

LINER NOTES

Gabby Pahinui

Pure Gabby

- [Note: this recording is not on Dancing Cat Records, but this information is included here for general interest]

Notes and Slack Key tunings from Gabby Pahinui's classic and influential recording PURE GABBY (Hula Records – 567). Virtuoso musician and soulful singer Gabby Pahinui was the founder of the modern Hawaiian Slack Key Guitar era. This classic album, recorded in 1961, presents him mainly in a trio setting, performing many of his favorite songs. Gabby is universally hailed as the folk hero of the Hawaiian music world, and the one who has inspired virtually every slack key guitarist and many others since he made the first ever slack key recordings in 1946.

Gabby Pahinui: slack key guitar and vocals

Sonny Nicholas: acoustic bass

Danny Stewart: ukulele

“Dad knew exactly when to pop it out. He could make an audience laugh or cry on cue just by watching them and when the time was right, he'd touch their hearts.”

Raymond Kaleoalohapoina'oleohelemanu Kane is a legendary figure in the Hawaiian art of *ki ho'alu*, (slack key guitar). A traditionalist with a unique sound and outgoing personality, Uncle Ray began playing as a child in the early 1930s, and has steadfastly maintained the style he learned then. “The way Albert Kawelo played - this is what I hear when I think of slack key,” he says. “That's the sound I heard when I was a little boy, nine years old. I just fell in love with it then and seventy years later it's still as strong as ever.”

Bla Pahinui (slack key guitarist/vocalist)

“I tell you, all the songs my dad did still have a lot of meaning for me and always will. I never get tired of hearing them or playing them. They're the songs that touch me the most.”

Cyril Pahinui (slack key guitarist/vocalist)

“When I sing, I feel him standing right next to me. My dad was and always will be the greatest.”

Martin Pahinui (vocalist/ bassist/guitarist)

Virtuoso musician, consummate entertainer, Pops Gabby Pahinui is the founder of the modern slack key guitar era. Like Louis Armstrong, another musical giant who earned the honoring title of Pops, Gabby revolutionized the instrument he played, and was revered for his incredibly soulful vocals. His creative improvising, dynamic flair, and rhythmic mastery made him a hugely influential artist. More than twenty years after his death, he remains a towering figure, not only in slack key but also in wider music circles. As Ry Cooder put it in a recent interview, “He was the man...I’d never heard anybody play guitar and sing like that...you meet folkloric people and you meet great players, but this guy seemed to be able to do everything.”

Gabby was famous for his live performances, where his inventiveness and charisma shone brightest. Fortunately, he made excellent use of the studio as well, becoming the first person to record slack key, and he recorded more often than any other slack key guitarist of his generation. His groundbreaking releases on Bell Records in 1946 - **Hi`ilawe Hula Medley** (with Nani Wale Lihu`e, Halona, and Wai`alae), **Ki Ho`alu**, and **Wai O Ke Aniani** - dazzled listeners, inspired musicians, and convinced other great slack key guitarists, such as Sonny Chillingworth (1932-1994), Leonard Kwan (1931-2000) - (Sonny and Leonard are the next most influential slack key guitarists in history), Abraham Konanui, Atta Isaacs (1929-1983), Ray Kane (1925-), and others to begin recording what had previously often been a carefully guarded music style, seldom shared with the public at large. The power of these early recordings resounded in many Hawaiian homes. One can imagine the awe and confoundment of slack key guitarists listening to these tracks, as each of the four were in different tunings! (Gabby’s first five recordings and fifteen other historical tracks by eight other great slack key guitarists from the 1940s and early 1950s have been reissued on the recording [THE HISTORY OF SLACK KEY](#) on Hana Ola Records 24000).

Gabby had five significant recording periods:

1. the mid 1940s for Bell and Aloha Records
2. the 1950s for Waikiki Records
3. the early 1960s for Hula Records
4. the late 1960s for Hula and Tradewinds Records
5. the 1970s for Panini Records

Many of the songs he recorded became the definitive versions and the standard way to play them, and remain so to this day.

Gabby used four tunings: the G Major Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D - from the lowest pitched string to the highest), a C Wahine Tuning (C-G-E-G-B-E), the C Mauna Loa Tuning (C-G-E-G-A-E), and an F Wahine Tuning (F-C-E-G-C-E).

There are 3 main classifications of tunings: the Major Tunings, where the tuning is usually a full Major chord, or has a Major chord within the tuning; the Wahine Tunings, where the tuning has

a major seventh note in it; and the Mauna Loa Tunings, where the two highest pitched strings are tuned a fifth interval apart.

Most slack key guitarists predominantly use one or two tunings from these three main categories. Usually a guitarist uses only one Mauna Loa Tuning, and often two Wahine Tunings, as Gabby did. Sometimes a guitarist will use two Major Tunings, as Cyril Pahinui does (the C Major Tuning [C-G-E-G-C-E] and the D Major Tuning [D-A-D-F# -A D]) and the late Leland “Atta” Isaacs did (the C Major Tuning [C-G-E-G-C-E] and occasionally the G Major Tuning [D-G-D-G-B-D]). When asked about playing tunings, though, Gabby told Dave Guard “It’s not how you tune ‘em up, it’s how you pluck ‘em.”

Gabby had four styles in which he liked to play slack key:

1. The first had an alternating “double-thumbing” bass, where the thumb plays the first and third beat bass notes on the fifth and sixth strings (depending on the chord being played), and plays the second and fourth beat bass notes on the fourth or third strings. He used this style for songs in the G Major Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D) and the C Mauna Loa Tuning (C-G-E-G-A-E)—on this album, the songs **Ki Ho`alu**, **Lihu`e**, **Lei Nani**, **Wai O Ke Aniani**, **Slack Key Hula**, **Mauna Loa**, **`Ahululi**, and **I Ka Po Me Ka Ao**.

2. For the second style, he played a bass note on the first and sometimes third beats, and played fills on the higher strings between the bass notes. He used this style for songs in his C Wahine Tuning (C-G-E-G-B-E)—on this album, the songs **Hi`ilawe** and **Nanea Ko Maka I Ka Le`ale`a**; and sometimes in the C Mauna Loa Tuning—on this album, in parts of the song **I Ka Po Me Ke Ao**.

3. His third one was a march style, playing the bass notes on the sixth string on the first beat and the fifth string on the third beat. He often used this style when playing in his F Wahine Tuning (F-C-E-G-C-E)—on this album, the fourth song of the **Slack Key Medley: Nani Wale Lihu`e** (for the second time he plays this song; in the march tempo the second time).

4. His fourth style used a rubato (no tempo) technique in the introduction to certain songs, a style which is very effectively used today by his son Cyril Pahinui. Gabby used this style often in his F Wahine Tuning (F-C-E-G-C-E)—on this album, for the first three songs in the **Slack Key Medley: Nani Wale Lihu`e**, **Ka `Tiwi Polena**, and **Silver Threads Among the Gold**; and in the **Farewell Medley** for the songs **Isa Lei** and **Aloha `Oe**.

By the late 1960s, a slack key revival had spread throughout the Islands, part of the Hawaiian Renaissance of reviving and expanding the great artistic traditions. Many important figures contributed to the movement, and Gabby led the way. He influenced, and continues to this day to influence, everyone who plays slack key guitar. Gabby was the founder of the modern slack key era, and his prolific and unique techniques led to greater recognition of the guitar as a solo instrument. He expanded the boundaries of slack key by creating a fully evolved solo guitar style capable of creatively interpreting a wide variety of Hawaiian traditional and standard songs, original pieces, contemporary songs, and songs from other cultures, such as Tahiti, Samoa, Fiji, the Maori culture (of New Zealand), Mexico, Puerto Rico, the Caribbean, Portugal, and Spain—

as well as Mainland American jazz, folk, pop, and country & western music. But Gabby most inspired other musicians through the feeling, the mana (soul), in his slack key guitar playing and with his hauntingly soulful and beautiful vocals, especially his leo kiçekiçe (falsetto singing). Additionally, he was a fine electric steel guitarist, and he occasionally recorded on steel. Because his artistry was both timeless and so well suited to its time, Gabby always attracted a diverse audience. At his concerts you could see everyone from white haired kupuna (elders), for whom Gabby was a youngster rekindling memories, to long haired teenagers, who saw Gabby as a cool uncle, a kindred spirit, a slack key rebel.

More than a local phenomenon, Gabby's music spread globally. As a testament to the power of his music, this happened without him ever touring outside of Hawai'i. He chose instead to stay home, playing concerts and clubs in Hawai'i, and hosting his famous Bell Street jam sessions, where technique and feeling commingled to create magic of a very high order. Collaborations with Ry Cooder, who dropped by to pay his respects in 1975, carried the Pahinui name to countless folk music fans who continue to sing his praises.

As the slack key movement continues to grow, with the number of recordings, concerts, classes, books, videos, and internet sites increasing every year, Gabby's reputation spreads. Posthumous awards frequently come his way. In 2001 a sculpture of him by artist Jan-Michelle Sawyer was unveiled at the entranceway of the Waikiki Shell, and in 2002 he was inducted into the Hawaiian Music Hall of Fame and Museum. Every year since 1982 the annual Gabby Pahinui/Atta Isaacs/Sonny Chillingworth Slack Key Festival (also now called the Hawaiian Slack Key Festival) has been produced by Milton Lau and Ka-Hoku Productions. Perhaps the most fitting tribute is that so many of his albums are still in print, still bringing joy, and still inspiring young players and musicians of all ages, and every slack key guitarist. As his son, Cyril, says simply, "Music was his life."

Gabby was born Charles Kaponohahawai, Jr. on April 22, 1921, of Hawaiian, Portuguese, and German ancestry. Adopted through the Hawaiian tradition of hanai by Philip and Emily Pahinui, he grew up in the colorful Kaka'ako district of Honolulu, which at that time was home to duck ponds, small businesses, and a large, ethnically diverse population. Accounts of how Gabby got his nickname vary, though many agree it came from the gabardine cloth popular in his childhood.

By all accounts, Gabby was a precocious musician; learning bass at age ten and turning professional at 13. He often claimed that growing up he was more interested in jazz than Hawaiian music, once citing Benny Goodman, Lionel Hampton, and Django Reinhardt as particular favorites. His interest in slack key began after meeting a neighborhood guitarist he knew only as "Herman." At that time Gabby was learning to play guitar in the Standard Tuning (E-A-D-G-B-E), and he was totally impressed by Herman's ability to play the melody, rhythm, and bass at the same time. Herman died soon after showing Gabby the basics. He spent the next ten years practicing to develop his style. Gabby often described Herman as the greatest slack key player of all time, a description usually given to Gabby himself today.

By the mid-1930s, Gabby also played the çukulele and steel guitar. He acknowledged the great steel guitarist Sol Hoçopiçi as his main inspiration on steel guitar, though Gabby's own style had

a more delicate, filigree sound. He usually played the electric steel in the modern B11th Tuning (B-D#-F#-A-C#-E). His other favorite steel player was the lesser known Puni Kaulia. Gabby's talents landed him the steel guitar post with the popular band Andy Cummings & His Hawaiian Serenaders in the late 1930s, and he was a regular in the swinging Waikiki scene. He married Emily when he was seventeen, and they had thirteen children, four of which became musicians (Bla, Cyril, Martin, and the late Philip Pahinui). In the 1950s, he continued to work as a steel guitarist, but focused more on slack key, recording many classic sides for the Waikiki label and playing bars throughout the Islands. He also began hosting the legendary jam sessions at his Bell Street home in Waimanalo.

One such visit to Gabby's house resulted in the formation of the Sons of Hawai'i (with çukulele master Eddie Kamae, the late great steel guitarist David "Feet" Rogers, and the late bassist Joe Marshall), the group most musicians credit with spearheading the Hawaiian Music Renaissance of the 1960s and early 1970s. Gabby played slack key and sang with the Sons of Hawai'i, bringing the spirit of classic older Hawaiian songs to a new generation. During this period he also recorded the trio sessions reissued here, and later in the 1960s, some seminal duets with his good friend and slack key master Atta Isaacs (on the late 1960s album TWO SLACK KEY GUITARS on Tradewinds Records 124).

On a stopover in the Islands in 1961, Dave Guard of the Kingston Trio produced the tracks that make up PURE GABBY. A Honolulu boy, Dave grew up admiring Gabby and wanted to make, as he put it, "a straight recording of his guitar and singing, with just a little bass and çukulele along for the ride." With Danny Stewart on çukulele and Sonny Nicholas on bass, Dave recorded Gabby at Honolulu's Central Union Church in two long sessions, which were interrupted every fifteen minutes by the ringing of church bells (you can hear them after Slack Key Medley and very faintly in the bonus track version of çAhululi). Once the album was completed, Dave shopped it around to mainland labels, hoping the power of Gabby's music (or at least Dave's own celebrity), would secure a national release. Surprisingly, there were no takers. Seventeen years later, however, Hula Records, who had first recorded Gabby with the Sons of Hawai'i in 1962, issued twelve of the songs along with a companion interview as the original PURE GABBY album, much to the delight of Gabby's growing legions of fans.

In 1978, when PURE GABBY was finally released, Pops was at the height of his creativity, and a larger than life figure in the local music scene. His band, the Gabby Pahinui Hawaiian Band (sometimes with two, three, or four of his sons, plus always slack key guitarist Atta Isaacs, and sometimes slack key guitarist Sonny Chillingworth, and others) was a major concert draw and his recordings were top sellers. Still, like many musicians playing traditional music, Gabby worked a day job. He spent 14 years with the city road crew, and in the last years of his life taught slack key for Honolulu Parks and Recreation.

On the afternoon of Sunday, October 13, 1980, while playing golf with Andy Cummings, Gabby died. His wake was held at Honolulu Hale (the Honolulu City Hall). Andy and many other musicians paid their respects with heartfelt performances. Since then, there have been countless tributes to Gabby, but, in the end, his music speaks for itself.

“...It’s enough that he plays the sweetest, cleanest, most soulful, most Hawaiian guitar music ever heard. It’s enough that he was one of the finest voices in the world. It’s enough that when I hear Gabby I’m home.”

—Dave Guard

THE SONGS

(See the Discography for a complete listing of all of Gabby’s recordings, and for the other versions that Gabby has recorded of the songs on this album).

