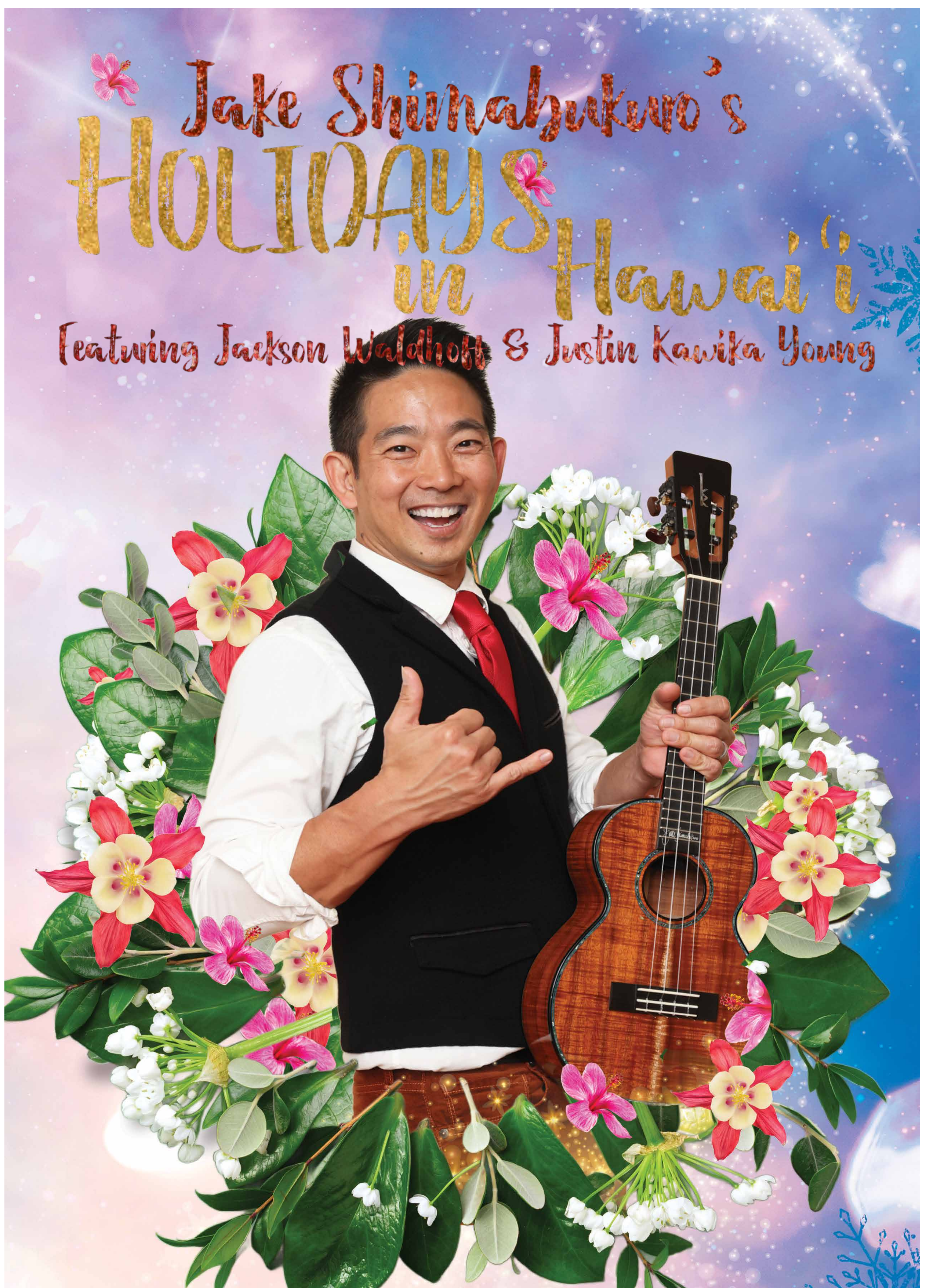


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ABOUT JAKE

By now, if you know the 'ukulele, you might know the name, the innovator who is Jake Shimabukuro. He has captivated audiences around the world with his unique and dynamic style. With his mother as his first teacher of the instrument, Jake embraced a deep love and respect for the 'ukulele and has explored new and unexpected ways to push the boundaries of what was possible on the humble four-strings. Each album has showcased his mastery of the instrument and his ability to weave together diverse genres to create a cohesive and captivating musical experience. He is undoubtedly one of the most innovative and exciting musicians of his generation, changing the perception of the instrument itself and breaking barriers of what kind of music it is capable of.

