

Dancing Cat Records Hawaiian Slack Key Information Booklet, **SECTION I:**

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY GUITAR (KI HO`ALU)

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1. Introduction

Hawaiian Slack Key guitar (*ki ho`alu*) is one of the world's great acoustic guitar traditions. However, due to Hawai'i's isolation (the islands lie furthest in the world from any major land masses), *ki ho`alu* remains one of the least known traditions. *Ki ho`alu*, which literally means "loosen the key," is the Hawaiian-language name for this unique finger-picked style. The strings (or "keys") are "slacked" to produce many beautiful tunings, almost always based on a Major tonality. They often contain a full Major chord, or a chord with a major seventh note, or a chord with a sixth note. Each tuning produces a characteristic resonance behind the melody; and each has its own characteristic color and flavor, like a beautiful basket of fruit.

Many Hawaiian songs and Slack Key guitar pieces reflect Hawaiian and universal themes: stories of the past, feelings of the present, and aloha for loved ones; the ocean, bays, rivers, and waterfalls; the volcanoes, mountains, and valleys; the forests, plants, animals, and birds; the sea, the wind, and the land itself.

Slack Key master **Ray Kane** (1925-2008) recalled how his best-known composition *Punahale*, which appears on his album PUNAHOLE (Dancing Cat Records), came to him one night in 1938: "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 waves bouncing on the sand and see the moonlight flicker on the water. It inspired me, something so nice. So mellow."

The great Slack Key guitarist and composer, **Keola Beamer**, similarly said, "Wherever we go, my wife and I always pause and listen to the environment; the wind blowing through the hala leaves, the water, the birds. I get a lot of inspiration from those moments." Such a moment inspired his album KOLONAHE. Beamer recalled, "I was out in a distant valley sitting under some hau trees enjoying the space, the quiet, when all of a sudden, the most beautiful, refreshing breeze came through. It caressed everything in its path: the trees, the grass, the stones. It changed the whole complexion of that day."

And the great composer and Slack Key guitarist, **Dennis Kamakahi**, said that as a composer, "Every place you go, you meet new people, see new things, and write about what you feel. I've written songs about other places, but most of the songs are about the love and beauty of Hawai'i and about special people."

These currents run deeply in Slack Key guitar playing, as accompaniment to vocals, as instrumental compositions, or as instrumental interpretations of vocal pieces. Drawn from the heart and soul out through the fingers, Slack Key music is sweet and soulful.

Slack Key's unique sound comes partly from techniques such as the hammer-on (or the add-on), an ornament produced by plucking a note and immediately fretting on that string to produce a second higher tone; and the pull-off, produced by plucking a string and immediately pulling the finger off that string, sounding a second lower note that is either open or fretted by another finger. A great example is **Ray Kane's** composition ***Punahale***, on his recording PUNAHOLE (Dancing Cat Records).

These techniques mimic the yodels and falsetto vocals (*leo ki'eki'e*) rooted in ancient chants and common in Hawaiian singing. Also common are harmonics ("chiming"), produced by lightly touching the strings at certain points on the fretboard; and slides, in which one or two treble notes are plucked and then slid up or down to sound another note or notes. A beautiful effect is sometimes created when a guitarist is singing, and the note or notes on the highest pitched strings sound like a second voice. This can be heard at the end of **Sonny Chillingworth's** version of ***Ka Wai Lehua ('A `ala Ka Honua)*** on his recording SONNY SOLO (Dancing Cat Records), and also on **George Kahumoku, Jr.'s** version of ***E Ho'i I Ka Pili*** on his recording HAWAIIAN LOVE SONGS (Dancing Cat Records).

All of these techniques enhance the expressions of aloha, joy, or longing, sometimes all in the same song.

Like blues guitar, the Slack Key tradition is very flexible and can have great emotional depth. A guitarist will often play the same song differently each time, sometimes changing tempos, or even tunings. As guitarists learn to play in this very individualistic tradition, they find their own tunings, techniques, arrangements, and repertoire.

One of *ki ho`alu's* three most influential Slack Key masters (along with the late **Gabby Pahinui** and the late **Sonny Chillingworth**), the late **Leonard Kwan**, explained his playing style: "I use a lot of variations. They make what you're playing sound more interesting. It's like when you're cooking. When you put the spices in, it tastes better than just cooking plain. The principle is the same in music." Variations, he said, are even more important for an instrumentalist like him. When someone sings, the voice is the center of attention, "but when you play a Slack Key instrumental, to make it sound full, you have to play the bass, the melody, and the harmonies, do the picking, and keep the rhythm. That's the hard part."

In addition to those variations, *ki ho`alu* music reflects what emotions the musician has at the moment. Guitarist **George Kuo** says, "It's a very personal kind of art, and it displays a lot of the person's feelings. You can make it fit to the mood you're in. If you're feeling sad, you can make the notes really linger and cry. And if you're feeling creative, you can really take off. You can speed up the song and make it bouncy, or you can take a bouncy song and make it hypnotic and dreamy."

For **Led Kaapana**, who has an inexhaustible ability to improvise, the best improvisation is based on two things - the song itself, and the mood of the moment, which changes each time the song is played: "Everything you play, every time you play, there's a mood, an energy. If you plug into it, the music just flows. Even in a simple song, there are so many different ways to play the melody, the rhythm, the harmony. It never stops if you stay open to it."

And, in some cases, even the pace can change, notes Led, as he looks back on his earlier recordings with the band Hui Ohana: "I see now that I speeded up the tempo on some [*ki ho`alu* songs] 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.”

Cyril Pahinui, another great master of improvisation, says of his father Gabby: “I remember what my daddy used to tell me. ‘No get lazy, Son. When you’re playing your music, you should always try to find something new to say. If you look, you can always change the melody line a little or add some coloring. Thanks to my dad, I can always keep adding things, and it’s comfortable for me.”

2. Origins of Slack Key

Music is one of the most mobile art forms. Several events led to the import of the guitar to Hawai`i. European sailors around the beginning of the 19th century possibly introduced Hawaiians to the gut string guitar, the ancestor of the modern nylon string guitar. Or, the instrument may have made its way to the Islands around 1818 with the return of Hawaiians whom King Kamehameha I had sent to Monterey, California, to assist the Argentine Navy.

A gift of cattle from England to Hawai`i in the late 1700s, and a subsequent *kapu* (taboo) on harming them, resulted in an overpopulation of the steers. King Kamehameha III, around 1832, hired Mexican and Spanish *vaqueros* (cowboys) from North America to teach Hawaiians how to handle the growing herds. In the evenings around the campfire, the *vaqueros* -- many of whom worked on the Big Island, especially around the Waimea region -- probably played their guitars, often two or more together, with one playing the melody, and the other guitarist(s) playing the bass and chords (occasionally a gifted guitarist would have played solo). In general, the guitarists played mainly to accompany singing.

This new instrument intrigued the Hawaiian cowboys (*paniolo*), who had their own Hawaiian music traditions. Given the long work hours, however, the Hawaiians probably did not have time to learn a lot about this new music. When the *vaqueros* returned to their homelands a few years later, some gave their guitars to the *paniolo*. The Hawaiians often retuned the guitar from the Standard Spanish Tuning (E-A-D-G-B-E - from the lowest pitched to highest pitched string), usually by loosening, or slacking, the strings: very often to tunings with a Major chord, called “Major Tunings” (such as the most popular G Major “Taro Patch” Tuning - **D-G-D-G-B-D** - from the lowest pitched string to the highest); or to tunings with a major seventh note in them, called “Wahine Tunings” (such as the popular G Wahine Tuning – **D-G-D-F# -B-D**, and the popular C Wahine “Dropped C” or “Leonard’s C” Tuning – **C-G-D-G-B-D**); and sometimes to tunings with the two highest pitched strings tuned a fifth interval apart, called “Mauna Loa Tunings” (such as the popular C Mauna Loa Tuning, “Gabby’s C” – **C-G-E-G-A-E**).

(These four tunings listed just above are the four most popular tunings in the Slack Key tradition).

The result was guitar tunings with the open (unfretted) strings having the sweet sound that so characterizes *ki ho`alu*. Also, the G Major and D seventh chords in the G Wahine Tuning (D-G-D-F# -B-D – from the lowest pitched string to the highest) are the exact same voicings as the A Major chord and a commonly used E seventh chord in the Standard Tuning (E-A-D-G-B-E), showing that this was an early Slack Key tuning influenced by the Mexican and Spanish cowboys that brought their guitars and their music to Hawai`i.

Geniuses of incorporating new elements, Hawaiians wove what they had learned of Mexican and Spanish music into their traditional chants, songs, and rhythms, and created a new form of music that was completely their own. Hawaiian musical traditions were the dominant force in their guitar music, as they have always been each time other musical influences have come to Hawai`i from the rest of the world.¹

¹ Some of the world’s other highly developed regional solo finger picking guitar traditions are listed below. Recordings of some of these artists are available from Roots & Rhythm Mail Order, 6921 Stockton Avenue, El Cerrito, CA, 94530, (510) 526-8373, www.rootsandrhythm.com; and from the Guitar Solo Store (GSP), 1411 Clement Street, San Francisco, CA, 94118, (415) 386-0395. www.gspguitar.com

This is a list of some of the greatest artists playing in these traditions. It is not a complete or up to date list by any means. It is also very difficult to "classify" many of these artists – each artist is really a category onto themselves, and some come out of more than one tradition. Even the traditions are sometimes hard to "name" – actually, categories really only tell you what someone is *not* – part of the process of elimination – it is the individuality of each musician that really counts – one has to hear each musician.

(a) **Spanish flamenco** - Ramon Montoya, Paco de Lucia, Sabicas, Paco Pena, Carlos Montoya, Manitas De Plata, Juan Serrano, Pepe Romero, Juan Martin, Vicente Amigo, Gerardo Nunez, Juan Miguel Canizares, Pepe Habichuela, Chicuelo, and Tomatino.

(b) **Spanish and European classical guitar** - Andres Segovia, Julian Bream, John Williams, Michael Lorimer, Agustin Barrios Mangore, Christopher Parkening, Leo Brouwer, Narcisco Yepes, Angel Romero, Pepe Romero, Vincenzo Macaluso, Alirio Diaz, Eliot Fisk, Liona Boyd, Benjamin Verdery, Stephen Robinson, Ida Presti, Alexandre Lagoya, Frederick Hand, Jorge Morel, Andrew York, Sharon Isbin, David Tannenbaum, Manuel Barrueco, David Russell, and Kazuhito Yamashita.

