

LINER NOTES

Ray Kane

Punahele

Ray Kane (pronounced Kah'-nay) was born in 1925 at 'Ele'ele, Kaua'i. He grew up in Nanakuli on the island of O'ahu, the son of a fisherman. At the early age of nine, Ray began to learn guitar from Albert Kawelo and Henry Kapuana, two slack key players from the island of Ni'ihau.

"This fella from Makua Ranch, he brought his guitar down on weekends," Ray remembers. "One time I got up early in the morning and I heard this beautiful music. I thought there were three guys playing, but it was only him. I asked him to teach me, but he said 'No, go away, humbug.' It was hard to convince the old folks to teach me. They liked their fish and I was a good diver to catch the fish, so we traded. I caught the fish and they taught me slack key."

In the 1940s Ray spent time in the service. Stationed on the Mainland and in Germany, he did not play much, but in 1947 he became re-inspired by the late Gabby Pahinui's first 78 rpm record, the classic **Hi'ilawe**. Ray first recorded in 1961, and did his first complete album in 1976. In 1973 he was the first slack key guitarist ever to give a full length solo recital. During this time he made his living as a welder, and lived in Nanakuli with his wife, Elodia, and their children.

In 1987 Ray and Elodia traveled to Washington, D.C., where he was presented with the National Endowment for the Arts Heritage Fellowship Award. Since then he has been touring and performing frequently, and has been recording three albums for Dancing Cat Records.

In the wide spectrum of slack key guitar, Ray represents the older ways of playing. To help the art flourish, he has issued a slack key instruction book and video, and he teaches regularly. Ray is often a featured performer at the annual Gabby Pahinui/Atta Isaacs Slack Key Festival on O'ahu, held on the third Sunday in August each year, and at the Big Island Slack Key Guitar Festival, held annually in Hilo on the island of Hawai'i on the next-to-last Sunday in July.

ABOUT THE SONGS

Set One

1. *Wai'anae Slack Key Hula* (Ray Kane - Instrumental)

Wai'anae is the region of O'ahu where Ray lives in the town of Nanakuli. Ray plays this song in the G Major tuning, as he does on all but two songs on this recording. Often called Taro Patch tuning, the notes used are D-G-D-G-B-D, from lowest to highest pitched string. This song uses part of the traditional slack key guitar piece **Ki Ho'alu** (meaning "slack key").

2. *Pauoa Liko Ka Lehua* (Emma Bush - Vocal)

The title refers to the region of Pauoa, a neighborhood in Honolulu up in the Nu'uuanu Valley, which is famous for its *liko ka lehua* (lehua buds). Written by the early radio and nightclub entertainer Emma Bush, this very personal song refers to fluttering skirts and scalloped petticoats swinging left and right. It enjoys wide circulation among traditional Hawaiian musicians. Ray's singing on this song is in the Hawaiian style known as *'i'i* vocals, which means feisty or expressive vocals. Both men and women sing in this style. Ray learned this song from his friend, Gabby Pahinui. In the second instrumental verse he gets some beautiful chiming overtones out of the guitar that are unique to this version.

3. ***Pua Sadinia*** (David Nape - Instrumental)

Sadinia is the Hawaiian name for the Gardenia flower (*pua*). This song, also known as **I Never Will Forget You**, dates from the late 1930s and is Samoan based. *Ki ho'alu* is a style of music that evokes strong feelings of nostalgia, and **Pua Sadinia** is especially effective for dropping tears.

4. ***Five Song Medley*** (Instrumental) ***Kealoha/Papakolea/Lea/E Hulihuli Ho'i Mai/Mauna Loa/Pua Makahala***

This is a beautiful medley of five classic Hawaiian pieces, which are often played as instrumental slack key pieces. Recording these five pieces as a medley works very well, almost making it seem as if it is one long, beautiful, complex piece. Ray plays **Kealoha** and **Papakolea** in honor of Genoa Keawe, one of the most well-loved and influential Hawaiian singers of the past two generations.

