

Various Artists

HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY GUITAR MASTERS INSTRUMENTAL COLLECTION

1. *Panini Pua Kea*

Cyril Pahinui

*With a distinctive, magical sense of rhythm and improvisation, Cyril continues to advance the musical legacy of his father, the legendary Gabby Pahinui (1921-80), and Gabby's friend and performing partner, slack key guitarist Leland "Atta" Isaacs (1931-82). Since beginning his professional career around the age of 12, he has shared his talents, traditions and aloha with many of Hawai'i's best known performers. His striking original compositions and powerful interpretations of timeless Hawaiian pieces reflect this history, and place this gifted musician in the ranks of today's most acclaimed guitarists.*

**From the album 6 & 12 STRING SLACK KEY**

Closely identified with Gabby, this musical favorite attributed to mandolinist, composer and bandleader Johnny Almeida describes the effects on the heart of tasting the honey of a *panini pua kea* (white cactus flower). Cyril plays it in the C Major tuning he learned from Atta Isaacs (C-G-E-G-C-E, from the lowest- to highest-pitched string) on a 12-string Martin, which is his favorite. "I like the 12-string for the octaves," he says. "It was also my dad's favorite. He did more magic on it."

Like jazz musicians, many *ki ho'alu* players like to quote from other songs when they notice a similarity in melody or structure. "In this recording," Cyril says, "I added some licks from **Hame Pila**. The two are pretty close in melody; it's just going back and forth with a lot of triple plucking and single plucking. Just go with the flow."

2. *Ku'u Kika Kahiko (My Old Guitar)*

Ozzie Kotani

*Ozzie Kotani is one of contemporary ki ho'alu's leading teachers and composers, preserving and expanding upon the slack key tradition learned from the masters with whom he studied, especially Sonny Chillingworth. His unique style, instantly recognizable to ki ho'alu aficionados, incorporates a wide variety of techniques and influences, including his distinctive four-finger picking, developed through years of experimentation*

**From the album KANI KI HO'ALU**

Ozzie composed **Ku'u Kika Kahiko** in 1990 on the guitar the title refers to. "My sister had this old beach guitar," he says. "It had a big chip in the back of the body and a big crack by the sound hole, but the sound was nice and deep. Earlier I'd played all steel string, but this nylon was not bad. Next thing you know, I was playing it quite a bit."

In C6th Mauna Loa tuning (C-G-E-G-A-E), **Ku'u Kika Kahiko** features Ozzie's trademark alternating bass, which evokes the sound of an acoustic bass player. "A lot of my early compositions sounded more contemporary," Ozzie says, "but here I really try to

center into the *ki ho'alu* sound and use some of the characteristic techniques." Ozzie recorded this on his beloved old beach guitar, and the song's end features two more of Ozzie's musical signatures; beautiful rolling cascades and an altered chord progression.

### 3. *Pokahkuloa*

#### Moses Kahumoku

*A pillar of Big Island slack key for the past few decades, Moses is a powerful improviser and a gifted composer. Making his living primarily as a fisherman and farmer, he is perhaps best known outside of his home island for his performances and recordings with his brother George as The Kahumoku Brothers.*

#### **From the album HO'OKUPU "THE GIFT"**

Moses plays this original composition on a nylon string guitar in G Major tuning, also known as Open G or Taro Patch (D-G-D-G-B-D). It showcases his trademark ballad style, particularly in the way he uses his thumb to sound the chord after he picks the melody.

The song expresses many Hawaiian's feeling about a beautiful place high on the side of the Mauna Kea volcano. "Pohakuloa has lava rock, native plants and animals and great *mana* (power), but the US military was using it for bombing practice," Moses relates. "The song was written in 1978 when I was hiking the area. It was written with the feeling, the sadness, that they were bombing our land."

Moses interjects a sense of hope into this version of the song, communicating the good news that the bombing has now stopped, while Pohakuloa and *aloha 'aina* (love of the land) live on.

### 4. *Ke'ala's Mele*

#### Leonard Kwan

*Leonard Ke'ala Kwan combines a solid family musical background with a firm grounding in Western music theory. Although he seldom appears in public, his recordings, arrangements and instruction book have influenced many, many players, among them Ledward Kaapana, Peter Moon and George Kuo. He is a recipient of the Bank of Hawai'i's Ki Ho'alu Lifetime Achievement Award, and in 1994 was designated a Living Treasure of the City and County of Honolulu.*

*Although Leonard is best known for playing and recording on an old Gibson F hole electric guitar, on the album KE'ALA'S MELE, he plays solo on a Martin acoustic.*

#### **From the album KE'ALA'S MELE**

Leonard's middle name, Ke'ala, translates as "sweet" or "fragrant," and *mele* means "song," or "story and song." In this epic original, the title track to Leonard's first album in over twenty years, he tells a profound story using many of his favorite musical phrases. He plays in his trademark C Wahine tuning (C-G-D-G-B-D), which has become known among slack key guitarists as "Leonard's C."