(c) **Brazilian / South American / Mexican / Carribean guitar:**

- **Brazil:** Bola Sete, Baden Powell, Egberto Gismanti, Sete Aneis, Luiz Bonfá, Raphael Rabello, Agustin Barrios Mangore, Laurindo Almeida, Paulo Bellinati, Nando Lauria, Marco Pereira, Romero Laubambo, Nonato Luiz, Sebastião Tapajós, Oscar Castro-Neves, Carlos Barbosa-Lima, Garoto (Anibal Augusto Sardinha), Toquinho, Raphael Rabello, Ulisses Rocha, Cristina Azuma, and Badi Assad. Also the American guitarist Charlie Byrd.
- **Peru:** Raul Garcia Zarate; and there are some unique tunings used in Peru:
F-Bb-D-G-C-E
G-Bb-D-G-C-E
D-A-D-F#-B-E – used for playing in the key of B minor
F-A-D-G-B-E – used for playing in the key of A minor
E-G-D-G-B-E
and Standard Tuning – E-A-D-G-B-E
- (mahalo to Daniel O'Donoghue for this information)
- **Argentina:** Cacho Tiara, and Atahualpa Yupanqui
- **Mexico:** Antonio Bribiesca
- **Puerto Rico:** Jose Feliciano, and Ernesto Cordero
- **The Bahamas:** Joseph Spence

(d) **Acoustic American country blues / ragtime guitar (especially from Mississippi, the Piedmont area of North Carolina, Georgia, and Texas, as well as contemporary guitarists)** - Blind Blake, Rev. Gary Davis, Robert Johnson, Lonnie Johnson, Mississippi John Hurt, Elizabeth Cotton, Charlie Patton, Son House, Skip James, Bo Carter, Blind Willie McTell, Blind Willie Johnson, Mance Lipscomb, John Jackson, Etta Baker, Big Bill Broonzy, Brownie McGee, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Furry Lewis, Henry Thomas, Robert Wilkins, Scrapper Blackwell, Sleepy John Estes, Blind Boy Fuller, Tommy Johnson, Bukka White, Tampa Red, Kokomo Arnold, Barbecue Bob (Robert Hicks), Casey Bill Weldon, Lead Belly (Huddie Ledbetter), Sleepy John Estes, Johnny Shines, Robert Jr. Lockwood, Josh White, Memphis Minnie, Frank Stokes, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Blind Boy Fuller, Snooks Eaglin, Muddy Waters, Lightnin' Hopkins, Fred McDowell, John Lee Hooker, Taj Mahal, Keb' Mo', John Cephas, Bob Brozman, Alan Youngblood Hart, Roy Rogers, Corey Harris, Roy Book Binder, Catfish Keith, John Hammond Jr., and Rory Block.

(e) **Tennessee/ Nashville based country/ jazz guitar** - Merle Travis, Chet Atkins, Jerry Reed, John Knowles, Doc Watson, Mose Rager, Sam McGee, Ike Everly, Roscoe Holcomb, Paul Yandell, Gamble Rogers, Thom Bresh, Buster B. Jones, Tommy Emmanuel, Albert Lee, John Pell, Tommy Flint, Tommy Jones, Pat Bergeson, Mark Casstevens, Brent Rowen, Brent Mason, Thumbs Carlisle, Peter Huttlinger, Doyle Dykes, Pat Donohue, Steven King, and Marcel Dadi.

(f) **Solo jazz guitar (often electric guitar)** – Ted Greene, George Van Epps, Lenny Breau, Ralph Towner, Martin Taylor, Joe Pass, Jimmy Wyble, Bucky Pizzarelli, Joe Diorio, Phil deGruy, Charlie Byrd, Laurindo Almeida, Robert Conte, Cam Newton, Buddy Fite, Howard Morgen, Ron Eschete, Stanley Jordan, Earl Klugh, Jim Nichols, Tuck Andress, and Tommy Crook.

(g) **Contemporary blues / ragtime / jazz arrangements** - Guy Van Duser, Rick Ruskin, Ry Cooder, David Lindley, Stefan Grossman, Dave Laibman, Eric Schoenberg, Woody Mann, Duck Baker, Taj Mahal, Keb' Mo', Leo Wijnkamp Jr., Ton Van Bergeyk, Steve Mann, Jorma Kaukonen, Pat Donohue, Mike Dowling, Leon Redbone, Dave Bromberg, Sam Mitchell, Steven King, Tom Ball, Kenny Sultan, John Miller, John James, Mike Cooper, and Dave Van Ronk.

(h) **Contemporary guitar based on American folk music and other influences** - John Fahey, Bruce Cockburn, Alex deGrassi, Michael Hedges, Daniel Hecht, Robbie Basho, George Cromarty, David Qualey, Leo Kottke, Walter Boruta, Fred Gerlack, Peter Lang, John Roth, Michael Gulezian, Ed Wright, Brian Keane, Bill Mize, Harvey Reid, Toulouse Englehardt, Chris Proctor, Preston Reed, Ed Gerhard, Dale Miller, Eric Tingstad, Phil Keaggy, Laurence Juber, Edgar Cruz, Woody Harris, Bob Hadley, Rick Foster, William Ackerman, Stevan Pasero, Lewis Ross, Seth Austen, John Doan, Tinh Mahoney, Muriel Anderson, Al Petteway, Amy White, Billy McLaughlin, Pat Kirtley, Stephen King, David Cullen, William Coulter, Robin Bullock, Steve Baughman, and Justin King.

(i) **Contemporary guitarists from the British Isles and Europe** - Pierre Bensusan, John Renbourn, Burt Jansch, Davey Graham, Dick Gaughan, Martin Simpson, Martin Carthy, Adrian Legg, John Feeley, Dave Evans, El McMeen, Dan Ar Bras, Jacques Stotzem, Peppino D'Agostino, Peter Finger, Richard Thompson, Colin Reid, Robin Bullock, and Dusan Bogdanovic.

(j) **African acoustic guitar** - Jean Bosco Mwenda (also known as Mwenda wa Bayeke), Pascal Diatta, Ali Farka Toure, D'Gary, Solo Razaf, Erich Manana, Stephen Tsotsi Kasumali, Herbert Misango, Baubacar Traore, Habib Koite, Djelimady Tounkara, Baaba Maal, Mansour Seck;

Hawaiian music never stops evolving, and yet it always remains in touch with its deep roots and inspiration. Slack Key guitarist **James "Bla" Pahinui** remembers his father **Gabby Pahinui** telling him, "Play whatever you feel, whatever makes you happy, but always keep Hawaiian music in your heart."

And from Botswana: Ronnie Moipolai, and KP (Kabelo) Moipolai - [see them on You Tube] - and playing with 6 strings in the tuning F - - - C-F ; and sometimes with 5 strings with the tuning F-X-A-C-F-x ; and sometimes with 4 strings with the tuning F-X-A-C-F-x - and playing in the keys of F and B Flat; and the great "Blind Man and His Guitar" (who plays one wonderful solo instrumental piece called *Isoka Labaleka* (originally on 78 RPM), on the out-of-print anthology cassette tape SOUTH AFRICAN JIVE, VOLUME IV on the Woza Label).

(k) **Classical Russian guitar** - played in Standard Tuning (E-A-D-G-B-D); and sometimes on a seven-string guitar (with the tuning D-G-B-D-G-B-D - from the lowest pitched string to the highest) - Boris Okunev and Leif Christensen.

(l) **Guitarists from India (who usually play the guitar lap-style with a steel bar in the left hand)** - Brij Bhushan Kabra, Debasish Bhattacharya, and Vishwa Mohan Bhatt.

(m) **Polynesian/Pacific Island guitar (also see footnote #4):**

- **Tahiti:** Petiot Tauru and Michel Peves
- **Samoa:** Vainu'u Tu'igale'ava.
 - According to guitarist Dennis Ladd, Samoan finger-style guitar is called 'ini, and has not been played as much towards the end of the 20th Century. Samoan guitarist Vainu'u Tu'igale'ava plays in at least six tunings (the 6th string is not used, and here it is marked out with an "X"):
 - (1). Standard Tuning (X-A-D-G-B-E), called "Ki Sepaniolo" (meaning "Spanish Tuning" or "Standard Tuning"), and is mainly played in the key of C.
 - (2). G Major Tuning (X-G-D-G-B-D), called "Ki Tu Fa"] (which probably means "Fourth Position Key").
 - (3). A variation of the G Major Tuning (X-F-D-G-B-D), called "Sui Ki A Le Ki Tu Fa" (meaning "Slack Key of the Open G" – and "sui" means "change", or "weaken", which could also be taken to mean "slack").
 - (4). D Wahine Tuning (X-A-D-F#-A-C#), sometimes called "Ki Salamo" (and also called "Repentance Tuning").
 - (5). C Sixth, or C Mauna Loa Tuning (X-G-C-G-A-E), called "Sui Ki Mauuluga" (and also called "High Slack Key"), with it's distinctive sound of the fourth string tuned down to the C note. Slack Key guitarist Leonard Kwan also used this tuning, except with the lowest pitched sixth string tuned down to the low C note (C-G-C-G-A-E), on his song *Pau Pilikia*, on his recording LEONARD KWAN—SLACK KEY MASTER—THE COMPLETE EARLY RECORDINGS (Hana Ola Records). Also, Hawaiian Slack Key guitarist Sonny Chillingworth used a C Mauna Loa Tuning that he called "Samoan Mauna Loa Tuning" (F-G-C-G-C-E), on the Samoan song *Let Me Hear You Whisper* on his recording SONNY SOLO (Dancing Cat Records).
 - (6). C Sixth Tuning (X-G-C-G-A-C), also called "Sui Ki Mauuluga" (but also referred to as "Low Slack Key").
 - (7). There is also an undocumented tuning called "Ki Tu Lua", also referred to as "Second Position Key." It could be the F Wahine Tuning, such as X-F-C-G-C-E; or it could be the D Major Tuning, X-A-D-F#-A-D; or it could be a C Major-based tuning, such as X-G-C-G-C-E, or again the X-F-C-G-C-E tuning, except playing in the key of C (and it would be called a C Major tuning when used for the key of C).
 - (also, for reference, Hawaiian Slack Key guitarist Sonny Chillingworth occasionally played in a similar C Major tuning that he called "Samoan C Major Tuning" [F-G-C-G-C-E], on the song *Minoi Minoi E*, which is not documented on any recordings at this time).
 - Mahalo to Dennis Ladd for this information
- **Fiji:** Saki, and his nephew, Fiji (both who live in Hawai'i currently)
- **The Cook Islands:** A term for solo guitar playing there is *ki mamaia*, sometimes called *ki amoa*. This term is closely related to Slack Key, and is used by guitarists in the Cook Islands (especially on the island of Aitutaki) to describe their playing, as documented by Hawaiian Slack Key guitarist, composer, and mariner Carlos Andrade. This term literally translates in their language as "early in the morning", which is the favorite time there for guitarists to play.
- **Papua New Guinea:** Especially guitarists on the Island of East New Britain and Mioki Island, which is part of the Duke of York Islands. Here guitarists often play in the tuning E-A-B-F#-B-D# in the key of E (or in the key of F, the tuning is F-Bb-C-G-C-E), and it is called "Five Key", because it has five different tones. They also play in the tuning E-A-B-E-G#-B in the key of E (or in the key of F the tuning is F-Bb-C-F-A-C), and it is called "Four-Key", since it has four different tones.

Three other tunings used are: E-G#-B-F#-B-D# (or in the key of F, it is F-A-C-G-C-E), which could also be called "Five Key" and it is a tuning used for the bass lines available to play on the three lowest pitched strings; and E-A-C#-F#-B-D# (or in the key of F, it is F-Bb-D-G-C-E), which could be called "Six Key" because it has six different tones, and it is also a tuning used for the bass lines available to play on the three lowest pitched strings. The Standard Tuning (E-A-D-G-B-E) is also used to play in the key of F and other keys, and it could also be called "Six Key" because it has six different tones.

– for more see guitarist/acoustic steel guitarist Bob Brozman's website www.bobbrozman.com – go to the "Road Notes" section, then go to "October 2003 – Papua New Guinea". You can hear the music of five Papua New Guinea stringbands and singers on the album Bob Brozman produced called SONGS OF THE VOLCANO (Riverboat Records TUGCD1040). On this album you can hear the "Five Key" Tuning (E-A-B-F#-B-D#), tuned up to the key of F (F-Bb-C-G-C-E) played by the Gilnata Stringband on three songs: song #15, *Tou Ra Vai* and song #9, *Youth Development Song*, and in song #3, *Tavurvar*, in the second part of the instrumental introduction. The guitarist playing in the first part of the introduction of song #3, *Tavurvar*, is playing in the key of F in the Standard Tuning (E-A-D-G-B-E). You can also see the Gilnata Stringband play in the wonderful DVD produced and directed by Phil Donnison that comes with the CD, in chapter 3 (*Gilnata*), chapter 12 (*Gilnata Concert*), and in the extras see the third selection (*Gilnata Fun*).

While there are different theories about the beginnings of Slack Key guitar in the Islands, *ki ho`alu* soon became a significant part of the music that the *paniolo* would play after work or with families and friends at gatherings, and this tradition continues today, especially on the Big Island and Maui.

Many guitarists choose to play just for family and friends rather than playing professionally or recording. George Kuo, reflecting on his Slack Key mentors, points out, "Sometimes the older players would lock into a groove (keeping the same tempo and feeling) and stay there all night." This can sometimes be heard in the playing of **Ray Kane** and Ni`ihau guitarist **Malaki Kanahele**.

At first there may not have been many guitars or people who knew how to play, so Hawaiians developed a way to get a full sound on one guitar. They picked the bass and rhythm chords on three or four of the lower pitched strings with the thumb, while using their fingers to play the melody or improvised melodic fills on three or four of the higher pitched strings.

The gut string guitar introduced by the Mexican and Spanish *vaqueros* had a very different sound than the steel string guitar, which arrived later, probably brought in by the Portuguese around the 1860s. By the late 1880s, the steel string sound became very popular with the Hawaiians, and Slack Key had spread to all of the Hawaiian Islands. To this day the steel string guitar predominates, although Slack Key artists **Keola Beamer**, **Ozzie Kotani**, **Moses Kahumoku**, and **Bla Pahinui** have also prominently used the nylon string guitar.

The steel string guitar later gave birth to the steel guitar in the 1880s when guitarists began using a steel bar on their acoustic steel string guitars. The steel guitar is named for the steel bar playing the string with the left hand, not for the bodies for the guitars, as the first steel guitars were the wood bodied guitars. The first tuning used was the most popular Slack Key tuning, the G Major "Taro Patch" Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D). Later, in the 20th Century, most steel guitarists used the louder metal-bodied guitars (the National Steel and Dobro guitars), and the most popular tuning changed to the "High Bass G" Tuning (G-B-D-G-B-D). Later, in the 1930s the electric metal-bodies steel guitar was invented (which later became the pedal steel guitar in Mainland America, which is rarely used in Hawai'i), where the most popular tuning was the C 6th (or A minor 7th) Tuning (C-E-G-A-C-E). After that the acoustic steel guitar was rarely used until the 1980s when Bob Brozman, Ken Emerson began playing and recording prominently with it, and occasionally Barney Isaacs, Jerry Byrd, and Led Kaapana and a few other players played and recorded with it as well.

The Portuguese also brought the small four-string nylon string guitar, the *braguinha* (which was also called the *cavaquinho*, or the *machete*), and the Hawaiians adapted this instrument to their music as well, calling it the `ukulele, literally meaning "jumping flea."

Until the mid-20th century, vocals were probably the most important element of Hawaiian music. The guitar was probably relegated mainly to a backup role, and was often grouped with other instruments. Played in a natural, finger-picked style with a steady rhythm, guitar was used as an accompaniment to hula and singing. The guitar usually did not play the exact melody of the song, but did play a repeated fragment with improvised variations, often using ornaments such as the hammer-on, pull-off, and harmonics. In the latter half of the 20th century, however, Slack Key guitarists have increasingly played the instrumental breaks between some of the vocal verses, often called *pa`ani*, meaning "to answer a vocal verse (or verses) with an instrumental verse (or verses)." The instrumental verse is also often called the *pane*. Previously the instrumental breaks were almost always played by steel guitarists.

Since the 1960s, and especially in the 1990s, Hawaiian Slack Key guitar has evolved into a highly developed instrumental art form, in both solo and group formats. When it is played solo, the beautiful and unique intricacies of the Slack Key guitar can be most fully appreciated, as the music of each master has great depth and individuality. Two of the most notable examples of this are **Sonny Chillingworth** and **Cyril Pahinui**, both of whom used extensive backup musicians on their past recordings, and whose artistry can now be heard more clearly on their entirely solo Dancing Cat releases. When Sonny was first recording for Dancing Cat, he would say things like, "Don't you want my boys?" (his band), and "I've never recorded like this!"

For Slack Key player **Ozzie Kotani**, who studied with the legendary **Sonny Chillingworth** and whose original works are conceived as instrumentals, there may be times when words just are not enough: "I listen to many vocalists, but I see myself as mostly an instrumentalist. Words are important to communicate ideas, but you can communicate emotions by playing a certain way. Sometimes it's hard to express something verbally, but music frees you of that."

3. King Kalakaua (1836-1891) & Queen Lili`uokalani (1838-1917)

The Slack Key tradition was given an important boost during the reign of **King David Kalakaua**, who was responsible for the Hawaiian cultural resurgence of the 1880s and 1890s. **King Kalakaua** supported the preservation of ancient Hawaiian music, while encouraging the addition of newer imported instruments like the `ukulele and the guitar. The music at his coronation in 1883 featured the guitar in combination with the *ipu* (gourd drum) and *pahu* (skin drum) in a new dance form called *hula ku`i* (*ku`i* means "to combine the old and the new"). It was accompanied by those instruments, and it also merged elements of poetry, chants, and costumes. This mixing of the old and new contributed to the popularity of both the guitar and the `ukulele. At **Kalakaua's** Jubilee in 1886, there were also performances of ancient chants and hula.

Some of his compositions are ***Hawai'i Pono'i*** (the Hawaiian National Anthem - he wrote the lyrics to this song and the Royal Hawaiian Band leader Henri Berger wrote the music), ***Koni Au I Ka Wai, Sweet Lei Lehua, 'Akahi Ho'i, Ka Momi***, and ***Alekoki*** (he wrote the lyrics to ***Alekoki***, and Lizzie Alohikea wrote the music [and there is another traditional song with the same name that is often played with this song as a medley]).

King Kalakaua's conviction that the revitalization of traditional culture was at the root of the survival of the Hawaiian Kingdom became a major factor in the continuity of traditional music and dance. His influence still shows.

This was a great era of Hawaiian music and compositions, known as the Monarchy Period, when traditional music and arts were actively supported by the monarchy. **Kalakaua**, along with his three siblings, composed beautiful songs that are still well-known today:

William P. Leleiohoku II composed the songs ***Adios Ke Aloha, Aloha No Wau I Ko Maka, Nani Wali Lihu'e, Moani Ke Ala, Ke Ka'upu, He Inoa No Ka'iulani*** (a different song from the one with the same name by Lili'uokalani), ***Nani Waipi'o, Hole Waimea*** (this one was co-written with his singing club), and ***Kaua I Ka Huahua'i*** (Johnny Noble adapted most of the melody and kept most of the same lyrics of this one, and changed the spelling of the title, for his 1926 song ***Hawaiian War Chant [Tua I Ta Huahua'i]***);

Miriam Likelike composed the songs ***Ainahau, Ku'u Ipo I Ka He'e Pue One, 'Aia Hiki Mai, Maika'i Waipi'o (Beautiful Waipi'o), Lei Ohaoha, and Ka 'Owe A Ke Kai***;

And especially **Lili'uokalani**, who is widely considered Hawai`i's greatest songwriter in history, and is the most beloved one to the people of Hawai'i. She succeeded **King Kalakaua** after he passed away in 1891, and she was Hawai`i's last monarch. **Queen Lili`uokalani** continued composing even after she was put under house arrest following the 1893 overthrow of the monarchy, and composed up until her death in 1917.

Among her classic pieces are ***Aloha `Oe, Sano'e, Ku`u Pua I Paoakalani, Pauahi `O Kalani, Ahe Lau Makani, He Inoa No Ka `iulani, Manu Kapalulu, Queen's Jubilee*** (the same melody as ***'Ike Ia Ladana***), ***Queen's Prayer, Ka Hanu O Ka Hanakeoki, Ninipo (Ho `onipo), Tutu, He Ai Na Ka Lani, Ka 'Oiwai Nani***, and many other beautiful songs. These compositions are still deeply part of the music of Hawai`i today.

One of Hawai'i's greatest and most prolific composers, **Dennis Kamakahi**, has been deeply inspired by **Queen Lili'uokalani**, and is one of the greatest vocal interpreters of her songs. He says, "**Queen Lili'uokalani** and I have one passion, that is, the passion to write what we see and hear around us and transform these images into music. She has been the inspiration for me to write in the most poetical way using the Hawaiian language she knew so well." **Dennis Kamakahi** has himself composed beautiful songs and Hawaiian standards such as *Koke'e*, *Wahine 'Ilikea*, *Pua Hone*, *Ke Aloha Mau A Mau*, *Kaua 'i O Mano*, *Lei Ko'ele*, *E Hihiwai*, *E Pupukanioe*, and *Ka 'Opae*.

