

GREYSON CHANCE – CAREER AND SONGS 2012

The third year of his career (with YouTube videos)

Review

In 2010, the first year of his career, Greyson Chance (GC) had probably done more work than anyone else of his age in the popular music scene before; he had, apart from attending school, composed a multiplicity of songs, prepared cover versions, rehearsed with his band, given interviews and played for TV stations.

In 2011 he was able to reap the fruits of his work with two singles and an album; professional videos, a guest role in a TV series and a large number of concert appearances more than met all the high expectations generated by his sensational start.

Two factors especially induced me, despite his youth (or perhaps because of it), to regard him as one of the most extraordinary of musicians:

- While, at the commencement of his career, he had only his piano, his voice and his musicality at his disposal, collaboration with other songwriters and his band led to such progress in instrumentation as to make possible the ideal creation of *Running Away*, launched in October 2011. I have heard it more than 3,000 times in the course of eleven months and never had the impression of having heard it frequently enough. Now I am waiting to see if GC will ever succeed in surpassing it. Unfortunately, there is not yet a live recording of it to be found on YouTube that would come up to the CD version; so this version is backed up only by stills:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPDWDeR21QQ>

- Years ago, at a concert hall in Vienna, Austria, I heard pianist Dave Brubeck, then in his eighty-sixth year, play wonderfully slow swing; and I have frequently remembered the experience. In November 2011, GC gave a concert in Singapore, represented on YouTube by especially good videos, among them *Home Is In Your Eyes*, one of his album songs, accompanied on the piano by himself; when I heard it, I suddenly heard Dave Brubeck's slow swing again, but this time played by fourteen-year old GC – since when I have been convinced that his interpretative genius is virtually unlimited:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nOx6QEOAF4>

I copied stills from this video in one of my oil paintings:



As was to be expected at this age, his voice is changing; what he loses in range and variability, he gains in intensity. Here is another video from Singapore that inspired a tableau (below left): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RN7Et5qT2rE>

He also varies his exterior: since December 2011 he has sometimes applied hair gel and coiffured his hair out of his forehead, which, in combination with his high eyebrows, gives him an especially attentive aspect. The tableau below right is an example:



Novelties

My Way

GC has been regarded as a master of the art of covering since *Paparazzi*, and this year he again lives up to his reputation. February saw the launching of this year's first video with new music: once again alone at the piano (seemingly in his new room, with three white walls and one black wall), and without a microphone, he sang *My Way*, universally known as the most popular song in Frank Sinatra's repertoire (Paul Anka supplied the lyrics for this version of the French *Comme d'habitude*) – one may add that he owed this to his audience; Sinatra did not especially appreciate the song, but usually performed it as the last encore because the audience demanded it.

Of course it takes an acquired taste to hear this finality-shrouded song (it begins with the words 'And now the end is near, and so I face the final curtain') delivered by so juvenile a voice. But when I face the question of whether such a young singer is already entitled to copy this song, my reply is that he is so more than anybody else. His way was and is unique; the way he includes his fans in the journey bears witness to much class, and there is no more authentic artist. His special version is created by the intensified pianism that impels his songs and that one remembers especially thanks to last year's *You And I*. But in singing this song, GC is also identifying himself with it.

One comment on the video calls GC an 'old soul in a young body', and this may be the best description of the incredible impression he leaves:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wW8dEi7qQ1U>

On Screen

GC shows his histrionic talent again in two screen appearances:

- In a scene from *Raising Hope* (compare the first article), unsung this time, he fights out a looking duel with an older pupil on a school bus. This is best seen on *Funny Moments 5* (until 0:45):
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_O4eeguEQ8
- In a Blackberry commercial where he provides music and comedy at the beginning (until 0:43) and end (from 2:30). At the end he appears bearded, possibly providing a glimpse into his future.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DclVkSSPjls>

Concerts in South-East Asia

In April, GC gave four major concerts in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), Singapore, Jakarta (Indonesia) and Manila (Philippines).

The songs: Cheyenne, Fire, Heart Like Stone, Hold On 'Til The Night, Home Is In Your Eyes, Light Up The Dark, Little London Girl, Paparazzi, Pumped Up Kicks, Purple Sky, Rolling In The Deep, Running Away, Summer Train, Take A Look At Me Now, Unfriend You, Waiting Outside The Lines.

