

These early recordings of the Legendary Vocalist Alfred Apaka capture the romance and enchantment of Territorial Hawaii. Includes extensive historical liner notes, rare photos and 8 songs previously unreleased on CD. Enjoy!





Alfred Aholo Apaka Hawaii's "Golden Voice"

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during the five o'clock early evening "cocktail" slot at the Alexander Young hotel in 1938.

ALFRED AHOLO APAKA

Early Recordings of Hawaii's Golden Baritone

In the two centuries since Hawaiians received contact from the outside world, Hawaii's music has evolved as a reflection of each new non-Hawaiian musical trend to reach her shores. At the same time, traditional Hawaiian music has been lovingly passed on from generation to generation, preserving Hawaii's rich cultural heritage.

Early growth of Hawaiian music's worldwide popularity was built through the dedication of its musicians, singers, and dancers. The recording, radio, movie, television, and visitor industries all embraced the music. Both visitors to Hawaii and her residents alike revered the brightest stars of the Hawaiian entertainment scene.

None of those stars has done more to popularize the music he loved so passionately than "Hawaii's Golden Baritone," Alfred Apaka. His voice expressed the romance and enchantment of Hawaii as no one else's ever has.

Alfred Aiu Afat was born in Honolulu on March 19, 1919, of Hawaiian, Chinese, and Portuguese decent. He was the only son of Mary Ahola and Alfred Aiu Afat, Sr., but he had five loving sisters; Elizabeth, Frances, Idamae, Lydia, and Mary Lois. A chubby lad, Alfred, Jr. attended Hanahauoli Preschool. Aliiolani Grade School, and Roosevelt High School. The family moved to Molokai in 1929 while their father operated a trucking business, but returned to Honolulu after two years.

Young Alfred enjoyed swimming and surfing at Waikiki, and playing his ukulele. Roosevelt High, an "English Standard School" named for President Theodore Roosevelt, opened at 1120 Nehoa Street in the Makiki District in September 1930. While Alfred was a student at Roosevelt, the handsome 5 foot 11 inch.

190-pounder excelled in sports. He played tackle for the "Roughriders" football team, and hurled shot put for the track squad. He also served as Cadet Captain of the school's military ROTC program.

Alfred listened attentively whenever his Aunt, Tutu Ahola, gave singing lessons to his father. In 1933, he sang tenor in a Mormon Church choir, and won many inter-Island contest honors singing with a mixed quartet. He also played string bass and ukulele. As a senior at Roosevelt in 1938, he served as MC for the school carnival.

Don McDiarmid, Sr. had become the orchestra leader at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. He was searching for a new vocalist to feature at the "Pink Palace" bandstand that faced the ocean. Seven young men were assembled to audition.

Alfred sang Harry Owens' composition, "To You Sweetheart, Aloha." Benny Kalama, string bass player and arranger for Don McDiarmid's Orchestra, whispered to McDiarmid, "That's the boy." Alfred had immediately hit the big time, earning \$30 a week singing at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. Benny Kalama would become a life-long friend of Alfred's, playing an integral part in his musical career. Matson Hotels owned both the Royal Hawaiian Hotel and the Waialae Golf Course and Country Club. As a result. McDiarmid's orchestra would alternate between the two locations, playing at the Royal on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday evenings, and at Waialae on Tuesday and Friday evenings. So it was that while Alfred's Roosevelt High School classmates enjoyed their graduation dance at the Waialae Country Club, he was on the Waialae club's stage, working with Don McDiarmid's Orchestra.

Alfred began playing with another group during the 5:00pm cocktail hour at the Alexander Young Hotel at Bishop Street, between King and Hotel Streets in downtown Honolulu. A popular female vocalist, Leolani Blaisdell, fronted the group, which featured Jake Carter on guitar, Sam Kaaa on steel guitar, Bill Lee on ukulele, and Alfred on string bass and vocals. Leolani Blaisdell was also a featured vocalist later in the evening with the Gigi Royce and the Young Hotel Rooftop Garden Orchestra.

Ray Kinney was a Hawaiian music success story in 1940. He and his orchestra, the Hawaiian Musical Ambassadors, were the house band at the Hawaiian Room in the Hotel Lexington in New York City, the premier showroom for Hawaiian music in the U.S. since its grand opening on June 23, 1937. One could

dine, watch the floor show, and dance amid the supper club's Hawaiian setting. During his second return to Hawaii from New York, Ray hired Alfred as featured vocalist at the Hotel Lexington in New York City.