Ki ho'alu player and instructor **Ozzie Kotani**, who has recorded the definitive instrumental album of the Queen's music, TO HONOR A QUEEN-E HO'OHIWAHIWAI KA MO'I WAHINE-THE MUSIC OF LILI'UOKALANI (Dancing Cat Records), said of her compositions, "I love the different melodies. They sometimes inspire me to play with strength, sometimes with tenderness – never with sadness despite her experiences. Because of her classical training and exposure to Western music, the songs are more often 'non-traditional' – but I still sense the 'Hawaiian-ness', her sense of self, her sense of what she wanted to express musically using her musical knowledge but having confidence with who she was."

Keola Beamer, who has recorded two of her songs, *Pauahi 'O Kalani*, on his album SOLILOQUY-KA LEO O LOKO (Dancing Cat Records), and *Sanoe*, on his album MOE'UHANE-TALES FROM THE DREAM GUITAR (Dancing Cat Records), said of the Queen: "She was a very, very special person. She made music of soulful heart and tenderness held in the arms of her own melancholy. She knew in her heart that her kingdom was lost. After all these years, one can still feel her sadness singing in the quiet spaces between the notes."

Slack Key guitarist **George Kahumoku, Jr.** has also recorded an instrumental tribute album to **Lili'uokalani**, titled E LILI'U (Kealia Farms Record Company), featuring songs by her, including some from the soundtrack of the film, ONIPA'A, about her overthrow in 1893.

4. Four Slack Key Styles

Today there are basically four ways of playing Slack Key guitar. Some guitarists play more than one style.

(1). The first style is playing deeply, profoundly, and simply, staying with the melody and a few ornaments, usually in a slow tempo, most evident in the older playing styles, such as that of the late **Auntie Alice Namakelua** (1892-1987).

This also applies to the Hawaiian deep Blues style, where songs are played with a slow deep swing, and sometimes with a strong accent on beats two and four of the measure. The Hawaiian Blues style has been used prominently by **Leonard Kwan** (1931-2000), **George Kuo**, **Dennis Kamakahi**, **Moses Kahumoku**, **George Kahumoku, Jr.**, and **George Kahumoku, Sr.** Some of these Hawaiian Blues songs are: *Moana Chimes*, *Muli Wai*, *Punalu'u*, *E Hulihuli Ho'i Mai*, *Mi Nei*, *Radio Hula*, *Kalama Ula*, *Ka'ena*, *Meleana E*, *Kukuna O Ka La*, *Pua Be Still*, *Na Pua Lei 'Ilima*, *Kauhale O Kamapua'a*, Dennis Kamakahi's *Nani Ko'olau*, *Keiki Mahine*, *Kalena Kai*, *My Yellow Ginger Lei (Lei Awapuhi)*, *Maile Lau Li'i Li'i*, *Aloha Ku'u Home Kane'ohe* (aka *Kane'ohe*), *E Mama E*, *Ua Like No A Like*, *Lepe Ula Ula*, *Aloha Chant*, *Wai Ulu*, *Noe Noe*, *Sanoe*, *Queen's Jubilee* (this is the same melody as *'Ike Ia Ladana*), *Ke Aloha*, *E Lili'u E*, *Inikiniki Maile (Gentle Pinches of the Wind)*, *Lihue*, *Papakolea*, *Pua Sadinia*, *Ka Lei E*, *Na Hoa He'e Nalu*, *'Akaka Falls*, *Hilo Hanakahi*, *Manuela Boy*, *Ka Manu*, *None Hula*, *Pua Makhala*, *Matsonia*, *Nana'o Pili*, and the ultimate Hawaiian blues song, *Kaulana Na Pua*, written by Ellen Prendergast in 1893 after the overthrow of **Queen Lili'uokalani** and the annexation of Hawai'i by the United States, and *Ku'u Pua I Paokalani*, written by **Queen Lili'uokalani** when she was under house arrest after the overthrow. Other Hawaiian songs can be played this way as well.

(2). The second style is a Slack Key jazz style, with lots of improvisation, used prominently in the music of **Leland "Atta" Isaacs** (1929-1983), **Cyril Pahinui**, **Led Kaapana**, **Dennis Kamakahi**, **Moses Kahumoku**, **George Kahumoku, Jr.**, **George Kuo**, **Peter Moon**, and **Ozzie Kotani**.

(3). The third style creates unique sounds, using ornaments like the hammer-on (or the add-on), the pull-off, and harmonics ("chimes", or "bells"). These are often incorporated into the older simpler style, as well as the Slack Key jazz style mentioned in the previous paragraph. Some great songs featuring hammer-ons and pull-offs include: **Sonny Chillingworth's** composition ***Ho`omalulu Slack Key***, on his recording SONNY SOLO (Dancing Cat Records); **Ray Kane's** composition ***Punahale***, on his recording PUNAHALE (Dancing Cat Records); **George Kuo's** composition ***Kohala Charmarita***, on his recording ALOHA NO NA KUPUNA-LOVE OF THE ELDERS (Dancing Cat Records); and **Moses Kahumoku's** composition ***Paniolo***, on his recording HO'OKUPU-THE GIFT (Dancing Cat Records).

Guitarist **Manu Kahaiali`i** (1935 -1993) used another technique called *ha ku'iku'i* on his song ***So Ti***, in **Eddie Kamae's** documentary film THE HAWAIIAN WAY, and on Manu's out-of-print album KAHAIALI'I MAUI STYLE (Naupaka Records). In this technique, the left hand holds the chord normally while the right hand index finger hammers down on the string and pulls off very rapidly (rather than the normal plucking), producing a beautiful and unique sound. The late Slack Key guitarist **George Kahumoku, Sr.** (1926-1979), called this same technique *ki panipani*.

There are many songs that feature harmonics, such as: **Leonard Kwan's** composition ***Ki Ho`alu Chimes***, on his recording KE'ALA'S MELE (Dancing Cat Records) and his earlier version of that song, called ***Hawaiian Chimes***, on his recording THE LEGENDARY LEONARD KWAN-SLACK KEY MASTER-THE COMPLETE EARLY RECORDINGS (Hana Ola Records); **Ray Kane's** composition ***Punahale***, on his recording PUNAHALE (Dancing Cat Records); **Sonny Chillingworth's** two versions of ***Moana Chimes***, and his composition ***Slack Key #1***, both of which are on his recordings WAIMEA COWBOY (Lehua Records) and ENDLESSLY (Dancing Cat Records), and his version of ***Maui Chimes***, on his recording WAIMEA COWBOY (Lehua Records); and **George Kuo's** version of **Sonny Chillingworth's** composition ***Ki Ho`alu`Ekahi (Slack Key #1)*** on his recording NAHENAHE-HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY GUITAR (Hula Records), and George's own composition ***Lullaby Chimes***, on his recording ALOHA NO NA KUPUNA- LOVE FOR THE ELDERS (Dancing Cat Records).

(4). The fourth Slack Key style is sometimes more entertainment-oriented, and features unusual visual and sound techniques, sometimes for entertaining the listeners, and sometimes to achieve new sounds for expression. These include: sliding up the strings with the forearm, and also playing with a bag over the fretting hand (as performed by the late **Fred Punahoa** and his nephew **Led Kaapana**); and the intriguing needle and thread technique, where the player dangles a needle hanging from a thread held between their teeth across the strings while otherwise playing normally with both hands – the vibrating needle creates a sound a bit like a mandolin or a hammered dulcimer. This latter technique can be heard on the fourth verse of the song ***Wai Ulu***, on **Sonny Chillingworth's** recording SONNY SOLO (Dancing Cat Records). This technique can also be seen in two great Slack Key films: Susan Friedman's KI HO`ALU, [[add kahako above I and O in "KI HO`ALU"](#)] THAT'S SLACK KEY GUITAR, on the song ***Kaula`Ili*** [[NOTE --it is spelled "I" then "L" then "I"---try to make it clearer with a capital "i" with the little lines on the top and bottom-----it looks like two "L"s now with the upper and lower case letters](#)] by **Sonny Chillingworth**; and **Eddie Kamae's** film THE HAWAIIAN WAY, on an improvised piece by Slack Key guitarist **Phil Secretario**.

5. Slack Key Sub-Traditions

These are some sub-traditions of Slack Key guitar playing:

1. Bass patterns
2. Bass runs
3. Vamps
4. Partial chords
5. Ornaments
6. The using of different tunings - when two or more Slack Key guitarists play together
7. Playing all of the song (or a significant part of the song) in keys other than the key the tuning is in
8. Changing songs by making medleys, or by adding bridges, or by changing the melody
9. Using chord substitutions for Major chords and dominant sevenths

(See **TECHNICAL ESSAY ON SLACK KEY SUB-TRADITIONS -Section 1a**, in this Slack Key information book for a more detailed discussion).

6. Slack Key Tunings

(Also see **Sections III, IV, V, and VI** in this Slack Key information book for more about tunings).

In the old days, there was an almost mystical reverence for those who understood *ki ho`alu*, and the ability to play it was regarded as a special gift. To retain and protect the Slack Key mystique, tunings were often closely guarded family secrets.

"I'm old enough to remember when we all thought Slack Key would die," says **Keola Beamer**. "There were many reasons for that. One of them was that our *kupuna* (elders) had lost so much: their land, their religious system, their sense of place in the universe. The last thing they wanted to lose was their music, so tunings became very cultish and protected. The irony was that by way of holding the secrets too close, this art form was actually dying, suffocating because the information wasn't being communicated. Maybe there is truth in the saying that one should hold the things that one loves with an open hand."

This practice has changed with the times, as the preservation of older Hawaiian traditions has become more conscious and deliberate. Slack Key guitarists are now more willing to share their knowledge with those outside the family circle who sincerely wish to learn. The sharing of tunings and techniques greatly helps ensure that the Slack Key guitar tradition will endure. **Ray Kane** says, "Play the best you can and share what you know. If we don't share Slack Key, we'll lose it. That almost happened once, so watch out. Take care of it."

George Kuo echoes **Ray Kane** and described this sharing as *pana`i like*, meaning "to give and take, to reciprocate." He said, "Puakea Nogelmeier [a songwriter and Hawaiian language instructor at the University of Hawai`i] gave me that name as a way of reflecting all the things that **Gabby Pahinui, Atta Isaacs, Sonny Chillingworth**, and other Slack Key elders shared with our generation when we were growing up, so that now we can pass on skills and knowledge to the next generation."

A wide variety of tunings in several different keys were created to effectively back up singers with their various vocal ranges. Strings tuned too low lost their tone; strings tuned too high were likely to break. Thus tunings in six keys were developed. In the early 1800s the Hawaiians probably did not use the capo (a strap or clamp which fits on the guitar neck and raises the pitch, which allows the same guitar fingerings to sound in a higher key).

The many ingenious tunings the Hawaiians invented fall into five basic categories: **Major**, **Wahine**, **Mauna Loa**, **Ni`ihau/Old Mauna Loa**, and **Miscellaneous**.² They retuned the guitar (usually lowering some of the strings) from the Standard Spanish Tuning (E-A-D-G-B-E - from the lowest pitched string to the highest), and found that the "slacked" strings resulted in many sweet and resonant tunings; such as in the G Major "Taro Patch" Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), where the sixth, fifth, and first strings are tuned down from the Standard Tuning. Occasionally Slack Key guitarists will tune up from the Standard Tuning to get into the Taro Patch Tuning, which in this case would be to tune the fourth, third, and second strings up from the Standard Tuning, yielding an A Major chord (E-A-E-A-C# -E). The strings are in the same relationship to each other - the tuning in A is just two half steps higher than the one in G.

Some of the most commonly used tunings are the **Major Tunings**, where the guitar is tuned to a Major chord or has a Major chord within the tuning. Especially popular is the aforementioned G Major "Taro Patch" Tuning. This was the first tuning that Led Kaapana 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 *barre* the chords [holding down several or all the guitar strings with the index finger of the left hand – and the other fingers of the left hand also often fret other notes as well]. It sounds pretty full, even that way."

Ease, however, does not equate with shallowness, points out **Ozzie Kotani**: "I love the open G or 'Taro Patch' Tuning, because I find it so versatile. It also lends itself to solid bass patterns and many, many 'traditional' Slack Key phrasings and vamps. While some Slack Key players don't like playing in G because 'everyone knows that tuning', I see it as a challenge to my creativity and imagination and know I will never completely tap it dry," he said.

"There's tons of repertoire to open in it. My mentality is to open up in a favored tuning and really become strong in it," Kotani explained. "**Sonny [Chillingworth]** once told me, 'A good Slack Key player isn't measured by how many tunings he knows – it's being able to play almost any song in one tuning that's impressive.' Like most teachers, I share Taro Patch first."

George Kuo also utilizes the whole range of the G Major "Taro Patch" Tuning, and he works to retain the sweetness so integral to Hawaiian music: "In Taro Patch you can get a real distinctive bass and play many different melody patterns and rhythms."

Also often used are **Wahine Tunings**, which contain a major seventh note. Some musicians say that these tunings are referred to as "Wahine" (woman) because of their sweet flavor; others say the tunings got their names in older days when women used to favor them in their playing. Two of the first Wahine tunings to be developed may have been the C-G-D-G-B-E Tuning (often called "Keola's C", because it has been used most prominently by Slack Key guitarist **Keola Beamer**) and the G-C-D-G-B-E Tuning (which is the same as the previous tuning, except the two lowest pitched strings are tuned up and reversed in pitch, which is actually referred to as the B flat family of tunings) - both in which the four highest pitched strings retain the same tuning as the Standard Tuning (E-A-D-G-B-E), and thus have the same fingerings on the four highest pitched strings as in the Standard Tuning; but with the bass notes retuned to the open strings of the C and G chords (the I and the V chords – the two most used chords in Hawaiian music).

The two most popular tunings in this category are: the G Wahine Tuning (D-G-D-F#-B-D – often called "Auntie Alice Namakelua's Tuning", because it was prominently used by her), which is especially Spanish sounding (*also see the 3rd paragraph in the section **ORIGINS OF SLACK KEY** above*); and also the C Wahine Tuning (C-G-D-G-B-D – often called "Leonard's C", because it has been used most prominently by the late Slack Key guitarist **Leonard Kwan**; it is also often called "Dropped C"). **Ozzie Kotani** said, "I love the deepness and fullness of C Wahine – beautiful chords, really different vamps from Taro [the G Major Tuning]."

² Tunings are comprised of different combinations and amounts of these notes of the Major scale: the first and fifth notes are always present; the third note usually is present; the major seventh is often in the tuning; the second and the sixth are sometimes present; and the fourth is occasionally present on one of the three lower pitched strings. (See **Section III, TECHNICAL ESSAY ON SLACK KEY GUITAR TUNINGS** for a more detailed discussion).

Speaking about his album MOE`EHANE KIKA -TALES FROM THE DREAM GUITAR (Dancing Cat Records), **Keola Beamer** said, "In some of these tunings, the vibrating of sympathetic strings creates a beautiful overtone series. The overtone series, of course, has been around since time immemorial, but actually embracing it, working with it and within it, is something I tried to focus on in this recording. It is probably most apparent," he continued, "when I use the Low C Wahine Tuning (C-G-D-G-B-E). If you listen carefully, you can hear a high spectral or ghostlike presence. The mysticism and spectral shadowing inherent in this halo, or veil, remind me of what one may experience in a dream."

Also common are the **Mauna Loa Tunings**, in which the two highest pitched strings are tuned a wide fifth interval apart. In these tunings the sixth intervals are played on the two highest pitched and thinnest strings (intervals that in many other tunings are played on the highest pitched first and third strings, or the second and fourth strings - where the four highest pitched strings are tuned either a fourth interval apart, or a Major third interval apart, or a minor third interval apart). This produces the characteristic sweet sound of the Mauna Loa Tunings. "C Mauna Loa has nice high movements on the first and second strings that really separate the melody from the bass line," said **Ozzie Kotani**. "You can also play a melody down near the first fret and then play a great contrasting melody up to the eighth fret and above. I need to play more in this tuning since it has such great inherent possibilities."

In his spoken introduction to his live recording of **Mauna Loa Blues**, which appears on his album ALOHA NO NA KUPUNA -LOVE FOR THE ELDERS (Dancing Cat Records), **George Kuo** said, "Mauna Loa Tuning, 'Mokihana Tuning' as it's called by some; it's a very sweet tuning, and it's one of my favorites. You can actually make the guitar cry, I think, with this kind of tuning."

Dennis Kamakahi, who says that C Mauna Loa Tuning is probably his favorite, recounts that Slack Key guitarist **Malaki Kanahale**, from the Island of Ni`ihau, once told him that when he (Malaki) was a boy, people often played in that tuning "to lullaby the kids to sleep" and that it was called "Ki Melia" Tuning.

The three most frequently used Mauna Loa Tunings are: C Mauna Loa Tuning (C-G-E-G-A-E), G Mauna Loa Tuning (D-G-D-D-G-D - with the third and fourth strings tuned to the same note, providing the special droning sound of this particular G Mauna Loa Tuning), and B Flat Mauna Loa Tuning (F-Bb-D-F-G-D - often tuned up two half steps to the key of C). Violins and mandolins brought to Hawai`i, and normally tuned in fifth intervals, may have influenced these Mauna Loa Tunings.

The **Ni`ihau Tunings**, or also called **Old Mauna Loa Tunings**, are tunings in which two successive strings are tuned a fourth apart, with the sixth note of the scale on the lower pitched string and the second note of the scale on the higher pitched string. This allows the player to hammer-on notes on these two successive strings, which is a characteristic sound of this type of tuning.

(There is a fifth category of **Miscellaneous Tunings** for ones that don't fit into any of the four previously mentioned categories).

When two or more guitarists play together, they often use different tunings in the same key. For example, one guitarist might use the G Major Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D) and the other might use the G Wahine Tuning (D-G-D-F#-B-D). Guitars can also be played together with different tunings in different keys, when one of the guitarists uses a capo (a strap or clamp placed on the fretboard to allow fingerings in a higher key) to sound in the same key. An example of this would be one guitarist playing in a G tuning, with a second guitarist in a C tuning, capoed up to the seventh fret to sound in the key of G; or with one guitarist playing in a C tuning, and the second guitarist playing in a G tuning, capoed up to the fifth fret to sound in the key of C. Also, often the guitarists might all play in the same tuning but use different voicings.

Examples of this are:

1. the Slack Key guitarists in the **Gabby Pahinui** Hawaiian Band (see Section 8 below titled **Gabby Pahinui, Sonny Chillingworth, and Leonard Kwan –The Three Most Influential Slack Key Guitarists in History**, paragraph 11);

2. **Atta Isaacs** and **Gabby Pahinui** on their album TWO SLACK KEY GUITARS, where Atta plays in his C Major Tuning (C-G-E-G-C-E), and Gabby plays either in his C Wahine Tuning (C-G-E-G-B-E) or in his C Mauna Loa Tuning (C-G-E-G-A-E)

3. and three of the most beautiful Slack Key duets ever recorded by:

Abraham Konanui and an unnamed second guitarist (possibly **Fred Punahoa** - both are uncles of Slack Key great **Led Kaapana**) on the songs **Hawaiian Melody** and **Maui Serenade**, with both guitarists probably playing in the Standard Tuning (E-A-D-G-B-E), in the key of C (these two songs, along with the earliest five recorded tracks by **Gabby Pahinui** and eight other 1940s and 1950s Slack Key artists, are reissued on the recording THE HISTORY OF HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY GUITAR (Hana Ola Records); another beautiful pure slack duet, **Ka Ua Noe (The Misty Rain)**, was recorded by **Atta Isaacs** and **Gabby Pahinui**, with Atta playing in the G Major "Taro Patch" Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D) and Gabby playing in the G Wahine Tuning (D-G-D-F#-B-D), on their recording TWO SLACK KEY GUITARS (Tradewinds Records - [the song was reissued on that CD with the wrong title, *March Medley*] - it was also issued with the correct title on the recording THE LEGENDARY ATTA ISAACS-INNOVATIVE HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY GUITAR MASTER (Hana Ola Records); and the duet with **Led Kaapana** playing in the G Major "Taro Patch" Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D) and **Leonard Kwan** playing in the G Wahine Tuning (D-G-D-F#-B-D) on the song **Salomila / New 'Opihi Moemoe**, on **Led Kaapana's** recording BLACK SAND (Dancing Cat Records).

7. Slack Key Influences From Outside Hawai'i

Hawai'i is a crossroads of cultures, and its music reflects many influences: Mexican, Spanish, and Portuguese music; Caribbean music; Polynesian music - especially from Samoa,³ Tahiti, and Tonga; European music - especially from Germany and England; as well as music from the American Mainland, including early Jazz, mainstream Jazz, Country & Western, traditional and popular folk music, and popular music & rock. Hawaiians have absorbed it all and enriched it with their *mana* (soul, or spiritual power).

While the late Slack Key master **Sonny Chillingworth** was strongly committed to Hawaiian music, his repertoire included a diversity of styles - Hawaiian standards, original compositions, American Country, Portuguese, American Rock oldies, Puerto Rican, Mexican, and Rhythm & Blues.

³ According to guitarist Dennis Ladd, Samoan finger-style guitar is called 'ini, and has not been played as much towards the end of the 20th Century. Samoan guitarist Vainu'u Tu'igale'ava plays in at least six tunings (the 6th string is not used, and here it is marked out with an "X"):

(1). Standard Tuning (X-A-D-G-B-E), called "Ki Sepaniolo" (meaning "Spanish Tuning" or "Standard Tuning"), and is mainly played in the key of C.

