



PROJECT MUSE[®]

Steelin' the Slide

Hawai'i and the Birth of the Blues Guitar

by **John W. Troutman**



Native Hawaiian guitarists, who slid metal bars over their strings to create sweeping glissando sounds, inundated the South in the first decades of the twentieth century and likely served as the direct inspiration for the slide guitar, the distinctive tradition originally and perhaps most beautifully expressed in the recordings of Charley Patton (here), Son House, Kokomo Arnold, Robert Johnson, and others. From the Collection of John Tefteller and Blues Images, www.bluesimages.com, used with permission.



Although the work of eliminating blues myths is a hard row to hoe, scholars have successfully uprooted a few, including the persistent belief that into the early twentieth century, Mississippi Delta blues musicians nurtured their musical traditions in isolation from the sounds of the modern world. We know that they sought out the latest hits from Tin Pan Alley, enjoyed the raucous and worldly, cosmopolitan performances of traveling vaudeville singers, and often mimicked the singing (or, in the case of Jimmie Rodgers, the yodeling) of the biggest recording artists of their day. Robert Johnson now seems much less of a devil-conjuring mystic than a bright, observant professional guitarist who readily assimilated a huge body of riffs borrowed from all the records he could get his hands on. Indeed, our understanding of music-making in the early-twentieth-century South has changed dramatically in recent years.¹

One belief that seems to have remained relatively intact, however, is that the bottleneck slide guitar style was developed as an “Africanism”—a musical technology that survived from the Middle Passage into the twentieth century. According to this theory, children’s instruments—monochord zithers, variously identified in Mississippi as the “diddley bow” or “jitter-bug”—served as the direct inspiration for the slide guitar, the distinctive tradition originally and perhaps most beautifully expressed in the recordings of Charley Patton, Son House, Kokomo Arnold, Robert Johnson, and others.

Indeed, folklorists in the 1960s and 1970s extensively documented uses and recollections of such one-stringed instruments around Mississippi and other parts of the South. These instruments were most often comprised of a wire string secured across a board or run from the exterior wall of a house to an anchor—often a brick—on the other end. One could generate sound and change the string’s pitch by running a bottle or a similar object up and down the wire. A quick search on YouTube returns numerous videos of Mississippi diddley bow practitioners collected by Alan Lomax or even an electrified version built by modern rocker Jack White. Scholars have worked to link these instruments’ roots to West and Central Africa. The connection seems plausible, and it was attractive to folklorists and historians in the 1960s and 1970s who, during and after the national Civil Rights and Black Pride movements, created scholarship that neatly calibrated with celebrations of African American culture and its ties to the African continent.²

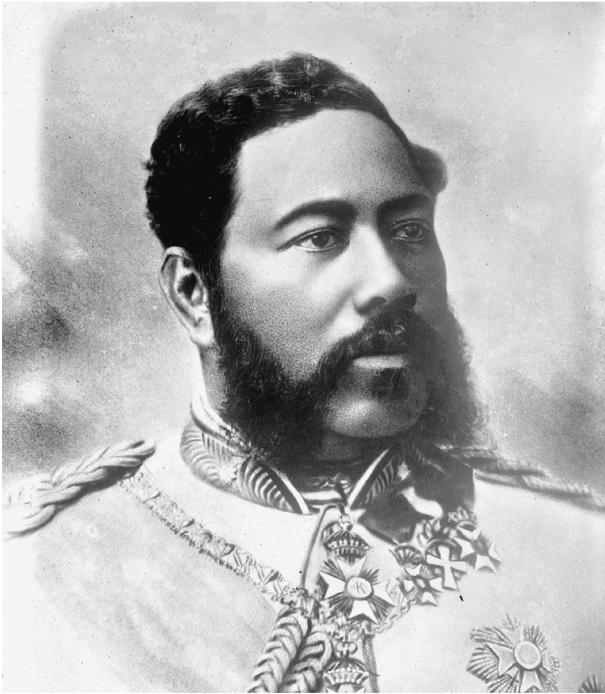
Upon closer inspection of the origins of the slide guitar tradition, however, the evidence linking it to African monochord zithers is rather tenuous. No monochord zithers seem to appear in the written record before the 1930s, well after African Americans had begun recording their slide guitars. This study will reveal that what we instead find in the South, in great preponderance, are Hawaiian guitars. Everywhere. Native Hawaiian guitarists, who slid metal bars over their strings to create sweeping glissando sounds, inundated the South in the first decades of the



Our first proof of guitars on Hawaiian soil derives from an 1840 advertisement for guitar strings in an island newspaper, The Polynesian. Honolulu newspapers routinely advertised guitars and guitar lessons by 1867, and by 1870 we have evidence of guitars being built in the islands out of Hawaiian woods. Emalia Kaibumua (center) holds a guitar in this studio image, c. 1890, along with women holding a taro patch and 'ukulele on either side of her. Courtesy of Hawai'i State Archives.

twentieth century. Yet, in the obsessively researched field of blues music, none yet have seen fit to consider the Native Hawaiian influence as anything more than a curiosity, a sideshow unworthy of serious contemplation.³

Thus, a significant reappraisal of blues slide guitar origins is in order, as is our understanding of southern guitar culture as a whole, as scholars have consistently ignored the presence of Kanaka Maoli, or Native Hawaiian, guitarists in the South. This reappraisal requires a turn to the many African American and Kanaka Maoli convergences that took place in the early-twentieth-century South, from the country roads of Mississippi and Alabama to the boisterous city streets of New Orleans. The evidence of these encounters is at times fleeting and certainly also requires some speculation. However, the abundance of these encounters in itself is provocative and demonstrates that we continue to underestimate the impact of ethnic heterogeneity in shaping the southern soundscape. For these reasons, we must contemplate a new crossroads of sorts as we revisit the history of the blues one more time.⁴



The ascendancy of guitars in the Hawaiian islands accelerated in the 1880s when King Kalākaua's campaign to maintain Native rule featured a cultural component that repudiated the longstanding efforts of the Americans to suppress the hula. When he repeatedly called on Kānaka Maoli to revive the hula as a public assertion of Native Hawaiian independence, guitarists were at the ready to provide the accompaniment, cementing a new role for the guitar as a vital instrument in Native Hawaiian songs and hula traditions. King Kalākaua, courtesy of the Collections of the Library of Congress.

JOSEPH KEKUKU AND HIS KĪKĀ KILA

First, however, let us turn to another origin story, set four thousand miles to the west of the Mississippi Delta, on a volcanic archipelago in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. The Hawaiian Islands, in fact, served as perhaps one of the world's most significant crossroads of the nineteenth century. Sailors, whalers, merchants, missionaries, entrepreneurs, and laborers from distant lands such as the United States, Portugal, Mexico, and Japan routinely arrived in and departed from Honolulu harbor. Since 1820, many of them had arrived on the good graces of the ruling ali'i, or chiefs of the islands, and international relations and trade for the Hawaiian kingdom vastly expanded during this period. As American missionaries and entrepreneurs increasingly sought souls for salvation, and lands for plantation, however, all of the Kānaka Maoli people, from the ali'i to the kāhuna (priests) to the maka'āinana (commoners), grappled with increasingly challenging and unforeseen circumstances.