1. Hi`ilawe

Tuning: C Wahine “Gabby’s Hi`ilawe” (C-G-E-G-B-E - from the lowest pitched string to the highest)

Using the beautiful Hi`ilawe waterfall (the highest waterfall in Hawai`i located deep in the Waipi`o Valley on the Big Island of Hawai`i), to symbolize a love affair that took place there, the traditional Hi`ilawe is regarded as Gabby’s signature tune. This subtly poignant story is about a girl from the Puna area of the Big Island who visits a young man she has fallen in love with in the Waipi`o Valley, and encounters the gossip of the small community, which is symbolized by the many chattering birds. She finally leaves this sad situation and goes back home where she is appreciated for who she is. Gabby recorded it at his first session for Bell Records in 1946 and soon again for Aloha Records in 1947 (both are reissued on the recording THE HISTORY OF SLACK KEY GUITAR on Hana Ola Records 24000). He later recorded versions for Waikiki Records in the 1950s, on THE BEST OF HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY WITH GABBY PAHINUI (Waikiki Records 340); and in a slower tempo for Panini Records on his 1972 album GABBY (often called “the Brown Album”) on Panini Records 1002, and on the live compilation album from 1974, THE WAIMEA MUSIC FESTIVAL (Panini Records 1006). He also played a great soulful slow solo version of it at the end of the 1979 film GABBY PAHINUI, FAMILY & FRIENDS.

On this recording, Gabby plays in a C Wahine Tuning which is referred to as “Gabby’s Hi`ilawe Tuning” or “Gabby’s C Wahine Tuning” because he was the first one to record in it, and was the guitarist who used it most prolifically, especially for his versions of Hi`ilawe. Wahine, literally translated as woman, is a term used to describe tunings with a Major 7th chord, such as this tuning, or any tunings with the major 7th note in it (here the B note on the second highest pitched string). This version of the song displays not only Gabby’s beautiful guitar playing, but also his spirited singing, which, like his instrumental work, was heavily influenced by Hawaiian traditions. Note how he percussively slaps the guitar, inspired by the ipu (the traditional Hawaiian gourd drum).

Gabby’s influence on other slack key guitarists is evident by how many guitarists have also recorded the songs on this album after hearing his versions.

For comparison, other slack key guitarists who have recorded vocal versions of Hi`ilawe are:

- Sonny Chillingworth, in a different C Wahine Tuning (C-G-D-G-B-D), on his album SONNY SOLO (Dancing Cat), and again in that same C Wahine Tuning, on his 1966 album KA `AINA [add kahako above "A] `O HAWAI'I (Lehua Records).
- Ray Kane, in a different C Wahine Tuning (C-G-D-G-B-E), on his album WA`AHILA (Dancing Cat Records), and in the G Wahine Tuning (D-G-D-F# -B-D), on his 1975 album NANAKULI'S RAYMOND KANE (Tradewinds Records - reissued on CD on Hana Ola Records, with the title THE LEGENDARY RAY KANE - OLD STYLE SLACK KEY -THE COMPLETE EARLY RECORDINGS).
- Cyril Pahinui, in the C Major Tuning (C-G-E-G-C-E), on his 1998 album NIGHT MOON (PO MAHINA) (Dancing Cat Records).
- Bla Pahinui, in the Dropped D Tuning (D-A-D-G-B-E), singing a different melody, on his 1983 album BLA PAHINUI (Mountain Apple Records), and with the normal melody for a future recording for Dancing Cat Records.
- Led Kaapana, in the Standard Tuning (E-A-D-G-B-E), playing in the key of C, on his 1994 album LED LIVE-SOLO (Dancing Cat Records).
- Haunani Kahalewai recorded it twice in the D Wahine Tuning (D-A-D-F# -A-C#), on her early 1960s album HAUNANI, THE VOICE OF HAWAI'I (Decca Records – out-of-print), and on a 78 r.p.m. (49th State Records 181), to be reissued in the future on THE HISTORY OF SLACK KEY - VOLUME 2 (Hana Ola Records) – From the early 1950s and farther back, Hiçilawe and similar traditional songs were often played in the D Wahine Tuning, a tuning used less often today.

Instrumental slack key versions Hi`ilawe have been recorded by:

- Atta Isaacs [with The Maile Serenaders (AKA the Sons of Hawai'i)], in his C Major Tuning (C-G-E-G-C-E), on the 1966 album SLACK KEY & STEEL GUITAR INSTRUMENTALS, VOLUME 1 (formerly titled KANI KA PILA! VOLUME 1) (Hula Records).
- George Kuo, in the same C Wahine Tuning as Gabby (C-G-E-G-B-E), with the title Old Hi`ilawe, on his 1981 album NAHENAHE (Hula Records).
- Keola Beamer, in the G6th Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-E), on his 1997 album MAUNA KEA-WHITE MOUNTAIN JOURNAL (Dancing Cat Records).
- Cindy Combs, in the G6th Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-E), on her 1997 album SLACK KEY LADY (Dancing Cat Records).

2. Kī Hō`alu

Tuning: C Mauna Loa (C-G-E-G-A-E)

Another of the first songs Gabby recorded on slack key guitar in 1946 for Bell Records (with the title Key Kaholo), Ki Ho`alu (literally meaning “slack key”) offers variations on a traditional theme widely played in slack key circles. Gabby’s 1946 version (reissued on the recording THE HISTORY OF SLACK KEY GUITAR on Hana Ola Records 24000) featured the theme used in this version, along with another traditional theme for the beginning part that is similar to Leonard Kwan’s 1960 recording Pau Pilikia, on his album SLACK KEY (the “Red Album”) on Tradewinds Records 103.

This recording nicely illustrates the uniqueness of this C Mauna Loa Tuning, which Gabby was the first one to record in. In Mauna Loa Tunings, the two highest pitched strings are tuned a fifth interval apart. This way, the player can easily make sliding sixth interval double notes on those strings, rather than the more commonly used first and third strings (or the second and fourth strings in some tunings). This gives the Mauna Loa Tunings a distinctively sweet sound. Mauna Loa Tunings also allow the player to rapidly frail the two highest pitched strings (a technique that Gabby uses for I Ka Po Me Ka Ao, song #11).

In the other tunings that Gabby employed, the C Wahine Tuning (C-G-E-G-B-E), the G Major Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), and the F Wahine Tuning (F-C-E-G-C-E), he used the first string and the thicker third string for the sixth intervals. In the last 10 years of his life Gabby used just the C Mauna Loa Tuning and the C Wahine Tuning for his recordings and live performances, changing only the second string to either the A or B note, depending on the song; and often tuning the whole guitar down between one and four half steps, depending on the key he sang the song in.

Note how Gabby beautifully strums with his thumb from the sixth to the first strings, while keeping a steady beat with the thumb on the bass notes (on the lowest pitched sixth and fifth strings on beats one and three, and on the higher third and fourth strings on beats two and four).

