

LINER NOTES

Ledward Kaapana

Led Live - Solo

Born in 1948, sixth of ten children, Ledward Kaapana grew up in the remote village of Kalapana on the extreme south shore of the Big Island of Hawai'i. "We didn't have television or even much radio," Led says, "so we entertained ourselves. You could go to any house and everyone was playing music. Even today when I play *ki ho'alu* (Hawaiian slack key guitar), I picture all the *'ohanas* (families) getting together and sharing their songs and their aloha."

Led's family produced many excellent musicians, including his father George, his mother, the noted singer Tina Kaapana, and his uncle, one of *ki ho'alu*'s true legends, Fred Punahoa. Led began experimenting with music at an early age. At around six, he began playing guitar and 'ukulele, then added autoharp, bass and steel guitar. "Back then," he says, "no one would tell you what to do. You had to catch on by example." This very traditional Hawaiian method stresses *Nana Ka Maka* (observe with the eye), *Ho'olohe ka pepeia* (listen carefully), *Ho'opili* (imitate someone who has mastered what you wish to learn) and *pa'a ka waha* (don't interrupt your teachers, concentrate on what they're showing you).

Ledward exemplifies the ideal end result of this time-honored instructional method. A strongly motivated musician with an excellent ear, great fluidity, a thorough knowledge of his instrument, a distinctive style and a clearly communicated, highly contagious love for what he does, Ledward Kaapana has been one of Hawai'i's hardest working and most popular guitarists. He began his professional career in the early 1970s with his acclaimed family group Hui 'Ohana, which featured his twin brother Nedward on bass, and cousin Dennis Pavao on rhythm guitar, also one of Hawai'i's premier *leo ki'eki'e* (falsetto) singers. Hui 'Ohana traveled extensively throughout Hawai'i and French Polynesia, and recorded many albums into the 1980s. Led went on to record four albums with his trio, I Kona (named after the song by the same name), and also two slack key albums.

Led increasingly takes his music around the world, and for the past several years has gone on the Masters of the Steel String Guitar tours sponsored by the National Council for the Traditional Arts. "I love to travel," Led says, "especially to share Hawaiian music and to hear other styles of music." He remains steadfastly committed to the style and spirit of *na kupuna* (the elders) who instilled in him a deeply felt love for *ki ho'alu*. "I play from within." Led explains. "I feel the music and try to make people happy. Sometimes I think I'm enjoying myself more than the audience. I'm having a heck of a time laughing and talking story. That's the way I learned to do it." LED LIVE - SOLO, his first solo recording, will please his many fans and will introduce one of Hawai'i's most gifted musicians, his songs and, perhaps more importantly, his aloha to a whole new legion of admirers.

ABOUT THE SONGS

Set One

1. *Salomila* (instrumental)

As either an instrumental or with an adult text that ends each verse with *'oni e 'oni e* (wiggle), this traditional song represents the sounds of a typical Kalapana community party. "At home we had parties just about every weekend. The adults would sing this *kolohe* (rascal) song in the backyard after chasing us kids away," Led recalls, "but we would sneak up on them and listen. I picked up the melody from my dad and my uncles, Fred Punahoa and Marshall, Randy and Abraham Konanui. They all played good *ki ho'alu*."

Because Led didn't have his own instruments, he would wait until the adults would put down theirs. "Uncle Fred knew I wanted to do what he just did on his guitar, so without me seeing it, he would slack one string, then leave the room. I'd sneak over and try to play like him, but no matter what I did, it would sound different. Meanwhile, he'd be outside listening and laughing. Finally at about age eight I figured out what he was up to, and I started slacking another string on him! He saw that and said, 'Oh, man, you got it, huh?' He stopped playing tricks on me and I got to play with him more and more."

Led plays **Salomila** in a high pitched C Mauna Loa tuning (G-C-E-G-A-E, sometimes called "B flat tuning" since the lowest two pitched strings are tuned up high and the whole guitar is often tuned down to the key of B flat to accommodate this). Mauna Loa tunings are based on a major chord with the top two (thinnest) strings tuned a 5th interval apart. This way these two strings can be played in 6th intervals (as the 1st and thicker 3rd string usually are in several tunings), producing the recognizably sweet Mauna Loa sound. The top two strings can also be "frailed" (strummed) rapidly with the index finger, producing another characteristic sound of this tuning.



