

**Various Artists**  
**HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY CHRISTMAS**

**THE SONGS:**

**Program 1**

1. ***Jingle Bell Rock*** (instrumental)

*Ozzie Kotani:* 6 string steel string guitar in G Major "Taro Patch" Tuning (D–G–D–G–B–D)

Though it began life as a simple, Elvis-inspired novelty song by Joe Beal and Jim Boothe in 1957, **Jingle Bell Rock** outlived the brief rock-a-billy era to become a perennial Christmas standard. It reappears faithfully every holiday season in a variety of guises, from the Bobby Helms original to lush orchestrations, and now a *ki ho'alu* arrangement by the noted performer and slack key teacher Ozzie Kotani.

2. ***Joy to the World*** (instrumental)

*Moses Kahumoku:* Nylon string guitar in G Major "Taro Patch" Tuning tuned down to F#

This grandly uplifting classic, still a favorite for group singing, started surfacing in British hymnals in the 1830s. For the melody, Lowell Mason freely adapted material from Handel's **Messiah**. He borrowed the text from one of Protestantism's greatest poets, Isaac Watts. It has been translated into Hawaiian, most familiarly as **Pomaika'i Wale, Ko Ke Ao** (A Freely Given Blessing to the World). Moses Kahumoku's version features nice variations, especially in the use of harmony parts of the main melody.

3. ***Silver Bells*** (instrumental)

*Led Kaapana:* 6 string steel string guitar in G Major "Taro Patch" Tuning

Led Kaapana chose this Ray Evans and Jay Livingston pop carol, written in 1950, for its attractive melody and the clever call response section, which he beautifully dramatizes with chimes. A staple of slack key, this method of creating harmonics involves gently touching a string with the fretting hand, then releasing it while plucking with the picking hand.

4. ***Away in a Manger*** (instrumental)

*Keola Beamer:* Nylon and steel string guitars in "Keola's C" Wahine Tuning (C–G–D–G–B–E). The nylon string guitar plays the main melody in the key of C. The steel string guitar is played in the key of G and capoed up 5 frets to sound in the key of C.

Often credited to German religious reformer Martin Luther, **Away in a Manger** reinforces the images of purity, love and humility at the heart of the first Christmas celebration. Keola Beamer's spirited version features his trademark way of creating arrangements for two complimentary guitars.

5. ***Mele Kalikimaka Ia 'Oe*** (*Merry Christmas to You*) (instrumental)  
*George Kuo*: 6 string steel string guitar in G Major "Taro Patch" Tuning tuned down to F

Composed by the late, great slack key guitarist Aunty Alice Ku'u-lei-aloha-poina-'ole Namakelua (1892–1986) and the late great Hawaiian scholar and teacher Mary Kawena Pukui (1895-1986), **Mele Kalikimaka Ia 'Oe** (*Merry Christmas to You*) celebrates the aloha that springs up around the world in the holiday season. It debuted on the Noelani Mahoe's album HAWAIIAN CHRISTMAS (Tradewinds 2200), with slack key guitar by the late Leland "Atta" Isaacs (1930–1983) in his C Major Tuning (C–G–E–G–C–E). George Kuo's version here, in the G Major Tuning, shows his great improvisational ability with his many variations on this beautiful, simple, yet profound melody.

6. ***My Hawaiian Christmas*** (vocal)  
*Dennis Kamakahi*: 6 string steel string guitar in C Mauna Loa Tuning (C–G–E–G–A–E) tuned down to the key of B

Surf instructors, outrigger canoe paddlers, friends to all, the legendary beach boys of Waikiki are also often times excellent musicians. This original Christmas song by longtime beach boy Parker Cummings expresses the uniqueness of Christmas in the Islands. Dennis Kamakahi dedicates this beautiful vocal version *me ke aloha pumehana* (with warm love) to the late longtime bandmate Joe Marshall (1929-1993), bassist for the Sons of Hawai'i.

7. ***Jingle Bells*** (instrumental)  
*Led Kaapana*: Django 6 string steel string guitar in G Major "Taro Patch" Tuning  
*Bob Brozman*: Acoustic National steel guitar in G Major "Taro Patch" Tuning

Now closely associated with Christmas, **Jingle Bells** actually dates back to an 1857 Thanksgiving pageant in Boston. Sunday School teacher James Pierpont wrote the song, one of those rare perfect matches of imagery, music and mood. Vickie I'i Rodrigues, Ronald Brown and others have written Hawaiian language versions.

Dashing through the surf, this rollicking duet evolved out of one of the many legendary jams sessions involving another perfect match, slack key virtuoso Led Kaapana and steel guitar wizard Bob Brozman. "We took a break in the middle of otherwise more serious session work," says Bob. "It was totally spontaneous with a spirit of fun."

## **Program 2**

8. ***Winter Wonderland*** (instrumental)  
*Cindy Combs*: 6 string steel string guitar in "Keola's C" Wahine Tuning (C–G–D–G–B–E)

Composed in 1934 by Felix Bernard and Dick Smith, **Winter Wonderland** is one in a long line of Tin Pan Alley pop songs that use snow to symbolize the Christmas holiday. George Kuo and Barney Isaacs recorded a pure slack key and steel duet for [KI HO'ALU](#)

[CHRISTMAS](#) (Dancing Cat 38037). Cindy Comb's version shows her trademark use of chord structures, and some of her jazz influence.

9. *The First Noel* (instrumental)

*Ozzie Kotani*: Baby nylon string guitar in G Major "Taro Patch" Tuning tuned up to B

Possibly of French origin, **The First Noel** first began appearing in print in the 1820s, described merely as traditional. Whatever its source, it remains one of the most hauntingly beautiful melodies of the Christmas season. Ozzie Kotani here plays it on a small-size, nylon string guitar with a shorter neck than normal, thus the higher pitch. His version is influenced some by the great guitarist Jose Feliciano, and is very evocative of being deep in a forest on a winter night.

10. *O Come All Ye Faithful* (instrumental)

*Bla Pahinui*: 6 string steel string guitar in "Dropped D" Tuning (D–A–D–G–B–E) capoed up 2 frets to the key of E

Song detectives trace the Latin original, **Adeste Fideles**, to a British Catholic hymnal published in the mid-18th Century. Music teacher John Francis Wade is credited as lyricist and composer, though both words and music may be derived, at least in part, from older, anonymous sources. Around 1860, Frederick Oakeley translated the lyrics into the more commonly sung English version. A few years later, Lorenzo Lyons drafted the Hawaiian text, **Ho'onani Kakou Iaia**. Bla Pahinui's beautiful version shows his trademark intro and interludes between the verses, his subtle rhythmic pulse, and his great use of chords.

11. *Holy! Holy! Holy!* (instrumental)

*George Kahumoku*: 12 string guitar in G Major "Taro Patch" Tuning

Reginald Heber crafted the melody in the early 19th Century. John Dykes contributed the text a few years later. Longtime *kahu* (pastor) at Kaumakapili Church, Samuel Keala, crafted the Hawaiian version **He Hemolele 'Oe, Iehova**. George Kahumoku's 12 string guitar version here, using drone effects, has a subtle yet powerful bagpipe influence.

12. *We Wish You Merry Christmas* (vocal)

*Leonard Kwan*: 6 string steel string guitar in "Leonard's F" Wahine Tuning (C–F–C–G–C–E) tuned down to the key of Eb

*Keikis*: Valerie Ancog, Renee Aquino, Alfred Omar Guerrero, Danny Gutu, Jessica Kishimoto, Jonette Natividad-Kiko and Christian Pasion, directed by Ruth Komatsu

One of slack key's three most most influential guitarists ever, Leonard Kwan made his public singing debut, after more than fifty years as an instrumentalist (!), on the 1995 album [KE'ALA'S MELE](#) (Dancing Cat 38004). For this charming *hana hou* (encore), he shares a rare family song written by his uncle, David Hauole, which features the *keikis* of the "Kalihi-Kai School 'Ukulele Club."

13. ***O Holy Night*** (vocal)

*Joanie Komatsu*: 6 string steel string guitar in G Major "Taro Patch" Tuning and vocals  
*Ruth Komatsu*: Alto recorder

First published in Paris in 1847, **Cantique de Noel** was written by classical composer Adolphe Adam and poet Cappeau de Roquemaure. Within a few years, an English language text appeared, by American preacher John Sullivan Dwight. A century later, Kawaia Ha'o Church Assistant Minister of Music, Louise Pohina Tolles, translated it into Hawaiian as **Po Hemolele**. Joanie Komatsu's beautiful guitar part is influenced by Ozzie Kotani and Ruth Komatsu adds her always beautiful vocal-sounding recorder.

14. ***Auld Lang Syne*** (instrumental)

*Cyril Pahinui*: 12 string guitar in Open D Major Tuning (D–A–D–F#–A–D)  
*Bob Brozman*: Acoustic National steel guitar in G Major "Taro Patch" Tuning playing in the key of D

Scottish poet Robert Burns described the melody on which he based his famous text as "an old song, which has often thrilled through my soul." However, the melody he had in mind is not this one, which George Thomson preferred and published in his classic 1799 compendium SCOTTISH AIRS. Strict accuracy has never been the hallmark of folk tradition, so Thomson's editorial over-ride continues to circulate with the Burns lyrics, which have been translated into Hawaiian several times, by Queen Lili'uokalani and others. Cyril Pahinui and Bob Brozman interpret this song beautifully, using a whimsical introduction.

Liner notes by Jay W. Junker and George Winston

Produced by George Winston

Engineered by Howard Johnston

Additional engineering by Justin Lieberman and Porter Miller

Mastered by Bernie Grundman at Bernie Grundman Mastering in Los Angeles, CA

Graphic design by Nelson Makua

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**MAHALOS**

Ruth Komatsu, Keala Kwan, Jr., Mike Souza and all the artists.