Other instrumental slack key versions of this song have been recorded by:

- Sonny Chillingworth, under the title Key Kaholo, in the G Mauna Loa Tuning (D-G-D-D-G-D), on his 1965 album SONNY CHILLINGWORTH (Makaha Records), and for his next album on Dancing Cat Records.
- Leonard Kwan, in the G6th Mauna Loa Tuning (D-G-D-E-G-E), on his album KEALA’S MELE (Dancing Cat Records); and in a different C Mauna Loa Tuning (C-G-C-G-A-E), with a similar traditional type song, Pau Pilikia, on his 1960 album SLACK KEY (“the Red Album”) on Tradewinds Records 103 - reissued on CD on Hana Ola Records 55000, with the title LEONARD KWAN - SLACK KEY MASTER- THE COMPLETE EARLY RECORDINGS.
- Ray Kane, playing a similar traditional type song, Popoki Slack Key, in the unusual and beautiful A Mauna Loa Tuning (E-A-E-E-F# -C#), on his 1998 album WAÇAHILA (Dancing Cat Records); and another similar traditional type song, with the title Waïçanae Slack Key Hula, in the G the Major Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), on his 1994 album PUNAHELE (Dancing Cat Records).

3. Nanea Ko Maka I Ka Le`ale`a

Tuning: C Wahine “Gabby’s Hiçilawe” (C-G-E-G-B-E)

Once a bar staple, this traditional risqué tale, which non-explicitly translates as “relaxed is your face in pleasure”, gives Gabby a chance to show off his kolohe (rascal) side. By all accounts, Gabby was the life of any party. As longtime friend and playing companion Sonny Chillingworth once said, “When Pops played a funny song, he had to make you laugh. If he couldn’t do it with the music, he’d roll his eyes, or toss in some off the wall ad lib. If that didn’t work, he’d get up and start dancing a comic hula.” He also recorded Nanea Ko Maka I Ka Leçaleça as an instrumental, in the G Major Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), with the Maile Serenaders for Hula Records in 1969.

Most Hawaiian mele (songs) feature the use of kaona (poetic hidden meanings of love, lovemaking, and other subjects). Traditionally there can be different levels of kaona, and in the times before Western contact there were sometimes five different levels in the chants and hula dancing, for the common people up through the hierarchy to the ali`i (chiefs/ royalty). This song, however, is rather unique with its totally explicit Hawaiian lyrics.

Other slack key artists who have recorded instrumental versions of this song are:

- George Kuo, in the G Major Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), on his 1981 album NAHENAHE (Hula Records) – this version was inspired by Gabby’s version with the Maile Serenaders.
- Ray Kane, in the G Major Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), on his 1994 album PUNAHELE (Dancing Cat Records) – this version was inspired by Gabby’s version with the Maile Serenaders.

A slack key version of this song with vocals was recorded by:

- Sonny Chillingworth, in another C Wahine Tuning (C-G-D-G-B-D), on his 1966 album KA `AINA ‘O HAWAI’I (Lehua Records), and for a future album for Dancing Cat Records.

4. Lihu`e

Tuning: G Major “Taro Patch” (D-G-D-G-B-D)

A mele inoa (place song) by Annie Koulukou, probably composed around the early 1900s, Lihu`e celebrates the Paupili rain, the sea at Niumalu, and other special features of Kauaçi’s largest city. Gabby plays it in the G Major “Taro Patch” Tuning favored by so many guitarists in Hawai`i, as well as in Mainland America and Europe, and he sings it beautifully and soulfully. He also recorded it in 1972 in his C Wahine Tuning (C-G-E-G-B-E), on his album GABBY (“the Brown Album”) on Panini Records 1002.

5. Lei Nani

Tuning: G Major “Taro Patch” (D-G-D-G-B-D), tuned down a half step to sound in the key of F#

A song by Charles Namahoe, possibly written around the late 1940s (it was at least copywritten by him, and it may have been written by Joseph Suzuki Hunt, with the title Leilani). Lei Nani uses a pretty lei to press for reconciliation between two lovers. Gabby recorded it two other times and in two different arrangements: playing in his C Wahine Tuning (C-G-E-G-B-E), on his 1972 album GABBY (Panini Records 1002), was influenced by Mexican Mariachi music for the vamp, and is very different from his 1960 recording of it, in a different C Wahine Tuning than he usually used, the popular C-G-D-G-B-D (the only time he ever recorded in this tuning) on the album HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY, VOLUME I – WITH GABBY PAHINUI (Waikiki Records 319).

This recording features Gabby's incredibly beautiful leo kiçekiçe (falsetto), which was as inspiring to musicians and listeners as his slack key playing. Note the ipu-style drumming on the guitar in the introduction and the ending. Take 1, the take used here, is looser, with more risk taking, and is being released for the first time. Take 2, which was issued on the original PURE GABBY album, appears later as a bonus track (song #13). Hearing both takes provides listeners with a good illustration of Gabby's love of variations.

Another slack key version of this song with vocals has been recorded by:

- Cyril Pahinui, in the C Major Tuning (C-G-E-G-C-E), to be released on a future album on Dancing Cat Records.

6. Slack-Key Medley (Hula Medley): Nani Wale Lihu`e /Ka 'Iwi Polena/Silver Threads Among the Gold/Nani Wale Lihu`e (march style)/Wai`alae (instrumental)

Tuning: F Wahine "Gabby's F" (F-C-E-G-C-E)

Medleys have long been a favorite device for slack key guitarists to extend the flow of a good instrumental performance, and Gabby always put together great medleys (several of which can be heard on the recordings HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY –WITH GABBY PAHINUI, VOLUMES I & II on Waikiki Records 319 & 320). Often, as in many of the songs he did, Gabby's medleys became the definitive and standard way to play the songs. Here Gabby joins ballads, a march, and a waltz - all popular musical forms in late 19th century Hawai`i.

Gabby plays this medley in his F Wahine Tuning. This unique Wahine Tuning has the major 7th note, the E note, on both the first and fourth strings, and is now called "Gabby's F", since he was the first guitarist ever to record in it, and he was the one who played most prominently in it.

Gabby plays two verses of the first tune, a ballad version of Nani Wale Lihuçe, composed in the 1870s by Prince Leleiohoku (1854-1877), and co-written with a composer named Kamakau. Leleiohoku was the younger brother to both King Kalakaua (1836 -1891) and his successor, and the last Hawaiian monarch, Queen Liliuokalani (1838-1917), Hawai`i's most beloved songwriter. The song praises the beauty of Lihuçe, and other scenic places on the Island of Kauaçi, to convey a romance that happened by chance.

The second song is a short variation of part of the melody of the ballad Ka `Ūiwi Polena, a love song from the 1800s, attributed to Hiram Kapoli, that uses the symbolic images of the Ūiwi bird and the Lehua flower. Gabby also backed up singer Melveen Leed on slack key guitar for this song, on her 1980 album MELVEEN WITH THE BEST OF SLACK KEY (Lehua Records). In that version, using tape editing, he used the C Mauna Loa Tuning (C-G-E-G-A-E) for the first 2 verses, then his C Wahine Tuning (C-G-E-G-B-E), capoed up two frets to sound in the key of D for his instrumental solo, then back to the C Mauna Loa Tuning, capoed up one fret to sound in the key of C# for the last verse.

The third piece, Silver Threads Among the Gold, is an American song composed in 1873 by Hart Danks and Eben Rexford. Gabby plays it as a ballad, with a verse, chorus, and another verse. This song had also been recorded by the late slack key guitarist Leonard Kwan the previous year, 1960, for his album SLACK KEY (“The Red Album”) on Tradewinds Records 103, in his C Wahine tuning (C-G-D-G-B-D), and either he or Gabby may have influenced the other to play it. Like Gabby, Leonard was noted for his definitive medleys. Note Gabby’s beautiful rolls in this song, which he plays by strumming from the sixth to the first strings with his thumb and his index finger of his right hand, then strumming the other way, from the first to the sixth strings, while playing beautiful Mexican-sounding double-note thirds on the two highest pitched strings with his left hand. Gabby loved and was very inspired by Mexican music.

