

LINER NOTES

Moses Kahumoku

HO'OKUPU "THE GIFT"

A powerful improviser, gifted composer and interpreter, Moses "Moke" Kahumoku was born in 1953 in Honolulu, and was raised in Kalihi on the Big Island. Moses began playing music around the age of five, and like most *ki ho'alu* (slack key) masters, he looked first to his family for his source. "My first inspiration," he says, "was the most beautiful lady in the world, Aileen N. Waiolama Perez, my mom. Others include my dad, George Kahumoku, Sr., Sonny Chillingworth, Gabby Pahinui, Ledward Kaapana, Leonard Kwan, Ray Kane, Atta Isaacs, Cyril Pahinui and my stepdad, Roman P. Perez. I love them all."

A pillar of Big Island slack key, Moses is well known as a musician, farmer, fisherman and activist struggling to help protect the *'a-ina* (land) and work for Hawaiian sovereignty through his association with the Aloha 'A-ina organization and other groups. He is also well known outside of his home island for his performances and recordings with his brother George as The Kahumoku Brothers. "My brother George is the best 12 string slack key guitarist I've ever had the honor of playing with," Moses says proudly. In addition to their own recordings, the two brothers have also worked with the group Na 'Oiwi, who accompanied *kumu hula* (hula master) and *haku mele* (composer) Aunty Edith Kanaka'ole on her highly acclaimed album HI'IPOI I KA 'AINA ALOHA (CHERISH THE BELOVED LAND) (Hula Records 568).

Moses says he plays music because "it saves my soul." He adds that he wants his listeners "to just enjoy and feel the positive gifts from *Akua* (God) through the sounds, rhythms and melodies." Moses plays a nylon string guitar in G Major tuning, also known as Open G or Taro Patch (D-G-D-G-B-D, from lowest- to highest-pitched string), for all the songs on this album, although overall he uses at least six other tunings. His instrumental style has many distinctive characteristics: his extensive use of his thumb to play powerful arpeggios to embellish the melody; rapid pull-offs; fast single-note picking; extensive improvisation; flamenco-type picking techniques; and a very soulful approach to ballads.

ABOUT THE SONGS:

Set One

1. *Pohakuloa* (instrumental)

This original composition showcases Moses' soulful ballad style, and features his powerful arpeggios filling in the melody.

The song expresses many Hawaiians' feelings about Pohakuloa, 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 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.

2. *Laupahoehoe* (instrumental)

Irmgard Farden Aluli, beloved leader of the family group Puamana, crafted this lively ode to youthful confidence with help from her friends, revered Hawaiian scholar Mary Kawena Pukui and Namaka Bacon. Aluli says the idea for the song came to her while she was cleaning house. Even though she had never actually visited Laupahoehoe on the Big Island, the feeling about the place kept coming to her until she realized she had to write the song. It has become a local standard and is frequently accompanied by a jaunty *kane* (male) hula brimming with *joie de vivre* (joy of life).

Moses plays this strong version as an instrumental. It features his powerful muted sound, which he produces by putting the side of his right hand on the guitar strings while playing with his fingers. It also features his stunning, muted banjo-type three-finger rolls on the high-pitched strings, as well as his great way of playing a D7th chord combining pull-offs and open strings. ("Pull-off" refers to the technique of plucking a string with the right-hand finger and immediately pulling the left-hand finger off of the fretboard, producing a second note, which is either open or fretted by another left-hand finger.)

Generally, Moses picks with three fingers, but uses his thumb to play the arpeggios. In **Laupahoehoe**, he displays these thumb arpeggios, especially on the highest-pitched strings. Other slack key guitarists such as Ledward Kaapana, Ray Ka-ne, Cyril Pahinui, George Kuo and the late Gabby Pahinui also use this technique, each in their own unique way. Other guitarists, such as Ozzie Kotani, use three- or four- finger rolls to play a similar arpeggio, but the sound is different.

3. *Pauahi 'O Kalani* (vocal)

Queen Lili'uokalani (1838-1917) was Hawai'i's last reigning monarch and one of its greatest composers. Over 150 songs are credited to her, including the well-known ballads **Sanoë**, **Ku'u Pua Lei Paoakalani**, and **Aloha 'Oe**. She composed **Pauahi 'O Kalani**, a lovely but seldom recorded *mele inoa*, or name song, for her foster sister, High Chiefess Bernice Pauahi Bishop.

