



L-R: LEDWARD KAAPANA; AARON MAHI ON BASS, MARTIN PAHINUI MIDDLE, GEORGE KUO RIGHT; KEOLA BEAMER

label had brought out George Kuo and the Kahumoku Brothers as well as compilations of the art.

Winston's timing in the '90s was perfect to take the Hawaiian Renaissance that had happened quite by accident locally to its zenith globally. Through his distribution deal for Windham Hill with BMG Records around the world, he was able to launch *Dancing Cat* in many territories with reasonable success in Australia and Europe. He took what was a niche genre into the mainstream and has sustained the careers of dozens of its best players in various territories as live cultural acts, especially in Japan where the masters were revered.

He not only captured individual masters like Ray Kane, Sonny, Leonard Kwan, George Kuo, Dennis Kamakahi, Keola Beamer and Ledward Kaapana that had recorded for other labels, he teamed duos into acoustic steel and slack key like Barney Isaacs and George Kuo in *Hawaiian Touch* in 1995. *Kika Kila Meets Ki Ho'Alu* paired Bob Brozman on acoustic steel and Ledward Kaapana on slack key in 1997. This was followed by *In The Saddle* with the pair and *Four Hands Sweet And Hot* with Cyril Pahinui and Brozman, both in 1999.

Winston's success with slack key came in the same way that he had seeded new age music by an extensive series of compilations. The best are *Hawaiian Slack Key Guitar Masters collections Volumes 1 and 2* which are mostly instrumental with a few vocals. Another is *Hawaiian Slack Key Christmas* which has a set of innovative adaptations of carols and songs of the season. Aside from his modern recordings of over 17 artists, he also produced the reissue of seminal recordings that have been sonically cleansed titled *The History Of Slack Key Guitar*.

One of the more modern artists that has taken slack key guitar, traditional Hawaiian chants and mele to the top of the charts as well as adapting current hits is Hapa from Maui. Fronted by guitarist Barry Flanagan and bassist Nathan Aweau, who is also an incredible falsetto vocalist, their performances are chicken neck highs as island and jazzy guitar stylings weave and bounce. They often play and record with chanter Charles Ka'upu whose powerful voice in Hawaiian language is like thunder.

There are also compilations lovingly crafted by producer and Grammy winning guitarist Charles Brotman of the Big Island on his Palm Records label (www.palmrecords.com) titled *Slack Key Guitar* and *Slack Key Guitar Volume 2*. He also has a great band, Kohala, which blends slack key with jazzier stylings.

Daniel Ho (www.danielho.com) is another local producer whose compilations *Masters Of Hawaiian Slack Key Guitar*, *Legends Of Hawaiian Slack Key Guitar*, *Treasures Of Hawaiian Slack Key Guitar* and *Masters Of Hawaiian Slack Key Guitar Volume 2* have all won Grammy Awards.

Aside from the rich catalogue of *Dancing Cat*, some standout releases from other labels include: Keola Beamer *Hawaiian Slack Key Guitar In The Real Old Style* (Mountain Apple Records MACD 2033).

Hapa (www.hapa.com) has several albums, all great but they also have a compilation with other modern slack artists *It's A Slack Key World*. Highly recommended are *Maui*, *In The Name of Love* and

Hapa.

John Keawe *Ho'onanea* and *Auhele* are available through www.mele.com.

DOCUMENTARY AND INSTRUCTIONAL DVDS

Keola Beamer, *Loosen The Key* – Great documentary on Keola Beamer and Slack Key Guitar, with live performances and interviews – 2003. To order, go to www.kbeamer.com.

Ki Ho'alu, *That's Slack Key Guitar* – Documentary by Susan Friedman, featuring performances by Ray Kane, Sonny Chillingworth, Leonard Kwan, Led Kaapana, George Kuo, George Kahumoku, Jr., Haunani Apoliona and others. Available at www.mele.com or whatisup@earthlink.net.

Keola Beamer, *The Art Of Hawaiian Slack Key Guitar*. Includes tablature. Available from Homespun Tapes (www.homespuntapes.com).

John Keawe, *Music With The Island Touch* DVD – 2004 (Homestead Productions).

SLACK KEY WEBSITES

Dancing Cat's website www.dancingcat.com has an exhaustive set of pages and

Taropatch (www.taropatch.net) lists and reviews resources for learning slack key.

SLACK KEY & MUSIC FESTIVALS

For those who want to experience the Sounds of Aloha firsthand, there is no shortage of festivals and free culture events to choose from all year around. **The Aloha Festival** (www.alohafestivals.com), for example, is statewide (over the six islands) and runs from August to October with an array of shows, ceremonies and cultural events that have been running since 1946. It not only has music concerts, a steel guitar festival, and hula performances, it also features a Hawaiian falsetto contest where voices reach to the sky in high notes of incredible length.

But the classic conclave of pickers are **The Hawaiian Slack Key Guitar Festivals** with massive free outdoor shows starting in Maui June 27, Waikiki August 15, Kona on the Big Island September 5 and Kauai November 14. These are laid back lawn concerts going back 28 years, devoted solely to the masters and new geniuses of the genre. With local crafts booths, copious food vendors of 'Broke Da Mouth' delights and a family ambience, the day might start with a ten-year-old virtuoso, segue to an expert quartet of Japanese slack key practitioners, then barrel into a roundhouse of a half dozen backyard pickers who turn out to be two of the major slack key families – the Pahinuis and the Kamakahis – doing jolly battle with each other in breathtaking pace. Details at www.slackkeyfestival.com.

An annual event that is centered around the Na Hoku Hanohano Awards (think Hawaiian Grammy or ARIA Awards) started this as the **NaHoku o Hawai'i Festival** in late May. It combines dozens of free shows around Honolulu on outdoor stages and in venues including clubs with a range of seminars, workshops and an exhibition. Details at www.nahokufestival.com.

Pacific Keys

