

Various Artists

History of Slack Key Guitar (updated and corrected notes)

Vintage Hawaiian Treasures Volume Seven (HOCD 24000 and HOC 24000)

Hawaiian slack key guitar is truly one of the great acoustic guitar traditions in the world. These historically significant recordings are the first slack key tracks ever recorded in this beautiful but previously largely undocumented art form.

(NOTE: One early track is missing -- see notes for track #14 - William Namahoe recorded a second slack key track around the same time, *Serenade of the Strings* (49th State #131), which is the only one of the historical slack key tracks from this era that we have been unable to find. If anyone has knowledge of this 78-rpm, please contact Dancing Cat Records, P.O. Box 639, Santa Cruz, CA 95061, 1-800-448-4228, ml@dancingcat.com).

Since music is one of the most mobile of cultural forms, there are different theories about the origins of slack key in the Islands. Most cite the visiting Mexican vaqueros of the 1830s, who were hired to teach cowboy skills to Hawai'i's original *paniolo* (cowboys). When the vaqueros departed, some left their guitars as gifts. The Hawaiians quickly adopted the guitar into their culture, and incorporated what they had learned from these outside influences into their traditional chants, songs and rhythms. Thus, a uniquely Hawaiian style of guitar playing was born. *Ki ho`alu*, which literally means "loosen the key," is the Hawaiian language name for this solo fingerpicked guitar style unique to Hawai'i. In this tradition, the strings (or "keys") are "slacked" to create different resonant tunings, often based on a major chord, or a chord with a major seventh note, or sometimes a chord with a major sixth note, and other combinations. Each tuning produces a lingering sound behind the melody and has a characteristic resonance and fingering, where the thumb plays the bass and the fingers play the treble strings.

Until the mid-20th century, vocals were usually the most important element of Hawaiian music, and the guitar was mainly relegated to a back-up role, often grouped with other instruments to accompany hula and singing. Slack key guitarists usually did not play the exact melody of the song, but played a repeated fragment with improvised variations using ornaments such as "hammer-ons," "pull-offs," and harmonics. This changed in the 1940s and 1950s when slack key guitarists began to play a more prominent role in Hawaiian music, adapting many more traditional instrumental and vocal pieces to the guitar. They expanded their playing techniques and became more often the featured instrument to take an instrumental break in a vocal piece, as well as providing more sophisticated fills behind the vocals. The art of solo slack key guitar began to develop as well. From the 1960s on, labels such as Tradewinds, Hula, Mahalo, Makaha, Lehua, Pumehana, Poki, Music of Polynesia, Panini, and others became more active in issuing albums featuring slack key.

Unfortunately, the early history of slack key had been very sparsely recorded, and in fact, the early history of slack key could loosely mean recordings before 1960. The tracks on this CD,

originally issued by Bell Records, the 49th State Record Co., and the Aloha label between 1946 and the early 1950s comprise about 40% of the tracks recorded before 1960. Approximately another 40% were recorded by Gabby Pahinui for Waikiki Records and are available on Waikiki #319, #320 and #340, amongst others. The remaining 20% are mainly single tracks recorded by artists such as Sonny Chillingworth on Island Recording Sound, Leonard Kwan on Tradewinds and Island Recording Sound, and George Nainoa and George Ka'ainoa (spelled *Kainoa* on the record notes) on the Waikiki label.

Both Bell and the 49th State label originally released the great majority of these slack key performances on the "B" sides of their discs. This adhered to the mainland trend of instrumentals, but also denoted the fact that Hawaiian slack key guitar did not yet enjoy the mainstream popularity that it does today. These recordings and the guitarists who performed them were the advent of the modern slack key guitar era.

There is a noticeable difference in the recording quality of the labels. While Bell employed master engineer Young O. Kang to make the recordings with two Altec 639 microphones in a fully baffled former military warehouse, many of the 49th State recordings were made on a portable home disc-cutter in owner George Ching's living room.

Because of the great sound restoration done by John Golden, John Polito, and Howard Johnston, we can now hear everything these guitarists are playing that we were unable to hear on the original tracks.

ABOUT THE SONGS

1. **HI`ILawe - Philip (Gabby) Pahinui** (Bell #505A)

Charles Philip "Gabby" Pahinui (1921-1980) is remembered today as Hawai'i's premier slack key guitarist, and the founder of the modern slack key guitar era, and he continues to influence all slack key guitarists. This 1946 recording of the traditional *Hi'ilawe* tells the story of a girl from Puna who shares a love affair at the Hi'ilawe Waterfalls in Waipi'o Valley on the Big Island of Hawai'i. It may very well be the first slack key track ever recorded. *Hi'ilawe* became Gabby's signature piece and soon recorded it again for the Aloha label [(#AR-810), track #20 on this album]. Here we are treated to a beautiful, fast tempo rendition of it with great guitar instrumental breaks between the vocal verses. Gabby's incredible *ki ho`alu* skills are showcased on this arrangement in a C Wahine Tuning (C-G-E-G-B-E, from the lowest- to highest-pitched string, tuned down a half-step to sound in the key of B), commonly referred to as "Gabby's C Tuning.", or "Gabby's Hi'ilawe" Tuning. Gabby is backed up by 'ukulele and bass. Gabby later recorded *Hi'ilawe* four other times: in the 1950s, on THE BEST OF HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY WITH GABBY PAHINUI (Waikiki Records 340); on PURE GABBY (Hula Records 567 – issued in 1978); and in a slower tempo for Panini Records on his 1972 album GABBY (often called "the Brown Album") on Panini Records 1002; and also in the slower tempo on the live compilation album from 1974, THE WAIMEA MUSIC

FESTIVAL (Panini Records 1006). He also played a great soulful slow solo version of it at the end of the 1979 film GABBY PAHINUI, FAMILY & FRIENDS.

Also recorded by:

- Sonny Chillingworth, in a different C Wahine Tuning (C-G-D-G-B-D), on his album SONNY SOLO (Dancing Cat), and again in that same C Wahine Tuning, on his 1966 album KA 'AINA 'O HAWAI'I (Lehua Records).
- Ray Kane, in a different C Wahine Tuning (C-G-D-G-B-E), on his album WAÇAHILA (Dancing Cat Records), and in the G Wahine Tuning (D-G-D-F# -B-D), on his 1975 album NANAKULI'S RAYMOND KANE (Tradewinds Records - reissued on CD on Hana Ola Records, with the title THE LEGENDARY RAY KANE-OLD STYLE SLACK KEY-THE COMPLETE EARLY RECORDINGS {Hana Ola Records)
- Cyril Pahinui, in the C Major Tuning (C-G-E-G-C-E), on his 1998 album NIGHT MOON-PO MAHINA (Dancing Cat Records).
- Bla Pahinui, in the Dropped D Tuning (D-A-D-G-B-E), singing a different melody, on his 1983 album BLA PAHINUI (Mountain Apple Records), and with the normal melody for a future recording for Dancing Cat Records.
- Led Kaapana, in the Standard Tuning (E-A-D-G-B-E), playing in the key of C, on his 1994 album LED LIVE-SOLO (Dancing Cat Records).
- Haunani Kahalewai recorded it twice in the D Wahine Tuning (D-A-D-F# -A-C#), on her early 1960s album HAUNANI, THE VOICE OF HAWAI'I (Decca Records – out-of-print), and on a 78 r.p.m. (49th State Records 181), to be reissued in the future on THE HISTORY OF SLACK KEY-VOLUME 2, (Hana Ola Records) – From the early 1950s and farther back, Hi'ilawe and similar traditional songs were often played in the D Wahine Tuning, a tuning used less often today.