Kealoha (The Compassion) (Lei Collins & Maddy Lam) - A popular love song from "the Golden Age of Hawaiian music," the era between 1920 and 1960, when Hawaiian song and dance were broadcast worldwide via radio (especially the Hawai'i Calls program), film, television, and major international record labels.

Papakolea (John K. Almeida) - Composed by "the dean of Hawaiian music," blind mandolinist, composer and singer Johnny K. Almeida (1897-1985). The title honors a Hawaiian Homesteads community in Honolulu on the slopes of Puowaina (now called Punchbowl). The poetic lyrics praise the *mikinolia* (magnolia) that grow there, and mention the nearby neighborhoods of Makiki and Manoa. Most old-time slack key players like to keep the lyrics in mind while playing, whether or not they are singing.

E Hulihuli Ho'i Mai (Attributed to Maddy Lam) - A song of longing and romance popularized in the late 1930s by Hawai'i's Songbird, Lena Machado (1903 - 1974). The title means "Turn and Come Back."

Mauna Loa (traditional) - A "naughty" hula by the Big Island singer and songwriter Helen Lindsey Parker, the Lark of Waimea (and slack key guitarist Sonny Chillingworth's aunt), who is also credited with writing the beautiful Hawaiian standard **Akaka Falls**. The title does not refer to the massive Big Island mountain, as you might expect, but to a ship plying the waves toward Ka'awaloa (the town known today as Captain Cook), and the *kaona* (hidden or double meaning) is an explicit description of a

woman. **Mauna Loa** is most commonly associated with Gabby Pahinui. Ray learned the song in the 1950s from Papa David Kalua, who sang at the Reef Hotel, where Ray and many other Hawaiian musicians (including Gabby, Jesse Kalima, Clyde "Kindy" Sproat, and local sportscaster Larry Price) used to congregate on Tuesday and Sunday nights for impromptu jam sessions under the hau tree.

Pua Makahala (Katie Stevens I'i, James I'i and Vickie I'i Rodrigues) - The makahala is a shrub with fragrant, white, yellow or orange flowers. This was another Lena Machado hit from the 1930s, and Ray has played it for years. It is becoming popular again, and is often played at hula contests.

Kealoha is played again briefly to end this beautiful medley.

5. ***Mai 'Ae I Ka Hewa*** (Horatio R. Palmer - Instrumental)

A rendition of the old Christian *himeni* (hymn) **Yield Not to Temptation**, which Ray and his wife, Elodia, learned from Uncle Buddy Kelly, late choir director of their church, the Wai'anae Seventh Day Adventist Church. For Ray, the song's meaning is clear: eternal life. The music and a Hawaiian translation of the lyrics can be found in NA HIMENI HAIPULE HAWAII, a songbook published in the 1970s and widely circulated among traditional Hawaiian congregations.

6. ***Punahele*** (Ray Kane - Instrumental)

Punahele means a favorite or pet. Ray's best-known composition, the one most often recorded by others, **Punahele** came to him one night in 1938 at Zablans Beach in Nanakuli. "Back in those days there were no cars, it was pitch black. So I sit there in the dark in the nice cool breeze and I hear the waves bouncing on the sand and see the moonlight flicker on the water. It inspired me, something so nice. So mellow. That's what gave me my inspiration." 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. This song is in the G Wahine tuning (D-G-D-F#-B-D).

Set Two

7. ***Nanea Kou Maka I Ka Le'ale'a*** (Traditional - arranged and adapted by Ray Kane - Instrumental)

One of the several translations of the title is "Relaxed is your face in pleasure." This paean to sensual delights relies less on *kaona* (hidden meaning) than most Hawaiian songs. Ray was attracted by its melody and by the way it feels to play in slack key.

8. *Morning Dew* (Eddie Kamae - Instrumental)

This song's theme is "Love that will remain fresh and beautiful as the morning dew." This very popular, beautiful song from the mid-1970s was written by the great 'ukulele player Eddie Kamae.