Ledward Kaapana - 1994

2. *Na Ka Pueo* (vocal)

Often attributed to Samuel Kaea, this rollicking love song declares the feelings of a sailor serving onboard the boat mentioned in the title. Named for an area on Maui, which is named for the Hawaiian owl (*pueo*), the ship plies the waters between the valley isle and Mamala, an old name for Honolulu. As the text puts it, *Na ka Pueo-kahi ke aloha* (from the Pueo-kahi comes love).

A frequently performed classic, **Na Ka Pueo** showcases both Led's dazzling fretwork in a C Wahine tuning (C-G-D-G-B-D - the guitar is capoed up to the 5th fret to sound in the key of F, and fingered in the keys of C and G, producing the sounds of the keys of F and B flat with the capo on. Wahine refers to a tuning that contains a major 7th note) and his mastery of *leo ki'eki'e*, the Hawaiian art of falsetto singing. Although the exact origins of *leo ki'eki'e* are unknown, experts cite *himeni* (hymn) singing, Mexican *paniolo* (cowboy) yodeling, European countertenor and *oli kahiko* (ancient style a cappella chant). Many aspects of this 1,000-plus year old tradition live on in Hawaiian singing. Major examples of vocal manipulation you often hear include *'i'i* (vibrato trill), *ha'i* (break between registers), *he'u* (deep throated sound) and *eaea* (elongated vowels). Hawaiian singers like Ledward still frequently glide up to pitch, and exercise various volume and breath controls, all practices retained from traditional chant.

"I learned this song from David Chun in 1963. I liked the falsetto and yodeling David was doing. Once in awhile David and his *hanai* (adopted) brother Uncle Joe Keawe would sing falsetto together - it was awesome. That's how I really got involved in doing it myself. To me it's easier than regular singing."

3. *He Aloha No 'O Honolulu* (instrumental)

By *kumu hula* (hula teacher) and *haku mele* (composer) Lot Kauwe, this popular classic details an event-filled voyage from Honolulu to Kona. Led's instrumental version in G Major (Taro Patch) tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D) recalls his father's style. "He played with a thumb pick and three metal finger picks. A lot of the songs I play come from him with a little of my own ad libs thrown in." Although Led cites his *'ohana* as his main influence, he also enjoyed listening to records by *ki ho'alu* performers such as Leonard Kwan and Gabby Pahinui. He also readily absorbed other styles of guitar. "I listened to the Ventures a lot," he says, "and learned songs like **Pipeline, Walk Don't Run and Sleepwalk.**" Led also enjoyed country guitarists like Chet Atkins and Roy Clark and jazz guitarists like Wes Montgomery. "Ned and I were the only kids at school that would carry our instruments into class. While other kids would play baseball at recess, we'd sit on the steps jamming."

4. *Radio Hula* (instrumental)

Lizzie Kahau Alohikea, longtime singer with the Royal Hawaiian Band, wrote this *mele hula* (lyrics for set rhythm, instrumental accompaniment and choreographed

movement based on the text) in the 1920s to celebrate the arrival of commercial radio broadcasts in Hawai'i. It was extensively reworked by Uncle Fred Punahoa. Led recalls, "I used to go with him to parties all the time in Hilo and we used to play it back and forth. He'd take one, then give me the signal and I'd take one." Aside from his playing, Uncle Fred was also well known for his entertaining tricks. "He would play with a paper bag tied to his fretting hand. He'd also play with his teeth, his nose...he could even take off his shoes and play with his feet. He said he dreamed for seven nights in a row that a man dressed in white with a red sash was standing under a tree showing him how to do all this. Then one day he told his father about the dreams and they never came back. Otherwise, he says, he would have learned how to play with his eyelashes!" Ledward loves to entertain and he, too, occasionally brings out the paper bag at parties or concerts.

Played here in G Major Taro Patch tuning, this was the first tuning Led taught himself. "It's one of the easiest to learn," he says, "because the strings all relate so closely to one another. One finger on the high string is all you need to play a basic melody, or throughout the whole song you can just bar the chords. It sounds pretty full even that way. Then, with practice, you can go from there to do more things, like hammer ons, chimes (harmonics) and all the other things that make *ki ho'alu* unique."

5. *Ku'u Ipo Onaona* (instrumental)

Ku'u ipo onaona means "my lovely sweetheart." This very affectionate term can often be heard in conversation and finds its way into countless Hawaiian songs. Led plays this extensive reworking of Maddy Lam's composition, another he learned from Uncle Fred Punahoa, in G Taro Patch tuning. Many of the songs Led learned from his uncle remain favorites.