2. **HULA MEDLEY - Philip (Gabby) Pahinui** (Bell #LKS-506-B)

The artistry of Gabby Pahinui's slack key guitar can be truly appreciated on this recording of *Hula Medley*, done around 1947 when he was in his mid-twenties. Played in his F Wahine Tuning (F-C-E-G-C-E, tuned down a half-step to sound in the key of E) from the lowest pitched string to the highest, this landmark virtuosic track is the only one that Gabby ever recorded completely solo, and it is the first ever solo slack key recording made (solo guitar recordings were extremely rare until the 1980s and 1990s - the other solo guitar track on this recording is George "Keoki" Davis' *Wahine Slack Key* (Song # 6),. Gabby recorded many other songs in this F tuning, especially for the Waikiki label, and he is the only slack key player who has recorded prominently in it. Like some Wahine tunings, this one produces an open chord of the dominant, or in this case, C7th note. The medley begins with *Nani Wale Lihu'e*, composed in the 1870s by Prince Leleiohoku (1854-1877), and Gabby starts slowly with beautiful rolls played down with the thumb and up with the index finger, then goes to a no tempo introduction verse. He

then goes to his trademark, influential march-like tempo feeling, using a tuba-like alternating bass playing for one verse. This also features great syncopations between his thumb and index finger. Next he plays two alternating verses of two waltzes from the turn of the century, *Wai`alae* by Mekia Kealakai, and *H_lona* by J. Elia, ending with *Wai`alae* again. The song *Wai`alae* contains strong Mexican music influences, and since Gabby loved the Mexican tradition, the song totally suited him. Note his great thumb and first finger rolls and fills in the inner-voices in between the melody, especially half way through the second verse of *Halona*.

This medley has become a slack key standard and has been recorded by the late Sonny Chillingworth, Ray Kane, and the late Leonard Kwan (Leonard Kwan's is unreleased so far). Gabby recorded it again in 1961 on his album, *PURE GABBY* (Hula Records HS-567) under the title *Slack-Key Medley*, adding the songs *Silver Threads Among the Gold* and *Ka`i`iwi Polena*, (and without *Halona*). He also re-recorded his other three songs on this album on the album *PURE GABBY* (Hula Records 567), as well as *Wai Hu`ihu`i `O Ke Aniani*, and *Hi`ilawe* for the album *THE BEST OF HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY WITH GABBY PAHINUI* (Waikiki Records 340) for Waikiki Records in the late 1950s.

Also recorded by:

- Sonny Chillingworth, in a C Wahine Tuning (C-G-D-G-B-D) on the album *SONNY SOLO*, (Dancing Cat Records)
- Ray Kane, in another C Wahine Tuning (C-G-D-G-B-E) on the album *NANAKULI'S RAYMOND KANE, NANAKULI'S RAYMOND KANE* (Tradewinds Records 1130 - Reissued with all of Ray's other early tracks on CD, with the title *THE LEGENDARY RAY KANE-OLD STYLE SLACK KEY-THE COMPLETE EARLY RECORDINGS*, on Hana Ola Records HOCD 52000), and also recorded for a future release on Dancing Cat Records
- Leonard Kwan, in his F Wahine Tuning (C-F-C-G-C-E), for a future release on Dancing Cat Records

3. **WAI O KEANIANI - Gabby's Trio, Joe Diamond, Gabby Pahinui and Ralph Alapai** (Bell #LKS-510-A)

Originally known as *Wai Hu`ihu`i O Ke Aniani*, the traditional song *Wai O Keaniani*, meaning 'Crystal Water,' describes the beautiful scent of pikake flowers in the mist of fine rain at Kahalu`u, O`ahu. Also recorded around 1947, this piece showcases Gabby's beautiful falsetto vocals as he weaves magic with his slack key guitar. Gabby's trademark and influential alternating bass, high riffs, slides, and turnaround vamps are featured here in "G Taro Patch" tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D, tuned down a half-step to sound in the key of F#). Joe Diamond and Ralph Alapai round out Gabby's trio on `ukulele and bass, and also sing background vocals.

Also recorded by:

- Ray Kane, in the G Major Taro Patch Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), on his recording

WA'AHILA(Dancing Cat Records).