(2). G Major Tuning (X-G-D-G-B-D), called "Ki Tu Fa" (which probably means "Fourth Position Key").

(3). A variation of the G Major Tuning (X-F-D-G-B-D), called "Sui Ki A Le Ki Tu Fa" (meaning "Slack Key of the Open G" - and "sui" means "change", or "weaken", which could also be taken to mean "slack").

(4). D Wahine Tuning (X-A-D-F#-A-C#), sometimes called "Ki Salamo" (and also called "Repentance Tuning").

(5). C Sixth, or C Mauna Loa Tuning (X-G-C-G-A-E), called "Sui Ki Maualuga" (and also called "High Slack Key"), with its distinctive sound of the fourth string tuned down to the C note. Slack Key guitarist Leonard Kwan also used this tuning, except with the lowest pitched sixth string tuned down to the low C note (C-G-C-G-A-E), on his song *Pau Pilikia*, on his recording LEONARD KWAN-SLACK KEY MASTER-THE COMPLETE EARLY RECORDINGS (Hana Ola Records). Also, Hawaiian Slack Key guitarist Sonny Chillingworth used a C Mauna Loa Tuning that he called "Samoan Mauna Loa Tuning" (F-G-C-G-C-E), on the Samoan song *Let Me Hear You Whisper* on his recording SONNY SOLO (Dancing Cat Records).

(6). C Sixth Tuning (X-G-C-G-A-C), also called "Sui Ki Maualuga" (but also referred to as "Low Slack Key").

(7). There is also an undocumented tuning called "Ki Tu Lua", also referred to as "Second Position Key." It could be the F Wahine Tuning, such as X-F-C-G-C-E; or it could be the D Major Tuning, X-A-D-F#-A-D; or it could be a C Major-based tuning, such as X-G-C-G-C-E, or again the X-F-C-G-C-E tuning, except playing in the key of C (and it would be called a C Major tuning when used for the key of C).

- (also, for reference, Hawaiian Slack Key guitarist Sonny Chillingworth occasionally played in a similar C Major tuning that he called "Samoan C Major Tuning" [F-G-C-G-C-E], on the song *Minoi Minoi E*, which is not documented on any recordings at this time).

Also two Tahitian guitarists who play some Slack Key, especially in the G Major "Taro Patch" Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), are Petiot Tauru and Michel Peves.

Similarly, **Dennis Kamakahi** recalled that as he grew up, he had absorbed music from many different cultures: "At that time it wasn't strange to go to one house, and they'd have Portuguese music playing; another would have Puerto Rican music; and another would have Japanese." Besides Hawaiian music, rock music was the other major influence in his early years.

Mainland American music has also enjoyed a reciprocal relationship with music from Hawai'i. In the early 1890s, Hawaiian musicians such as the Royal Hawaiian Band, steel guitarists, and vocal groups began touring in the United States. The 1912 Broadway show, *BIRD OF PARADISE*, helped introduce Hawaiian music (although not Slack Key guitar) to the Mainland, as did Hawaiian shows at the big Panama Pacific International Exhibition in San Francisco in 1915.

In the following years, Hawaiian recordings, especially acoustic steel guitar tracks and vocal recordings, became the biggest selling record "genre" in Mainland America. Increased recordings and tours by Hawaiian performers greatly influenced blues musicians who played slide guitar, as well as country & western steel guitarists. Steel guitar (as opposed to the *steel string* guitar, which is a normal guitar strung with steel strings, as opposed to nylon strings) refers to any guitar played with a steel bar, regardless of what material the guitar is made of. Likewise, Slack Key does not refer to a type of guitar but rather a style of playing that can be performed on any kind of guitar.

In the late 1880s, some Slack Key guitarists began holding the guitar flat on the lap and playing it with the steel bar. These guitarists used Slack Key tunings, particularly the G Major or "Taro Patch" Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), which the steel players also called "Low Bass G" Tuning. This later evolved into the electric lap steel guitar, which was also often played on a stand. Later, in Mainland America, pedals and knee levers were soon added to raise the strings while playing, and this became known as the pedal steel guitar, which is prevalent in country & western music, but only very rarely played in Hawai'i.

Some Hawaiian steel guitar tunings, and thus some Mainland lap and pedal steel guitar tunings, evolved from Slack Key tunings. For example, the "High Bass G" Major Tuning (G-B-D-G-B-D) for the dobro (the acoustic steel) and the electric lap steel, evolved from the G Major "Taro Patch" Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D - which was also sometimes called "Low Bass G" Tuning by the early steel guitarists as well). The C Sixth/A minor Seventh Tuning for the Hawaiian electric steel guitar (C-E-G-A-C-E) and the C Sixth Tuning for the 10 string pedal steel guitar (C-F-A-C-E-G-A-C-D-E - here strings 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, and 1 are the same notes as the Hawaiian six string steel guitar C Sixth [or A minor Seventh] Tuning) may have been influenced somewhat from the C Mauna Loa Tuning (C-G-E-G-A-E), which has a sixth note (the A note) in it, on the second string.

The hot jazz of the 1920s and 1930s, especially the great trumpeters Louis Armstrong and Bix Beiderbecke, influenced the Hawaiian steel guitar players, most notably **Sol Ho`opi`i** (1902-1953). The great acoustic steel guitarist, (1908-2004), points out that when he was a boy growing up in the pre-World War I era, many steel guitar players played in the Slack Key style, using the G Major "Taro Patch" Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D). This later changed, however, when steel guitarist **Sol Ho`opi`i** began changing the tunings (for example, his C# minor Tuning [E-B-E-G#-C#-E]), and began concentrating on jazz influenced single note lead lines.

Because of the distance between the Islands, each developed unique styles, sometimes even specific to regions of an island. The Big Island, due to its size, has engendered the greatest variety of regional styles. Other players, especially those around Honolulu, often developed more modern and improvised styles, as a result of greater exposure to different musical traditions from the American Mainland and other parts of the world. To this day, Slack Key artists draw from the traditions of the area where they grew up and from the music of their *`ohana* (family), and add to it their own individual playing style. In recent years, learning from recordings has become more common, as well as learning from professional teachers, both in schools and private lessons.

8. Gabby Pahinui, Sonny Chillingworth, and Leonard Kwan – The Three Most Influential Slack Key Guitarists in History - (and Atta Issacs, Ray Kane, Keola Beamer, Led Kaapana, & Peter Moon; and the other most influential players)

The most influential Slack Key guitarist in history was the late **Philip "Gabby" Pahinui** (1921-1980). The modern Slack Key period began around 1946, when Gabby, often referred to as "The Father of The Modern Slack Key Era", made the first-ever Slack Key recordings.

Gabby was the prime influence for keeping Slack Key guitar from dying out in the Islands. His prolific and unique techniques led to the guitar becoming more recognized as a solo instrument. He expanded the boundaries of Slack Key guitar by creating a fully-evolved solo guitar style capable of creatively interpreting a wide variety of Hawaiian traditional and popular standards, original pieces, and even pieces from other cultures, including Tahiti, Samoa, Fiji, Mexico, Puerto Rico, the Caribbean, Portugal, and Spain; as well as Mainland American Jazz, folk, pop, and Country & Western music.

Gabby's five earliest recordings from the 1940s (four 78 rpms on Bell Records and one on Aloha Records) were especially influential: *Hi'ilawe* (twice), *Key Kohalu* (sic), *Hula Medley*, and *Wai O Keaniani*. These have been reissued along with fifteen 1940s tracks by eight other artists on the recording THE HISTORY OF HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY GUITAR (Hana Ola Records).

These recordings inspired and astounded many other Slack Key guitarists, given the level of Gabby's playing, and because each song was in a different tuning. He also made more great recordings in the 1950s for the Waikiki Label, which were mostly issued on three different albums: HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY-VOLUME 1, HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY-VOLUME 2, and THE BEST OF HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY. In 1961 the late Dave Guard (who performed with the first Kingston Trio, and who grew up in Hawai'i and was inspired by Gabby), produced the beautiful album PURE GABBY (which was eventually released in 1978 on Hula Records).

Ray Kane says of Gabby, "He had the true Hawaiian style: his voice, his timing, his touch. You can really feel it in the heart. Words can never express."

Gabby's beautiful, expressive vocals, especially his incredibly soulful falsetto, have also inspired many other musicians, including sons **Cyril Pahinui** and **Bla Pahinui**, who are great Slack Key artists and singers in their own right; as well as son **Martin Pahinui**, whose voice and falsetto renderings of Hawaiian classics such as *Hanohano Hawai'i*, *Pua Lilia*, *Ipu Lei Manu*, *Pu'u Anahulu*, *I Ka Po Me Ka Ao*, *Hi'ilawe*, and others, are especially reminiscent of his father's.

Exposed to music at home when extended family and friends, including Slack Key greats such as **Atta Isaacs** and **Sonny Chillingworth**, would come together to party and jam into the wee hours of the morning, Gabby's son **Cyril Pahinui** started playing guitar and `ukulele at the age of seven: "I used to watch my dad, Atta, Sonny, and my brothers when they would jam. They were so awesome you didn't want to miss anything. You didn't even want to blink your eyes!" he said. "Music was so important to him. It was his life. To me all my music, whatever I'm doing, it's Pops and me. I feel his presence." Cyril composed *Lullaby for Pops* for Gabby, and it appears on his recording 6 & 12 STRING SLACK KEY (Dancing Cat Records).

Son **Bla Pahinui**, who likes to experiment with his Hawaiian music (sometimes even changing the melodies), says: "I don't like to rush the note. Whatever you do, bottom line, it has to work. It has to be real, but it has to work – not just for you but also for the other musicians and for whoever takes the time to listen to you. My dad got away with a lot of stuff, because it worked. And he touched so many people, because he shared what was in his heart in such an honest and direct way." In 1983, three years after his father passed away, Bla wrote *Gabby's Song*, a *mele inoa* (name song), because, as Bla says, "I missed him. I just wanted to tell him thanks and that I loved him." That song appears on Bla's solo live album WINDWARD HEART (Dancing Cat Records).

Gabby, known affectionately as Pops, never realized his dream of doing an album with just his sons, but he did manage to draft sons Bla, Cyril, Martin, and the late Philip Pahinui to join him in various lineups of The **Gabby Pahinui** Hawaiian Band, one of the most popular and influential groups of the early 1970s. At the height of what is now referred to as the Hawaiian Renaissance, Gabby's band filled large venues, and also revitalized the Slack Key scene. They recorded four great albums for the Panini Label in the 1970s: GABBY (often called the "Brown Album"), THE RABBIT ISLAND MUSIC FESTIVAL, THE GABBY PAHINUI HAWAIIAN BAND-VOLUME 1, and THE GABBY PAHINUI HAWAIIAN BAND-VOLUME 2, as well as five songs on the live compilation double album THE WAIMEA MUSIC FESTIVAL (also on Panini Records). Just before this in 1971, Gabby also recorded for the Panini Label with the **Sons Of Hawai'i**, on the classic and influential album AN ISLAND HERITAGE.