Led made sure at least one or two *ki ho'alu* songs wound up on every Hui 'Ohana album. "Looking back, though," Led says, "I see now that I speeded up the tempo on some of them for some reason. When I used to play back home on the Big Island, I kept more to the old style, smooth and slow; but in the studio with Hui 'Ohana I picked up the pace. Maybe it was the fast life of Honolulu." Led adds, "I like this song for its nice bouncy rhythm, especially how I play it now; not too fast...just right."

6. *Ka'a Ahi Kahului* (vocal)

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the steam locomotive found its way into countless musical cultures throughout the world. Musicians integrated its distinctive rhythms into their playing, singers and harmonica players imitated its many sounds, composers celebrated its remarkable capacity to link distant communities or conjure up adventure. July 29, 1879, marked the arrival of passenger train service to Hawai'i, when the Kahului Railroad Company of Maui began running from Kahului to Wailuku.

Because King David Kalakaua encouraged railroad construction in Hawai'i, Kalakaua-

era enthusiast Palani Vaughan wrote this song in the early 1970s. The second verse honors King Kalakaua and the chorus contains the onomatopoeic phrase, "chuku chuku" to simulate the sound of the engine. The rhythm recreates the steady beat of a train as it runs across the rails *kuehu aku ma ke alahao* (stirring up dust along the track). "I kind of muffle the string with my right hand to create the train sound," Led says. Tuning: Standard tuning (E-A-D-G-B-D), played in the keys of F and C.

7. *E Lili'u E* (instrumental)

Led plays this John Kaulia and Charles E. King adaptation of a traditional chant in the same C Mauna Loa tuning as **Salomila**. He learned it from Uncle Fred and uses it to display many of his characteristic style features. "I change my style all the time but I never forget the roots," Led says. "In the end I always go back to the simple way I remember my dad and my uncles played *ki ho'alu*. They had a certain rhythm and little sweet things, little licks and harmonies. It's hard to describe, but so easy to feel. You have to feel it to play *ki ho'alu*. Maybe that's why it's a little different every time."

8. *Whee Ha Swing* (instrumental)

Ki ho'alu master Sonny Chillingworth (born 1932), created this virtuosic vehicle to test the mettle of slack key guitarists. In G Wahine tuning (D-G-D-F#-B-D), Led offers his version to honor Sonny, one of the guitarists he most admires. "I saw Sonny play this in 1965 and I was amazed at his fingers. I sat down and tried to learn it the next day. I can always tell when it's him from his picking style and when he starts to slap the guitar like an *ipu* (gourd drum). I love his vocal style too, that vibrato."

Set Two

9. *Glass Ball Slack Key* (instrumental)

Sometimes called **Chicken in the Straw** by Led, this traditional song illustrates his prowess on the 'ukulele, which he plays here in a standard 'ukulele tuning. The relative pitches (G-C-E-A from the lowest-pitched string to the highest), are the same as the top four pitches of Standard tuning on guitar (D-G-B-E), but tuned up to the key of C. Led fingers it in the key of G, thus sounding in the key of C. The 'ukulele arrived in Hawai'i in 1878 with the Portuguese, who call it the *braguinha*. Adopted by King David Kalakaua and his court, it picked up its new name (literally, 'jumping flea'). Hawaiian musicians found it ideal for accompanying the voice and for keeping traditional hula rhythm. Today, the 'ukulele continues to flourish in its adopted home of Hawai'i. Local musicians such as Eddie Kamae, Eddie Bush, Lyle Ritz, Ohta-san, Byron Yasui and Troy Fernandez, perpetuate the tradition of hot playing on the "jumping flea."

10. *'Opihi Moemoe* (instrumental)

Leonard Kwan's classic tune about the sleeping limpet has been a favorite of Led's since he first heard it on the radio years ago. "It brings back a lot of memories for me. It's real *nahenahe* (relaxing), very soft and sweet. I learned it when I first heard it in the '60s. It was popular on the Big Island, and everywhere we went, people would ask us to play it. It was a great honor to finally meet Leonard at the annual Gabby Pahinui and Atta Isaacs Slack Key Festival a few years back." With his own ad libs as always, Led plays this slack key standard in G Major tuning, as Leonard did for his extremely influential early 1960s recording, **SLACK KEY** (the red album) on Tradewinds Records (5503).