- George Kuo, in the G Taro Patch Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), as a medley with Ahulili, on his recording ALOHA NO NA KUPUNA-LOVE FOR THE ELDERS (Dancing Cat Records)

4. **KEY KHOALU - Philip (Gabby) Pahinui with Joe Diamond & Ralph Alapai** (Bell #509B)

The Bell 78-rpm record label reads *Key Khoalu*, but it should read *Ki Ho`alu*, which has become the Hawaiian language term for "slack key guitar." This recording made around 1947 stands as one of young Gabby Pahinui's early masterpieces.

Ki Ho`alu or *Slack Key Guitar* is an appropriate instrumental to showcase Gabby's mastery of the C Mauna Loa Tuning (C-G-E-G-A-E, tuned down two half-steps to sound in the key of B flat). Mauna Loa tunings are based on a major chord with the top two (thinnest) strings tuned a 5th interval apart. This way these two strings can be played in 6th intervals (as the first and thicker third string usually are in several tunings), producing the recognizably sweet Mauna Loa sound. The top two strings can also be "frailed" (strummed) rapidly with the index finger, producing another characteristic sound of this tuning.

Gabby plays two traditional instrumental themes here, both of which are in the repertoires of many slack key guitarists, often under the title *Ki Ho`alu*. He begins with the first theme for three verses, which are similar to the piece *Pau Pilikia* recorded by Leonard Kwan, and to Ray Kane's *Popoki Slack Key*. Gabby then plays a more common *Ki Ho`alu* type melody for six verses, then goes back to the first theme again for one more ending verse. This rendition uses his trademark alternating bass with the 5th and 6th strings playing on the first and third beats of the measure, with the third string played on the 2nd and 4th beats.

Variations of this piece have also been recorded by Sonny Chillingworth, Ozzie Kotani, George Kuo, Ledward Kaapana, and others, again attesting to Gabby's great influence on all slack key guitarists. In later renditions of this piece on the Waikiki and Hula labels, Gabby played it differently with more strumming down with the thumb in between the beats, as well as high frails on the top two pitched strings.

One can imagine other slack key guitarists being astounded, confused and inspired by these four Bell recordings by Gabby, each of which showed his advanced playing ability in four different tunings.

Also recorded by:

- Leonard Kwan in another C Mauna Loa Tuning, C-G-C-G-A-E tuning under the title *Pau Pilikia* on his 1960 album SLACK KEY (Tradewinds TS-103, known as "the red album"). SLACK KEY (often called the "Red Album") This album has been reissued with all of Leonard's other early tracks on CD on Hana Ola Records HOCD 55000, with

the title LEONARD KWAN–SLACK KEY MASTER–THE COMPLETE EARLY RECORDINGS)

- Leonard Kwan, as a medley with *Pau Pilikia* and *Salomila* in the G Mauna Loa Tuning (D-G-D-D-G-D) on 12-string guitar for a future release on Dancing Cat Records.
- Ray Kane recorded it in G Major tuning as part of *Wai`anae Slack Key Hula* on the album PUNAHELE. Ray also recorded it in the A Mauna Loa Tuning (E-A-E-E-C#-F#) as part of the song *Popoki Slack Key* on his recording WA'AHILA (Dancing Cat Records)
- George Kuo recorded it in the C Mauna Loa Tuning (C-G-E-G-A-E) as part of the song *Mauna Loa Blues* on his album NAHENAHE (Hula Records), and in the same tuning on ALOHA NO NA KUPUNA-LOVE FOR THE ELDERS (Dancing Cat Records)
- Ozzie Kotani recorded it in the G Major Taro Patch Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), as part of the piece *Slack Key Hula* from his album CLASSICAL SLACK (Pacific Sound Design Records 1001 - out-of-print).