The **Gabby Pahinui** Hawaiian Band provides a good example of the complex sound that Slack Key can achieve with multiple guitars in different tunings. Along with Gabby and his sons, this band featured the late great Slack Key guitarists **Leland "Atta" Isaacs, Sr.** (1929-1983) and **Sonny Chillingworth** (1932-1994). On the band's recordings (*see Recommended Recordings and Other Information, Section II of this Slack Key information book, in part #1c, Some Recommended Recordings*) each guitarist usually played in a different C tuning - and Bla and Cyril often played in D tunings tuned down to the key of C, or lower, if Gabby was tuned lower than the key of C; and Cyril and especially Bla sometimes used capos, and also sometimes played in the Standard Tuning (E-A-G-D-B-E). These different tunings created a thick, multi-textured sound for the band (**Joe Gang** was the group's bassist).

The tunings of the Gabby Band were sometimes as follows:

Gabby Pahinui: C-G-E-G-B-E (C Wahine Tuning – from the lowest pitched string to the highest), or C-G-E-G-A-E (C Mauna Loa Tuning)

Leland "Atta" Isaacs: C-G-E-G-C-E (C Major Tuning)

Sonny Chillingworth: C-G-D-G-B-D (another C Wahine Tuning)

Cyril Pahinui: D-A-D-F#-B-E (a D 6th/9th Tuning - tuned down two half steps to sound in the key of C, yielding C-G-C-E-A-D)

Bla Pahinui: D-A-D-G-B-E (Dropped D Tuning - tuned down two half steps to sound in the key of C, yielding C-G-C-F-A-D). Bla Pahinui also very often played in the Standard Tuning (E-A-D-G-B-E), sometimes using a capo. For example, playing in the Standard Tuning in the key of G, and capoing the guitar up to whatever pitch that Gabby's C tuning was tuned to, as he can be seen doing in the film GABBY PAHINUI, FAMILY & FRIENDS/THE PAHINUI BROTHERS - here Bla is playing in the key of G, with his guitar capoed up to the third fret, sounding in the key of B flat, which is the key that Gabby Pahinui's C tuning is tuned *down* two half steps to, in the film. Bla also played sometimes in Standard Tuning in the key of C, if the other guitarists' Slack Key tunings were tuned up to the key of C. He also occasionally played in the G Major "Taro Patch" Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), also capoing up to whichever pitch that Gabby's C tuning was tuned to.

Sonny Chillingworth acknowledged the great impact that Gabby had on him: "It was Gabby's [1946] version of *Hi'ilawe* that really turned me on to Slack Key. That was beautiful. His voice was high then. We didn't have electricity on Moloka'i, but we had one of those old Victrolas with a crank. I had that record going, you know, playing and playing." Later, a young Sonny finally met Gabby and played his guitar for him: "He must have liked what he heard, 'cause he went back in and came out with his guitar. We played all night. That was really an honor. Later, we played together. I loved the man. Nobody else did what Gabby did."

Ozzie Kotani says of Gabby, "He's the greatest influence on most of us, because of the great recordings he's put out. Gabby played a beautiful style with great feeling for the music. No one else has ever done it quite the same. That's why I consider myself still a student. I can always look forward to listening to him and trying to figure out more."

Besides Gabby, the two other most influential Slack Key artists are the late **Edwin "Sonny" Chillingworth** and the late **Leonard Kwan** both of whom recorded from the 1950s through the late 1990s.

Sonny Chillingworth (1932-1994) began his recording career in 1954 or 1955, when he recorded *Makee Ailana* with the late Auntie Vickie I`i Rodrigues. He later recorded a 45 rpm single for Waikiki Records in the late 1950s with his signature composition *Whee Ha Swing*, and his signature arrangement of *Moana Chimes/Pa`ahana*. In 1964 he released his now-classic first album WAIMEA COWBOY on the Makaha Label (now on the Lehua Label), and recorded five more albums in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as backing up many other artists. In addition to playing in the **Gabby Pahinui** Hawaiian Band, he kept busy with his own band and for a while, was the Slack Key guitarist in 'ukulele master **Eddie Kamae's** great and very influential group, **The Sons of Hawai`i** (a position also held at different times by **Gabby Pahinui, Atta Isaacs, Dennis Kamakahi, and George Kuo**), although Sonny never recorded with them on guitar.

His original approach to bass patterns and runs, chord voicings, and vamps made his style easy to identify. Like his close friend and mentor, **Gabby Pahinui**, he both preserved and extended the tradition as he learned from diverse sources and added his own techniques.

Sonny's former student, **Ozzie Kotani** says of his teacher, "I'll never forget the patience and kindness Sonny showed me. There's no question why I am so committed to teaching – Sonny shared with me in such a memorable way." Kotani continues, "Sonny was a true virtuoso. His style was unique with wonderfully original movements. He was able to execute extremely difficult passages with speed and fluidity, and yet he was able to capture an unmistakable sweetness and cleanness in his playing and singing. He leaves us a wonderful legacy in his music, an inspiration to everyone who loves Slack Key."

Leonard Kwan (1931-2000) made his first recording, the track *Hawaiian Chimes*, around 1957, and he recorded the first ever all-instrumental Slack Key album, SLACK KEY (often called "the Red Album"), for the Tradewinds Label in 1960. This album, which included his standard Slack Key composition '*Opihi Moemoe*, has influenced all the next generations of *ki ho`alu* guitarists and continues to do so today. This recording also had six pieces that Leonard composed (unusual for Slack Key albums, as the majority of songs played by most Slack Key guitarists are interpretations of Hawaiian classics and traditional songs), most of which have become Slack Key standards. This album and all of Leonard's early recordings have been reissued on THE LEGENDARY LEONARD KWAN-SLACK KEY MASTER-THE COMPLETE EARLY RECORDINGS (Hana Ola Records).

Leonard's favorite tuning was the C Wahine Tuning (C-G-D-G-B-D), and it is often called "Leonard's C", because of his profound use of it in his recordings.

These three Slack Key mentors are noteworthy not only for their beautiful playing (and their singing, in Gabby's and Sonny's cases) and their recordings, but also for the influence they have had in greatly expanding and forever changing the Slack Key tradition.

Also influential was the late **Leland "Atta" Isaacs Sr.** (1929-1983) from the renowned Isaacs musical family, who was a great improviser and was very jazz influenced in his beautiful use of chords. He was also known for his C Major Tuning (C-G-E-G-C-E), and for his work with **Gabby Pahinui**, and he particularly influenced **Cyril Pahinui's** playing.

Ray Kane (1925-) also made some influential early 1960s recordings and embodies the early 1900s style of playing.

Auntie Alice Namakelua (1892-1987), whose 1800s style was the earliest style ever documented, has also inspired many players, especially with her prominent use of the old G Wahine Tuning (D-G-D-F#-B-D), which many refer to by her name, calling it "Auntie Alice Namakelua's Tuning."

The release of several great Slack Key albums in the 1960s by **Leonard Kwan, Ray Kane, Atta Isaacs,** and **Gabby Pahinui** on Margaret Williams' Tradewinds Label, further increased the awareness and popularity of Slack Key guitar. Those four artists and **Sonny Chillingworth** recorded in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, and influenced all the younger Slack Key guitarists.

The next generation's three most influential Slack Key guitarists issued their own first recordings in the late 1960s and early 1970s and have influenced many players ever since: **Keola Beamer** (solo and with his brother Kapono), **Led Kaapana** (with his trios The Hui `Ohana, and I Kona), and **Peter Moon** (with his groups The Sunday Manoa, and The Peter Moon Band).

From the 1980s on **Cyril Pahinui, Ozzie Kotani, George Kuo,** and **George Kahumoku, Jr.,** have also been very influential, as have **Dennis Kamakahi, Cindy Combs,** and **John Keawe.**

Leonard Kwan, Ray Kane, and **Sonny Chillingworth** continued to record and influence many Slack Key guitarists into the 1990s. Also **Keola Beamer, Led Kaapana, Cyril Pahinui, Ozzie Kotani, George Kuo, George Kahumoku, Jr., Dennis Kamakahi, Cindy Combs,** and **John Keawe** have and continue to influence many players with their recordings, concerts, and workshops.

9. The Most Influential Slack Key Albums:

Although **Gabby Pahinui** was the most influential Slack Key guitarist, **Leonard Kwan** had the most influential *album* with his 1960 recording SLACK KEY (often called "the red album"). The most influential albums on Slack Key guitarists have been these 19 listed here approximately in the order of the amount of influence. There are many great recordings, but these albums, released between 1960 and 1978 have been the ones that other Slack Key guitarists have learned from and have cited the most for many years. Other albums by these artists have also been influential, as well as those by many other artists (for a list of many more influential Slack Key albums, see **Recommended Recordings and Other Information – Section II** of this Slack Key information book and go to part 1, **Recommended Recordings**).

Prior to the release of these albums Slack Key guitarists learned mainly from family members, and from occasional 45 RPM and 78 RPM records (also see the reissue recordings THE HISTORY OF HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY GUITAR (Hana Ola Records) – this recording has 20 historical tracks from the 1940s and the early 1950s by 9 Slack Key guitarists, including **Gabby Pahinui** (his first 5 recordings from the 1940s, which were also the first recordings of Slack Key guitar), **Tommy Blaisdell, George Keoki Davis, Mike Hoomanawanui, George & Tina Kaapana, Henry Kahalekahi, Abraham Konanui, William Namahoe,** and **Tommy Solomon**).

1. **Leonard Kwan's** 1960 album SLACK KEY [often called "the Red Album"] (Tradewinds Records) – Leonard's first album was the first ever all-instrumental Slack Key album and featured Leonard's compositions, several of which became Slack Key standards, and his definitive arrangements, several of which have become the standard way to play the songs. This recording and all of Leonard's other early recordings have been reissued on THE LEGENDARY LEONARD KWAN–SLACK KEY MASTER–THE COMPLETE EARLY RECORDINGS (Hana Ola Records). Leonard and Dennis Ladd later put out a book of transcriptions of many of the songs Leonard had recorded, in both standard notation *and* tablature, called SLACK KEY INSTRUCTION BOOK (originally on Tradewinds Publications, now available through Elderly Instruments).

