



## *Spreading Okinawan Culture Through Music*

Almost everyone in Hawaii has picked up, plucked and/or strummed an ukulele at one time or another. None, however, has done with it what Jake Shimabukuro has accomplished since he first picked up the instrument at the age of 4. Boy and uke formed an immediate bond, but simply loving something does not guarantee success at it. Jake learned to play from his mother, Carol, and looked to such musical masters as Eddie Kamae, Herb Ohta, and Peter Moon to develop his craft. And, as he matured, Jake also found inspiration from guitar players, drummers, pianists and singers. Even athletes helped fuel the intensity of his artistic fire.

In the late-90s, Jake gained notice with the popular musical group called Pure Heart. After the group dissolved, his fame as a solo artist spread throughout Hawaii and eventually to Japan. There, in 2001, Jake signed a historic deal with Epic Records/Sony Music, which formed the basis of a career punctuated by a string of hit albums and standing room audiences.

In 2005, Jake's life took another pivotal turn when a video of him performing George Harrison's "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" received more than 13 million views on YouTube, making it one of the world's first "viral videos." It exposed Jake's talent to the world, and invitations to perform throughout North America, Europe, and Asia soon followed.

With no geographic or artistic boundaries to confine him, Jake amazed audiences with his arrangements of Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody," Schubert's "Ave Maria," and Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah." He collaborated with such luminaries as Yo-Yo Ma, Jimmy Buffett, Bette Midler, Cyndi Lauper, Jack Johnson, Ziggy Marley, Dave Koz, and Michael McDonald, amongst others. He has topped Billboard's World Music Chart on numerous occasions and wowed audiences on such television shows as "Jimmy Kimmel Live," "Late Night with Conan O'Brien," "Good Morning America," and "The Today Show."



Jake has also played with world-renowned orchestras and at prestigious venues such as the Hollywood Bowl, Lincoln Center, and Sydney Opera House, and at music festivals including Bonnaroo, SXSW, the Playboy Jazz Festival, and Fuji Rock Festival. He even performed for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II! Not too shabby for a humble young man from Hawaii and his trusty ukulele.



Jake continues to write and record, while maintaining a mind-boggling international concert schedule of some 140 live performances a year. He is a loving husband and proud father of two boys. In addition to balancing his career with family, Jake also remains firmly rooted in his commitment to community, frequently performing at schools in Hawaii and overseas to urge youngsters to reject drugs and inspire them to find their passion. In the process, Jake has served as a Pied Piper in the booming popularity of the ukulele, spreading his belief that the world would be a happier place if everyone played the ukulele.

A fifth generation descendent of Okinawa, Jake is proud of his ties to the Okinawan community and culture, having performed at various HUOA events as well as concerts in Okinawa. On September 4, 2006, Jake was appointed as the 160th Okinawa-Uchina Ambassador by Governor Inamine. It was at that occasion that Jake stated, "I hope to spread the Okinawan culture all over the world through music!"

