

# CYRIL PAHINUI

Cyril Lani Pahinui was born April 21, 1950. He grew up in Waimanalo on O`ahu's Windward coast. Like most Hawaiian musicians, he started playing early. For this he credits his father, the legendary Gabby Pahinui, and his father's close friends Atta Isaacs and Sonny Chillingworth. "All my music comes from my dad, Atta and Sonny," he says. "If it wasn't for them, I wouldn't be here. They were the ones who showed all of us young ones the way."

Over the years, Cyril has shared his talents with many Hawaiian groups, most notably Sunday Manoa in the 1960s, The Gabby Band in the 1970s, The Peter Moon Band in the 1980s and The Pahinui Brothers in the early 1990s. Since joining Dancing Cat, he has increasingly turned his attention to performing solo. His first Dancing Cat CD, 6 & 12 STRING SLACK KEY, released in 1994, won the Na Hoku Hanohano Award for Instrumental Album of the Year. His second solo CD, NIGHT MOON - PO MAHINA, was released in the fall of 1998.

In many ways, Cyril both maintains and expands slack key. He lovingly plays the standards and gratefully acknowledges his teachers. Yet Cyril also freely draws on a wide variety of music styles. His musical intelligence, great ear, killer chops and spirit of aloha make him one of Hawai`i's most respected and beloved performers.

Cyril's newest Dancing Cat album, released January 12, 1999, FOUR HANDS SWEET & HOT, is the latest in Dancing Cat's ground-breaking series of slack key and steel guitar duets. On it, Cyril plays with Bob Brozman. These two master musicians have long admired each other's playing. "I really liked the CD Bob did with Led Kaapana," Cyril says. "When I heard he wanted to get together with me, I said 'sure.' The first time we met we jammed for three hours straight, one song after another without stopping." Bob has listened to Cyril since the 1970s. He enjoys his style, and relished the chance to make music with him. "His deep roots in Hawaiian music and jazz really speak to me," Bob says. "His unique rhythmic approach to Hawaiian music really informed and changed my playing, especially the rhythmic innovations."

For Bob, Cyril's main innovation revolves around what he does with his picking thumb. "Most slack key players place their thumb strokes on the straight or swung quarter-notes," he says. "Cyril constantly syncopates his thumb strokes in a very Latin American way, usually on beats 1, 2 1/2 and 3 1/2 of a four beat measure. This constant syncopation sets up many polyrhythmic possibilities of 3 over 2 or 3 over 4."

All sixteen tracks on FOUR HANDS SWEET & HOT illustrate this point, particularly the old Mexican-flavored classic Wai`alae and the new original LBC Slack Key. The album also gives both artists ample room to demonstrate other skills. They gallop through Hawaiian Cowboy at blazing speed. On E Mama Ea, they slow down to express exquisite tenderness. Lei No Ka`iulani and E Nihi Ka Hele pay tribute to Cyril's father, who popularized both a generation earlier. Inikiniki Malie falls into a category Bob describes as Hawaiian blues. The swing-flavored Coquette and Lei `Ohu reflect Hawai`i's long-standing love affair with jazz. E Lili`u E retains a hint of its origins as a traditional chant. Similarly, Lihu`e and Hula O Makee perpetuate the flowing, syncopated beat of hula. A faint aroma of samba wafts through Kela Mea Whiffa, while Wai Ulu permeates the air with the distinctive scent of Hawaiian flowers.

Most of the songs on the album are standards and will be well known to Hawaiian music fans. However, the arrangements are quite unique. "Most of these have been done a lot," Cyril says, "But I bet they haven't been done like this before." Bob agrees, adding that the ability to work things out in advance made the project a very conscious and conscientious collaboration. Both musicians were pleased with the sensitive and supportive give-and-take. "It was very much a musical dialog," says Bob.

A labor of love and mutual respect, of risk taking and rewards, FOUR HANDS SWEET & HOT conveys the pure joy of music. Rehearsals often took the form of extended jams, which generated incredible excitement for everyone present. Takes often ended in laughter, high fives or tears. "Playing with Cyril has really stretched my skills as a musician and given me tremendous joys in musical communication and fellowship," Bob says. "I enjoyed every minute," says Cyril. "I'd play with Bob anytime."