5. *Maui Medley*

**Barney Isaacs (acoustic steel guitar) & George Kuo (slack key guitar)**

*Barney Isaacs is a member of the celebrated Isaacs family, which includes his late brother, influential slack key guitarist Leland "Atta" Isaacs. After learning steel guitar from his father, Alvin Kaleolani Isaacs, he went on to develop his own unique steel guitar style, becoming one of Hawai'i's most versatile and active performers. Barney's recording credits number in the hundreds, including his well-known recordings on electric steel with slack key guitarist Gabby Pahinui's band in the late 1950s on Waikiki Records*

*This medley was recorded by Barney on acoustic steel guitar, accompanied by slack key guitarist George Kuo (see track #10). The recording is a milestone, marking the first time in recording history that acoustic steel guitar has been recorded in duets with slack key.*

**From the album HAWAIIAN TOUCH**

On this piece, Barney plays in the key of G, in the A minor 7th tuning (C-E-G-A-C-E), while George plays in G Major tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D). The medley includes some of Maui's best-known songs: **Ke 'Ala O Ka Rose** (variously attributed to Daniel Ka'opio and Joseph Kelley), **Ka Loke** (Mary Heanu and Johnny Noble), **Roselani Blossoms** (John K. Almeida), **Hanohano Olinda** (traditional), **Kilakila 'O Haleakala** (Charles E. King), and ends with the rousing march tune, **Maui Chimes** (Samuel Kapu/John Kalapana), sometimes referred to as **Maui No Ka 'Oi** (Maui Is the Best).

6. *Moe 'Uhane*

**Sonny Chillingworth**

*One of Hawai'i's three most influential slack key guitarists (along with Gabby Pahinui and Leonard Kwan), Edwin Bradfield "Sonny" Chillingworth, Jr. (1932-94) embodied the legend of the paniolo (Hawaiian cowboy). Known as "the Waimea Cowboy," he is fondly remembered for his boundless creativity, his personal warmth, and simple courage.*

*In Hawai'i's multicultural environment, Sonny's curiosity and incredible ear for melody led him to experiment with American jazz, country and pop, as well as Portuguese, Mexican, Spanish, and Polynesian songs, influencing his legendary slack key guitar style. The extent of his contribution to Hawaiian music was recognized in 1992, when he was awarded the Bank of Hawai'i Na Hoku Lifetime Award for Slack Key Guitar.*

**From the album SONNY SOLO**

Sonny received this song in a dream (*moe 'uhane* is the Hawaiian word for "dream"). "The melody was so haunting," he said, "that it woke me up and I had to put it on tape before I forgot it." He said that he had received other songs in dreams as well, but this was the first one he managed to get down in a finished form. He plays here in the G Major tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D).

7. *Kalena Kai*

**Keola Beamer (with George "Keeki" Winston)**

*Keola Beamer is one of Hawai'i's premier slack key guitarists, singer/songwriters, arrangers and composers, and he has always been a strong advocate for ki ho'alu. His*

*well of talent springs from five generations in one of Hawai'i's most illustrious musical families, who trace their roots to the 15th century.*

*On WOODEN BOAT, Keola is joined by a select group of musicians, resulting in an uplifting mix of contemporary and traditional Hawaiian music, with flavors of calypso, Island rhythm and pure slack key. On this slack key duet, he is joined by guitarist/pianist George Winston.*

**From the album [WOODEN BOAT](#)**

According to Hawaiian history, **Kalena Kai** was written in the early 1900s by Charles E. King. He called it **Bath House**, because there was a favorite bathing place that Hawaiians enjoyed, near an area called Watertown on the island of O'ahu. The setting is oceanside, and Keola and Keoki give it the happy treatment of a fun-filled outing. In this instrumental slack key arrangement, the guitarists extend a special aloha to Sonny Chillingworth for his everlasting contributions to slack key guitar. (This piece is sometimes credited to John Kalapana.)

Keola plays this in an F Wahine tuning (C-F-C-G-C-E). George plays eight string guitar (tuned G-C-D-G-D-G-B-D, tuned down one full step to sound in the key of F).

