



Spotlight *By Jim Hilmar*

ATTENTION HAWAIIAN/ELECTIC GUITAR MUSIC FANS: Imagine the year is 1946 and you live in Europe. You're a steel guitarist and, naturally, you're really interested in Hawaiian music. You don't want to play this music all by yourself, so you find three other guys who are interested, and voila! You're a band!

That's simplifying things, but in es-

(catchy rockabilly guitar intro before things break into a classic Hawaiian sound; guitar and steel "tradin' fours"), "Hula Moon" (boogie-flavored Hawaiian number with bass breaks), "Hula Hula" (surf sounds) and "Ay Ay Ay" (sounds like the Baja Marimba Band sitting in; pretty melody/chord progression). The Hula Hawaiians definitely deserve wider recognition, and thanks to the efforts of producer Peter

404-4117, PO Box 1108, Orange, CA 92856. And if you live in the New England area, catch these guys when they motor through your town.

ATTENTION WESTERN SWING/COUNTRY-JAZZ FANS: Where would country and R&B music be to-

Stockard and His Wanderers ("Cowtown Boogie," "Twin Guitar Polka"). Some great photos and informative liner notes from Kevin Coffey make this set a real winner. Highly Recommended!

AND FINALLY - ATTENTION

ROCKABILLY

FANS: *Rockabilly Rarities Volume Two* (Yeah CD 13) picks up where *Volume One* ("Spotlight," June '99) left off and features 30 tracks of rockin', shakin', foot-stompin' music. Great/obscure labels like Bakersfield, Sure, Rebel, Cherry, Jan, Fox, Testa,



Hawaiian and Hillbilly - Western Style

Hula Hawaiians, Starline Rhythm Boys, and cool compilations

since that's the story of steel guitarist Walter Roost and The Hula Hawaiians, a terrific group of musicians whose repertoire included everything from Hawaiian standards to swing/pop/jazz-flavored material to downright rockin'/rhythm and bluesy numbers. *Hilo March* (Bear Family Records CD BCD 16169 AH) contains 32 songs recorded by the band from 1955 through '68. And from the first time I played this CD, I was hooked!

Whether you call it European/Hawaiian, pop/rock Hawaiian, or something else, it really doesn't matter; The Hula Hawaiians' music is a ton of fun, with plenty of fine playing. The core group from the '50s included Roost (steel guitar), Werner Kunz (guitar), Max Zimmerli (ukulele) and Robert Felix (upright bass). For you fans of Hawaiian music there are classics like "On The Beach At Waikiki," the "Kohala March," the "Hilo March," "Aloha Oe," and "Lovely Hula Hands." For fans of pop and rock and roll there are great cuts like "The World Is Waiting For The Sunshine," the "Chimpanzee Rock" and "Hula's Boogie."

Favorite cuts include "Hula's Boogie" (snappy, with drums and twin steel/guitar sound; Fran Beecher meets George Barnes, with a bit of Les Paul), "On The Beach At Waikiki" (Walter's tone is mighty fine), "The World Is Waiting For The Sunrise" (Hawaiian version of the infectious pop number with melodic Les Paul flavor, energy, and drive from the ukulele and bass), "Chimpanzee Rock" (definite Bill Haley goes-Hawaiian vibe, Werner's guitar work is catchy and cool), "Ich Hab Dich Soliebt" (a bluesy/rhythm and blues vibe with close-harmony steel and guitar work - this one has an Ivory Joe Hunter/"Since I Left You Baby" sound), "Minoi Minoi" (fun vocals with energy and drive propelled by strong rhythms), "Na Moku Eh"

Stahl and Bear Family president Richard Weize, the music/talents of Walter Roost, Werner Kunz, Max Zimmerli, and Robert Felix will be more widely available.

ATTENTION VINTAGE HONKY TONK/HILLBILLY FANS: If you're a fan of classic country and honky tonk music with elements of rockabilly, boogie woogie, bluegrass, western swing and hillbilly blues, you're gonna love The Starline Rhythm Boys. *Better Luck Is A Barroom Away* (Tim Toner Records CD TT215) is the Vermont-based band's debut CD and there's plenty of good stuff to check out. The band includes Danny Coane (singing and strummin'), Al Lemery (guitar and singing) and Billy Bratcher (doghouse, singing, and writin').

The 16 tracks on this include some solid original numbers (six written by Bratcher) and well-chosen covers ("Juke Joint Johnny," "Where The Rio De Rosa Flows," "I Need A Good Girl Bad," "I Cried Again"). Favorites include "Piece Of Alabam" (a definite bluegrass thang with darn decent mandolin work from Al Hawkes), "I Need A Good Girl Bad" a solid cover of Wade Ray's version - Sean Mencher nails the original Chet Atkins solo and Al Lemery's twangy comping make for a real winner), "3:00 a.m. In The Kansas Plains" (moody steel from Cartwright Thompson, thumping bass from Billy), "Better Buick Boogie," "Where The Rio De Rosa Flows" (a fine cover, Coane's vocal work and Lemery's pickin' make this one work), "Juke Joint Johnny" (a more animated version than Red Sovine's), and "Texacos and Roadmaps" (a honky tonk-meets-western swing number by Billy).

A tip-of-the-Stetson to Mencher for his production skills, and to Matt Robbins for the fine recording/mix.

Contact Hep Cat Records, 1-800-

day without Syd Nathan's King Records? Syd was a true pioneer, mixing country and rhythm and blues years before Sam Phillips and Sun Records. Syd also had a number of artists on his label that recorded western swing and country-jazz including Jimmy Wyble, Jimmie Widener, and Paul Howard and his Arkansas Cotton Pickers.

Shuffle Town (Westside CD WESF 111) is a terrific compilation showcasing several of the King Records roster of artists, including all of the previously mentioned, and more. *Shuffle Town* features 24 tracks recorded from 1946 to '49, and 12 of them are previously unissued/alternate takes.

Widener (who worked with Spade Cooley, Bob Wills, Tex Williams, The Whippoorwills and more) is featured on 11 tracks, and every one has some great instrumental backing. Three favorites include "You Better Wake Up Babe" (cool steel solo from Noel Boggs, and a Charlie Christian-flavored solo from Wyble), "I've Got The Hesitation Blues" (classic western swing blues, complete with muted trumpet, tasty Boggs steel ride, and jazzy guitar from Wyble) and "Shuffle Town" (infectious little number by Harold Hensley and Merle Travis - guitar and piano are featured on this one).

Other favorites include "Rattle Snakin' Daddy" (fine boogie/bopper from Boots Woodall and His Radio Wranglers, great sound and guitar work), "Taking My Time" (country meets jazz on this 1946 effort from Wyble and His Riffette) and "Since You've Been Gone" (another smooth number from Boots Woodall and the boys with a short steel solo and two short guitar solos). There are a couple of solid instrumentals from Ocie

Note, and Meteor, are represented along with plenty of fun artists/groups including Larry Terry, Bill Woods, Wayne Williams and The Sure Shots, Ronnie Haig and Parker Cunningham. In the primarily hillbilly category I'm real partial to "Six White Horses" (ca. '56 from Stan Johnson and The Blue Chips - a fine cover of Clyde Moody's classic tune, check out the significant volume increase during the guitar solo, which has a bit of a Joe Maphis tone/vibe), "Hepecat Boogie" (a definite Hank Williams vibe on this one from Fletcher Hanna With Red "Joe" Rayner & His Ozark Playboys) and "Be My Baby" (some Atkins links in this one).

More rockin' than hillbilly is the late Bill Woods' "Phone Me Baby" (rockin' guitar, gnarly vocal), "Woodpecker Rock" (complete with Woody Woodpecker laugh) is plenty of fun, as is "Dancing Doll" (plenty of rockin' guitar). For a rockin' rhythm and blues sound, a la Little Richard, check out "Rocking With The Rhythm And Blues" from Ronnie Haig (cool rhythm guitar work and a tasty solo).

NEXT MONTH: Jay Roberts and more.

Jim Hilmar listens to a wide range of musical styles but his special interests are in the instrumental jazz, cowboy jazz, and country. Steel guitar, too. He also writes liner notes for contemporary guitar music releases and provides historical research and commentary for reissue guitar music projects. Jim hosts "Fretlin' Fingers," a weekly radio show dedicated to guitar music of all genres from the '30s through today. It airs Wednesday evenings from 6:30-8 p.m. on Seattle area station KSER - 90.7 FM. His e-mail address is fretlinfingers@yahoo.com. UN