5. **SLACK-KEY HULA - George “Keoki” Davis and Willie Davis** (Bell #LKS-504-B)

George (Keoki) Davis and Willie Davis were the brothers of Alice Davis Fredlund, a gifted singer, guitarist, and composer who made recordings with the Halekulani Girls on the Tradewinds label, sometimes backed up by slack key guitarist Leonard Kwan. Alice was the wife of Bell Records owner, Bill Fredlund, a construction dynamite expert who started the Bell Record Company. Alice's two brothers were talented slack key guitarists. Willie Davis, Alice's younger brother, was made sales manager of Bell Records. He cruised the Waikiki and Honolulu club circuit, scouting for talent to record on the new label. He also got to record his talents on the Hawaiian slack key guitar.

This song contains more traditional themes and is played in the G Major Taro Patch Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), tuned up a half step to sound in the key of A flat. It features a classic style of slack key playing where the thumb plays the bass on the first and third beats of the measure, and a higher pitched string or a chord on the second and fourth beats. George is accompanied by `ukulele and a second guitar played by his brother Willie Davis, also in the G Major Tuning, also tuned up to A flat.

6. **WAHINE SLACK-KEY - George “Keoki” Davis** (Bell #502B)

In the D Wahine Tuning (D-A-D-F#-A-C#), this early 1950s rare solo guitar track (the other one on this recording is Gabby Pahinui's *Hula Medley* (Song # 2), features George (Keoki) Davis' very nice variations in the first position. *Wahine* is the term for a tuning that contains a major 7th chord or has a major 7th note in it (in this case, the high-pitched first string, the C# note). A characteristic of Wahine tunings is the open major 7th note that is “hammered on” (playing a string then immediately fretting a note above the strunk note on the same string with the left hand) to produce the tonic (here, the D note) and produces a strong and resonant dominant (V) chord, here the A7th. Some say these

tunings are referred to as “Wahine” because of their sweet flavor. Others say the tuning got its name in older days, when women used to favor it in their playing. A ‘hammer-on’ is an ornament produced by plucking a note and immediately fretting above that note to produce a second tone. For comparison, listen to Tommy Solomon’s *Midnight Hawaiian Serenade* (track #15) and Tommy Blaisdell’s *Rocking Chair Hula* (track #19) on this album, both also in the D Wahine Tuning.

Other songs in the D Wahine Tuning have been recorded by:

- Ray Kane, on his composition *Nani Ho`omana`o*, on his album PUNAHELE (Dancing Cat Records).
- Leonard Kwan, on his composition *Ki Ho`alu Chimes*, which using a unique harmonic chime technique, on the album KE’ALA’S MELE (Dancing Cat Records).

7. **THE KANAKA HULA - George “Keoki” Davis and Willie Davis** (Bell #LKS-503-B).

Keoki plays this song in G Major Taro Patch Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), tuned up one fret to sound in the key of A flat, again accompanied by a ‘ukulele and a second guitar also in the in G Major Tuning, also tuned up to A flat. This piece contains four different traditional themes: the first theme is played for two verses, the second theme is played for five verses and features his bass runs in the second and third verses. In the third theme, which is played twice, the second guitarist his brother Willie Davis (also in the G Major Tuning, also tuned up to A flat) plays some nice bass runs between some of the chords. They are accompanied by an ‘ukulele player, and this song is from the same recording sessions as *Slack Key Hula* (song # 4). There is a fourth theme played for one verse to end the song.

8. **HOLAU MEDLEY - Henry Kaalekaahi** (49th State #89B)

Recorded in G Major Taro Patch Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), tuned up to sound in the key of A flat, this medley contains a simpler, traditional slack key melody together with the songs *Holau* by Lena Machado, *Hoo Ki Paka*, and *E Huli Ho`i Mai* by Maddy K. Lam. This medley showcases Henry's trademark bass run and a nice, steady thumb rhythm playing bass on the first and third beats of the measure, and a strong strummed chord on the second and fourth beats. Bass runs are one of the sub-traditions of the slack key tradition, as many players have their own identifiable signature runs, notably the late Sonny Chillingworth, Ledward Kaapana, Cyril Pahinui, and George Kuo. Since the late 1950s, Henry has actually concentrated much more on the steel guitar, but still plays a little bit of slack key. Light rhythm guitar on Henry's three tracks, all recorded at the same session, is played by slack key guitarist William Namahoe, probably in Standard Tuning (E-A-D-G-B-E), playing in the key of G, and tuned up to A flat, or capoed up one fret, to sound in the key of A flat (also see track #14).