This year, the best videos were the Manila ones contributed by *braggyreyes*. They show GC performing and entertaining grandly and at full blast in all sixteen songs, while the band can take a breather when he is working the piano alone – a remarkable achievement for a fourteen-year-old.

This tour saw his first band-accompanied performance outside the US, much gesticulation, many dancing steps, and these other firsts:

Running Away: This song he sang live for the first time, but did not come up to the CD version:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2l1uggRRlc>

Take A Look At Me Now, sung live and band-accompanied for the first time; a marvellous piece of work by a proud GC:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wteBuQd90I>

Cheyenne: This rendition made a few demands on his fans' singing along:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mGcFMWbzhPM>

There were significant melody changes in:

Home Is In Your Eyes, from 3:27; last year's slow swing is gone again, which may be the band's fault:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rcOn0qDBbaQ>

Hold On 'Til The Night:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFR3AJwP1yQ>

Paparazzi: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3SfjllD0gHs>

Fire: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jIS3o7c2vBg>

Further examples:

Heart Like Stone: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mNjGWRUzMo>

Little London Girl: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vCf58tlkvI>

Purple Sky: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZeYPQ3uJ9c4>

Summer Train: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=36-Ulubi54A>

What has not changed is the old forehead-covering hairstyle and the nonchalant choice of dress (black trousers, white T-shirt, and a grey jacket with the respective country's flag on the back).

This year's two new cover songs were of outstanding quality:

Rolling In The Deep

It was to be expected that GC would cover an Adele song, as their approaches to music and their abilities are quite similar. The difference evident in GC's rendition is the more surprising: he sits on the piano, performs to guitar accompaniment and sets a spectacular pace. One remembers this quickening of the tempo from last year's cover of Brenda Lee's *Rocking Around the Christmas Tree*, where it served to bring the house down. Here it works again:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QKGpDgw4pFQ>

A recording released later (without an audience), in which he slows the pace:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S067vnU7RhY>

On 29 August, in Vancouver, he performed the same song in an even more slowed-down tempo and with a deeper voice: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTQUkXsME44>

Pumped Up Kicks

This cover is no genuine surprise, either, as band leader Mark Foster of 'Foster the People' had been mobbed in high school just as GC had been in middle school. The song *Pumped Up Kicks* was launched in September 2010, at about the time GC's *Purple Sky* was created; it is about a socially disadvantaged youth who finds a rifle in his father's closet, dreams of running amuck and advises 'all the other kids with the pumped up kicks' to run faster than his bullets. The expression 'pumped up kicks' designates all the trendy but superfluous things many teenagers, seeing little meaning in life, are showered with (which is to say about as much as: life does not have a meaning, life *is* meaning). Though Mark Foster wanted to send out a signal against teenage violence with this song, the sympathies are rather with the disadvantaged youth than with those that own the 'pumped up kicks'.

GC is serving up quite a spectacle here, singing and dancing to band accompaniment (dancing more than ever before, in fact), but also playing the piano and pounding the drums. At this opportunity he also introduces the members of his band:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cG2-4qwTIBU>

There is also an official video recorded in Manila that uses scenes from this performance:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EnyeBUui_E8

From June 2012, **AwesomenessTV** released professional videos also showing scenes before and after the concerts:

Pumped Up Kicks from Jakarta: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GFA1xVz97Nc>

Hold On 'Til The Night from Singapore, in which the members of his band are introduced: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyYviqgyuhg>

Purple Sky from Kuala Lumpur: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6H8-k2vcPU>

Unfriend You from Manila: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hlnU9WS4su8>

Waiting Outside The Lines from Jakarta: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ii2JKNjIJqU>

Take A Look At Me Now from different concerts, mostly from Singapore:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v0O6ok7ZXZI>

A Comparison between the 2011 and 2012 Concert Tours

A direct comparison is made very difficult by the considerable differences between the concerts themselves and between the videos. However, to judge from his motions, especially his hand movements during performances, he appears more in control during last year's than during this year's tour. Take, for example, **Unfriend You**:

2011 during a TV appearance in Malaysia (until 3:25):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v= vhnlnpAwBQ>

2012 during the Manila concert:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fm3Qxkl7a1I>

Winding up the Asian tour in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Bangkok

After his four major concerts GC stayed in Asia for another two weeks, appearing in showcases in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Bangkok (Thailand). Due to the band's absence, changes in the melodies become even more prominent, especially in **Hold On 'Til The Night**: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kUQaEI4aVE>

If you want to know how he rendered his debut success **Paparazzi** two years later, listen to this Hong Kong recording: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WNZFilwkvU>

A very long video released by a Thai TV station contains many music clippings (especially worthwhile is the forty-second wo-o from **Waiting Outside The Lines** he sings with full abandon from 8:50 to 9:30) as well as GC doing some Thai boxing:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LCJZlyvwKpo>

Waiting Outside The Lines without other songs:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DjGXpLjQbuM>

This video, compiled by GC for his Asian fans, shows scenes recorded in Hong Kong and Bangkok to the strains of **Take A Look At Me Now**:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GiKmxF6y9Bs>

In Asia, as in America, GC is frequently signed up for photo and TV sessions. In Malaysia, he appeared on the sitcom *Oh My English* in a short, but fun scene:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9nvJucsKA>

Preview

Since September 2011, GC was working on a new album the release of which was scheduled for 2012. In January 2012 he wrote about it:

I have been in the recording studio a lot lately working on new music! I know I have said this many times, but I cannot wait for you all to hear it! I think it is some of my best work. My

goals coming in, were to make something very universal and big; almost kinda worldly. After my trip to Asia, I was very inspired to make music not just for my US fans but for fans all across the world. So some of the songs have had international influences. I have also been into somewhat of a different sound this time. For example, one song is kinda bluesy, most of them are pop/rock, and then some are kinda on the rock edge. Finally, the Beatles have had a huge influence in my writing. Their lyrical compositions are so incredible, so I wanted to try to make something that could live on forever, like the Beatles. I think you guys are going to like these new songs coming.

Elsewhere, he told of a song he had written and performed together with Ariana Grande.

The EP 'Truth Be Told' part 1

Beginning on 11 August, he presented **Sunshine & City Lights**, the first song of a new EP (Extended Play) containing the first part of the projected album, in concert. He was always accompanied by guitarist Michael Warren, who also produced the EP and accompanied him in all further concerts of this year.

On 2 October, the CD version of **Sunshine & City Lights** was posted to YouTube, and at the end of October the remaining four songs of the EP followed. The recordings date from February 2012, when his voice was noticeably higher; they are of a high quality and their very private atmosphere is enhanced by the guitar accompaniment. The EP first hit the shops towards the end of October in Asia, the focus of GC's interest since November 2011 and "he's taking Asia by storm". These five songs once again showcase his extraordinary ability to create fine, complex melodies and package them with skill. The lyrics, especially those of Leila, demonstrate his imaginative engagement with the fair sex; but he also mentioned that he had had to dig deep to give them their flair and that it had taken many a sleepless night.

The first video listed under the following titles also contains the lyrics. The videos by AwesomenessTV were recorded in September, when he already had a deeper voice:

Sunshine & City Lights: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ESkGi0XJWo>

Official video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1PwA2QJ0ns>

A look behind the scene: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eHFKVWoYAVI>

This song was the product of a serendipitous encounter between GC and the songwriter duo 'The Nexus' – who also produced the outcome – in a London studio.

You Might Be The One: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7kq7K1RlwzY>

Video by AwesomenessTV: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRNwZ5sRhpc>

Leila: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fBZpdrMxZ0E>

Video by AwesomenessTV: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bmOgoqlorVg>

California Sky: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xr36-8Rq2Q>

Video by AwesomenessTV: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DOd2rllbMpQ>

Take My Heart: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9js-6lChaAU>

Video by AwesomenessTV: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aHdFmuVMQsg>

This video illustrates the making of the EP to the strains of *Sunshine and City Lights*:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QVMaO3zNo2k>

This EP also sports, sixthly, a remix of *Sunshine & City Lights*:

Sunshine & City Lights (Jeff Bhasker vs. Tyler Johnson Remix)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwNUOcORyls>

Concert videos of the new songs will be referenced on the following pages.