Enter his newest, and most personal album yet.

Grateful is a coming home for Jake. With a literal who's who of Hawai'i based musicians, this collection of songs is performed live, in studio with Jake's friends, contemporaries, mentors, and heroes – all kanikapila style in a return to his roots. *Grateful* is the follow-up to the critically acclaimed duets album with artists

from Willie Nelson, Ziggy Marley and Bette Midler to Jimmy Buffett, Jack Johnson and Kenny Loggins. It was these collaborations that inspired him to go back to the beginning and play with the musicians who first inspired him as he was growing up in Hawai`i. Jake shares a connection with each and every artist on this album.

It all started with an after-concert hang with fellow musician Mark Yamanaka. Jake asked Mark if he would ever want to record something together. Ironically, Mark was the first to agree and one of the last to record, "Love Will Keep Us Alive," which would be one of the many epic collaborations on the long-awaited album.

In addition to his impeccable musicianship, Jake is also a gifted storyteller, weaving together musical narratives that draw listeners in and leave them spellbound. He wanted to bring the power of each artist's stories to this album.

Once the musicians decided on the song that they wanted to record, Shimabukuro along with producer

and engineer Grande and Fletcher, worked on a plan on how to best capture the live collaboration. In the studio, the musicians played through the song a couple of times and then Michael would press record. All live in the studio and tracked in the same room together, just like the old days.

It was coincidence that brought him together with Hawaiian music legend Henry Kaponu. Seated next to each other on a recent flight, Henry shared stories from his “hanabata” (childhood) days, the two talking story about growing up in Hawai`i and how music formed their lives. Jake’s humble nature would have previously prevented him from approaching Henry for a collaboration, but getting to know the man on a personal level gave him the confidence to ask. Jake wanted each artist to choose the song and Henry Kaponu chose the iconic, “Sailin’.”

When Jake was at Ka`imukī High School, he would never imagine having the opportunity to perform with the musicians on this album. It was there where he began his longtime friendship with John Feary, nephew of the late Mackey Feary from the legendary

Kalapana band. John sought him out after a performance at the school's welcome back assembly. As Jake began playing his `ukulele, with his friend holding a microphone in front of him, none of the students were listening. He chose Ohta-san's iconic song, "Bodysurfing," a song he learned from his teacher, Tami Akiyama from Roy Sakuma Studios. As he slowly walked closer and closer towards the microphone, the sound of Jake's Kamaka `ukulele started to echo throughout the gymnasium, and the crowd of over 1500 students fell silent until the end, when they suddenly erupted in cheers. It was a moment that the shy musician would never forget and the beginning of Jake's journey in music performance.

John Feary approached Jake afterwards and they began a daily ritual of jamming after school. Other students joined in the kanikapila sessions and the song "Friends," composed by John and inspired by a friend who had passed away, was always on the afterschool set list. Having never recorded the song,

Jake and John share this special piece of nostalgia on *Grateful* for the first time.

Herb Ohta Jr. was one of Jake's big influences, as his teacher and the son of the legendary Ohta-san, one of the biggest inspirations for Jake's passion for the 'ukulele. Jake has always been a fan of Ohta Jr.'s polished performance style and melodic sense and the two were lucky enough to collaborate during the pandemic. They chose to arrange a medley of two songs: one by Queen Lili'uokalani (Ahe Lau Makani) and another by Mekia Kealakai (Wai'alaе). The one-take recording is beautiful. Like his father, Herb Jr. plays with a low 4th string, which is a nice contrast from Jake's high 4th string. Together, their sound is rich and full.

Chris Kamaka and Bryan Tolentino are two musicians who've had incredible influence on Jake's career. They were in fact the first to invite Pure Heart, Jake's first band, to perform in front of a live audience at the Sheraton Waikiki during Ku'uipo Kumukahi's concert.