This piece is similar to two current slack key recordings: Ledward Kaapana's *Ku`uipo Oonaona* from his album LED LIVE-SOLO (Dancing Cat Records), which features Led's

own trademark bass runs; and Cyril Pahinui's *Young Street Blues* from 6 & 12 STRING SLACK KEY (Dancing Cat Records), which features his beautiful unique bass run.

9. **THE STROLLING TROUBADOUR - Henry Kaalekaahi** (49th State #HRC-134-B - 78 RPM).

This traditional-type slack key piece is also played in G tuning and tuned up to sound in the key of A flat. It features another one of Henry's powerful bass runs that extends the phrase two beats in a manner often done in Hawaiian slack key and vocal pieces. This extended bass run makes the D7 chord last four measures, or sixteen beats, instead of the usual twelve in pieces that use bass runs like this. This song also features a beautiful D11th chord (a C Major partial chord barred on the fifth fret on the three highest pitches with a D bass), which is often used in slack key, and it has been prominently used by Gabby Pahinui, Ledward Kaapana, George Kuo, and others. Sometimes he plays the C chord with a G bass, which is also common in slack key.

10. **HOOKIPA PAKA/MAUNAWILI MEDLEY - Henry Kaalekaahi** (49th State #HRC-96-B - 78 RPM).

Many songs about Maui have been written by Alice Johnson. Her popular Ho`okipa Paka Hula tells of the beauty of Ho`okipa Park, near Paia, Maui. Henry plays it again in the in G Taro Patch Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), tuned up to sound in the key of A flat. He uses his trademark bass run here, with a slight variation the first time he plays it.

11. **HAWAIIAN MELODY - Abraham Kalauli Konanui** (49th State #103B)

This track and the following track, *Maui Serenade*, recorded at the same session, show the incredible power, feeling and abilities of two guitarists: Abraham Konanui, and an unidentified guitarist, who may have been the late, great slack key guitarist, Fred Punahoa. Abraham Konanui was related to Fred Punahoa and both were uncles to slack key guitarist Led Kaapana, and Fred Punahoa was one of Led Kaapana's major influences and inspirations.

One or both guitarists are probably playing in Standard tuning (E-A-D-G-B-E) in the key of C, which was and is still common to use for slack key playing on the Big Island of Hawai'i, and it is a frequently used tuning in the Konanui/Kaapana/Punahoa family. It is also a possibility that one player may have been in a C Wahine tuning (G-C-D-G-B-E), since it is also common on the Big Island to use tunings with the lowest two pitches strung up higher rather than slacked. This C Wahine tuning would combine the two: the Standard Tuning on the four highest pitches with the high strung tuning on the lowest two pitches. A string bass player provides accompaniment.

Hawaiian Melody is a medley of a traditional Hi'ilawe-type slack key melody and *Kukuna O Ka La* (variously attributed to Emma Bush, Rosalie Flores and Johnny Noble), played here as a Hawaiian blues piece. Note the powerful transition in the tempo for the first song to *Kukuna O Ka La*. The lead guitarist (probably Abraham Konanui), builds wonderfully with different phrasing in each verse. The second guitarist plays beautiful

rapid arpeggios behind the lead guitarist's artificial harmonics (although the first arpeggio might be the lead guitarist answering himself). As a variation on the second verse, the key of C is implied two extra beats before going to the G7 note. The lead guitarist resolves each verse by playing artificial harmonics, played by holding notes with the left hand and simultaneously touching the string 12 frets above with either the index finger or the side of the hand and picking with the thumb.

This version of *Kukuna O Ka La* influenced the late Sonny Chillingworth when he recorded his version of this piece in the G Major Taro Patch Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), on his album SONNY SOLO (Dancing Cat Records).

