

# Proclamation

The steel guitar is a beloved instrument in Hawai'i with a legacy that stretches back more than 125 years, when many believe a young boy from Lā'ie first created it. According to legend, Joseph Kekuku was walking along a railroad track through Honolulu strumming an old guitar when he came across a bolt. He found that sliding the metal bolt across his guitar created a pleasing, melodic sound. Joseph experimented playing the guitar with the back of a pocket knife and steel comb. Later, utilizing the machine shop at Kamehameha School for Boys, where he was a student, Joseph created a steel bar to slide over the strings. After adding raised steel strings, the Hawaiian steel guitar was born.

At the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, the Hawaiian steel guitar and 'ukulele were introduced to the mainland. The expo, a celebration of the completion of the Panama Canal, attracted more than 17 million people in seven months. Hawai'i's hula show created a sensation, exposing Hawaiian song and dance to the world. Early Tin Pan Alley and Hawaiian songwriters blended jazz and Big Band Era music with Hawaiian music and themes to create a paradise on the radio for people longing for something better during the Great Depression. Songs with English lyrics, Hawaiian themes and jazz flavorings helped fuel the early tourist industry in Hawai'i. The music also influenced many musicians and musical styles including country, gospel and blues.

Notable Hawaiian steel guitar legends include Billy Hew Len, who led the Moana Hotel's band for 14 years, playing with a leather cuff fitted with a steel bar due to an industrial accident that left him with only one hand; Henry K. Allen, Jules Ah See and Barney Issacs, who played for the Hawai'i Calls radio show, which broadcast around the world; Sol Hoopi'i, the "King of the Hawaiian Guitar;" Lani McIntire, who collaborated with Sol Hoopi'i, and laid the foundation for the steel guitar as a standard country instrument; and Annie Kerr, Hawai'i's first professional female steel guitarist.

In an effort to introduce the Hawaiian steel guitar to the next generation, educators such as Dr. Neil Scott, of University of Hawai'i, have created programs which combine science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) and music education. This summer, the YMCA; state Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism (DBEDT); and Dr. Scott will offer an afterschool program at YMCA locations across O'ahu, which will teach participants to apply and develop STEM skills to create their own hand-crafted steel guitars.

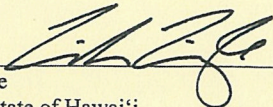
On April 4, 2009, steel guitar legend Henry Allen was presented with a Legacy Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2009 Hawai'i Music Awards at the Mamiya Theater. Also, on April 28-30, the Hawai'i Steel Guitar Association (HSGA) sponsored its *Biennial Honolulu-Waikiki Convention* at the Queen Kapi'olani Hotel in Waikiki. This event featured three days of live performances by Hawaiian steel guitar musicians around the world. On May 3, HSGA sponsored the annual Jerry Byrd Steel Guitar Ho'olaule'a concert at the Ala Wai golf course. On June 26-27, the Hawaiian Steel Guitar Festival will take place at the Ka'anapali Beach Hotel. We appreciate Bryant Neal's efforts in coordinating this exciting event on Maui. Through the efforts of DBEDT's Creative Industries Division, plans are underway to feature a Hawaiian Steel Guitar exhibit at the Grammy Museum in Los Angeles, as well as live performances at Nashville's legendary Grand Old Opry, in collaboration with the Music and Entertainment Learning Experience (MELE) program at Honolulu Community College. These events are important for Hawai'i, extending the reach of our state's arts, culture and music beyond our shores.

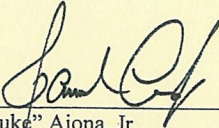
**THEREFORE, I, LINDA LINGLE**, Governor, and **I, JAMES R. "DUKE" AIONA, JR.**, Lieutenant Governor of the State of Hawai'i, do hereby proclaim **June 2009**, as

## HAWAIIAN STEEL GUITAR MONTH

in the Hawai'i, and encourage our residents and visitors to learn more about Hawai'i's beloved instrument.

**DONE** at the State Capitol, in the Executive Chambers, Honolulu, State of Hawai'i, this fifteenth day of June 2009.

  
Linda Lingle  
Governor, State of Hawai'i

  
James R. "Duke" Aiona, Jr.  
Lieutenant Governor, State of Hawai'i