The lyrics poetically praise her beauty, dignity and exalted position, and the *hui* (chorus) wishes her long life. The song speaks of Pauahi's sojourn at Mana, the old Parker residence near Waimea on the Big Island, where she admired all the beauties of the forest, but soon turned her thoughts back to her people and returned home.

Pauahi often sat under a tree in her front yard and listened to the common people, and helped them with their problems. This song is sung annually at the Kamehameha Schools

Founder's Day celebration, in honor of the princess who established this school in 1887 to benefit the youth of Hawai'i. Moses plays and sings this song with deep feeling.

4. ***Kona Kai 'Opua*** (instrumental)

Perhaps because words are so central to traditional Hawaiian culture, lyrics often show remarkable durability, surviving intact or forming the basis for new compositions. Congregational choir director Henry Waiau fashioned this very melodic *mele pana* (song of place) from an early 19th Century *mele ho'oipoipo* (love chant) that Kalola, widow of Kamehameha I, composed in honor of Liholiho, Kamehameha II. Like most Hawaiian compositions, it uses imagery from nature and draws upon specific places in a highly poetic fashion. The title refers to the pink *'opua* (cumulus clouds) that build in the sea beside Kona on the Big Island. The lyrics also describe how the proud and serene *'opua* beautify Hualalai, the Big Island's third largest mountain.

Moses' version here uses different tempos to express the feelings of the three different sections within this song. ***Kona Kai 'Opua*** has also been recorded by slack key guitarist George Kuo in the same G tuning, on his album NAHENAHE (Hula Records 576) and by Atta Isaacs with the Maile Serenaders on SLACK KEY & STEEL GUITAR INSTRUMENTALS, VOLUME 1 (Hula Records 517) in his C Major tuning (although played in the key of F).

5. ***Paniolo*** (instrumental)

Originally given as a gift to King Kamehameha I by the British explorer, Captain George Vancouver, cattle have been a major part of the local culture since the early 19th century. *Paniolo* (Hawaiian cowboys), trained by Mexican cowboys (vaqueros), have been riding the range and making their lariats hum since before there were ranches in the fabled American West. Moses composed this tune in honor of the *paniolo* greats of Hawai'i. He dedicates it specifically to the memory of Ikua Purdy, the famous Big Island *paniolo* who won first place (and a standing ovation) at the 1908 world championship rodeo in Cheyenne, Wyoming. This song features Moses' trademark pull-offs on the top two, highest-pitched strings.

6. ***Ua (Rain)*** (instrumental)

Water, in all of its forms, plays a major role in the poetic language of Hawaiian music. This slack key instrumental by Moses extends the tradition. "It conveys in melody," Moses says, "the feeling of being cleansed throughout the spiritual, mental and physical, by being in tune with the natural elements."

7. ***Lei Ka'ahumanu*** (vocal)

According to Marmionett Ka'aihue's lovely and informative book, SONGS OF HELEN DESHA BEAMER, ***Ka'ahumanu*** was composed for 'Ahahui Ka'ahumanu, the well-known Hawaiian benevolent society named for Kamehameha I's chief wife. The stately anthem, with its strong suggestion of a processional, praises Ka'ahumanu, 'adorned in a

lei of love and victory which is made of yellow *mamo* (honeycreeper) feathers.' In the chorus, Helen calls upon *na kini o ka 'aina* (the multitudes of the land) to arise in unity, with one heart, and perpetuate Ka'ahumanu's name. The song has been memorably recorded by Helen's famous descendent, Mahi Beamer, and by the late slack key guitarist Gabby Pahinui.

Set Two

8. *Ka'aha Point* (instrumental)

Moses wrote this hauntingly beautiful portrait of the title location, which he describes as "a place of mysterious beauty and color, where I enjoy meditation."

9. *U'i Lani* (instrumental)

"Hawai'i's Songbird," Lena Machado (1903-1974) composed this exquisitely tender love song for a beautiful little girl, her newborn grandchild. As the English portion of the lyrics say, "In my bosom I caress you with a lullaby." Notable recorded versions of this frequently requested favorite include Machado's own and a stunning 1970s version by Hui Ohana, featuring the *leo ki'eki'e* (falsetto) majesty of Dennis Pavao and the slack key mastery of his cousin, Ledward Kaapana. This great instrumental version by Moses is a more feisty interpretation of the song.

10. *Moke's Bounce #1* (instrumental)

Another original by Moses, this song features a strong swing tempo, his trademark pull-offs, and some interesting chiming notes during the muted part at the end of the piece, which seem to come out of nowhere.