These first three songs are played solo in a rubato (slow, undefined) tempo, and this was the first time Gabby had recorded entirely solo since his 1946 version of Hula Medley.

These three songs are then followed by another verse of Nani Wale Lihu`e, played this time in Gabby’s signature march style in his F Wahine Tuning, with his thumb picking the bass part on the first and third beats of the measure on the sixth string, and the second and fourth beats on the fifth string, while Sonny Nicholas and Danny Stewart come in here on the bass and the `ukulele.

When Henry Berger (1844-1929), who also had arranged this song as a march, was hired by Hawai‘i’s King Kamehameha V to start the Royal Hawaiian Band in 1872, he brought with him the influence of European marches. This tradition continues to live in the repertoire of today’s Royal Hawaiian Band, as well as with steel guitarists and slack key guitarists - especially songs such as Hilo March and Kohala March. Another example of Gabby playing march-style in his F Wahine Tuning can be heard in the selection called Slack Key Medley on the songs Gabby Pahinui recorded a march medley called Slack Key Medley with the songs Kuhio Bay, Roselani, Henderson’s March, Koni Au I Ka Wai, and Hu’i E, on the album HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY VOL I–WITH GABBY PAHINUI (Waikiki Records 319).

Arranging marches for guitar is a distinct part of the slack key tradition, and six notable examples are:

1. Leonard Kwan recorded Aia Hiki Mai/Koni Au/Palisa, in the D Wahine Tuning

(D-A-D-F# -A C#), on the early 1960s Tradewinds album SLACK KEY (also known as the “Black & White Album”, which also has tracks by slack key guitarist Ray Kane, on Tradewinds Records 106) – Leonard’s tracks from that album are reissued on CD on Hana Ola Records

HOCD 55000, with the title LEONARD KWAN – SLACK KEY MASTER – THE COMPLETE EARLY RECORDINGS.

2. Atta Isaacs and Gabby Pahinui recorded March Medley: Aia Hiki Mai/Haili Po Ika Lehua, on their 1969 album TWO SLACK KEY GUITARS (Tradewinds Records 1124), with Atta in his C Major Tuning (C-G-E-G-C-E), and Gabby in his C Wahine Tuning (C-G-E-G-B-E – with two strings tuned differently from Leonard’s C Wahine Tuning).

3. Atta Isaacs recorded Kohala March, in the C Major Tuning (C-G-E-G-C-E), on his early 1970s album ATTA (Tradewinds Records 1126).

4. The Kahumoku Brothers (George and Moses) recorded Hilo March/Maui Chimes, in the G Major Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), on their 1988 album SWEET AND SASSY (Kahumoku Brothers Records).

5. George Kuo recorded Wai`alae/Koni Au I Ka Wai, in the C Wahine Tuning (C-G-D-G-B-D), on his 1996 album ALOHA NO NA KUPUNA (Dancing Cat Records).

6. George Kuo also recorded Hawaiian March Medley: Hilo March/Ainahau/Ka Makani O Kohala, in the G Major Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), on his 1981 album NAHENAHE (Hula Records 576).

The last song in the medley, Waiçalae, is the beautiful waltz and popular standard written in 1898 by Mekia Kealakai (1867-1944), who led the Royal Hawaiian Band in the 1920s. It was probably adapted from a Mexican melody, and Mexican music was one of the influences on Hawaiian music in the 1800s. Gabby also recorded Waiçalae as a medley with the waltz Halona featuring his vocals and playing backup guitar in the key of D in the Standard Tuning (E-A-D-G-B-E) on the 1962 album GABBY PAHINUI WITH THE SONS OF HAWAII (Hula Records 503), and by itself in the C Mauna Loa Tuning (C-G-E-G-A-E) on the 1973 album THE RABBIT ISLAND MUSIC FESTIVAL (Panini Records 1004).

Gabby’s 1946 version of Hula Medley (reissued on the recording THE HISTORY OF SLACK KEY GUITAR on Hana Ola Records 24000) was different from this medley. For that recording, he used the three songs Nani Wale Lihuçe , Halona , and Waiçalae. Gabby also played these in his F Wahine Tuning on that recording.

Other slack key guitarists who have recorded instrumental versions of Gabby’s Hula Medley (with Nani Wale Lihuçe, Halona, and Waiçalae) include:

- Sonny Chillingworth, in a C Wahine Tuning (C-G-D-G-B-D), on his 1994 album SONNY SOLO (Dancing Cat Records).

- Ray Kane, under the title Waiçalae–Halona Medley (which also includes Nani Wale Lihuçe), in a different C Wahine Tuning (C-G-D-G-B-E), on his 1975 album NANAKULI’S RAYMOND KANE (Tradewinds Records 130 - reissued on CD on Hana Ola Records HOCD 52000, with the title THE LEGENDARY RAY KANE - OLD STYLE SLACK KEY -THE COMPLETE

EARLY RECORDINGS), and a version to be released on his next album for Dancing Cat Records.

- Leonard Kwan, in an F Wahine Tuning (C-F-C-G-C-E), where the three lowest strings are tuned differently from Gabby's F Wahine Tuning (F-C-E-G-C-E), to be released on his next album on Dancing Cat Records.

7. Wai O Ke Aniani

Tuning: G Major "Taro Patch" (D-G-D-G-B-D), tuned down a half step to sound in the key of F#

Another of Gabby's signature tunes, this traditional song is probably from the late 1800s, and it may have been adapted from an older song. First recorded by him in 1946 for Bell Records (reissued on THE HISTORY OF SLACK KEY GUITAR on Hana Ola Records 24000), Wai O Ke Aniani (sometimes called Wai Huçihuçi O Ke Aniani) celebrates a ridge in Oçahu's Moanalua Valley and the tingling cold waters (wai). Gabby drops some of the vocal verses that are often sung, leaving more room for paçani (instrumental breaks). The chorus again illustrates Gabby's beautiful leo kiçekiçe (falsetto singing). In contrast to his younger, sweeter voice in the 1940s, here the timbre has darkened, giving him a very soulful and mature, much admired quality.

He also recorded Wai O Ke Aniani in the G Tuning in the 1950s on the album THE BEST OF HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY WITH GABBY PAHINUI (Waikiki Records 340), and in 1972 on the album GABBY ("the Brown Album") on Panini Records 1002, in his C Wahine Tuning (C-G-E-G-B-E). Notice here Gabby's beautiful guitar phrases in the G Major Tuning in the introduction, at the end of each vocal verse, and in his two instrumental solo verses. An alternate version appears later as a bonus track (song #14).

Other slack key guitarists who have recorded this song are:

- Ray Kane, with vocals, in the G Major Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), on his 1998 album WA`AHILA (Dancing Cat Records); and on his album NANAKULI'S RAYMOND KANE (Tradewinds Records 130 - reissued on CD on Hana Ola Records 52000, with the title THE LEGENDARY RAY KANE - OLD STYLE SLACK KEY -THE COMPLETE EARLY RECORDINGS). Ray learned this song from Gabby, and it has become a signature song for him as well.
- George Kuo, as an instrumental medley with çAhululi, in the G Major Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), on his 1996 album ALOHA NO NA KUPUNA (LOVE FOR THE ELDERS) (Dancing Cat Records).