Chris Kamaka, with his son Christopher Kamaka, Jr., chose to record a song written by Eddie and Myrna Kamae called "Dreams," a tune that Chris would sing to his kids when they were little. Jake heard Chris sing it for the first time in Japan, a moment he remembers bringing him to tears. Chris and his son bring that same emotion to the recording on *Grateful*. "Eddie Kamae was the first 'ukulele virtuoso and paved the way for all of us. It is such an honor to record a song composed by Uncle Eddie, one of the greatest players of the instrument with Chris and Christopher Jr. of the Kamaka family, one of the greatest makers of the instrument.

Bryan Tolentino, who Jake refers to as one of the true ambassadors of the 'ukulele, promotes the instrument everywhere he goes – through word and deed. In what promises to be one of the most fun and spontaneous songs on the album, the two recorded "Māori Brown Eyes," a classic tune that has been recorded by some of the greats like Peter Moon and Troy Fernandez. This is meant to be played in true kanikapila style and that's how Jake and Bryan

approached it in the studio – coming together with no plan, they jammed their way through it and share that joyful energy in the performance. “Like Bryan always says, ‘Ready, fire, aim.’”

When Del Beazley isn't singing, he's usually cracking jokes. The witty, kind-hearted jokester had Jake laughing all the way through his first tour of Japan with Bryan Tolentino, Chris Kamaka and Asa Young (Side Order Band). The pair recorded “Kahalu'u Night” in what Jake can only call magical. Del's phrasing and the space he gives the music can only be captured when recording in this free form style. Jake recalls having multiple “chicken-skin” moments during the recording.

The track with Nathan Aweau, was originally recorded for Hawaiian Airlines as a music video for their in-flight entertainment programming. “Kawika,” which means David in Hawaiian, was originally recorded by the band, Sunday Manoa, and later the Ka`au Crater Boys. This iconic piece honors King David Kalākaua, also known as the Merrie Monarch. “When I was a kid, this was the song that I wanted to learn because it

had the coolest intro. I sometimes think of it as the 'ukulele equivalent to guitar players wanting to learn the intro to "Stairway to Heaven." Nathan Aweau is a monster musician, and it's always so inspiring to hear and see him play. It was an honor to record this with him."

John Cruz's original composition, "Song for Sin" was something the multi-talented instrumentalist and singer/songwriter had always wanted to record. Its Spanish-flamenco sound lends itself perfectly to the pairing of Jake and John's virtuosic playing styles. "John just plays everything with so much soul. It doesn't matter if he's singing, grooving on the bass or strumming away on the guitar... you always know it's John Cruz."

Jake has been a longtime fan of Raiatea Helm. They've known each other for years and have collaborated on several occasions. Jake was surprised when she decided on a Japanese pop song for their duet. "Stars," by Nakashima Mika, is a wonderful addition to the project, and it truly showcases a side of Raiatea that I've never seen or heard before. Her phrasing and

pronunciation of the Japanese lyrics was sheer perfection – you would never know that she doesn't even speak the language. She sounds amazing as always."

Another Japanese thread weaves through the project in the song recorded with Ron Artis II. While touring together, Jake asked Ron if he could write some lyrics to one of his original songs. An incredibly talented songwriter and multi-instrumentalist, Ron brings so much soul to their recording of "Ichigo Ichie," which means, "once in a lifetime." A Japanese phrase that reminds Jake to be present and grateful because each moment in life will never happen again in the exact same way.

One of Jake's dearest friends and favorite singers is Pōmaika`i Keawe. In addition to her incredible musical talent, Jake is always so inspired to see how much time she dedicates to local non-profit organizations, lifting up the community through outreach opportunities. Pomaika`i had always wanted to record "Ho`okahi Akua," as a tribute to her late grandmother, the legendary Aunty Genoa Keawe. It was Aunty

Genoa who arranged the music with the help of her friend Malia Craver who provided the Hawaiian translation. They had originally recorded the song during the pandemic and both were in tears by the end of it. Fate would have it that the song had to be re-recorded and the recent track captured the more hopeful and joyful feelings they now share.

Jake and his manager Van sought out newcomer and “America’s Got Talent” contestant Connor Johnson after seeing him on the show. They all had lunch at Happy Days in Ka`imuki one day and was moved by Connor’s passion for songwriting and storytelling. Connor came into the studio with his original song, “I’ll Be There,” and it was an instant chicken skin moment. “Connor is so talented and it was an honor to work with him in the studio.”