11. *Le'ale'a Lihau* (vocal)

Attributed to the dean of Hawaiian music, Johnny Kameaaloha Almeida (1897-1985), this paean to good-time pleasures and cool, misty rain becomes a march in Moses' arrangement, which features rapid harmonics and picked single notes, as well as more feisty pull-offs and great arpeggio work.

12. *Pane Mai* (instrumental)

Composed by Robert Cazimero, one-half of The Brothers Cazimero and *kumu hula* of the Gentlemen of Na Kamalei, the lilting, folksy **Pane Mai** debuted on his 1978 solo album. It very effectively uses the title phrase (which means "answer me") as a repeating motif throughout the song. Moses' instrumental version here gives the piece a *paniolo* feeling.

13. *Kaula 'Ili* (vocal)

A popular *paniolo* song, now closely associated with slack key master Sonny Chillingworth (1923-1994), **Kaula 'Ili** describes riding across the treacherously shifting volcanic soil of Waimea. The song says, "*Ho'oma-kaukau kou kaula 'ili i luna o ka pu'u Kanakaleonui* (Get your *kaula 'ili* [rawhide lasso] ready while riding over the top of the hill called the man with the big voice)."

"*E ho'olohe i ke kani a na-manu* (Hear the singing of the birds)," the song continues, "Oh never mind, *ke hina pu, ua hiki no* (Oh, never mind, if we fall together, it's gonna be okay)." Moses recorded the song in tribute to Sonny, who has been one of his inspirations. In the key of G, the song modulates near the end to the key of C before coming back to the key of G for a long instrumental break to end the piece.

14. **Hawai'i Aloha** (instrumental)

Composed by the Waimea-based missionary, Rev. Lorenzo Lyons (1807-1886), this is perhaps Hawai'i's best-known *himeni* (hymn). It praises Hawai'i's beloved ridges, glistening streams, and beautiful flower gardens, and calls to all *na 'opio o Hawai'i* (Hawai'i's youth) to celebrate the gentle breezes that blow love always for Hawai'i. Although Lyons was not a native speaker, he learned to master the Hawaiian language and the deep poetic idioms of traditional composition. He wrote or translated hundreds of *himeni*. A staunch supporter of the kingdom, he is reported to have asked on his death bed that he be buried wrapped in the Hawaiian flag. The story goes that King David Kala-kaua himself sent the flag. Moses' instrumental version here again features his very soulful ballad style.

Notes written by Jay W. Junker and George Winston.

Moses Kahumoku's Tunings

On this album:

G Major "Taro Patch" tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D, from lowest- to highest-pitched string), for all songs on this album, usually tuned down to the key of F# or the key of F. Major tunings are comprised of a major chord or contain a major chord.

Other tunings:

G Wahine (D-G-D-F#-B-D), "Wahine" is the term for a tuning containing a major 7th note, hammered up with the index finger to produce the tonic note, which is one of the characteristic sounds of Wahine tunings.

C Wahine (C-G-D-G-B-D), also known as "Leonard's C"

C Wahine (C-G-E-G-B-D), also known as "Hanalei C"

C Major (C-G-E-G-C-E), also known as "Atta's C"

D Major (D-A-D-F#-A-D)

D6th (D-A-D-F#-B-D)

Produced by George Winston.

Recorded, engineered and mixed by Howard Johnston.

Additional engineering by Dave Millington and Adam Muñoz.

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

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Booklet interior design by Su Gatch, with editing and research assistance by Heather Gray and Leimomi Kuo.

"I dedicate this album to the following people I love: Mikala Coakley, Mr. & Mrs. Van Kahumoku; Kaliko Kanaele (cuz); Samson, Shar, Pila, Terry and Makoa; Tommy Nahiwa and Pi'ilani Stevens; Dottie Thomson; Solomon Colburn; sisters Mona, Maile and Charlene; Carlson Pong; Collier Thelen; Ray McCormic "Maka Pa;" Iau "Net Man;" Eddie Kalama; Ernie Cruz, Jr. and Sr.; Henry Coakley "Fisherman," and special thanks to Louise "Waha" Coakley for her mana'o and wisdom."

--*Moses Kahumoku*

Mahalo nui loa also to: Gay Tolar, Diana Aki, Jacqueline "Skylark" Rossettiota, Rick & Donna Keefer, Amy Markham, April Fountain, Sara Warner, Fred Johnson, Eddie & Myrna Kamae, Keith Haugen, Dirk Vogel, Yuki Yamauchi, Mika'ele McClellan, Tim Holtwick BMG Music, Surfside Distributors, Inc., and Windham Hill Records.