8. Slack-Key Hula (Mauna Loa/Moana Chimes/Pua Be Still)

Tuning: G Major "Taro Patch" (D-G-D-G-B-D)

Although mele hula is a vocal art, which uses dance to convey a visual representation of the text, slack key guitarists love to adapt hula tunes and rhythms to purely instrumental use. Here, Gabby, continuing in the G Major Tuning, plays beautiful variations on three songs, including two popular hulas, Mauna Loa (see song #9) and a much faster than usual version of Pua Be Still, a haunting love ballad about the breezes of Kohala on the Big Island that was composed by falsetto legend Bill Aliçiloa Lincoln around 1940. Between the two hulas is his adaptation, in a fast slack key tempo, of Moana Chimes, a well known steel guitar standard from 1928 by the great pre-electric steel player M.K. Moke. Gabby plays three verses of Mauna Loa, then two verses of Moana Chimes, followed by two verses of Pua Be Still, one more verse again of Moana Chimes, and ends with one more verse again of Mauna Loa.

Gabby recorded a different version of Moana Chimes, in the C Mauna Loa Tuning (C-G-E-G-A-E), as a medley with the songs Kaulana Na Pua and Kuwili, on the 1960 album HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY, VOLUME II – WITH GABBY PAHINUI (Waikiki Records 320).

This medley, along with the previous song, Wai O Ke Aniani (song # 7), and the next song, Mauna Loa (song # 9), are a virtual encyclopedia of phrases and techniques in the G Major Tuning. Also notice Gabby's whimsical retarding at the end, a way he often ended songs.

This instrumental slack key medley has also been recorded by:

- Ozzie Kotani, in the G Major Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), on his 1988 recording CLASSICAL SLACK (Pacific Sound Design – out-of-print), and for a future album on Dancing Cat Records.

Other versions of Moana Chimes with slack key guitar have been recorded by:

- Sonny Chillingworth, in the G Major Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), on his album ENDLESSLY (Dancing Cat Records), and on his 1964 album WAIMEA COWBOY (Lehua Records).

- George Kuo, on slack key guitar, in the G Major Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), with Barney Isaacs on acoustic steel guitar, on their 1995 duet album HAWAIIAN TOUCH (Dancing Cat Records).

- Led Kaapana, on slack key guitar, in the G Major Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), with Bob Brozman on acoustic steel guitar, on their 1997 duet album KIKA KILA MEETS KI HO'ALU (Dancing Cat Records).

- Ray Kane, in the G Major Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), on the early 1960s album SLACK KEY (the "Black & White Album", which also has tracks by slack key guitarist Leonard Kwan, on Tradewinds Records 106) – Ray's tracks are reissued on CD on Hana Ola Records 52000, with the title THE LEGENDARY RAY KANE - OLD STYLE SLACK KEY -THE COMPLETE EARLY RECORDINGS.

- The original version by the composer, acoustic steel guitarist M. K. Moke, in High Bass G Tuning (G-B-D-G-B-D - tuned up one half step to sound in the key of A flat) from 1928 has been reissued on the album THE HISTORY OF THE HAWAIIAN STEEL GUITAR (Hana Ola Records 34000).

Other instrumental slack key versions of Pua Be Still, as a ballad, include:

- Keola Beamer, as a medley with Ku`u Lei `Awapuhi, in the F Wahine Tuning that Leonard Kwan often used (C-F-C-G-C-E), on his 1995 album MOEÇUHANE KIKA (TALES OF THE DREAM GUITAR) (Dancing Cat Records).
- Led Kaapana, on slack key guitar in the G Major Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), as a duet with steel guitarist Bob Brozman, on their 2001 album IN THE SADDLE (Dancing Cat Records).

9. Mauna Loa (vocal)

Tuning: G Major “Taro Patch” (D-G-D-G-B-D, tuned down a half step to sound in the key of F#)

Gabby’s beautiful vocal performance of this standard, composed in the early 1900s by Helen Parker (who also composed the beautiful standard waltz Akaka Falls), tells a risqué tale of a spurned lover. This piece was another of Gabby’s best loved signature tunes. He performed and recorded it often. This recording again features his soulful leo kiçekiçe (falsetto singing) and was the most extended version he ever recorded. He also recorded it in the 1950s on the album THE BEST OF HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY WITH GABBY PAHINUI (Waikiki Records 340). Mauna Loa was another of Gabby’s signature songs, as are most of the songs on this album. In fact, many of the songs Gabby recorded became signature songs and the definitive versions of those songs, as well as the standard way for many other slack key guitarists to play those pieces from then on. Gabby was truly one of the world’s greatest song interpreters of all time.

Another slack key version of this song with vocals has been recorded by:

- Cyril Pahinui, in the C Major Tuning (C-G-E-G-C-E), on his 1998 album NIGHT MOON (PO MAHINA) (Dancing Cat Records).

Other slack key guitarists who have recorded this song as an instrumental include:

- Leonard Kwan, in his F Wahine Tuning (C-F-C-G-C-E), on his 1995 album KEALA’S MELE (Dancing Cat Records).
- Ozzie Kotani, as part of a tribute medley to Gabby with çAhulili and I Ka Po Me Ke Ao, in the G Major Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), on his 1995 album KANI KI HOÇALU (THE SOUND OF SLACK KEY) (Dancing Cat Records).

10. `Ahulili (vocal)

Tuning: G Major “Taro Patch” (D-G-D-G-B-D), tuned down a half step to sound in the key of F#

Hawaiçi’s cowboys, na paniolo, have always been actively involved in slack key, especially on the Big Island and on the Island of Maui (the Niçihau slack key guitarist Malaki Kanahale, who will have an album out in the future on Dancing Cat Records, also was a paniolo). This Maui favorite, composed by Scott Haçi probably in the early 1900s, takes us to the ranches near Kaupo

where two suitors vie for the same woman. One, a paniolo, goes off to work faithfully. The other comes to visit the lady with a big bunch of freshly composed love songs. Which one will she choose? Gabby does beautiful leo ki'eki'eki (falsetto singing), yodeling, and paçani (instrumental breaks) as always.

According to Gabby's friend, the great singer and 'ukulele player Clyde "Kindy" Sproat, people from different areas around the Islands would come together, often for days, to share special occasions and family celebrations. Plenty of music was played at these gatherings, and folks would take turns sharing "identification" songs about such things as their occupations, including paniolo, fisherman, stevedore (longshoreman), and more; and/or about the area where they lived. The folks from Kaupo would often sing 'Ahulili, and Me Ka Nani A'o Kaupo (by Johnny Watkins), both of which allude to the prominent peak of Mauna Hape ("Happy Mountain"), an identifying feature of Kaupo. The town supported a thriving Hawaiian community for many years.

Kaupo means "night landing place", and is thought to be a reference to canoe travel, which was once so fundamental to the area's way of life. Kaupo was a thriving Hawaiian settlement for close to a thousand years, but after Western civilization came, the population was greatly reduced in the second half of the 1800's. When the nearby Kaupo Ranch was established in the late 1920's, it brought new employment and activity to the area. Although the Kaupo Ranch is still in operation today, the town itself became almost completely deserted by World War II and has never been repopulated, and it is now one of the most remote areas in Hawai'i.