The cultural impact of the foreign arrivals was immediate and complex. Missionary proselytization efforts and interactions with sailors and vaqueros (Latin American cowboys hired to maintain cattle herds in the islands) influenced many to incorporate foreign singing traditions into their own ever-changing repertoires. In addition, foreigners brought to the island a variety of trade goods, including Spanish guitars. A late-nineteenth-century newspaper article suggested that guitars first arrived from Mexico in the early 1800s, but our first proof of gui-

tars on Hawaiian soil derives from an 1840 advertisement for guitar strings in an island newspaper, *The Polynesian*. In 1939, a reminiscence by Curtis Piehu Iaukea, the former chief diplomat of King Kalākaua and later Queen Lili‘uokalani, suggested that steel string guitars were first introduced, at least to Maui, by Portuguese sailors who were shipwrecked by the Confederate cruiser *Shenandoah* during the U.S. Civil War. Honolulu newspapers routinely advertised guitars and guitar lessons by 1867, and by 1870, we have evidence of guitars being built in the islands out of Hawaiian woods. Portuguese instruments such as the rajão and machete, sold by Madeiran emigrants, developed into instruments known by Kānaka Maoli as ‘ukuleles and taro patch fiddles. Banjos, violins, and mandolins also interested them, but six-string guitars, in particular, began to proliferate at a remarkable pace.⁵

The ascendancy of guitars in the islands accelerated in the 1880s, just as the political climate of the islands rapidly deteriorated. At that time, a cohort of American planters and entrepreneurs increased their efforts to undermine ali‘i authority. King Kalākaua’s campaign to maintain Native rule featured a cultural component that repudiated the longstanding efforts of the Americans, particularly the Calvinist missionaries, to suppress the hula. When he repeatedly called on Kānaka Maoli to revive the hula as a public assertion of Native Hawaiian independence, guitarists were at the ready to provide the accompaniment, cementing a new role for the guitar as a vital instrument in Native Hawaiian mele (songs) and hula traditions. In 1893, however, the American cohort engineered an illegal, U.S.-Marines-supported overthrow of the kingdom. Kānaka Maoli faced a tumultuous political uncertainty that decade as nearly the entire Native population, along with the deposed (and eventually imprisoned) Queen Lili‘uokalani, waged an extraordinary campaign to restore the Hawaiian kingdom government. During this time, guitar music perhaps provided them with a measure of reassurance and strength: even if the missionaries resumed their efforts to destroy the hula, the countless Kanaka Maoli guitarists strolling the countryside and the streets of Honolulu seemed to ensure that their language, their genealogies, their *histories*, all carefully bound in mele, would continue to fill the trade winds with sound.⁶

In this context, just a few years prior to the overthrow, a Kanaka Maoli adolescent named Joseph Kekuku‘upenakana‘iaupuniokeamehameha Apuakehau developed a guitar technique that would come to transform not only island guitar culture, but guitar cultures all over the world. He played the instrument by laying it across his knees, tuning his guitar to open chords, and sliding a piece of metal—most likely at first a metal comb or knife—along the strings, raising and lowering their pitch. When he strummed the instrument, the slide created moveable chords as it traveled up and down the neck of the guitar; when he plucked single strings, he could produce melodies and harmonies, as well as accents and harmonics. Kekuku, as he and his family became known, reported that it took him about seven



Kekuku (middle) developed a guitar technique that would come to transform not only island guitar culture, but guitar cultures all over the world. He played the instrument by laying it across his knees, tuning his guitar to open chords, and sliding a piece of metal—most likely at first a metal comb or knife—along the strings, raising and lowering their pitch. His classmates learned his technique and quickly dispersed it throughout the islands. The kīkā kīla, or Hawaiian guitar, as it became known off the islands, sonically revolutionized every musical tradition it touched. Photograph courtesy of the Redpath Chautauqua Collection, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City, Iowa.

years to perfect this new style, as he adapted it to suit a variety of Hawaiian and Western musical traditions. He fabricated finger picks, a steel bar, and a higher nut that he placed under the strings to raise them away from the fret board. In doing so, he increased the instrument's volume, he avoided hitting its fretboard with the bar, and he created shimmering glissando sounds on the strings, mimicking, perhaps better than any other instrument on the islands, the human voice. The effect, as described by all who first heard it, was transcendent. Kekuku's classmates learned his technique and quickly dispersed it throughout the islands; the kīkā kīla, or Hawaiian guitar, as it became known off the islands, sonically revolutionized every musical tradition it touched, from traditional mele to protestant hymns introduced by New England missionaries, to the latest Tin Pan Alley sheet music imports that arrived on ships from San Francisco. Vaulted in status from serving as a typically rhythmic, accompanying instrument to that of a much more dynamic and melodic, or lead, instrument, the guitar would never be the same.⁷

Following his innovations with remarkable haste, Kekuku and his compatriots then embarked upon a series of extraordinary journeys throughout the world. Some musicians were from once elite families whose status was called into ques-

tion after the overthrow; some left the islands in protest of the provisional government; some were maka'āinana who sought better economic opportunity than what the islands afforded them; and some, perhaps most, sought adventure. A few stowed away on passenger liners bound for California. Others left the islands in more organized fashion as Hawaiian musical troupes; they would come to tour nearly every populated continent in the world, introducing their Hawaiian guitars and their mele within the first generation of the instrument's incarnation. Kekuku himself finally left Oahu for California in 1904 and toured the continents of North America and Europe for the next thirty years. Typically promoted on the U.S. continent as novelty acts in traveling vaudeville, tent, and Lyceum shows, newspaper reporters and music critics stammered—in their breathless wonder—to describe these new sounds of the Hawaiian guitar as crowds attended their shows and purchased their recordings on wax cylinders and early 78 rpm records. While some early reviewers could only describe the Hawaiian guitar's sounds as “weird” or “bizarre,” they quickly gained an ear for the instrument, as did the critic for the *Atlanta Constitution*, who in 1916 referred to Hawaiian guitarist July Paka as “a man whose music holds his hearers absolutely spellbound.” Interest continued to grow, such that industry representatives reported that, in that same year, Hawaiian guitar music outsold every other genre of recorded music in the United States.⁸

HAWAIIAN TRAVELS THROUGH THE U.S. SOUTH

The rapidly rising popularity of Hawaiian guitar music on the U.S. continent is staggering, but it is important to note, as we focus our attention on the U.S. South, that Kānaka Maoli had exploited the burgeoning southern entertainment markets long before 1916. Indeed, by that time, two generations of southerners had become familiar with Hawaiian music. The Royal Hawaiian Band introduced Hawaiian music to the South as early as 1884, when the lyrics to “Aloha ‘Oe,” penned by King Kalākaua's sister, the future Queen Lili'uokalani, were displayed at the New Orleans World's Fair. Other Hawaiian troupes traveled the southern states as early as 1893, as hula dancer Kini Kapahukulaokamāmalu noted in an interview decades later. In 1896, she and a fellow dancer posed for photographs at Howell photography studio in Louisville, Kentucky. The 1900 tour diaries of Hawaiian troupe-manager John Wilson include the routing for a southern tour featuring July Paka, who would make the first commercial Hawaiian guitar recording in 1909. The tour route included Kansas City, New Orleans, Birmingham, Memphis, Atlanta, and Louisville. At the conclusion of the Buffalo Exposition in 1901, several musicians under the management of Native Hawaiian Joseph Puni (who would also become known as a Hawaiian guitarist) traveled to South Carolina to perform at the Charleston Exposition. In 1906, a member of the Royal Hawaiian Band, who had years earlier toured the U.S. continent as a member of the Hawaiian Kawahua



New Orleans served as a major destination point for routing Hawaiian vaudeville tours; in 1912, three years after July Paka's first recordings with the Edison company, his troupe, known as "Toots Paka and Her Hawaiians," booked into the city through the Orpheum circuit. Studio image of July Paka playing Spanish guitar, Toots Paka, kneeling, and, most likely, Joseph Kekuku, the steel player whose face is partially obscured by his hat, courtesy of the author.

Glee Club, suffered a heart attack in his hotel room in Memphis. In 1912 the *Hawaiian Gazette* reported that Kanaka Maoli steel guitarist Lui Thompson's troupe was "playing one night stands in the Southern States, and expect[ed] to stay in the South all winter." By then, the sight of Native Hawaiian musicians making their way through southern towns and countryside must have seemed almost commonplace to many southerners.⁹

Tracing the footprint of Kanaka Maoli guitarists in Louisiana alone can reveal their frequent access to the South and their influence upon local musicians. New Orleans served as a major destination point for routing Hawaiian vaudeville tours; in 1912, three years after July Paka's first recordings with the Edison company, his troupe, known as "Toots Paka and Her Hawaiians," booked into the city through the Orpheum circuit, one of several visits to the state. From 1915 on, newspaper advertisements for Hawaiian guitar music frequented the *Times-Picayune*, featuring recordings by the most significant first generation steel guitarists to leave the islands: July Paka, Pale K. Lua, David Kaili, and Palakiko "Frank" Ferera. Louisiana residents were no mere passive recipients of these new sounds; rather, lured by the novelty or exoticism, they succumbed to the Hawaiian guitar craze like the rest of the country. By 1918, the LSU Men's Glee Club had included their own Hawaiian guitar performance on their tours through the state, and in New Orleans, by 1925, students enrolled in the Hanley Brothers' guitar classes received free Hawaiian guitars. Of course, jazz and Hawaiian music would come to shape



Born in Hilo on the island of Hawai'i, the Vierra brothers (center) always traveled with Hawaiian guitarists, and they frequented rural and southern markets from Hattiesburg, Mississippi, to Lumberton, North Carolina, in the late 1910s. Photograph by Zelta Studio, Great Falls, Montana, 1912, courtesy of the Hawai'i State Archives.

