

Jim “Kimo” West
Moku Maluhia - Peaceful Island
Westernmost Records



Following in the sandy footsteps of such renowned Hawaiian slack key guitarists as Sonny Chillingworth, Keolo and Kapono Beamer, and Peter Moon, **Jim “Kimo” West** offers up an astounding album of twelve Hawaiian contemporary and traditional tunes on his album, **Moku Maluhia - Peaceful Island**. I lived on Hawaii in the seventies and got my first exposure to slack key guitar during a performance by legendary guitarist Keolo Beamer. I admit, I didn’t understand the extraordinary nuances of this unique music at the time, but eventually I came to appreciate the nascent beauty of this genre. Slack tunings make for a distinctive sound from a six string acoustic guitar. This kind of fingerstyle fretwork is exclusive to the Hawaiian Islands and a blessing to the spirit no matter where you are from.

This blissful album starts with the song entitled **Tidepools**. Just pick a sunny spot beside the ocean and wait while the tide goes out and soon you will be witness to jewels that exist beyond your imagination. A temporary new world of colored rocks, green algae, and tiny fish of every description are created right in front of you. Kimo’s music is a sound track of calm as the water sparkles and clouds are reflected as you look down, not up.

West’s title tune, **Peaceful Island** is a soothing respite from anyone’s busy life. It recommends musically that you take time to breathe, to reflect and to enjoy the moment. Hawaii is a haven of unusual lifestyles, a mixture of bohemian ideals counterbalanced by a strong sense of place and family. This relaxing music is the heartbeat of such an uncommon state, pun intended.

My Old Island Home is particularly poignant to me. I cannot remember a time when I felt more free and more in harmony with the planet than when I lived there. I was not born in Hawaii, but I got there as soon as I could. My time on the Big Island will always be special no matter where I live now. The beautiful voice of Simone Vitucci’s cello echoes the aloha for this land.

George Abe’s idyllic shakuhachi flute is featured on **Bamboo Forest** turning into an otherworldly experience. Kimo’s guitar just seems to drift along, unencumbered and tranquil. The sun filters through tall, lean bamboo stalks that are closer than relatives, the blue sky above adding a sense of coolness. You catch the sun here and there and there is balance. It is world that we do not want to leave.

When I first got to Hawaii and heard of Hanalei on Kauai, it made me think of the place where Puff the Magic Dragon is from, Honalee. (And why not?") Of all the songs on Moku Maluhia, **Hanalei River** has that more traditional sound. There is certain flow to Hawaiian music, a cadence that is as laid back as its ideology, and the idea of a meandering river that comes down from the mountain and flows to the sea is the embodiment of time passing at a unhurried pace.

The Pathway of Pi’ilani is a song of peace. Hawaii’s history is rich in truth and legend. Pi’ilani was a Hawaiian leader that built a road around the island of Maui trying to unite all the people

that lived there. This isn't legend, this is fact. Kimo's song, using sweet mid-tones, is a walk around Maui, in what is called *circle the island* from Lahaina to Hana and back. The tempo is perfect for a leisurely stroll.

There is a magic to this kind of music. With just a few bars of play, my heartrate slowed, my breathing eased, and I felt such a peace that cannot be readily explained. Hawaii is an enchanted place. The *o'hana*, the family of man on Hawaii is just as special. Jim "Kimo" West's music is a tribute to tradition and to the future of Hawaii that remains true to its past. This is an excellent recording. Mele no ka oi.

- R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews