

## LINER NOTES

### [Bob Brozman & Ledward Kaapana](#) **KIKA KILA MEETS KI HO'ALU**

*Ki hoalu* (slack key guitar) is the name for the finger-style guitar tradition unique to Hawaii. Predating the steel guitar by a half-century, its roots can be traced to the 1830s when the guitar was first introduced to the Islands by Spanish and Mexican cowboys. The Hawaiians quickly adopted the guitar into their culture, and created many ingenious tunings to suit their music. "Slack key" means that some of the strings are literally "slacked" from the standard tuning to produce more resonant sounds, with the thumb playing the bass notes, while the other fingers play the melody.

Acoustic Hawaiian steel guitar (*kika kila*) evolved from *ki ho'alu* in the late 1880s when guitarists began experimenting with the slack key tunings while playing the guitar flat on their lap, raising the strings, and using a metal bar to produce notes and tones. The sound of the steel guitar is characterized by languid floating notes, romantic glissandos and the use of chimes. Through these techniques, players often achieve the various levels of expression of the human voice. During the 20th Century, many tunings and types of steel guitars have been developed, and its influence felt in many cultures around the world.

Until Dancing Cat Records began bringing together some of the masters of Hawaiian acoustic steel and slack key guitar in the **Hawaiian Acoustic Steel & Slack Key Guitar Duets** series, these two very separate traditions had never been recorded as pure duets. Historically, steel guitar overshadowed slack key, because it was performed in public more often, while slack key was more of a backyard style. Slack key finally gained more popularity in the late 1940s, when recordings were finally available.

There are three distinct periods in the history of the acoustic Hawaiian steel guitar: the first began with the advent of the steel guitar in the late 1880s and continued until around 1915. First-generation players such as Ernest Kaai, William Ellis, Keoki Awai, Frank Ferera and July Paka took the United States by storm, integrating ragtime and other music of the era into traditional Hawaiian music. By 1916, more Hawaiian records were sold than any other type in the U.S. The resonator guitar, which provided more volume, was invented in the 1920s. This ushered in the National era, commonly referred to as the Golden Age of acoustic Hawaiian guitar, lasting through the late 1920s and early 1930s. Hawaiian steel guitar music flowered, and thousands of National guitars were sold. Artists such as Sol Hoopii and Jim & Bob, The Genial Hawaiians were popular during this era. The acoustic Hawaiian guitar fell out of favor by the mid-1930s, when players switched to the electric steel, leading into the third period, wherein the steel guitar became fully absorbed into and commercialized by American pop culture.

According to Bob Brozman, the National guitar represents a transition point between acoustic and electric instruments. "It has a much wider dynamic range than any acoustic or electric guitar. The difference between the softest and loudest strokes is really huge and there are so many subtle tonal things you can pull out of it."

The National's inventor, John Dopyera, operated a violin shop in Los Angeles. He already held several patents for musical instruments in 1926, when a vaudeville performer named George Beauchamp requested a new, louder version of the Hawaiian guitar. Dopyera crafted the body of the National from nickel. In step with the fashions of the day, he incorporated stylish Art Deco designs that give the instrument a unique period charm. For volume and tone he added a spun aluminum resonating cone. "His most famous models use three cones," Bob explains. "The tricones are absolutely the finest sounding acoustic Hawaiian guitars ever made. The top Hawaiian recording artists of the 1920s and 30s used them. They were only made between 1929 and 1941 and are quite rare today."

Besides Hawaiian musicians, many blues players bought National guitars. Bob, who first got into Nationals through the blues, bought every album he could find with a National on it. Around 1971, he happened upon a reissue of the legendary Sol Hoopii. "That was it," he says. "I started collecting Hawaiian 78s and learning songs. The music had the same emotional depth and validity as the blues. Sol Hoopii, Benny Nawahi, The Kalama Quartet, Jim & Bob, The Genial Hawaiians, George Ku, Sam Ku – those were my main Hawaiian guys." One of Bob's missions became to help Hawaiian music regain acceptance on the international scene, especially vintage Hawaiian music played on the National.

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## ABOUT THE SONGS

### SET ONE

#### 1. *Maika'i No Kaua'i*

Credited to Hawaiian Congregational choir director Henry Waiiau, this popular song dates from the early 20th century. Based on a 19th Century *mele inoa* (name chant) attributed to Kapaakea, King David Kalakaua's father, it celebrates the island of Kauai. The text describes Hanalei, Namolokama, Mount Waialeale and other natural wonders of the Garden Isle. Tau and Rose Moe recorded it in Japan in 1929 (this was reissued on VINTAGE HAWAIIAN MUSIC, THE GREAT SINGERS on Rounder) and again in 1989 for HOOMANAO I NA MELE O KA WA UI. "This is the Moe's signature piece," Bob says. "It's the song I found in the basement in 1977 and, by the way, that's still the only known copy."