Many people continue to visit (and hike through) the remote area of Kaupo, which is located along the Hana Coast and on the way to the majestic peak of Haleakala (which translates as "the house of the sun"). The great slack key guitarist, singer, and composer, Dennis Kamakahi said of 'Ahulili, in the liner notes of his 1996 Dancing Cat album PUA`ENA (GLOW BRIGHTLY): "This is my favorite, because I was taken one time by the cowboys of Kaupo Ranch up to 'Ahulili. We rode up the horse trail and when you sing on horseback, boy, you really get the feeling for this song."

There is so very much to be learned about the Hawai'i of many years ago through the chants and songs that continue to be sung and perpetuated today. Place names (such as Mauna Hape and 'Ahulili) have deep meanings in Hawaiian song, on many levels, in many different contexts, and they can have different meaning for different people. Some are certain that the names of landmarks (such as some of the mountain peaks and cinder cones between Kaupo and Haleakala) were given to star houses (constellations), and were included in navigational chants as memory cues, to aid ancient Hawaiian navigators in ocean travel.

Though today the coastline there is desert-like (partly due to the fact that the eastern slopes of Haleakala block the clouds, preventing much moisture from reaching the area), it is thought that many years ago, the area was more green and lush. When driving around the remote coast of Kaupo, one can still see evidence of the stone formations remaining from centuries ago, and some of the old churches from over 150 years ago are still standing.

Notice the use of the English word “beauty” at the end of the second verse, which is sung twice after the first instrumental guitar break and once after the second guitar break. This is a technique which was sometimes used by Hawaiian composers in the late 1800s and the early 1900s for purposes of expression, humor, or playfulness, and sometimes to imply their command of the English language. One of the best known songs which also uses this is Kaula ‘Ili, where the English words “Oh Never Mind” are stated (see the late slack key master Sonny Chillingworth’s version on his 1994 album SONNY SOLO on Dancing Cat Records).

Another take of this song appears later on this recording as a bonus track (song #16). Gabby also recorded it in the 1950s on the album THE BEST OF HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY – WITH GABBY PAHINUI (Waikiki 340).

Another slack key version of this song with vocals has been recorded by:

- Dennis Kamakahi, in the C Mauna Loa Tuning (C-G-E-G-A-E), on his 1996 album PUA`ENA (GLOW BRIGHTLY) (Dancing Cat Records).

Another slack key version of this song as an instrumental has been recorded by:

- Ozzie Kotani, as part of a tribute medley to Gabby, with the songs Mauna Loa and I Ka Po Me Ke Ao, in the G Major Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), on his 1995 album KANI KI HO`ALU (THE SOUND OF SLACK KEY) (Dancing Cat Records).

11. I Ka Po Me Ke Ao (vocal)

Tuning: C Mauna Loa (C-G-E-G-A-E), tuned down a half step to sound in the key of B

Often translated as “night and day”, this Lena Salis and Vicky Silva classic, composed in the 1930s, makes reference to the high art of flirting with the eyes. Another standard that Gabby brought into the slack key repertoire, it was later recorded by Ray Kane in the G Major Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D) on his 1994 album PUNAHELE (Dancing Cat Records). These two tunings, the G Major Tuning and the C Mauna Loa Tuning, are very versatile and interchangeable—a song played in one is often played in the other by another slack key guitarist, or even by the same guitarist, especially by slack key guitarists George Kuo and Dennis Kamakahi. Gabby, in the 1970s, played everything in the C Mauna Loa Tuning or in the C Wahine “Hiçilawe” Tuning, that he had played earlier in the G Major Tuning. One of the reasons he did this was so he would only have to retune one string on his guitar (the second string was tuned either to the B note for the C Wahine Tuning, and to the A note for the C Mauna Loa Tuning), during his many live performances with his band in the 1970s.

Notice the beautiful rapid frailing between the two highest pitched strings in the introduction and in his two instrumental solos, a technique often used in the Mauna Loa Tunings. Also note the beautiful thumb strums, as in Ki Hoçalu (song #2). This song has an interesting and unique use of the Major II chord (the D7th in the key of C), where it goes right back to the Tonic chord (C in this version), instead of going to the usual V chord (which would have been a G chord in the key of C). Gabby plays the D7 (the II chord) as a partial chord, rather than barring it with his

index finger for a full chord (he would use the barre chord if he was playing the D7 as a back-up chord in this tuning). Ray Kane uses the full Major II barre chord (the A7th in his version in the G Major Tuning). A barre is made by holding down the guitar strings with the index finger of the left hand placed across several or all of the strings on the same fret - the other fingers of the left hand also often fret other notes as well. The use of partial chords is common in the slack key tradition, creating a very strong unresolved tension to be resolved by the next chord. It is a testament to the genius of the slack key guitarists, to make it sound right to often have partial chords.

The other take from this recording session appears later as a bonus track (song #15). Gabby also recorded this song in the 1950s on the album **THE BEST OF HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY WITH GABBY PAHINUI** (Waikiki Records 340), and again in 1960 for the album **HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY, VOLUME I – WITH GABBY PAHINUI** (Waikiki Records 319).

Another slack key version of this song with vocals has been recorded by:

- Ray Kane, in the G Major Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), on his 1994 album **PUNAHELE** (Dancing Cat Records).

Another slack key version of this song as an instrumental has been recorded by:

- Ozzie Kotani, as part of a tribute medley to Gabby with Mauna Loa and `Ahulili, in the G Major Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), on his 1996 album **KANI KI HO`ALU (THE SOUND OF SLACK KEY)** (Dancing Cat Records).

12. Farewell Medley (Isa Lei /Aloha `Oe) (instrumental)

Tuning: F Wahine “Gabby’s F” (F-C-E-G-C-E), tuned down a half step to sound in the key of E)

Another beautiful medley arranged by Gabby, Farewell Medley begins with the Fijian traditional song of farewell, Isa Lei, which has circulated widely throughout Polynesia. The second song, Aloha çOe by Queen Liliçukalani, is the best known Hawaiian song in the world. Although Liliçu wrote it as a mele hoçoipoipo (love song) in 1878, it quickly became a favorite of departing travelers leaving Hawaiçi amid tears, flowers, and this deeply evocative tune.

Gabby performs Isa Lei and part of Aloha çOe entirely solo, something he sometimes did in his F Wahine Tuning, especially for song introductions. Sonny Nicholas and Danny Stewart come in on the bass and the çukulele for the second chorus of Aloha çOe, accompanying Gabby’s beautiful and hauntingly soulful frailing of the melody, which he plays in thirds on the two highest pitched strings, creating the same effect as falsetto vocals. Also notice Gabby’s whimsical use of the minor iv (the B flat minor) chords in the middle of both choruses and at the very end of the song (as well as very subtly at the end of Isa Lei earlier). Gabby also recorded a very different version of Aloha çOe, on steel guitar, as a medley with the song Hi’ilawe 1972, on his 1972 album **GABBY** (“the Brown Album”) on Panini Records 1002.

