support the healing power of music.

Enjoy! Hope to see you soon and as always, please contact us via one of the following methods. Natural Healing Express: Phone 815 990 8732, email: skscham@aol.com 204 W Main St, Lena, IL 61048.

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