On this version, a tribute to the Moes, both Bob and Led play in G Major "Taro Patch" tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D from lowest-pitched string to highest) in the key of G, with Bob playing on the National steel guitar.

#### 2. *Lei 'Awapuhi (Yellow Ginger Lei)*

On this *nahenahe* (relaxing) local standard, Led and Bob play in G Major tuning, with Bob on the Weissenborn. Former Royal Hawaiian Band leader Mekia Kealakai composed **Lei 'Awapuhi** during a train trip to the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. It uses the image of a beautiful lei of ginger to discuss a love securely bound. There is some particularly

nice interweaving of parts on this rendition. "Like most of the session, this was improvised on the fly," Bob says. "There was no rehearsal, just real careful listening – not just to notes but also rhythm and tone and timbre. Ledward really listened and I really listened and we took turns."

This version is based on the one by the great and most influential slack key guitarist Leonard Kwan, who first recorded **Yellow Ginger Lei** on his album **SLACK KEY**, known in slack key circles as "the red album" (on Tradewinds Records), also in G tuning.

### 3. *Kolopa*

Taken at a medium tempo, **Kolopa** refers to kicking and screaming like a child in a tantrum or a breakaway horse. Sol Hoopii recorded it in 1933 on one of the first electric steel guitars.

On this rendition, Bob plays the National in G tuning in the key of G, and Led plays in C Wahine tuning (C-G-D-G-B-D) capoed up seven frets to sound in the key of G. Wahine is the term for a tuning containing a major 7th note, which is hammered on to produce the tonic note, one of the characteristic sounds of Wahine tunings.

### 4. *Pa'ahana*

Tau and Rose Moe recorded **Pa'ahana** as members of Mme. Riviere's Hawaiians in 1929. Bob and Led give it a different sound. "What's nice about this version," Bob explains, "is the choppy duple approach. It's divided into two, where hula often has a subtle division of three. Led plays very well in that duple and quadruple division of the beat." Bob plays it on the National, and both play in the key of G, in G tuning.

### 5. *'Akaka Falls*

Helen Kauinohea Lindsey Parker, The Lark of Waimea, composed this immortal classic to describe the Big Island waterfall where a rendezvous of two lovers took place. Frequently recorded, **'Akaka Falls** is one of the most familiar melodies in Hawaiian music. On this very improvisational rendition, Led plays in standard tuning key of F while Bob plays in the key of F in G tuning on the Weissenborn. "Inside the big waltz is a smaller, faster one-two-three," Bob says. "That's done all the time in Caribbean and Mexican music. If you turn it into 6/8 and then make a triplet out of those two it creates this rolling thing that goes through it."

### 6. *Maile Lau Li'ili'i*

**Maile Lau Li'ili'i** refers to the small leaf maile, a highly prized, subtly scented vine used in lei making. The song is attributed to Dave Burrows and his one-time featured vocalist Ray Kinney. Bob learned the song from The Kalama Quartet recording from 1928. "That's why I gave it that kind of heavy approach," he says. On this slow, almost bluesy update, Led and Bob both play in G tuning in the key of G, with Bob on the Weissenborn.

## 7. *Maui Chimes*

A jam session favorite among both steel and slack key guitarists of all levels of ability, **Maui Chimes** dates from the late 19th Century, when the steel guitar was in its youth. Appropriately, the melody is derived from a popular children's song of the era, **My Boat is Sailing**. The tune is also known in Hawai'i as **Maui No Ka 'Oi**, with lyrics in praise of the Valley Isle written by Rev. Sam Kapu. Led recorded it previously with Hui Ohana.

"Our particular version is kind of a double time swing, which accommodates some fast rolls from both of us," Bob says. Played in G tuning in the key of G, this unique version has some jazzy and bluegrass licks.

Bob uses a "hands-crossed" technique on the National where he crosses his right hand over the left, picking between the bar and the tuning pegs, for the unusual sliding chord sound.

## 8. *Ua Like No A Like*

Alice Everett's classic **Ua Like No A Like** poetically immortalizes a romantic meeting when the birds sang in the midnight hour and rain fell gently on a lehua bud. Published in 1882, the song was first made popular by the Royal Hawaiian Band, and has retained its popularity.

Bob learned it from Tau Moe's 1934 recording made in China. "That's probably my all-time favorite three minutes of music," he says. "It's just unbelievable. They pitched it up to A and Rose is just melodically singing in the highest pitch possible for a human voice. Tau is playing his National extremely emotionally. A beautiful record. There's only one known copy." Bob recorded **Ua Like No A Like** with The Moes on their Rounder album.

Here, Led plays in the C Wahine tuning, with Bob in G tuning in the key of C on the National.