On the same September day that AwesomenessTV recorded the above videos, one with GC's **new cover song** was also made:

Landslide (Original: Fleetwood Mac = Stevie Nicks & Lindsey Buckingham, 1975):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ShMAI1o4YUA>

Fleetwood Mac, for comparison: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WM7-PYtXtJM>

Adaptation of songs to his darker voice

His first Music Award in Peking

On 21 August, during the CCTV/MTV Mandarin Music Festival in Peking, GC was presented with the **Most Popular New International Artist Of The Year Award**; to mark the occasion, he performed a liberally modified version of **Waiting Outside The Lines**, followed (from 3:49) by **Sunshine & City Lights**:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wzZjeBoGQtI>

This video is shorter, but it has close-up shots:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29X9yPmshGM>

Concert in Vancouver

At a concert in Vancouver on 29 August, to give his changed register its due, GC performed new versions of some of his old songs with a voice once again darker than in his concerts in South-East Asia in April. Approaching music playfully, he always manages to adjust the songs to the voice he happens to have.

The first of these videos also demonstrates another facet of his professionalism: he has already begun to perform when a bra from the audience is thrown onto the stage; he grins broadly, but the incident leaves no acoustic traces whatsoever:

Rolling In The Deep (noticeably slowed-down compared to his first version from April):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTQUkXsME44>

Cheyenne: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j3TnyLew0KA>

Unfriend You (with an impressive finale):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GACE0kmAqY>

Home Is In Your Eyes: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ebceOt0lVXg>

Sunshine & City Lights: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=45LSch8kM7E>

EP-Promotion-Tour in South-East Asia

From 2 to 12 November, GC performed in Kuching, Kota Kinabalu and Kuala Lumpur (all of them in Malaysia), in Singapore and in Manila (Philippines).

This video from Manila is long (14:56) and the camera work shaky, but it gives a good idea of the concert with **Unfriend You** (beginning at 0:50), **Take My Heart** (beginning at 4:30) and **Sunshine & City Lights** (beginning at 10:38):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGeYjfJO7EQ>

The best videos of this tour, as in November 2011, hail from Singapore; in this case, they are of the MTV Session of 9 November, with accompaniment provided by guitarist Michael Warren and percussionist Leonardo Costa:

Sunshine & City Lights: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJ8I1HBNGXY>

You Might Be The One: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RFs-Dxsodg>

Leila: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDUwQtOS77w>

California Sky: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-g3OTHunyZw>

Take My Heart: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pox9GfE3no>

Waiting Outside The Lines: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NiAgJMUyYkg>

Unfriend You: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=codVgDltMY0>

Two new cover songs deserve special mention:

Crazy (Original: Gnarl's Barkley = Cee-Lo Green & Danger Mouse, 2006)

By far the most convincing demonstration of his vocal development into a very mature and flexible baritone; it comes from Singapore and gives you quite a bit of goose-flesh:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRMn6Sym394>

Cee-Lo Green, for comparison: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MgHioCC3yCo>

Human Nature (Original: Michael Jackson, 1982)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_JG2ISOBEM

Michael Jackson, for comparison: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kql0ld02SS4>

Further recommendable videos of this tour:

Sunshine & City Lights

Manila (from a TV programme): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YmLSwGch6bY>

Leila

Kuching: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oDUG_MneDXM

California Sky

Kuching (from 1:10): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWxX2mIn5mA>

Take My Heart

Manila: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uR4_b7l4fql

This performance is by and large the best of his EP songs, but the optical quality is very unsatisfactory.

Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve

To ring out 2012, GC contributed to this New Year's Eve event of forty years' standing broadcast by ABC, which is regularly watched by an audience of more than twenty million in the USA and contains performances from New York and Hollywood. This time around, New York saw contributions by (among others) Psy, Taylor Swift and Carly Rae Jepsen, and Hollywood, by GC, Justin Bieber and Ellie Goulding.

What counted for GC was the opportunity to perform *Sunshine & City Lights* as the new year's beginning saw the EP hit the shops in the USA:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FzUqRGVIWSM>