12. MAUI SERENADE - Abraham Kalauli Konanui (49th State #HRC-104-A - 78 rpm)

This medley is a collection of five songs, each played for two verses: two traditional slack key melodies, *Aloha Ia No O Maui* (by Alice Johnson), *Salomila* (traditional) and *Papalina Lahi Lahi* (traditional or Alice Johnson and Johnny Noble). This medley is played with the same musicians and tuning as *Hawaiian Melody*. The profound improvisation, interplay and rapport are stunning. Note the very strongly defined vamps at the end of each verse, which unifies these five pieces, and also how the players manage to keep the rhythm going with a bass note on the first and third beats of each measure, and an alternating third string G note on the second and fourth beats. In the last measure there is a little car-horn guitar effect with two chromatic notes played together, which slack key guitarist Ledward Kaapana often puts to use today.

These two Abraham Konanui tracks are two of the most powerful pieces ever recorded in any genre. The great audio restoration work done by John Golden, John Polito, and Howard Johnston enables us to more fully hear what these two fantastic guitarists are playing.

13. PUNALU`U - Mama Tina Kaapana with George Kaapana on guitar (49th State #370 - 78 rpm - also on 45 rpm)

Written by George Kipoa, *Punalu`u* is recorded here by one of Hawai`i's great singers, Tina Kaapana. This is the only known recorded track by George Kaapana, Tina's husband, and father of the great slack key guitarist, Led Kaapana. Here George plays in an older traditional backup slack key style in G Taro Patch tuning to accompany Tina's beautiful falsetto vocals. George Kaapana plays *Punalu`u* a little differently than usual by playing eight beats on the C chord and eight beats on the D chord (usually the G chord is played for six beats and the D chord is played for ten). This track also features steel guitar and bass. Tina went on to record several beautiful albums in the 1970s on the Lehua label with her son Led Kaapana backing her up on slack key guitar and vocals with the group Hui Ohana, which also featured Led's brother Nedward Kaapana on bass and vocals, and his cousin Dennis Pavao on rhythm guitar and falsetto vocals.

14. MUSIC FOR DREAMING - William Namahoe (49th State #121B)

Recorded in the G Major Taro Patch Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), William Namahoe played

this piece through an older amplifier with the vibrato setting on, a sound which was also sometimes used by the great slack key guitarist Leonard Kwan. This song features four themes. The first one is very similar to the traditional chant *E Lili`u E* (later popularized as an instrumental slack key guitar piece) and is played three times. Next he goes to another traditional slack key theme, which has some six beat measures. The third theme is played for two verses, and features a very interesting 18 beats on the first G chord. The fourth theme is played twice and has ten beats on the first G chord. Interestingly enough, the D chord toward the end is again 18 beats. This track was possibly recorded at the same time as Henry Kaalekaahi's tracks (#8, 9 & 10). Here, Henry plays backup acoustic guitar, probably also in the G Major Tuning, and there is also a 'ukulele player accompanying as well.

William recorded another track around the same time, *Serenade of the Strings* (49th State #131), which is the only historical slack key track that we have been unable to find.

If anyone has knowledge of this 78-rpm, please contact Dancing Cat Records, P.O. Box 639, Santa Cruz, CA 95061, 1-800-448-4228, ml@dancingcat.com.

15. MIDNIGHT HAWAIIAN SERENADE - Tommy Solomon (49th State #136B)

This is another fine piece played in the first position in the old-style D Wahine Tuning (D-A-D-F#-A-C#), with a backup guitar played in the Standard Tuning (E-A-D-G-B-E), playing in the key of D. For comparison see track #6, George "Keoki" Davis' *Wahine Slack Key*, and track #19, Tommy Blaisdell's *Rocking Chair Hula*, both of which are also played in the D Wahine Tuning.

16. OLD TIMER'S HULA - Tommy Solomon (49th State #90B)

This short, yet profound and influential piece by Tommy Solomon is played in the G Major Taro Patch Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), tuned up to sound in the key of A flat. This track also has a backup guitar played in the Standard Tuning (E-A-D-G-B-E), tuned down one half-step to sound in the key of A flat. The first theme features two extra beats, making ten in the first G chord.