2. **Sonny Chillingworth's** 1964 album WAIMEA COWBOY (Makaha Records & later issued on Lehua Records) – Sonny's first album was largely instrumental and mainly featured his definitive arrangements, some of which became the standard way to play those songs.

3. **Gabby Pahinui's** two albums from around 1960, HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY, VOLUME 1-WITH GABBY PAHINUI, and HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY, VOLUME 1-WITH GABBY PAHINUI, VOLUME 2 [with the *same cover* as VOLUME 1] (Waikiki Records 319 & 320) – these albums were largely instrumental and featured a wide spectrum of Gabby's playing and definitive arrangements.

4. **Keola Beamer's** 1973 album HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY GUITAR IN THE REAL OLD STYLE.(Music of Polynesia Records) – Keola's first album of mainly instrumentals featured his definitive arrangements and compositions. He also released the first ever Slack Key instruction book around this time HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY GUITAR (Oak Publications - out-of-print), which was an extended version of his earlier book FIRST METHOD FOR HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY GUITAR.

5. **Gabby Pahinui's** album PURE GABBY (Hula Records) – the music for this album was recorded in 1961 and it was not released until 1978 – this album featured Gabby's definitive playing and arrangements of many of his older signature pieces, and listed the tunings for each song. Almost everything Gabby played became a signature song and many of his arrangements became the standard way to play the songs.

6. **Gabby Pahinui's** 1972 album GABBY [often called "The Brown Album"] (Panini Records) – this heralded and popular album was the first one with his GABBY PAHUNIU HAWAIIAN BAND, with Slack Key guitarists **Atta Isaacs, Sonny Chillingworth, Cyril Pahinui, and Bla Pahinui**, and it featured his definitive arrangements, many of which became the standard way to play those songs.

9. **Gabby Pahinui's** 1975 album THE GABBY PAHINUI HAWAIIAN BAND, VOLUME 1 (Panini Records) - another influential album was his third one with his GABBY PAHUNIU HAWAIIAN BAND, with Slack Key guitarists **Atta Isaacs, Cyril Pahinui, Bla Pahinui, and Peter Moon**, and it featured his definitive arrangements, many of which became the standard way to play those songs.

10. **Gabby Pahinui and The Sons of Hawaii's** 1971 album AN ISLAND HERITAGE (Panini Records) – this influential album has many classic arrangements by Gabby along with 'ukulele master **Eddie Kamae**, steel guitar master **David "Feet" Rogers**, bassist **Joe Marshall** and singer **Moe Keawe** - many of which became the standard way to play those songs.

11. **Gabby Pahinui's** 1977 album THE GABBY PAHINUI HAWAIIAN BAND, VOLUME 2 (Panini Records) – another influential album was his third one with his GABBY PAHUNIU HAWAIIAN BAND, with Slack Key guitarists **Atta Isaacs, Sonny Chillingworth, Cyril Pahinui, and Bla Pahinui**, and it featured his definitive arrangements, many of which became the standard way to play those songs.

12. **Gabby Pahinui's** 1973 album THE RABBIT ISLAND MUSIC FESTIVAL (Panini Records) - another influential album was his second one with his GABBY PAHUNIU HAWAIIAN BAND, with Slack Key guitarists **Atta Isaacs, Sonny Chillingworth, Cyril Pahinui, and Bla Pahinui**, and it featured his definitive arrangements, many of which became the standard way to play those songs.

13. **Ray Kane's** 1975 album NANAKULI'S RAYMOND KANE (Tradewinds Records), featuring his very traditional style, harkening back to the early 1900s. This recording and all of Ray's other early tracks have been reissued on THE LEGENDARY RAY KANE-OLD STYLE SLACK KEY-THE COMPLETE EARLY RECORDINGS (Hana Ola Records).

14. **Peter Moon & the Sunday Manoa's** 1972 album GUAVA JAM (Hula Records) – this album featured Peter Moon's great Slack Key playing and unique arrangements with the Sunday Manoa (at that time Robert & Roland Cazimaro).

15. **Led Kaapana** with Hui Ohana – their first album from 1971, YOUNG HAWAI'I PLAYS OLD HAWAI'I (Lehua Records) featured great Slack Key guitar by Led Kaapana and great vocals by Dennis Pavau, Led Kaapana, and Ned Kaapana.

16. **Atta Isaacs** and **Gabby Pahinui's** 1969 album TWO SLACK KEY GUITARS (Tradewinde Records) – this mainly instrumental album had great playing and arrangements by Atta & Gabby with a backup band.

17. **Atta Isaacs'** 1971 album ATTA [often called "The Orange Album"] (Tradewinds Records) – this was Atta's first album as a leader, and featured his great playing and arrangements. This album has been reissued along with historical tracks of his as THE LEGENDARY ATTA ISAACS–INNOVATIVE HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY GUITAR MASTER (Hana Ola Records).

18. **Leonard Kwan's** 1975 album THE OLD WAY –this all instrumental album had more of Leonard's distinctive arrangements.

19. **Leonard Kwan** and **Ray Kane** –this all instrumental album also called SLACK KEY [often referred to as "the black & white album"] (Tradewinds Records) from the early 1960s had seven songs by Leonard Kwan (five of which were on his earlier album SLACK KEY ["the Red Album"] (Tradewinds Records), and six songs by Ray Kane. These tracks and all the early Leonard Kwan and Ray Kane tracks are all reissued on the recordings LEONARD KWAN–SLACK KEY MASTER–THE COMPLETE EARLY RECORDINGS (Hana Ola Records), and THE LEGENDARY RAY KANE-OLD STYLE SLACK KEY-THE COMPLETE EARLY RECORDINGS.(Hana Ola Records).

10. Slack Key Since 1970

Since the early 1970s (often called the era of the Hawaiian Renaissance), Hawaiians have increasingly looked to their cultural roots, and because of this, Slack Key guitar has steadily grown in popularity. The Hawaiian Music Foundation, founded by the late **Dr. George Kanahale**, did much to increase awareness through its publications, music classes, and the sponsoring of concerts, including the landmark 1972 Hawaiian Music Foundation Slack Key Concert in Honolulu, with **Gabby Pahinui, Fred Punahoa**, which was the first one ever held anywhere.

The Slack Key tradition possibly reached its peak in the mid-1990s and is still going strong in the early 21st century. Currently, there are several annual Slack Key festivals held in the Islands, and there are more live venues featuring Slack Key (see **Recommended Recordings and Other Information – Section II** of this Slack Key information book and go to part 7, **Seeing Slack Key Live**). More Slack Key guitar recordings are now available throughout the world. More guitarists are giving concerts more frequently in Hawai'i, and also in Mainland America, Canada, Japan, Australia, and Europe. Additionally, Slack Key is gaining recognition in more institutional music settings. In 1998 **Ozzie Kotani** gave the first-ever solo instrumental Slack Key recital. With these developments and with the techniques and influences of today's players expanding the range of Slack Key guitar, the future looks good for *ki ho`alu*.

11. Recording Labels

The four record labels that produced the most early Slack Key tracks were: the Bell Label, who issued the first four Slack Key tracks ever, of **Gabby Pahinui**, in 1946; the 49th State Label, which issued tracks in the late 1940s and the early 1950s; the Waikiki Label, which issued tracks in the 1950s by **Gabby Pahinui, Sonny Chillingworth, George Nainoa**, and **George Kainoa** (misspelled on the recording he was on – his last name is actually *Ka'ainoa*); and the Tradewinds Label, which issued albums in the 1960s by **Leonard Kwan, Ray Kane, Gabby Pahinui**, and **Atta Isaacs**.

In the 1960s the Makaha Label and the Lehua Label issued albums by **Sonny Chillingworth**; and the Hula Label issued albums by **The Sons of Hawai'i** with **Gabby Pahinui, Peter Moon** with The Sunday Manoa, and one by **Auntie Alice Namakelua**.

In the 1970s the Panini Label issued recordings by The **Gabby Pahinui** Hawaiian Band, **The Sons of Hawai'i** with **Gabby Pahinui**, **Peter Moon** with The Sunday Manoa, as well as with The Peter Moon Band; and the Hula Label issued the **Gabby Pahinui** album PURE GABBY.

In the 1970s and the 1980s the Lehua Label, the Poki Label, and the Pumehana Label issued recordings by **Led Kaapana** with his bands Hui Ohana and I Kona; and the Music of Polynesia Label issued albums by **Keola Beamer**, and the Beamer Brothers.

In the 1980s the Hula Label issued recordings by **George Kuo**, as well as **The Kahumoku Brothers**; and the Kahanu Label issued recordings by **Al Ka'ai** and **Nolan Ha'o**. Occasionally other labels also issued Slack Key oriented recordings in the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s, such as Palm Records, Kealia Farms Records, Aire Music, Daniel Ho Creations, and others.

Dancing Cat Records has been producing the ongoing Hawaiian Slack Key Guitar Masters Series, starting in 1994, which consists mainly of solo albums by many of the best players in Hawai'i. The entire repertoire of each player, as well as experiments beyond, are being recorded. These guitarists include the late **Sonny Chillingworth**, **Leonard Kwan**, **Ray Kane**, **Keola Beamer**, **Led Kaapana**, **Cyril Pahinui**, **Ozzie Kotani**, **George Kuo**, **Dennis Kamakahi**, **Bla Pahinui**, **George Kahumoku, Jr.**, **Moses Kahumoku**, **Cindy Combs**, **Martin Pahinui**, **Pat Cockett**, and others (many albums by these artists are listed in *Recommended Recordings and Other Information, Section II* of this Slack Key information book in part 1, *Some Recommended Recordings*). Ultimately, Dancing Cat plans to release at least sixty albums. Until these recordings were made, it was rare to hear Slack Key played solo on recordings (some of the rare solo guitar tracks were Gabby Pahinui's *Hula Medley*, the first ever recorded Slack Key solo guitar track from 1946, George "Keoki" Davis' *Wahine Slack Key*, from the early 1950s [both reissued on THE HISTORY OF SLACK KEY on Hana Ola Records], and Ozzie Kotani's 1988 album CLASSICAL SLACK).

Dancing Cat Records is also producing a series of Hawaiian acoustic steel and Slack Key guitar duet recordings. Until recently, this combination has curiously been absent from the entire history of Hawaiian recording. The first of these, HAWAIIAN TOUCH, with the late steel guitarist **Barney Isaacs** and Slack Key guitarist **George Kuo**, was released in 1995. In 1997, Dancing Cat Records issued KIKA KILA MEETS KI HO`ALU, featuring **Bob Brozman** on acoustic steel guitar with **Led Kaapana** on Slack Key. **Bob Brozman** also plays duets with **Cyril Pahinui** on Slack Key on the 1999 recording FOUR HANDS SWEET AND HOT, and again with **Led Kaapana** on the 2001 recording IN THE SADDLE. More of these duet albums are planned.