one another over the coming years: New Orleans jazz singer and pianist Walter “Fats” Pichon hired Kanaka Maoli Hawaiian guitarist Bennie Nawahi to play on “Wiggle Yo Toes” and “I’ve Seen My Baby (And It Won’t Be Long Now)” in 1929. New Orleans’s great Louis Armstrong would come to feature a Hawaiian steel guitar in his 1930 recording of “I’m In the Market For You.”¹⁰

Hawaiian musicians found all sorts of opportunities to play in the South. During the same period that Blind Lemon Jefferson was busking on the downtown Dallas streets, for example, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* reported in 1922 that one Hawaiian troupe’s “Haunting Hawaiian melodies . . . will be included on the program of free entertainment which will be provided for visitors to the Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show,” featuring David Kaleipua Munson on Hawaiian guitar. Several troupes traveled through Mississippi, including the Royal Hawaiian Players who booked three days in Hattiesburg’s Strand Theatre in 1919, and the Sanine Hawaiian Troubadours who performed with the “ukulele, steel guitar and taropatch” in Biloxi less than two months later. In April of 1918, Vierra’s Royal Hawaiian Singers closed the Lyceum season in Fayetteville, Arkansas. Born in Hilo on the island of Hawai’i, the Vierra brothers always traveled with Hawai-

ian guitarists, and they frequented rural and southern markets from Hattiesburg, Mississippi, to Lumberton, North Carolina, in the late 1910s. Their oft-reported appearances in small-town southern newspapers reveal not only that many markets existed for Hawaiian guitarists at this time in the South; they also reveal that they were working every small town, nook, and holler along the way.¹¹

They also found plenty of opportunities to be heard in between tours. In Gulfport, Mississippi, for those who could afford records, or, more commonly, for those who merely walked in front of George Northrup's shop as he blasted the latest hits to lure potential customers from the street, one could hear the latest Lua, Kaili, and Paka Hawaiian guitar records. In fact, in 1917, Northrup took out a double-columned advertisement in the Biloxi newspaper that stretched nearly the length of the page to exclusively list his Hawaiian guitar records. By the early 1920s, Hawaiian guitarists also played regularly on radio stations heard throughout the South, such as WFAA in Dallas, WBAP in Fort Worth, and WLS in Chicago. By 1923, eighty-nine radio stations were in operation in the South alone, and many offered live Hawaiian guitar performances throughout the day and evening.¹²

Other shows and entertainment circuits further contributed to the deep reach of Native Hawaiian guitarists in the South. *Bird of Paradise*, a dramatic production set in Hawai'i in the years following the overthrow, premiered on Broadway in 1912. The play perhaps became best known for the songs and interludes performed by Hawaiian guitarists. The initial run lasted for 112 days, but the true impact of the production would be felt when numerous traveling troupes staged it throughout the country in the years following. When, in 1918, a troupe featuring a Kanaka Maoli Hawaiian guitarist presented the production in Anniston, Alabama, and Greenville, Mississippi, the local papers billed it as "The Play that Made Hawaiian Music Popular." Clearly, then, if Hawaiian guitar music was renowned in Anniston and Greenville by this time, it was well established throughout the Deep South.¹³

Despite Jim Crow segregation, African American audiences could see, hear, and interact with these Kanaka Maoli guitarists. In order to advertise their local theatre bookings, for example, recently arrived vaudeville groups would often march through town during the day, offering a view of their musical performance for everyone in town to behold. "The Father of the Blues," W. C. Handy, himself recalled parading through the streets with Mahara's Colored Minstrels before selling tickets for the evening shows in the 1890s; they would play anything from Tin Pan Alley numbers to Sousa marches, introducing all of the locals to the latest hits emanating out of the big cities. As Karl Hagstrom Miller recently noted, when Harvard archaeologist Charles Peabody spent the summers of 1901 and 1902 in the Mississippi Delta, he reported the frequency of Tin Pan Alley hits, such as "The Bully Song," sung with glee by the local African American men laboring for him on excavations. "Undoubtedly picked up from passing theatrical troupes,"



Haunting Hawaiian Melodies recorded for the Grafonola

—Columbia Records that really convey the strange fascination of the Hawaiian music, and the romantic atmosphere of the South Sea Islands.

The plaintive minor wail of soft female voices against the rich choral background of deep-throated male singers in

COLUMBIA DOUBLE DISC RECORD
NO. A 1616-75c.

"ALOHA OE"

sung by
Toots Paka Hawaiian Company

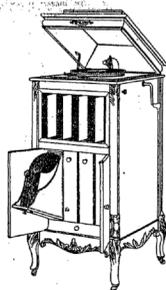
will thrill even those who have never visited Stevenson's beloved "Isle of Dreams," nor heard the distance-softened chorus floating faintly over the waters on velvet-dark Hawaiian nights.

"The Hawaiian Melody" on the reverse of this record is an odd blending of the wild melancholy and still wilder merriment of Hawaiian instrumental music. No one can remain unresponsive to the all-but-human notes of the South Sea guitar, or the rhythmic throbbing of the *ukulele*—the appeal of Hawaiian music is well-nigh universal.

For a novel "Musical Evening in the South Sea Islands," your dealer will be glad to make suggestions from among the many Columbia records listed in the special Hawaiian catalog. Hear "Kamamee," the original Hula dance, and others, by the same inimitable company of Hawaiian musicians.

Columbia Records is of Foreign Language

New records go on sale the 20th of every month.



The \$150 Columbia Grafonola

COLUMBIA GRAFONOLAS and DOUBLE-DISC RECORDS

NEW ORLEANS

GRUNWALD MUSIC STORE,
301 Canal Street.
J. P. SIMMONS PIANO CO., INC.,
HARRIS BUILDING, 7th and
Humboldt Streets.
COLUMBIA GRAPHOPHONE CO.,
393 Canal Street.

FOR SALE BY

L. M. BOURGEOIS, Opelousas, La.
N. BELLINO, Bayou La Batre, Ala.
J. ALBERT ANDERSON, Baton
Rouge, La.

L. & MISS. (Near N. O.)

HAY JEWELRY CO., Bay St. Louis,
Miss.
HARRIS & PAROLD, Gulfport,
Miss.
W. WOODRUFF, Hattiesburg,
Miss.

"ALOHA OE"
and all the other
Haunting Hawaiian
Columbia Records

65c up—Come and hear them and
enjoy a South Sea Musical Even-
ing.

J. P. SIMMONS
PIANO CO., Inc.
114 Prospect Street
104 CANAL STREET

COLUMBIA
RECORDS
65c to \$3.00

Hear them and ask especially
for our special list of
HAWAIIAN RECORDS
and the December Supplement.

COLUMBIA
GRAPHOPHONE CO.
933 Canal St.

Hear the
Popular Hawaiian
Records

In our comfortable Record Rooms

65c and Up

They Will Fit Your Machine
GRUNWALD'S MUSIC STORE
733 Canal St.

After 1914, newspaper advertisements for Hawaiian guitar music frequented the Times-Picayune, featuring recordings by the most significant first generation steel guitarists to leave the islands: July Paka, Pale K. Lua, David Kaili, and Palakiko "Frank" Ferera. Louisiana residents were no mere passive recipients of these new sounds; rather, lured by the novelty or exoticism, they succumbed to the Hawaiian guitar craze like the rest of the country. Advertisement promoting the recordings of Toots and July Paka, 1915, courtesy New Orleans Times-Picayune.

he wrote, "the 'ragtime' sung for us quite inverted the supposed theory of its origin." Although Peabody referred to their guitar playing as "limited" in repertoire and "lacking" in spontaneity and did not seem to observe any guitarists playing with a bottleneck or knife, certainly if local African Americans rattled off several of the latest hits from New York City, they would have seen Hawaiian guitarists when they traveled through town and countryside. African Americans, in fact, had access to these performances both in the street and on the stage. As historians John S. Otto and Augustus M. Burns astutely noted in 1974, "most [southern] states did not pass legislation segregating public amusements: this task was left to

local authorities or to custom. Only in Louisiana and South Carolina did the state legislatures consider segregation of amusements, and there they segregated only the ticket offices and entrances for tent shows . . . Therefore, once inside southern amusement shows, whites and blacks could listen to the same lectures or to performances by Hawaiian guitarists, Tyrolean yodelers, minstrels [*sic*], vaudevillians, or cabaret blues singers.”¹⁴