Other instrumental slack key versions of Aloha çOe have been recorded by:

- Ozzie Kotani, in a C Wahine Tuning (C-G-D-G-G-B), on his 2002 album TO HONOR A QUEEN (E HOÇOHIWAHIWA I KA MOÇI WAHINE) – THE MUSIC OF LILI’UOKALANI (Dancing Cat Records).
- George Kahumoku, playing two guitars: one in the G Major Tuning capoed up five frets to sound in the key of C; and the other one in the D Wahine Tuning (D-A-D-F# -A-C#) tuned down to the key of C, on his 1997 album DRENCHED BY MUSIC (Dancing Cat) - and two versions on his 1994 album E LILIÇU E (Kealia Farms Record Co.): One guitar is in a C Wahine Tuning (C-G-D-G-B-D)—and the second guitar is in the G Major Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), capoed up five frets to sound in the key of C; for the second version, both guitars are in the same tunings, but the first guitar is tuned down to the key of A flat, and the second guitar is capoed up one fret to sound in the key of A flat.
- Winston Tan, in the G Major Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), on his 1980s album TEA TIME AT THE MOANA (Rosewood & Silver Records).

The song Isa Lei has also been recorded with slack key guitar by:

- Bla Pahinui, in the Dropped D Tuning (D-A-D-G-B-D - capoed up two frets to sound in the key of E) as a solo instrumental on his 1997 album MANA (Dancing Cat Records); and as a vocal on the 1992 album THE PAHINUI BROS. (Panini Records).

GABBY PAHINUI SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

(Other slack key versions of the songs from the PURE GABBY album are listed for reference. Additionally, some of the albums listed are not primarily slack key recordings; on these albums, the songs where Gabby’s slack key guitar is prominently featured are listed.)

Gabby Pahinui

PURE GABBY – Recorded in 1961, issued in 1978

HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY, VOLUME I – WITH GABBY PAHINUI (Waikiki Records 319) – Includes Lei Nani and I Ka Po Me Ke Ao – 1960

HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY, VOLUME II – WITH GABBY PAHINUI (Waikiki Records 320) - Includes Moana Chimes (as a medley with Kaulana Na Pua and Kuwili – 1960

THE BEST OF HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY WITH GABBY PAHINUI (Waikiki Records 340) – Includes Hiçilawe, Mauna Loa, Wai O Ke Aniani, çAhulili, and I Ka Po Me Ke Ao – tracks from the 1950s

Gabby Pahinui with Eddie Kamae and The Sons of Hawai`i:

GABBY PAHINUI WITH THE SONS OF HAWAII (Hula Records 503) – Includes Wai`alae/Halona Medley – 1962

MUSIC OF OLD HAWAII (Hula Records 506) – 1964

THE FOLK MUSIC OF HAWAII – AN ISLAND HERITAGE (Panini Records 1001) – 1971

The Gabby Pahinui Hawaiian Band (with guitarists Atta Isaacs, Sonny Chillingworth, sons Cyril, and Martin Pahinui, and Ry Cooder):

GABBY (also known as “the Brown Album”) (Panini Records 1002) – Includes Hi`ilawe, Lihu`e, Lei Nani, Wai O Ke Aniani, and Aloha `Oe – 1972

THE RABBIT ISLAND MUSIC FESTIVAL (Panini Records 1004) – Includes Wai`alae – 1973

GABBY PAHINUI HAWAIIAN BAND, VOLUME 1 (Panini Records 1007) – 1975

GABBY PAHINUI HAWAIIAN BAND, VOLUME 2 (Panini Records 1008) – 1977

THE WAIMEA MUSIC FESTIVAL (Panini Records 1006) – Includes Hi`ilawe among five tracks by The Gabby Band, and also features other artists – 1974

BEST OF THE GABBY BAND 1972–1977 (Panini Records 1010) – Includes Hi`ilawe and Lei Nani

Gabby Pahinui with The Maile Serenaders:

HAWAII'S FAVORITE SLACK KEY & STEEL GUITAR, VOL. 2 (Formerly titled KANI KA PILA! VOLUME 2) (Hula Records 531) – Gabby's slack key guitar is featured on Nanea Kou Maka (I Ka Leçaleça) and Kahuli Aku (Peter Moon is also featured on slack key for Kananaka and `Ia `Oe E Ka La) – 1969

EVENING IN THE ISLANDS – THE MAILE SERENADERS (Hula Records 509) – Gabby's slack key guitar is featured on the song Pearly Shells – 1964

IN HAWAII THE STORY STARTS (Waikiki Records 334 – out-of-print) – Gabby's slack key guitar is featured on the songs Lei E (backing up vocalist Louis Akau), Meleana E, and Keawaiki – (Waikiki Records 334) - tracks from the 1950s

(the tracks Meleana E/ Keawaiki, edited together as a medley, and the track Lei E also appear on the anthology recording with various artists DUKE KAHANAMOKU'S FAVORITES (Waikiki Records 124 – out-of-print).

With Atta Isaacs

TWO SLACK KEY GUITARS (Tradewinds Records 1124) – 1969

Backing up Melveen Leed

MELVEEN WITH THE BEST OF SLACK KEY (Lehua Records 7046) – Gabby plays slack key guitar on the songs Pua Alani, Ka Manu, and Ka `Ūiwi Polena (Atta Isaacs, Sonny Chillingworth, and Led Kaapana also play on three songs each) – 1980

Backing up Sam Kahalewai

A LEI OF SONGS FROM SAM (Four Winds Recording 2001 – out-of-print) –probably 1960s

Backing up John Lukela

3 UKULELES (Waikiki Records 125)

Backing up Charles Miller, Jr.

DUKE KAHANAMOKU'S FAVORITES (Waikiki Records 124 – out-of-print) - backing up Charles Miller, Jr. on the song Maunakea

Backing up the Sunday Manoa

CRACKED SEED (Panini Records 1003) -Gabby plays steel guitar on Pa'au'au Waltz

Anthologies including Gabby Pahinui:

THE HISTORY OF SLACK KEY GUITAR – VINTAGE HAWAIIAN TREASURES VOL. 7 (Hana Ola Records 24000) – This compilation album contains Gabby's five earliest recorded tracks from the 1940s, including two versions of Hi`ilawe originally issued on Bell and Aloha Records, and the three other tracks from the Bell label, Ki Ho`alu, Hula Medley (with Nani Wale Lihuçe, Halona, and Wai`alae), and Wai O Ke Aniani. It also contains fifteen late 1940s and early 1950s tracks by eight other slack key guitarists.

“Best of” Albums

These two albums are compilations of five recordings on Hula Records (LP numbers): HS-503, HS-506, HS-531, HS-567 (the PURE GABBY album) and HS-517 (HS-517 actually features Atta Isaacs on slack key guitar rather than Gabby)

THE KING OF SLACK KEY – THE BEST OF GABBY PAHINUI–VOLUME I (Formerly titled KA MAKANA A PAHINUI (THE GIFT OF PAHINUI)) (Hula Records 578) – The songs Nani Koçolau, Ulili E, Kona Kai `Opuu, and He`eia actually feature Atta Isaacs on slack key guitar rather than Gabby.

THE BEST OF GABBY: VOLUME II (Hula Records 585) – Includes an interview of Gabby by Dave Guard from the same time as the PURE GABBY sessions.

BEST OF THE GABBY BAND 1972–1977 (Panini Records 1010)

VIDEO

GABBY PAHINUI, FAMILY, AND FRIENDS/ THE PAHINUI BROTHERS - Video documentary on the late founder of the modern slack key era along with a documentary of the making of the Pahinui Brothers' album.