9. *Hula O Makee* (Traditional, sometimes attributed to John Kalapana - vocal)

This song tells the tale of the ship The Makee striking a reef off Kapa'a on the East Coast of Kaua'i. Another ship, The Malulani, came searching for her. The *kaona* (hidden meaning) is said to be of a woman whose lover ran away, then came back. *Hula* means dance, and *O* translates as "of."

10. *Nani Ho'omana'o* (Ray Kane - Instrumental)

Translated, the title means "Beautiful Memories" or "Sweet Memories." This piece represents an older traditional way of playing. Ray plays this piece in the D Wahine tuning (D-A-D-F#-A-C#), which was used more often in earlier times.

11. *Hawai'i Aloha* (Rev. Lorenzo Lyons & James McGranahan - vocal)

This is probably the best-known hymn in Hawai'i today. Reintroduced by Loyal Garner at the height of the Hawaiian Renaissance in the 1970s, the song is most often sung at the end of concerts, graduations, and other events. It has become traditional to stand and join hands, sway and sing along. The title means "Beloved Hawai'i." In this version, Ray is joined on lead vocals by his wife, Elodia, and is also accompanied by the San Francisco Nahenahe singers.

12. *Ua Noho Au A Kupa* (attributed to Edward Nainoa & Emma Bush - vocal)

This title translates to "I've become accustomed to your face," and features Ray's tender vocals, beautiful guitar accompaniment and instrumental verses. This is another song Ray learned from Gabby Pahinui and especially Gabby's long-time playing partner, the great slack key guitarist, Leland "Atta" Isaacs.

RAY KALEOALOHAPOINAOLEOHELEMANU KANE'S TUNINGS

(Ray's middle name means 'Voice of love will never be forgotten where it comes from, and like a bird away it flies.')

Tunings used by Ray on this album:

1. **G Taro Patch** (Major) - **(D-G-D-G-B-D)** from lowest to highest pitched string) - used by Ray for all songs on this recording except the ones indicated below.

2. **G Wahine** (Major 7th) - **(D-G-D-F#-B-D)** - for the song Punahale. Ray also uses this tuning on Wa'ahila, which will be issued on Ray's second Dancing Cat recording, WA'AHILA.
3. **D Wahine** (Major 7th) - **(D-A-D-F#-A-C#)** - for the song Nani Ho'omana'o.

Other tunings used by Ray:

4. **C Wahine (C-G-D-G-B-E)**, which he uses on Hi'ilawe and the Lihu'e/Halona/Wai'ala'e Medley, both to be issued on Ray's second Dancing Cat recording, WA'AHILA.
5. **A Mauna Loa (E-A-E-E-F#-C#)** - for the songs Kila Kila Haleakala and Poena Ole Slack Key, which will be issued on future Dancing Cat recordings.
6. Ray also sometimes uses **Standard tuning (E-A-D-G-B-E)**, mainly on songs where he plays strummed chords to back up the vocals.

Special thanks to Elodia Kane, Michael Nohea Kane, Raynette Moana Kane, Faith Kaleoaloha Kane, Milan Bertosa, Ben Churchill, Frosty Horton, Tony Hugar, Jay Junker, Eddie & Myrna Kamae, George and Leimomi Kuo, Milton Lau, Noelani Mahoe, Lynn Martin (State Foundation for Culture and the Arts), Dr. Ricardo Trimillos, Dirk Vogel, the late Margaret Williams, KCCN 1420 AM Hawaiian Radio, Ray's loving fans and all those who have helped Ray through the years.

Produced by George Winston.

Morning Dew, nanea Kou Maka and Hawai'i Aloha were studio recorded, and were engineered by Howard Johnston. The remaining songs were recorded in Ray Kane's home in Nanakuli, Hawai'i, and engineered by Ben Churchill.

Mixed by Howard Johnston.

Design and cover graphics by Nelson Makua Design.

Cover photo of Ray Kane by Kyle Rothenborg, hand-tinted by Marianne Clancy.

Notes edited by Patricia Shipstead and Su Gatch.

Booklet interior design by Su Gatch, with research assistance by Heather Zimmerman.