Jim Crow laws actually may have created some opportunities for African Americans to interact with Native Hawaiian musicians at the time, as Kānaka Maoli would likely have taken up lodging with African American families or in boarding houses for African Americans and other people of color as they toured the segregated South. This phenomenon extended at least into the 1940s; Lani Ellen McIntire, the daughter of the Kanaka Maoli singer and bassist Al McIntire, and the niece of Lani and Dick McIntire, two of the most famous Hawaiian guitarists of their generation, recalled to me her traumatic childhood experiences in 1939 or 1940 of getting twice spit upon by white men (presumably, she believes, because she was walking with her white mother and her Kanaka Maoli father) while touring with her family’s Hawaiian troupe in Mississippi and Tennessee. She spoke of the embarrassment of being refused lodging in white-only hotels, including those that her family entertained in, just as she gleefully remembered the camaraderie of boarding with African Americans, American Indians, Latinos, and others in integrated boarding houses that catered to itinerant entertainers and circus performers. Presumably her experiences with the Jim Crow South reflected those of the Kānaka Maoli who traveled those roads before her. Indeed, we do know that the Ka Bana Lahui, or Hawaiian National Band, decided to speak publicly only in the Hawaiian language when south of the Mason-Dixon Line in the 1890s, specifically to avoid the wrath of local white supremacists. As late as 1959, a Hawaiian entertainer reported exiting a Montgomery, Alabama cafeteria only to face its owner and a police officer, who told him never to return. Jim Crow laws and the terrors of racial violence in the South created a complex series of hazards on the road that Kanaka Maoli musicians, just like African Americans, had to navigate with great care. At the same time, their shared experiences of segregation certainly created opportunities for musical collaboration.¹⁵

Hawaiian guitarists also played the earliest black segregated “chitlin circuit,” the Theatre Owners Booking Association, or T.O.B.A. Lizzie Wallace, an African American entertainer who was part of Black Patti’s show in the 1910s, gained firsthand experience with Hawaiian music when she performed in the islands as part of Hen Wise’s Bronze Review. According to the *Chicago Defender*, in 1917, when she returned to the continent, she brought with her six Hawaiian musicians: David Burrows, George Sam Ku, Walter Ho, Sam Clement, Johnnie Kasihue, and Zachary Pali. Adopting a Hawaiian persona and naming her outfit Princess Pauhi and Her Hawaiian Song Birds, she led her troupe, featuring the Hawaiian guitar,



In New York City in late 1923, guitarist Sylvester Weaver cut four sides accompanying blues and vaudeville singer Sara Martin. During their second session, he recorded his own “Guitar Blues” and “Guitar Rag,” the two sides blues scholars identify as comprising the first blues slide guitar recordings ever made. Weaver and Martin, c. 1920, courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

on tours through the Midwest. Although we don’t know if “Her Hawaiian Song Birds” toured the South, it does seem clear that in the early-twentieth-century South, Native Hawaiian guitarists were playing everywhere, for everybody.¹⁶

THE STEEL AND THE SLIDE

So the plausibility is clear. Native Hawaiians *could* have influenced the first generation of blues slide guitarists in the South. Now: *did* they? Based upon technique, terminology, inferences in interviews, and repertoire, it seems that most of the earliest documented African American slide guitarists, and certainly the most significant, understood their style as that of playing “Hawaiian guitar.” They no doubt developed unique techniques and sounds, particularly after the bottleneck style was first recorded in the late 1920s; yet, they did so with no documented connection to one-stringed instruments such as the diddley bow, and they did so in the wake of Hawaiian guitarists working their way through the U.S. continental entertainment circuits.

In New York City in late 1923, African American guitarist Sylvester Weaver cut four sides accompanying blues and vaudeville singer Sara Martin. Weaver had arrived in the city from his home near Louisville, Kentucky, where he worked as a



Pale K. Lua was an exceedingly popular Kanaka Maoli steel guitarist who toured the U.S. continent. During his heyday (1914–1920), one could find his records all over the South. Courtesy of Les Cook.

day laborer and a jug band guitarist at night. Weaver was an incredibly agile guitarist, commanding a variety of the most modern music styles at his fingertips. After hearing him play, it is no wonder that Sara Martin would bring his talents to her sessions in New York.¹⁷ However, during their second session, on November 2, 1923, he recorded his own “Guitar Blues” and “Guitar Rag,” the two sides blues scholars identify as comprising the first blues slide guitar recordings ever made.

In the years preceding Weaver’s landmark recordings, however, Kentuckians were treated routinely to the sounds of Kanaka Maoli guitarists. As early as 1909, July Paka’s troupe was performing in Lexington. In August of 1918, the *Hartford Republican* reported that a *Bird of Paradise* production had recently passed through town. A Kanaka Maoli troupe featuring a steel guitarist performed in Middlesboro, Kentucky, in 1919. That year, the *Mt. Sterling Advocate* featured an advertisement for Paka’s records. In 1922, a year before Weaver’s recording debut, “The Royal Serenaders,” yet another Native Hawaiian troupe, performed at the opera house in Paris, Kentucky. Further examples abound. Certainly these troupes

would not have passed up the Louisville market on the Kentucky circuit. As a resident of Louisville, Sylvester Weaver lived and worked in a town that served as a major crossroads for musical troupes that paraded their novelty through the streets in the daytime, segregated or not, so that *everyone* in the community could watch. Weaver was among the best and most versatile guitarists of his day in the South, and certainly when new players came through town, he would ensure that he had a front seat, either on the streets or in the balconies of the town's segregated theatres. In fact, while African American guitarists would eventually adopt a new style of playing slide by placing a metal or glass cylinder on a finger rather than holding a piece of steel, and by positioning the instrument upright rather than on their lap, Weaver played his guitar with a knife and, when doing so, most likely held the guitar in his lap, "Hawaiian style."¹⁸

Indeed, when we take a comprehensive look, many of the most significant, earliest-documented African American slide guitarists actually played "Hawaiian style" by laying the guitar across their laps and using steel bars or knives. These players included Weaver, Huddie Ledbetter (Leadbelly), and likely Charley Patton and perhaps Blind Lemon Jefferson as well. W. C. Handy asserted in his autobiography that while waiting for a delayed train to arrive at the Tutwiler, Mississippi depot in 1903, he observed an African American musician as he "pressed a knife on the strings of the guitar in a manner popularized by Hawaiian guitarists." Music scholar Samuel Charters also suggested that Blind Willie Johnson learned to play in the "Hawaiian style." East Texas guitarist B. K. Turner ("Black Ace") also performed in the "Hawaiian" lap style, as did Louisiana born guitarist Sam Collins, Georgia-born guitarist James "Kokomo" Arnold, Oscar "Buddy" Woods, and Eddie Schaffer from the Ark-La-Tex region.¹⁹

Evidence suggests, furthermore, that African American guitarists were familiar not only with Hawaiian guitars but with Hawaiian music as well. Arkansas-born African American guitarist Casey Bill Weldon, who recorded as "Casey Bill, the Hawaiian Guitar Wizard," played "Hawaiian style" and became quite popular among African American consumers in the 1930s. Working in St. Louis in 1927, perhaps *the* most influential black guitarist of his day, Lonnie Johnson, recorded several intriguing Hawaiian guitar sides with Henry Johnson and His Boys, including "Blue Hawaii" and "Hawaiian Harmony Blues." In addition, one of the first stars in the blues idiom, Ma Rainey, featured the Hawaiian-style work of Milas Pruitt in two of her early recordings from March 1924. African Americans indeed not only took up Hawaiian guitars but 'ukuleles as well: commercial recordings from the mid-1920s by groups such as The Two of Spades, Ukulele Bob Williams, Danny Small & Ukulele Mays, and The Pebbles attest to this broad familiarity with Hawaiian instruments.²⁰

In addition, other early African American guitarists, who played their guitars upright with a bottleneck slide on their finger, often acknowledged the Hawaiian



Working in St. Louis in 1927, perhaps the most influential black guitarist of his day, Lonnie Johnson (left, in 1941), recorded several intriguing Hawaiian guitar sides with Henry Johnson and His Boys, including “Blue Hawaii” and “Hawaiian Harmony Blues.” Photograph by Russell Lee, courtesy of the Collections of the Library of Congress.

style of playing as a foundational reference point for their technique in interviews conducted during the blues revival period. Tampa Red [b. Hudson Woodbridge], for example, one of the most popular black guitarists to record and perform in the 1920s and '30s, explained to Jim O'Neal, “I used two, three, maybe four strings sometime. It's got a Hawaiian effect. I couldn't play as many strings as a fella playin' a regular Hawaiian guitar, but I got the same effect. I was the champ of that style with the bottleneck on my finger.” In 1965, Mark Levine, Barry Hansen, and John Fahey interviewed the legendary early slide player Eddie James “Son” House; they spent much time teasing out details of early-twentieth-century Mississippi Delta guitar culture. Son House offered that his father and uncle mostly played tuba and trombone and only later picked up the guitar. When pressed about the interest around Clarksdale in guitar music, he said, “Long back in that time, they didn't care nothing 'bout guitar much.” Son House reported that he didn't see his father play guitar until he was about ten years old (ca. 1912), and then, his father (and all the other guitarists he recalled) used a standard tuning, not an open tuning necessary for a slide or Hawaiian guitar style: in fact, “none of the old guys,” he said, played in open tunings, and he did not recall anyone from that period playing with a bottleneck or knife. He made no mention of diddley bows. When asked



When one considers the appropriation of kīkē kīla within many other genres, including jazz, country and western swing, vocal pop music, and even Cajun music, the impact of Kanaka Maoli musicians on U.S. continental music is astonishing. The Hamakua Singers and Players (here) were one of dozens of troupes featuring the Hawaiian steel guitar that toured the continent in the early twentieth century. Courtesy of Redpath Chautauqua Collection, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City, Iowa.

how he came about the slide guitar and open tunings, he thought for a while and responded, “the first guy I paid attention to . . . was a guy by the name of Rubin Lacy . . . And he’s the first guy, him and this guy [James McCoy], . . . that I see play the slide—the *Hawaiian way*.” Even after diligent urging by his interviewers to deliver the goods on the ancient origins of the Delta blues slide guitar, Son House characterized it as a new style, learned by him and his peers: the “Hawaiian way” of playing.²¹

Later recordings by famous southern African American guitarists also suggest that Hawaiian repertoire was more than familiar to them. Take, for example, an informal recording session from 1968 at the Memphis apartment of Furry Lewis. Lewis, born in the 1890s in Greenwood, Mississippi, played in jug bands around Memphis in the 1910s and 1920s, traveled in medicine shows, and was invited to play with numerous legendary performers from that period, including Bessie Smith, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Gus Cannon, and W. C. Handy. In his apartment, among friends, Lewis sang a bluesy number he called “Farewell to Thee” and played a guitar solo that replicated the melody to Queen Lili‘uokalani’s “Aloha ‘Oe” (which means, when translated from the Hawaiian, “Farewell to Thee”).²²

One of the most curious traces of Hawaiian repertoire derives from a recording of Huddie Ledbetter, himself a Hawaiian-style knife player, performing at a private party in 1948. By the time Ledbetter was “discovered” in the Angola prison farm by John and Alan Lomax in 1933, he had already spent a great deal of his life as a musician, having worked the streets of Dallas with Blind Lemon Jefferson in the late 1900s and 1910s. It was at this time that he learned how to play the Hawaiian guitar. Though the Lomaxes presented him as a “folk” singer, his early repertoire was loaded with commercial Tin Pan Alley material. One of Ledbetter’s early chroniclers, Frederick Ramsey, remarked, “Travelling in the South even singing for Negro Audiences you would get requests . . . , people who could know about the current popular songs even though they [were] Broadway and white inspired or Tin Pan Alley songs, and [Ledbetter] had quite a few of them in his repertoire.” Ledbetter was a consummate professional, so he knew that in order to get paid, whether on street corners or in the finest theatres, you had to know how to play whatever your audience expected or demanded. At this 1948 party, in one of his last recorded performances, Ledbetter sang what he called the “Hawaiian Song.” The last time that this song, otherwise known as “My Hula Hula Love,” was recorded by any artist, was when Hawaiian guitarists Pale K. Lua and David Kaili cut it with the Irene West Royal Hawaiians for Victor records in 1916. Prior to that, according to Edison publicity materials, it had been “introduced to metropolitan audiences by Toots Paka” and, of course, her bandmates, Hawaiian guitarists July Paka and Joseph Kekuku. Ledbetter, then, conjured a song from deep in the past, from the days of his street work with Blind Lemon Jefferson, in the days when Hawaiian



At this 1948 party, in one of his last recorded performances, Leadbelly (here, c.1942) sang what he called the “Hawaiian Song.” The last time that this song, otherwise known as “My Hula Hula Love,” was recorded by any artist was when Hawaiian guitarists Pale K. Lua and David Kaili cut it with the Irene West Royal Hawaiians for Victor Records in 1916. Photograph courtesy of the Collections of the Library of Congress.

guitar music was among the most popular, if not *the* most popular, music in the United States.²³

RECOVERING THE INDIGENOUS CROSSROADS OF AMERICAN MUSIC

Despite the evidence that the most important early blues slide players either played in the “Hawaiian style” or, like Son House, specifically acknowledged “the Hawaiian way” as a key reference point for describing the slide guitar technique, many blues scholars over the years have seemed determined to discount the possibility that the slide style developed from any other musical influences than those found in West or Central Africa. In fact, one of the most authoritative scholars on this topic wrote that, “I find it very hard to believe that young Joseph Kekuku invented and perfected this guitar style without some such model, and the most logical model would have been an American Negro guitarist, probably a sailor whose ship docked in Honolulu.” Others have made similar claims, but no evidence exists that Kekuku was inspired by any such figure; in fact, by the 1890s, it is much more likely that an African American sailor would have observed Hawaiian steel guitarists strolling through the Honolulu waterfront. Regardless, these



Native Hawaiians reoriented Americans to the guitar's possibilities, and Kanaka Maoli guitarists deserve notice as pivotal architects of American music—music that perhaps sounds as Hawaiian in its overtones as anything else. Julius "Papa Cairo" Lamperez, Cajun Hawaiian guitar player, National Crowley, Louisiana, 1938, courtesy of the Collections of the Library of Congress.

earlier, unwarranted assertions have obscured the much more plausible argument that Kekuku and the Kanaka Maoli adherents to his method were those most responsible for distributing the technique throughout the South.²⁴

Of course, it certainly remains possible that as guitars became increasingly accessible in the early 1900s, black and white southerners independently developed interests and talents in barring the strings with glass or metal objects on their own. In 1907, four years after W. C. Handy observed an African American musician playing "in a manner popularized by Hawaiian guitarists," sociologist Howard W. Odum observed some African American guitarists passing through Lafayette County, Mississippi, who occasionally used a slide as well. These two earliest documented observations of African Americans playing in this style came close on the heels of the introduction of continental audiences to the Hawaiian guitar, and we likely will never know whether those guitarists developed their techniques independently or not.²⁵

Moreover, the concept of moving a device over a string to change its pitch is

found all over the world in various incarnations, including, of course, West and Central Africa. Furthermore, a number of African American blues guitarists did string wire from their walls as children. But as Gerhard Kubik, one of the leading proponents of the Africa-to-Delta Blues-Diddley Bow connection admits, these one-stringed children's instruments do not appear in the Delta's historical record until the 1930s. Maybe, given that late date, then, we have the diddley bow story backwards. When Lynn Summers and Bob Scheir asked blues musician Little Milton the leading question, "Was your first instrument the proverbial piece of baling wire strung up on the side of a house?" Milton responded, after first describing drums made out of lard cans, "you had wire [on] the side of the house, on the wall or something, with a brick on one end maybe and a bottle on the other, then you use a nail in a bottle and *you sound like a Hawaiian type*." Rather than demonstrating an African retention, perhaps children built diddley bows to mimic the Hawaiian guitar, which we know widespread audiences of black and white southerners alike had witnessed by the first or early second decade of the century.²⁶

At the same time, the role of Kānaka Maoli guitarists in the blues tradition should not diminish the extraordinarily unique guitar styles developed by African Americans in the early twentieth century. Southern African Americans may have seen Native Hawaiians first craft a competent and translatable technique of sliding objects over guitar frets to make music, but African Americans then made it their own, adapting it to suit their most modern music of the day, the blues. They came to develop their own tunings and techniques, preferring bottle-necks with upright guitars to knives with guitars played on the lap. Certainly, as well, the transmission of musical ideas moved in multiple ways, and many Native Hawaiian guitarists by the 1920s were experimenting with and recording blues, jazz, and hillbilly music. The extensive African and Kanaka Maoli diasporic collisions in the South suggest that this southern soundscape was more fluid and ethnically diverse, and less isolated and segregated, than we even recently imagined.

Based upon our available evidence, it seems clear that many African American guitarists learned from Kānaka Maoli a new tool for their bag of tricks, and when one considers the appropriation of kīkā kila within many other genres, including jazz, country and western swing, vocal pop music, even Cajun music, the impact of Kanaka Maoli musicians on U.S. continental music is astonishing. The near absence of Kānaka Maoli in most American music histories, then, is appalling. Native Hawaiians, simply put, reoriented Americans to the guitar's possibilities. It is time, then, that these histories are overhauled in consequence, so that Kanaka Maoli guitarists are given their due as pivotal architects of southern music, of American music—music that perhaps sounds as Hawaiian in its overtones as anything else.

1. See, for example, Elijah Wald, *Escaping the Delta: Robert Johnson and the Invention of the Blues* (New York: Amistad, 2004). University of Hawai'i at Manoa ethnomusicologist Ricardo Trimillos has connected leo ki'eki'e (male falsetto yodeling, here with regard to kī hō'alu, or slack key guitar) in the Hawaiian islands to Vera Cruz traditions that may have been passed on to Hawaiian cowboys by vaqueros in the early to mid-1800s; others attribute the origins of yodeling in the islands to Henry Berger, who first arrived from Germany to conduct His Hawaiian Majesty's Band in 1872, or Theodore Richards, who began conducting the Kamehameha School Boy's Choir in 1889. Elizabeth Tatar, "Falsetto," in George S. Kanahale, ed., *Hawaiian Music and Musicians: An Illustrated History* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawai'i, 1979), 87–8. Some have wondered if Hawaiian touring groups influenced Rodgers's yodel. I would like to thank one of my anonymous readers for pointing out this additional possible link between the islands and music in the South. Indeed, this essay has improved in critical ways by the careful review of three anonymous reviewers, each bringing a unique perspective and interest to the text. I am profoundly indebted to them for improving this piece, though the remaining errors are my own.

2. David Evans, "Afro-American One-Stringed Instruments," *Western Folklore* 29, no. 4 (1970): 229–45; David Evans, "African Elements in Twentieth-Century United States Black Folk Music," *Jazzforschung: Jazz Research* 10 (1978): 85–109; William Ferris, *Blues from the Delta* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1978); Alan Lomax, *The Land Where the Blues Began* (Pantheon Books, 1993), 347–352. The work of identifying such "Africanisms" addresses what Gerhard Kubik suggests is a "persistent concern in African American studies." Gerhard Kubik, *Africa and the Blues* (Oxford: University Press of Mississippi, 1999), 4.

3. Russel Shor briefly speculates on this influence in Russel Shor, "From the Islands to the Delta: The Steel Guitar Story," *The Frog Blues & Jazz Annual*, no. 2 (2011): 55–59. Another, equally important question to ask is: why don't Kanaka Maoli musicians figure prominently in historical narratives or in popular understandings of the history of popular music in the United States? This question, as well as a deeper contextualization of guitar culture in the islands and its implications in Kanaka Maoli music and history, is addressed in my forthcoming book, *Kikā Kila: The Hawaiian Steel Guitar and the Indigenization of American Music* (University of North Carolina Press). When discussing guitars in Hawaiian music, it is important to acknowledge that Kanaka Maoli guitarists have developed several distinctive styles of playing the instrument since Portuguese and Latin American sailors brought them to the islands in the early to mid-nineteenth century. Today, the most well known of these styles is that of kī hō'alu, or slack key guitar. This style typically involves open tunings and complex finger picking often unique to particular islands, families, or individuals. However, the instrument is held upright and fretted in the traditional manner of a Spanish guitar. In contrast, the kikā kila style features the instrument played on the lap with the player using a steel bar to alter the string pitch rather than depressing the strings between frets on the neck. Kī hō'alu remained ensconced within the islands for most of the twentieth century, while Kānaka Maoli rapidly transported kikā kila to stages throughout the world. The latter is the instrument that features in this essay; I also will refer to it as the "steel guitar" or as the "Hawaiian guitar," as these names were those most typically used by Kānaka Maoli and African American guitarists on the U.S. continent in the early twentieth century to describe kikā kila. When African Americans began to experiment with bottlenecks and hollow metal cylinders to create the same effect, they began to distinguish this style as "slide guitar."

4. I will refer to individuals with indigenous ancestral ties to the Hawaiian Islands interchange-

ably as Kanaka Maoli or as Native Hawaiian. In accordance with Hawaiian language norms, I will use a macron (ā) when referring to a plurality of Kanaka Maoli people (e.g., Kānaka Maoli).

5. Kanahale, ed., *Hawaiian Music and Musicians*, 351–2; Curtis Piehu Iaukea, “Whaling in the Days of the Kingdom,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, May 7, 1939, 1; Advertisement, *Honolulu Advertiser*, May 11, 1867, 4; “Home Manufacture,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, March 5, 1870, 3; Jim Tranquada and John King, *The ‘Ukulele: A History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2012), 37–41.

6. For concise histories of the assertion of haole (foreign) rule in the islands as well as that of Native resistance efforts, see Noenoe Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo‘ole Osorio, *Dismembering Lāhui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2002). Guitar accompaniment (and Kalākaua’s renaissance) created a new genre of hula, called hula ku‘i. For a history of missionary efforts to prohibit hula dancing and King Kalākaua’s hula renaissance, see Adria L. Imada, *Aloha America: Hula Circuits Through the U.S. Empire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 29–37, 42–54. See also Amy Ku‘uleialoha Stillman’s exceptional work on the history of hula genres, including Amy K. Stillman, “History Reinterpreted in Song: The Case of the Hawaiian Counterrevolution,” *Hawaiian Journal of History* 23 (1989): 1–30.

7. Origin stories always contain a bit of uncertainty, at the very least, and Hawaiian guitar enthusiasts have bandied about several competing claims that suggest other individuals in the islands as the originator of the Hawaiian guitar technique. The claims, while intriguing, do not enjoy the much more extensive documentation that corroborates Kekuku as the originator. For a collection of sources documenting Kekuku’s development of the instrument, along with the competing claims, see Lorene Ruymar’s excellent sourcebook, *The Hawaiian Steel Guitar and Its Great Hawaiian Musicians* (Anaheim Hills, CA: Centerstream Publishing, 1996).

8. Adria L. Imada, “Aloha America: Hawaiian Entertainment and Cultural Politics in the U.S. Empire” (PhD Diss., New York University, 2003), 110–128, 138; “Hotel Men Dine in Sunken Garden,” *New York Times*, December 16, 1909, 9; Percy Hammond, “Mr. Carle in the Echo,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 29, 1910, 6; “Amusements,” *Atlanta Constitution*, August 15, 1916, 10; “Forsyth Offers Toots Paka as Headliner This Week,” *Atlanta Constitution*, August 13, 1916, B8; W. D. Adams, “The Popularity of Hawaiian Music and Musical Instruments,” in *Hawaiian Almanac and Annual for 1917*, ed. Thomas G. Thrum (Honolulu: Thos. G. Thrum, 1916), 143. The transnational Kanaka Maoli diaspora in this period and the globalization of Hawaiian culture are subjects that interest a number of scholars. See Imada, *Aloha America: Hula Circuits*; Jane C. Desmond, *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Elizabeth Tatar, *Strains of Change: The Impact of Tourism on Hawaiian Music* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1987); Elizabeth Buck, *Paradise Remade* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994). Other authors and scholars who have recently written more specifically about the Hawaiian music boom of this period include Gary L. Okihiro, *Island World: A History of Hawai‘i and the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Tranquada and King, *The ‘Ukulele*; Charles Hiroshi Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation: American Music and the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Tim Brookes, *Guitar: An American Life* (New York: Grove Press, 2005); and Peter Doyle, “‘And as the Sun Sinks Slowly in the West . . .’: Sobbing Guitars, Distant Horizons and the Acoustics of Otherness,” in *Echo and Reverb: Fabricating Space in Popular Music Recording, 1900–1960* (Wesleyan University Press, 2005), 120–142.

