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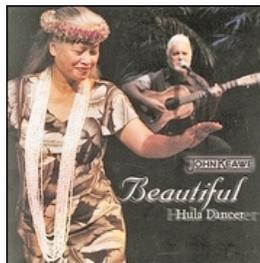
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ISLAND SOUNDS

Keawe originals highlight of 'Hula'

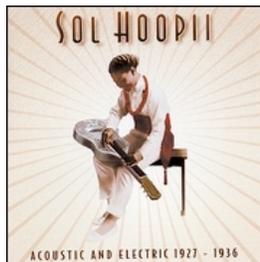
By [Wayne Harada](#)
Advertiser Entertainment Writer

Two recent CDs focus on instrumentalists who also sing: John Keawe, a pioneer of ki ho'alu, and Sol Ho'opi'i, a specialist in Hawaiian steel guitar.



"BEAUTIFUL HULA DANCER" BY JOHN KEAWE; HOMESTEAD PRODUCTIONS

- Genre: Ki ho'alu instrumentals (including a few vocals).
- Distinguishing notes: John Keawe long has been a revered and respected slack-key guitarist. He's all about simplicity with precision, and his newest does not disappoint. He wrote all 14 instrumentals (with two



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collaborations) and four vocals; these are fresh originals. The title song (one of the vocals) is a tribute to Hope, Keawe's wife, and is a sweet Valentine. There's tranquility and solace on "'Aina Hanau," a ditty about birthplaces. "Aloha Pueo" describes a rhapsodic encounter with an owl during a journey in the Volcano area. "Gentle Spirit" soothes, inspired by the Christmas season and "a higher source." "Hana Pipi" is an excursion in time to paniolo and vaquero days in Kohala.

"Gimme Some Slack" is very nahenahe, like a spontaneous backyard jam, with Keawe's mastery on guitar in full throttle.

- The outlook: Should be a major contender come award time. Locally, nationally — a disc for all seasons.
- Our take: Reassuring evidence the ki ho'alu is alive and kicking — and in good hands.

• "Hawaii's Hope" by John Keawe. Audio sample available in [mp3](#) format.

"SOL HO'OPI'I: KING OF THE HAWAIIAN STEEL GUITAR, VOL. I" BY SOL HO'OPI'I; HANAOLA RECORDS

- Genre: Compilation of vocals and Hawaiian steel guitar.
- Distinguishing notes: Sol Ho'opi'i has been a longstanding favorite in the annals of Hawaiiiana; this collection of 20 tracks amasses 62 minutes of vintage (1927-36) sounds that unmistakably suggest another time, another era.

There's more historical perspective than entertainment value here, in the sense that most of the tracks may not be broadly accessible these days. The expansive song list ranges from the truly Hawaiian to the hapa-haole, with mixed results, largely performed by Ho'opi'i's Novelty Quartette. The fare includes "Palolo" (1937), "Royal Hawaiian Hotel" (1930), "Hula Blues" (1930), "Hapa Haole Hula Girl" (1933) and "To You, Sweetheart, Aloha" (1936), surely early repertory favorites. Then there are the curious items like "King Kamehameha," "Hula

Breeze" and "Ten Tiny Toes, One Baby Nose," with an unmistakable hapa-haole stamp evocative of a time when Hawai'i was an exotic port in the far-off seas. A bit kitschy, but reflecting the period well.

- The outlook: While the steel is evident in the back-up, the compilation is unmistakably vocal-oriented and it provides a window of opportunity to hear Hawaiian music while it was commercially explored in the 1920s and '30s.
- Our take: A stroll down memory lane.

• "Palolo (Charles E. King)" by Sol Hoopii's Novelty Trio. Audio sample available in [mp3](#) format.

Reach Wayne Harada at wharada@honoluluadvertiser.com.

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