Jake has always wanted to work with Kimié Miner, a force of nature who dedicates so much of her time to the local community, not only in music, but in education for the children of Hawai`i. It is this same enthusiasm that she approached the recording of “Kawaikini” and the joy she brings to the music is awe-

inspiring. “Kimié is such a great leader in the music community and she does so much positive work in mentoring the next generation of artists.”

Jake speaks of Brother Noland as one of his musical inspirations. Jake’s father used to take him down to see Brother Noland perform in Waikiki and his soulful voice and conviction captivated Jake at a very young age. Their duet of “Hualālai” takes you on a journey back in time.

After performing live with Kawika Kahiapo at Jack Johnson’s Kokua Festival, Jake was inspired to record with the iconic artist. Kawika chose a sweet and heartfelt rendition of “Have You Ever Seen the Rain,” his deep and resonant voice is the perfect complement to Jake’s melodic phrasing.

Fiji, an awe-inspiring vocalist, is as raw and authentic as they come. His genre-bending approach to music takes listeners through reggae, soul, gospel, and R&B. Jake was surprised when he chose “Rusty Old Steampipes,” a classic song written by Warren Ka`ahanui while serving time in prison. Jake recalls

playing this song with friends in the stairwells of Kaimuki High School. "I was so thrilled when Fiji agreed to record with me. I never thought that I would have the opportunity to make music with him. He is truly a genius."

Jake felt like a fish out of water when he stepped on stage in front of the Honolulu Symphony in 2015, now known as the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra, to perform Dr. Byron Yasui's *'Ukulele Concerto, conducted by Maestro JoAnn Falletta*. Jake recalls Concertmaster Ignace "Iggy" Jang who encouraged him with non-verbal cues throughout the 36-minute piece. Jake said that was one of his most inspiring musical experiences of his career. The encores on both evenings were "Pianoforte," an original piece by Jake, performed as a duet with Iggy on violin. This was the natural choice for their collaboration and one that has always been a favorite of Jake's wife Kelly. "Ever since she heard Iggy and I perform the piece, she kept asking me when we were going to record it together." The recording truly captures Iggy's incredible

sensitivity and tone as the two instruments melt together in this beautiful and haunting rendition.

Another expert at his craft is classically trained guitarist Jeff Peterson. Having fallen in love with Hawaiian culture and kī hō‘alu, or slack key guitar, Jeff is constantly pushing musical boundaries, experimenting with his color palette and virtuosic arrangements. Years ago, while performing together at the `Ukulele and Slack Key Guitar Festival hosted by the Kahilu Theatre, Jeff and Jake performed a memorable version of Leonard Cohen’s Hallelujah. The experience of the performance was so meaningful to Jake, that when the opportunity came up to record a song for this project, there was no other choice.

Going back to his roots – Jake teamed up with former bandmates Jon Yamasato and Lopaka Colón, of “Pure Heart.” Though, they performed it many times together, the group never had the opportunity to record, “Can You Believe,” a song written by Jake for the group. “I felt like a teenager again being back in the studio with Jon and Lopaka. Just like old times...”

While Jake loves paying homage to the past, he also is excited about trying new things. During the pandemic, Jake went for long periods without playing the 'ukulele or doing anything creative. At the end of 2020, Jake had a conversation with longtime friend and videographer, Tracey Niimi, and abstract visual artist, Kristie Fujiyama Kosmides. This virtual meeting would eventually take him on a journey through Hawai'i Island as part of a commissioned work to help create an art installation at the Hilo International Airport. Kristie and Tracey wanted to explore nature for inspiration and had the idea to collaborate with Jake to compose a song to inspire the visual piece. The three of them toured tropical locations on Hawai'i island, documenting the trip with amazing video footage that would serve as the basis for the five-panel installation. This project, now known as Abstract Collab, really opened Jake's mind on ways to push the boundaries on collaborative creativity and will culminate in a music video combining the different mediums in one vision. "Eyes Of The I'iwi" is the song that came out of this unique experience.

The title track of the album, "Grateful," is an original song by Justin Kawika Young. The two friends toured together on the mainland and the simple message from the chorus struck a chord with Jake each night as they performed it.

"And if it's 10 years or two, or a lifetime with you,

I'll just be grateful for what I got.

When only minutes remain, on the rest of our days,

I'll just be grateful for what I got."

And Jake couldn't be more grateful.