11. ***Mauna Loa Slack Key*** (instrumental)

"When I was young my uncle Fred told me you can play slack key in Standard tuning. He said, 'It's easy, jus' press the right strings.' 'Jus' press' was something he would always tell us when we'd ask him a question. One time when we were playing I asked him, 'Uncle Fred, what key is this?' He told me, 'Boy, no worry what key, jus' press.'"

Fred Punahoa only recorded once two songs live at the 1974 WAIMEA MUSIC FESTIVAL (Panini Records 1006), including this song, under the name **Slack Key Instrumental #2**. Like Uncle Fred, Led loves to challenge himself and delight his audiences by taking a few risks with his playing. He'll play **Mauna Loa Slack Key** to illustrate how Hawaiians mix poi. "What I do," Led says, "is play for awhile, then reach over the neck and start rubbing my forearm across the bass string. It takes practice to keep playing in time and hitting the right notes. After each run, I like to use my fingers to make the 'shaka' sign or the 'peace' sign. People enjoy that and I get a big kick out of it too." It is played here in Standard tuning in the key of A.

12. ***Silver Strings*** (instrumental)

Led also learned this Mainland song by Eben Rex and Hart Dankas, from Leonard Kwan's recording on Tradewinds Records. "We used to go to restaurants on the Big Island," Led recalls, "and this would be on the jukebox along with Auntie Genoa Keawe's records, Johnny Almeida, all the greats." Also known as **Silver Threads Among the Gold**, the song illustrates the strong cultural exchange that has existed between Hawaiian and American Mainland music for over 170 years. Led plays **Silver Strings** in the C Wahine tuning so favored by Leonard Kwan (C-G-D-G-B-D, capoed to the 5th fret to sound in the key of F). "It's got a nice melody, very *nahenahe*."

13. ***Ki ho'alu*** (instrumental)

This traditional melody shows up with distinctive variations in the repertoire of many *ki ho'alu* masters under a variety of names. For example, Sonny Chillingworth has recorded a similar song, **Malasadas**, in G Wahine tuning, on his albums WAIMEA COWBOY (Mahalo Records 4011) and on SONNY SOLO (Dancing Cat Records 38005, as a medley with **Charmarita**). Led plays **Ki ho'alu** in G Wahine tuning with

his own distinctive ad libs.

14. **Hi'ilawe** (vocal)

A traditional song that invariably reminds many Hawaiian music lovers of Gabby Pahinui, **Hi'ilawe** describes a love affair in the once-flourishing community of Waipi'o at the foot of two waterfalls, Hi'ilawe and Waio'ulu. "This was Gabby's signature song," Led says, "and like everybody else, I love his style, his voice, his way of picking, everything. First time I saw him I came to Honolulu in 1963 or '64. Around 1972 we would go to his house down in Waimana and jam. He's another one, you know, when you're growing up you hear his records and then, when you get the opportunity to meet him, it's really an honor. My mom and dad used to do **Hi'ilawe** all the time back in Kalapana. She sang and he played *ki ho'alu*. Once in awhile he would slap on the guitar while picking and make it sound like a drum. For me, playing it brings back memories of them." Led plays it here in Standard tuning, key of C.

15. **I Kona** (vocal)

Perhaps his best known song, **I Kona** has become a staple of Led's live performances. Credited to George Kelepolo, this *mele pana* (song of place) praises Kona on the west coast of the Big Island of Hawai'i. "To me it expresses love for the *'ailana* (island), for everybody in Kona and for everybody who enjoys it."

Notes written by Jay W. Junker and George Winston.

Ledward Kaapana's Tunings:

On this album:

1. **G Major (Taro Patch) [D-G-D-G-B-D]** for all songs except the ones mentioned below.
2. **G Wahine [D-G-D-F#-B-D]** for Whee Ha Swing and Ki ho'alu.
3. **C Wahine [C-G-D-G-B-D]** for Na Ka Pueo, Silver Strings and I Kona.
4. **C Mauna Loa [G-C-E-G-A-E]** (sometimes tuned down to the key of B flat for Salomila and E Lili'u E.
5. **Standard [E-A-D-G-B-E, from low- to high-pitched string]** for Ka'a Ahi Kahului, Mauna Loa Slack Key and Hi'ilawe.

Other tunings used by Led:

6. **C-G-D-G-B-E** - a different C Wahine tuning
 7. **G-C-E-G-B-D** - another C Wahine tuning
 8. **D-A-D-F#-B-C#** - a D Wahine tuning
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