8. ***Whee Ha Swing***

**[Ledward Kaapana](#)**

*Ledward earned his nickname, Lima Wela (fiery fingers), with his dazzling technique and lightning-fast ability to improvise. Emerging in the 1970s with the very popular family group, Hui Ohana, and continuing in the 1980s with his trio, I Kona, Led has been a mainstay of the Hawaiian music community.*

*A guitarist and showman beyond compare, Led continues to stretch the boundaries of slack key guitar with his fretboard improvisations, wide-ranging vocals, and animated stage presence.*

**From the album [LED LIVE - SOLO](#)**

The late *ki ho'alu* master Sonny Chillingworth 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," remembers Led. "I sat down and tried to learn it the next day. I could always tell when it was him from his picking style and when he started to slap the guitar like an *ipu* (gourd drum). I loved his vocal style too, that vibrato."

9. ***E Ku'u Morning Dew***

**[Keola Beamer](#)**

*Keola draws on a Hawaiian heritage that encompasses traditional chant and hula, himeni (hymns), the royal art songs, folk and pop. All of these influences contribute to his very original and beautiful slack key style.*

*This piece is from Keola's first solo instrumental album for Dancing Cat Records, which is due out late in the summer of 1995, and is the natural successor to his 1973 debut album, HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY GUITAR IN THE REAL OLD STYLE, on the Music of Polynesia label.*

**From the album [MOE'UHANE KIKA](#)**

The melody of this beautiful *mele ho'oipoipo* (love song) was composed by 'ukulele virtuoso Eddie Kamae. Since its debut with Eddie's group, The Sons of Hawai'i, **E Ku'u Morning Dew** has become a local standard.

Keola performs it here on his custom double sound hole Mango guitar in a C Ni'ihau, or Old Mauna Loa, tuning (C-G-C-G-A-D). The overtone series generated by the instrument weaves a soft musical veil, through which the piece is perceived. This creates a dream-like quality that Keola calls *moe'uhane kika*, tales from the dream guitar.

10. **Waikiki Hula Medley**

**[George Kuo](#)**

*A steady alternating bass sound, a strong sense of melody and improvisational techniques characterize George Kuo's slack key style. His compositions and his instrumental arrangements of many traditional and standard Hawaiian pieces distinguish him among slack key artists. George learned from the elders of slack key: Gabby Pahinui, Atta Isaacs, Sonny Chillingworth, Ray Kane, Leonard Kwan, Tommy Solomon and others. George is a formidable soloist, and a highly-respected member of The Sons of Hawai'i as well as an alumnus of The Kipapa Rush Band. He recorded his first solo album, NAHENAHE, on the Hula label in 1980.*

**From the album [ALOHA NO NA KUPUNA - "LOVE FOR THE ELDERS"](#)**

George assembled **Waikiki Hula Medley** based on both musical and subject considerations, trying to capture the feeling of the old Hawaiian style. **Royal Hawaiian Hotel** is about the Waikiki luxury hotel of the same name. Prolific composer Mary Pulaa Robins created the song in 1927 for the hotel's grand opening. **Le'ahi** is the Hawaiian name for Waikiki's most famous landmark the volcanic peak known around the world as Diamond Head. The song, attributed to Robins and to Johnny Noble, points out that the *makai* (sea-facing) side of the mountain resembles the head of an *'ahi* (yellow-fin tuna). **Kaimana Hila** (the Hawaiian translation of Diamond Head) celebrates the beauty of the crater by moonlight and is attributed to Charles E. King and Andy Cummings.

11. **Punahale**

**[Ray Kane](#)**

*Raymond Kealohapoina'oleohemanu Kane's nahenahe (gentle) and elegant approach has captivated audiences around the world. Widely regarded as the ambassador of slack key, Ray embodies the essence of traditional Hawaiian music in 1987 he was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts Folk Heritage Fellowship award, the nation's highest folk arts honor.*

*Ray's middle name means "voice of love will never be forgotten where it come from, and like a bird away it flies." His sweet, soulful guitar is showcased in this original and influential piece.*

**From the album PUNAHELE**

**Punahale** means a favorite or pet. Ray's best-known composition and the one most often recorded by others, **Punahale** came to him one night in 1938 on Zablau's Beach in Nanakuli, Ray recalls, "I sat there in the dark in the nice cool breeze. I heard the waves bouncing on the sand and saw the moonlight flicker on the water. It inspired me, something so nice. So mellow."

This song features a variety of beautiful, complex hammer-ons and pull-offs which occur often in Ray's playing, but are developed to the fullest in this piece. A hammer-on is an ornament produced by plucking a note and immediately fretting above that note to produce a second tone. Pull-off refers to plucking a string and immediately pulling the finger off that note, producing a second note which is either open or fretted by another finger. Ray plays this song in G Wahine tuning (D-G-D-F#-B-D).

Liner notes written by Jay Junker and George Winston

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