9. Imada, “Aloha America: Hawaiian Entertainment,” 152–156; Imada, *Aloha America: Hula Circuits*, 60, 81–2, 89; Tour Diary, 1900, M–182 (John Henry Wilson Papers), Hawaiian State Archives (HSA); T. Malcolm Rockwell, *Hawaiian and Hawaiian Guitar Records, 1891–1960* (Kula, HI: Mahina

Piha Press, 2007), CD-ROM; *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, December 5, 1901, 3; “Juan F. Edwards’ Body. The Remains Will Be Shipped to Hawaii For Burial,” *Times-Picayune*, August 9, 1906, 13. In addition to Native Hawaiians traveling within the U.S. South, southern newspapers frequently provided news coverage of the Hawaiian Islands, and they often featured articles on Hawaiian music. For example, see “Hawaiian Music: Elementary Modes of Expressing Musical Ideas Influenced by Incoming Civilization,” *Biloxi Daily Herald*, October 15, 1901, 6. “Hawaiians on the Mainland Do Well,” *Hawaiian Gazette*, August 30, 1912, 4.

10. “Green Room Gossip,” *Times-Picayune*, October 6, 1912, 44; *Times-Picayune*, September 19, 1915, 10; Advertisement for Maison Blanche, *Times-Picayune*, February 19, 1917, 34; Malcolm Rockwell notes that Joe Kekuku was the possible second guitarist for the July Paka recordings (Rockwell, *Hawaiian and Hawaiian Guitar Records*). Hawaiian acts traveling through New Orleans at the time included the Comet Royal Hawaiian Serenaders, who visited in 1917, and the Big Kawa’a Hawaiian Troupe, which travelled along a vaudeville circuit in 1921 to the Louisiana Theatre. Kuleella’s Hawaiian Troupe followed them in the theatre six months later. *Times-Picayune*, October 13, 1917, 13; *Times-Picayune*, May 29, 1921, 13; *Times-Picayune*, December 19, 1921, 3; “Glee Club Trip Success. Fourteen Concerts Given by L. S. U. Men in Ten Days,” *Times-Picayune*, March 27, 1918, 11; *Times-Picayune*, August 27, 1925, 17; Robert Armstrong, Liner Notes, *King Bennie Nawabi: Hawaiian String Virtuoso, Acoustic Steel Guitar Classics from the 1920s*, Yazoo, A Division of Shanachie Entertainment Corp, 2000, compact disc. The Pichon recordings, made in Los Angeles, California, on July 21, 1930, featured Ceele Burke on the steel, an African American guitarist who learned the instrument in California and later also cut the steel guitar on Fats Waller’s rendition of “My Window Faces the South” in 1937. Many Hawaiian musicians, in turn, became highly influenced by jazz in the 1920s and 1930s, particularly as they embraced the relatively new Hawaiian music genre of “hapa haole” music (music categorized by Native Hawaiians as “half-foreign” or “half-white” due to their inclusion of English lyrics or a U.S. continental musical style or subject matter. See the recordings from this period of Hawaiian guitarists Sol Ho’opi’i, Bob Paole, and Sam Ku (a/k/a Sam Ku West), Kanahale, ed., *Hawaiian Music and Musicians*, 106–7. Ferera was born in Honolulu in 1885 but was of Portuguese descent. He is easily the most recorded Hawaiian guitarist; the precise number of his recordings is unknown, but they likely number in the thousands. Tim Gracyk, “Frank Ferera: Hawaiian Guitar Pioneer,” Tim’s Phonographs and Old Records, 2006, <http://www.gracyk.com/ferera.shtml>.

11. Advertisement, *Hattiesburg American*, December 6, 1919, 3; Advertisement, *Biloxi Daily Herald*, January 31, 1920, 3; “Hawaiians 8:30 Tonight,” *Fayetteville Democrat*, April 12, 1918, Fragile Documents Folder, Vierra Family Papers (HSA); Advertisement, *The Robesonian* (Lumberton, NC), December 18, 1919, Fragile Documents Folder, Vierra Family Papers, HSA; Advertisement, *Hattiesburg American*, October 21, 1920, 3; “Music, Dancing, Singing and Jazz to be Free Numbers in Exposition’s Entertainment,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 19, 1922, Fragile Documents Folder, Vierra Family Papers, HSA.

12. Advertisement, *Biloxi Daily Herald*, February 17, 1917, 4; Advertisement, *Laurel Daily Reader*, January 10, 1923, 2; “Radio Programs,” *Laurel Daily Leader*, December 24, 1924, 2; “The Radio,” *Hattiesburg American*, January 16, 1925, 12; “Radio Programs,” *Laurel Daily Leader*, March 26, 1925, 3; Wald, *Escaping the Delta*, 95.

13. The plot did not diverge from the common formula for American plays featuring indigenous people at the time, in that it suggested the ultimate impossibility of interracial unions through the doomed relationship of a white American man and a Kanaka Maoli woman, and it exploited both noble and ignoble representations of Native Hawaiians. Christopher B. Balme, “Selling the

Bird: Richard Walton Tully's *The Bird of Paradise* and the Dynamics of Theatrical Commodification," *Theatre Journal* 57 (2005): 1–20; Advertisement, *Anniston Star*, March 31, 1918, 2; Advertisement, *Greenville Daily Democrat Times*, March 5, 1918, 7.

14. W. C. Handy, *Father of the Blues* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1941), 34–35; Karl Hagstrom Miller, *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 23; Charles Peabody, "Notes on Negro Music," *Journal of American Folklore* 16, no. 62 (July–Sept, 1903): 151; John S. Otto and Augustus M. Burns, "Black and White Cultural Interaction in the Early Twentieth Century South: Race and Hillbilly Music," *Phylon* 35, no. 4 (4th Qtr., 1974): 410. The latter authors also acknowledged "blacks and whites both may have borrowed the [bottleneck or knife] style from Hawaiian guitarists who toured the South in tent shows and fairs in the early twentieth century," 409.

15. Lani Ellen McIntire, Interview by author. Digital recording. Waimānalo, Hawaii, August 4, 2011; John H. Wilson, "A Royal Hawaiian Love Story—A Man & His Band," *Ha'ilono Mele* 5, no. 10 (October 1979): 3; Milly Singletary, *Hilo Hattie: A Legend in Our Time* (Honolulu: Mutual Publishing, 2006), 75–76.

16. "Lizzie Wallace," *Chicago Defender*, December 22, 1917, 7. She perhaps utilized her connections to play on both black and white entertainment circuits; earlier in 1917, for example, her Hawaiian troupe performed at the Strand, a major theatre in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Advertisement, *Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette*, December 3, 1917, 5. I would like to thank Les Cook for bringing these articles to my attention.

17. Jas Obrecht, "Sylvester Weaver: The First Blues Guitarist on Record," Jas Obrecht Music Archive, last modified on July 30, 2011, <http://jasobrecht.com/sylvester-weaver-blues-guitarist-record/>.

18. Tranquada and King, *The 'Ukulele*, 214, n. 43; "No Lazy Man's Place," *Hartford Republican*, August 30, 1918, 6; "Miss Gladys Frisbie Entertained," *The Central Record*, August 1, 1918, 7; "Famous Hawaiian Troupe of Singers, Dancers, and Steel Guitar Players in 'My Honolulu Girl' at the Manring Theatre, April 17," *Middlesboro Pinnacle News*, April 14, 1919, 4; Advertisement, *Mt. Sterling Advocate*, July 29, 1919, 3; "The Royal Serenaders' at Paris Grand Thursday," *The Bourbon News*, November 28, 1922, 2. *The Bourbon News* reported that, "the guitar and his own ukelele [*sic*] . . . has made the music of these islands familiar to all." In the early years, newspaper reporters occasionally confused the names of the 'ukulele, with its often brash, staccato rhythmic playing, and the Hawaiian guitar, with its associated soft, glissando slides, as the article continued, "the peculiar sliding tone of the ukulele has taken the world by storm, and you can hear almost any familiar tune rendered a la Hawaiian." 'Ukuleles were sometimes confused with steel guitars, but more often audiences recognized the clear distinction between the two instruments, and early on at that. A review of a local "Field's Minstrels" performance in a 1916 edition of Mississippi's *Greenville Daily Democrat*, for example, states, "One of the new hits of the performance was when Bobbie Henshaw and his little Ukulele imitated the music of the Hawaiian steel guitar in a most realistic manner. He pleased the audience wonderfully." This review also reveals that the 'ukulele can be played in a number of styles, not simply in the rapid, staccato manner that was popularized on the U.S. continent in the teens and twenties. "Field's Minstrels," *Greenville Daily Democrat*, October 11, 1916, 4; Jeff Harris, "Smoketown Strut: Sylvester Weaver's Blues Pt. 1," Big Road Blues, 2008, <http://sundayblues.org/archives/230>.