Alfred Aiu Afat, Jr.'s name went through a dramatic transformation. It would undergo a popular process transposing Hawaiian consonants for non-Hawaiian letters, and adding appropriate Hawaiian vowels. The "f" in Afat would become a "p," while the "t" in Afat would become a "k." Since no Hawaiian word can end with a consonant, an "a" was added to the end. The resulting name was "Apaka." Alfred's maternal family name "Ahola" became



Don McDiarmid Orchestra on the lawn of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, with Diamond Head in the background: (Back row) Benny Kalama, string bass; unidentified saxophone player (holding guitar); Sammy "Makia" Chong, steel guitar; Don McDiarmid, orchestra leader whose first job in Hawaii was as Harry Owen's trumpet player; David Kaumehelwa, guitar; unidentified trombone player (holding pu'ill, a split-bamboo rattle); Henry Allen, tenor saxophone; and unidentified trumpet player (holding uli'uli, a seed-filled, feather-topped gourd rattle). Front row: Alfred Apaka, vocals (holding ukulele); George Kruze, guitar; Henry Spencer, drummer (holding guitar); and unidentified saxophone player (holding ukulele).

his middle name. He would legally change his name to "Alfred Ahola Apaka" and his father would eventually follow suit.

Alfred and his first wife, Diane, sailed for the mainland in March of 1940 with Ray Kinney and his musicians. Ray had gathered some new Hawaiian song sheets while in Honolulu, for a Decca recording session in Hollywood, California. One of the resulting 78rpm discs, Decca 3447A, featured Ray singing "Ululani," his own composition for one of his daughters. Kinney decided on a Hapa-Haole song then popular in Honolulu for Alfred Apaka's recording debut on the B-side of the disc. "Hawaii's Charm," with words by Harry Soria, Sr. and

music by Dick Gump, was the first record with Alfred Apaka's name on the label.

Alfred performed at the Hotel Lexington through the outbreak of World War II. He would also be featured as soloist on several of the recordings made by Ray Kinney on Decca and Victor during this pre-war period. Rejected from military service for "first degree flat feet," he toured the country for 8 months with a production of "Hellzapoppin." No longer married, he returned to Hawaii in 1943 to rejoin the Don McDiarmid Orchestra at the Kewalo Inn, at 1016 Ala Moana Boulevard, as a string bass player and vocalist.

In 1944, he formed his own band for the first time. His 10-piece group played Jimmy Walker's

"La Hula Rhumba" at 744 Lunalilo Street until June of 1947. During this time, he was asked to record with Randy Oness' Select Hawaiian Serenaders, a combo assembled specifically for recording 2 separate 78rpm 4-disc albums for the Bell Record Company of Honolulu. Randy Oness' Select Hawaiian Serenaders featured Alvin Kaleolani Isaacs on guitar, Pua Almeida on steel guitar and guitar, "Buddy" Peterson on string bass, "Steppy" De Rego on steel guitar and guitar, Randy Oness on clarinet and ukulele, and Alfred Apaka on vocals. Of the 16 sides recorded, Alfred is featured as soloist on 5 of them. (Selections 1 - 5 of this compilation were recorded in that session.)

The Bell Records studio was a former military warehouse in an area known as "Base Yard 6," located at Date and La'au Streets, across the Ala Wai Canal from Waikiki. Between 1944 and 1950, Bell Records recorded and released an enormous catalog of Hawaiian music. The label assembled a star studded stable of Hawaii's professional musicians and entertainers – the absolute cream of the industry! Practically every star of every showroom, lounge, and nightclub in the Waikiki showbiz scene recorded on "Bell."

In 1945, Alfred married Edna Blake, a young female vocalist with the Don McDiarmid Orchestra. Their only son, Jeffery Ahola Apaka, was born on June 22, 1946. Their marriage would last until 1959.

After appearing as a guest vocalist on the "Hawaii Calls" nationwide Mutual radio program in the spring of 1947, Alfred was asked to become a member of the show's house band, Al Kealoha Perry and the Singing Surfriders in September of the same year. "Hawaii Calls" broadcast each Saturday, most often from the Banyan Court of the Moana Hotel at Waikiki Beach. Al Kealoha Perry and the Singing Surfriders featured leader Al Kealoha Perry,

with Simeon Bright on guitar, Andy Bright on guitar, John "Squeeze" Kamana on ukulele, Bob Kauahikaua on background vocals, Frank "Mystery" Cockett on string bass, and David Kelii on steel guitar. The Waikiki Girls, Marion Kanekapolei Guerrero Diamond, Lila Kaualoku Guerrero Replinger, and Eloise Gasper Holt, were also featured as vocalists. The two featured vocal soloists were Haleloki Kahauoiopua and Alfred Ahola Apaka. The group made 28 recordings for the "Aloha Recording Co." in 1948. Alfred is featured as soloist on some of them. (Selections 6 & 7 of this compilation were recorded in those sessions.)

The Aloha Recording Company recorded in the Kamehameha Schools Alumni Clubhouse, at 2290 Liliha in Pu'unui. The livingroom of the Clubhouse, the former Lincoln L. McCandless mansion, had a wooden floor and a high ceiling. This translated into an extremely "live" sound on the recordings. The cast would assemble there after work to first rehearse, and then record, in the relative quiet of the Hawaiian evening.

In 1949, Alfred formed another group for an engagement at the Moana Hotel. Alfred Apaka and his Hawaiians featured "Steppy" De Rego on guitar and Tommy Castro on steel guitar. The group recorded 10 sides for the Bell Record Company. Benny Kalama is featured as an arranger and on the high harmony parts in background vocals. (Selections 8 - 16 of this compilation were recorded in those sessions.)