17. HULA MEDLEY - Mike Ho`omanawanui (49th State #HRC-61-B - 78 RPM).

Ho`omanawanui means 'Take it easy' in Hawaiian, and that well describes the playing style of Mike Ho`omanawanui on this number in G Taro Patch Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D). Mike used many traditional slack key riffs incorporating high chords, steady bass and rhythm using the thumb, bass runs, harmonics, different chord positions, and extra beats in the measure. He exhibits great improvisation and feeling. The song contains three themes. The first one has a nice high C chord and is played for two verses. The second is played for two verses and features a C chord with a G bass, often used in slack key. In the slack key tradition, chords other than the tonic, or home key, are often used with the tonic bass (here, the G note) to keep the drone feeling going, which creates a unique tension. The third theme is played for two verses before going back to the second theme for a verse, the first theme for two verses, and the second theme again for three verses, the first

of which features a rough but interesting bass run. He is accompanied by a second guitar, also in the G Major Tuning, and 'ukulele accompaniment is played in a traditional strummed style.

Slack key guitarist George Kuo paid tribute to Mike Ho`omanawanui when he recorded his version of this piece, which he called *Ho`omanawanui*, on his album NAHENAHE-HAWAIIAN SLACK KEY GUITAR (Hula Record). George Kuo used the first theme with slight variations, usually playing the second chord D chord with twelve beats rather than ten beats used by Mike, and George also varies the third theme.

18. MOKIHANA SLACK-KEY - Tommy Blaisdell (49th State #192A)

This traditional-type slack key piece features Tommy Blaisdell playing slack key guitar in the G Major Taro Patch Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D), while the lead guitar plays early jazz-type licks in the Standard Tuning (E-A-D-G-B-E), playing in the key of G.

Mokihana is a term sometimes used for the G Major Tuning. The song contains three different themes: the first one is played for three verses and has an odd number of six beats for the second chord in the progression, while the second theme is played for two verses, and the third one for five verses.

19. THE ROCKING CHAIR HULA (NOHO PAI PAI) - Tommy Blaisdell (49th State #193B - 78 rpm).

This is a rare vocal piece with slack key guitar. Tommy Blaisdell plays powerfully in the D Wahine Tuning (D-A-D-F# -A-C#), in the first position. He starts with a great instrumental interlude with nice strums, hammer-on and pull-off ornaments, which are often used in slack key. ('Pull-off' refers to the technique of plucking a string with the right-hand finger and immediately pulling the left-hand finger off of the fretboard, producing a second note, which is either open or fretted by another left-hand finger.) He then comes on with his expressive vocals. *Rocking Chair Hula*, or *Noho Pai Pai*, is one of John Kameaaloha Almeida's most often recorded compositions. As is often the case, Hawaiian lyrics frequently have *kaona*, or double-meaning: *If you were here with me, we would rock together on a rocking chair*. This track has a second guitar in the G Major "Taro Patch" Tuning, capoed up seven frets to sound in the key of D. For comparison see track #6, George "Keoki" Davis' *Wahine Slack Key*, and track #15 Tommy Solomon's *Midnight Hawaiian Serenade*, both of which are also in the D Wahine Tuning.

20. HI`ILawe - Gabby Pahinui (Aloha #AR-810)

This is Gabby's second recorded version of Hi`ilawe in his C Wahine Tuning (C-G-E-G-B-E), done around 1947. It is a different arrangement from his Bell label version, track #1 on this album. This rendition is shorter, the tempo is slower, and the guitar is tuned down lower. Part of the vocal melody is slightly different in the second measure and the guitar instrumental breaks are a bit more subdued. In the 1970s Gabby slowed the tempo down much more when he recorded it as a ballad under the title *Hi`ilawe-1972* on the album GABBY (Panini Records PS-1002 "the brown album") and on the anthology recording WAIMEA MUSIC FESTIVAL (Panini Records PS-1006).

Notes by Harry Soria, Jr., Jay Junker and George Winston.

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