19. Jas Obrecht, "Tampa Red: The Guitar Wizard," *Jas Obrecht Music Archive*, 2010, <http://jasobrecht.com/tampa-red-the-guitar-wizard/>; Giles Oakley, *The Devil's Music: A History of the Blues* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1997); Handy, *Father of the Blues*, 74; Samuel B. Charters, *The Country Blues*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1975), 157; Francis Davis, *The History of the Blues* (New York: Hy-

perion, 1995), 116, 146; Charles Wolfe and Kip Lornell, *The Life and Legend of Leadbelly* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1999), 45, 91; Gayle Dean Wardlow, *Chasin' That Devil's Music: Searching for the Blues* (San Francisco, CA: Backbeat Books, 1998), 5, 36; David Evans, "Musical Innovation in the Blues of Blind Lemon Jefferson," *Black Music Research Journal* 20, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 93. Handy assumed the guitarist was African American, but we should not discount outright the possibility that the guitarist was instead Kanaka Maoli, waiting for the train to depart for the next stop on the vaudeville circuit. The earliest practitioners of the African American "sacred steel" tradition in the House of God and Church of the Living God actually took lessons from Kanaka Maoli Hawaiian guitar instructors in the 1930s. See Robert L. Stone, *Sacred Steel: Inside an African American Steel Guitar Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 64–71, 129–130.

20. Paul Garon and Beth Garon, *Woman With Guitar: Memphis Minnie's Blues* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1992), 20–21; *St. Louis 1927–1933: The Complete Recorded Works of Jelly Roll Anderson, Henry Johnson, Bert 'Snake Root' Hatton, Jesse Johnson, 'Spider' Carter, Ell-Zee Floyd, Red Mike Bailey, Jimmy Strange, Georgia Boyd*, Document Records DOCD-5181, 1994, compact disc; "Dream Blues" and "Last Wandering Blues," recorded March 1924 in Chicago, Paramount 12098; *Hokum Blues, 1924–29*, Document Records, DOCD-5370, 1995, compact disc.

21. Quoted in Obrecht, "Tampa Red: The Guitar Wizard"; see also Vincent Cortese, "Tampa Red: Long Live the Guitar Wizard," *Blues Review Quarterly* 6 (1992): 23; Son House, interview by Barry Hansen and Mark Levine, FT-2809 LC, *Interview with Son House in Venice, CA, 1965, Part 1* (20001), John Edwards Memorial Collection, Southern Folklife Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, emphasis in original. I would like to thank Elijah Wald for turning my attention to this interview. For more on Rubin Lacy, see David Evans, "Rubin Lacy," in Mike Leadbitter, ed., *Nothing But the Blues* (London: Hanover Books, 1971), 239–245. A curious 1927 newspaper article from Mississippi's *Hattiesburg American* claims to promote the first local stage performance by a player using a bottle rather than a piece of steel as a slide: "What is probably the most novel Presentation act ever to be presented on local stages is 'Turner & McCoy' . . . [It has] proved a knockout in all the largest theatres in the country where it has played. 'Turner and McCoy' . . . have a style all their own for playing guitars, that of using a 'jake' bottle to produce tones and sounds from their instruments that never before have been heard on local stages . . . McCoy is known in theatrical circles as the Hawaiian guitar specialist. He plays a large steel guitar." "Turner-McCoy Premier Show," *Hattiesburg American*, April 14, 1927, 9. Turner is Lemuel Turner, identified as a white guitarist who recorded four "steel-guitar solos" for Victor Records in Memphis in February 1928, including "Jake Bottle Blues." Tony Russell, *Country Music Records: A Discography, 1921–1942* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 917. "Jake" refers to a Jamaican Ginger Extract medicine that was, due to its high alcohol content, frequently consumed by poor and working-class southerners as an intoxicant. The next day's edition of the *Hattiesburg American* provided a biographical sketch of Turner. It reported that he was born in McComb City, Mississippi, and during World War I enlisted in the army's 81st Infantry Division. He reported to the newspaper that after he was gassed in France, he returned to the United States and spent six years in a government hospital in San Francisco. It was there that he began to play guitar and developed this method of playing guitar with a bottle. "King Guitar Player Here," *Hattiesburg American*, April 15, 1927, 2. I have not located any further references to the Turner & McCoy group. His recordings are among the very earliest to feature the guitar played with a bottle rather than a knife or metal bar. It is likely that guitarists Sylvester Weaver or Walter Beasley experimented with the bottleneck slide around this time too, as together they cut "Bottleneck Blues" in November of 1927.

22. "Walter 'Furry' Lewis—Memphis School," *Trail of the Hellbound: Delta Blues in the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 2001, http://www.nps.gov/history/delta/blues/people/furry_lewis.htm; Furry

Lewis, Bukka White & Friends, *Party! At Home: Recorded in Memphis in 1968*, Arcola Records, A CD 1001, 2004, compact disc.

23. Wolfe and Lornell, *The Life and Legend of Leadbelly*, 45, 48; Quoted in *Ibid.*, 38; Tim Brooks, “‘Hula Love, Another Case of Song Larceny,’” *Ha’ilo Mele* III, no. 8 (August 1977), 6.

24. Evans, “Afro-American One-Stringed Instruments,” 238–9; David Evans, “The Guitar in the Blues Music of the Deep South,” in *Guitar Cultures*, ed. Andy Bennett and Kevin Dawe (Berg, 2001); William Barlow, “*Looking Up at Down*”: *The Emergence of Blues Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 31. In his highly influential study *Deep Blues*, Robert Palmer discounted the possibility even that the Hawaiian guitar was invented by a Kanaka Maoli, arguing that it was “instead introduced there between 1893 and 1895, reputedly by a schoolboy, Joseph Kekuku.” Obviously, many Kānaka Maoli at this time attended school in the islands, not simply foreigners. Later, when arguing the earlier origins of the slide style in Mississippi, Palmer quoted a line from an interview with Gus Cannon, who said the first time he heard the slide guitar was “around 1900, maybe a little before.” Interestingly, however, when I located the original interview, Cannon in fact had said in full, “Alec Lee was the first guy I heard playing on a Hawaiian guitar . . . used to knife. Uh . . . that must’ve been around 1900, maybe a little before.” Robert Palmer, *Deep Blues: A Musical and Cultural History of the Mississippi Delta* (New York: Penguin, 1982), 46; Bengt Olsson, Liner Notes, *Cannon’s Jug Stompers: The Complete Works 1927–1930*, Yazoo 1082, 1992, compact disc.

25. Howard W. Odum, “Folk-Song and Folk-Poetry as Found in the Secular Songs of the Southern Negroes,” *Journal of American Folklore* 24, no. 93 (July–Sept., 1911): 261, 270; Howard W. Odum, “Folk-Song and Folk-Poetry as Found in the Secular Songs of the Southern Negroes (Concluded),” *Journal of American Folklore* 24, no. 94 (Oct.–Dec., 1911): 363–364, 395; Marybeth Hamilton, *In Search of the Blues* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 29. Bruce Bastin argues that the transition to slide guitar was facilitated through a familiarity with fretless banjos. Bruce Bastin, *Red River Blues: The Blues Tradition in the Southeast* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 11–12. Hawaiian guitarists influenced Canadians as well. In 1899, William Miles observed a Hawaiian guitarist in Honolulu; by 1903, Miles was regularly teaching classes and giving public demonstrations of the instrument in Winnipeg. U.A. Shilstra, “William Miles,” in Kanahela, ed., *Hawaiian Music and Musicians*, 249–252.

26. Evans, “Afro-American One-Stringed Instruments”; Ferris, *Blues from the Delta*; Kubik, *Africa and the Blues*, 17; Jim O’Neal and Amy van Singel, eds., *The Voice of the Blues: Classic Interviews from Living Blues Magazine* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 391, emphasis added. In regard to the fabled stories of homemade instruments, Barry Lee Pearson notes, “The homemade guitar has become tied to the bluesman image and is a recognized and at times even a suspect motif of the bluesman’s story. What began as a black folk tradition now is part of the bluesman stereotype and, as a stock item of record liner notes and folk festival programs, now serves to authenticate the artist for an essentially white audience.” Barry Lee Pearson, “*Sounds So Good To Me*”: *The Bluesman’s Story* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), 52.