## SET TWO

## 9. *E Lili'u E*

According to Elbert and Mahoe, hula master Anton Ka'o'o created this *mele inoa* for Queen Lili'uokalani in the late 19th Century under the title **He Inoa No Lili'u**. He based the melody and most of the text on **He Inoa No Kina'u**, an earlier *mele inoa* honoring the infant son of Prince Ruth Ke'elikolani. John Kaulia and Charles E. King are credited with the conversion to popular song. Here, both Bob and Led play in G tuning in the key of G, with Bob playing the Weissenborn.

## 10. *Hula Blues*

This well-known melody sprung from a collaboration between composers of *hapa-haole* music Sonny Cunha and Johnny Noble, who was one of Territorial Hawaii's most

prominent band leaders and publishers. *Hapa haole* refers to songs with English lyrics and Hawaiian melodies; *hapa* means half, and *haole* means foreign.

Noble debuted the song in 1920 with his famous dance band at the Moana Hotel. It quickly spread around the Islands and the world.

Bob plays **Hula Blues** in G tuning in the key of G on the National, and Led is in standard tuning in the key of G, instead of in open G, the way most slack key guitarists play it.

#### 11. *Moana Chimes*

A steel guitar standard, **Moana Chimes** is sometimes attributed to steel guitar wizard M.K. Moke, sometimes to Johnny Noble, and sometimes to both. In any case, it makes good use of the harmonics produced by gently touching and releasing the bar at several specific intervals on a string. Slack key guitarists also enjoy creating this ornament to add a bit of timbric contrast or to end a phrase.

"Tau Moe learned it from M.K. Moke," Bob says. "He took a lesson from him for twenty bucks back then. That's like three hundred bucks today. Moke refused to teach him the song, but Tau asked him to play it for him, then ran home and started playing it." Bob plays the Weissenborn here, and both he and Led are in G tuning in the key of G.

#### 12. *Lepe 'Ula'ula*

**Lepe 'Ula'ula** refers to the cockscomb of a rooster. The lyrics tell the story of a *paniolo* (cowboy) from Waimea with a winning lariat, using it the way that Cupid uses his bow and arrow. Attributed to Kaimanahila, **Lepe 'Ula'ula** began life in the 1920s as a *leo ki'eki'e* showcase. Bob and Led play in G tuning in the key of C; Bob is on the Weissenborn.

#### 13. *Ka Lei E*

Most commonly attributed to Johnny Noble, **Ka Lei E** is also known simply as **Lei E**. This rendition is unique in that Led is doing his slack key 16th note rolls and Bob tries to answer Led's phrases on the National guitar, which he says has never to his knowledge been done before on record. "It's one of my favorites on the album," Bob says. Both he and Led play in G tuning in the key of G.

#### 14. *Fort Street*

Bob learned this old rag-flavored classic, complete with ad hoc percussion, from a 1929 recording by Tau Moe. Danny Stewart is credited as the composer. "It's actually a variation of the A part and B parts of the classic **Black and White Rag**," he says. Bob plays in G tuning in the key of G on the National, and Led is in standard tuning key of G. Note Led mimicking Bob's triplets.

### 15. *Tre Moe*

A Tahitian song Led chose for the session, this piece is played by Led in the key of G capoed up five frets to sound in the key of C. Bob also plays in G tuning on the Weissenborn, and the song is played in the keys of C and F. Again, Led answers Bob's triplets and Bob answers Led's staccato. It's a tour de force of spontaneous improvisation.

### 16. *Kalama'ula*

This Hanna Dudoit *mele pana* (place song) for a Hawaiian Homestead community on Molokai is a popular favorite for *leo ki'eki'e* singers. "The Kalama Quartet did a beautiful version of it in 1929," Bob says. "Also Lizzie Alohikea on Brunswick. I love that tune."

On this recording, Led plays in G tuning capoed up five frets to sound in the key of C. Bob plays in Mainland C major tuning (C-G-C-G-C-E) in the key of F on his Weissenborn koa wood steel guitar, again using the crossed-hands technique for the unusual sliding chord sound.

*Liner notes by Jay W. Junker and Bob Brozman with technical assistance by George Winston.*

## TUNINGS USED ON THIS ALBUM

BOB BROZMAN'S ACOUSTIC STEEL TUNINGS:

**G Major "Taro Patch" tuning** (D-G-D-G-B-D) for all songs on this album except the following:

**Mainland C Major tuning** (C-G-C-G-C-E) for *Tre Moe* and *Kalamaula*

LEDWARD KAAPANA'S SLACK KEY TUNING:

**G Major "Taro Patch" tuning** (D-G-D-G-B-D) for all songs on this album except the following:

**C Wahine tuning** (C-G-D-G-B-D) for *Kolopa* and *Ua Like No A Like*

**Standard tuning** (E-A-D-G-B-E) for *Akaka Falls* and *Fort Street*

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Visit Bob Brozman on the worldwide web at [www.bobbrozman.com](http://www.bobbrozman.com)

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