Alfred Apaka's star was now rising. His rugged good looks and his natural, masculine voice were coming into their prime. The world was noticing. Popular local radio disc jockey, J. Akuhead Pupule, recorded Alfred Apaka & his Moana Serenaders on his own "Aku" Records, through "Hawaiian Radio Features," and played them on the local airwaves constantly. Alfred Apaka began making records soon after for Decca Records, initially



Original Tapa Room Show - Opening on September 15, 1955 (clockwise): Alfred Apaka, vocalist and MC; Jimmy Kaopuiki, string bass, Jules Ah See, steel guitar; David Kupele, guitar; Pauline Isaacs, dancer; Iolani Luahine, dancer; Benny Kalama, ukulele and musical director; and "Pappy" Bowman, percussion.

with Danny Stewart & his Islanders in 1950. Alfred began a gig at "Don the Beachcombers" at 2318 Kalakaua Avenue in Waikiki, where he was "discovered" by Bob Hope in 1952. On April 26, 1952, Alfred Apaka sang on the comedian's national television show, "The Bob Hope Show." He would eventually appear on three television shows. In May of 1952, Alfred appeared on Bob Hope's NBC radio show with Dorothy Lamour, followed by an appearance on Bing Crosby's radio show.

In a relatively short period of time, the world had discovered this handsome Hawaiian with the golden baritone. He toured the mainland circuit again until he was called home by industrialist and developer Henry J. Kaiser to open at the new Kaiser Hawaiian Village Hotel at 2005 Kalia Road in Waikiki. On September 15, 1955, Alfred Apaka & his Village Men opened in the Tapa Room of the Kaiser Hawaiian Village. Fittingly, the musical director was Benny Kalama, the man who helped Alfred get his very first professional job in 1938. The cast of the original Tapa Room show featured Alfred Apaka on vocals, Jimmy Kaopuiki on string bass, Jules Ah See on steel guitar, Pappy Bowman on percussion and drums, David Kupele on guitar, and Benny Kalama on ukulele. Pauline Isaacs danced modern auwana hula, while lolani Luahine performed ancient kahiko hula. During this period, Alfred recorded LP's for Decca, Capitol, and ABC Records. He also recorded for Henry J. Kaiser's label, Hawaiian Village Records.

On January 30, 1960, Alfred was playing paddle ball with friends K. Hyun and Ken Akahiji in the Central YMCA at 401 Atkinson Drive in Honolulu. Alfred collapsed on the court, and was pronounced dead at 11:25am. Alfred Apaka was only 40 years old. His shocking death came at the peak of an exploding career.



A TV pilot project starring Alfred had just been sold to a sponsor, assuring him of national television exposure. Alfred Apaka appeared to be on the verge of becoming a worldwide phenomenon. He is buried in the shadow of Diamond Head, with a microphone in his hands and some of the memorable lyrics he sang engraved in marble above him.

"Hawaii's Golden Baritone" was gone but not forgotten. He did not read music and had no

formal training but he had commanding stage presence, and possessed a voice that could range from B flat to E, with incredible agility. He was a consummate balladeer who must be credited as a major factor in the popularization of Hawaiian music for two decades.

Hana Ola Records now shares with you an overview of Alfred Apaka's early years, focusing on his post-war recordings between 1945 and 1950. This sixteen selection historical

anthology accurately portrays the early years of a "Hawaiian Legend," Alfred Apaka.

THE SONGS

- **1- Nalani** *Randy Oness' Select Hawaiian Serenaders* [3:13] Alfred Apaka opens our collection as featured vocalist with Randy Oness' Select Hawaiian Serenaders consisting of Alvin Kaleolani Isaacs on guitar, Pua Almeida on steel guitar and guitar, "Buddy" Peterson on bass, "Steppy" De Rego on steel guitar and guitar, and leader Randy Oness on clarinet and ukulele. Steppy sang the low part and Alfred sang the high part, while Alvin and Randy filled the four-part harmony. Alvin Kaleolani Isaacs, "Hawaii's Ambassador of Good Cheer," originally wrote a different lyric for this composition, but Girdie Beilenson contributed a new title with an English lyric. She also wrote the English lyric for another popular Hapa-Haole tune, "Dance the Hula in the Sea." The result of this collaboration with Isaacs, "Nalani," became very popular and was promoted by a prominent Hawaii resident, tobacco heiress Doris Duke, who even persuaded Nat King Cole to record it. This recording is perhaps one of the loveliest ever made of the gem.
- **2 Haunani** Randy Oness' Select Hawaiian Serenaders [3:04] "Haunani" was written by Randy Oness for his daughter, Marianne Haunani Oness, who was born in 1944. The English lyric for the version recorded here was written by a frequent collaborator of Randy's, pianist Jack Pitman. Originally from Regina, Canada, Pitman wrote many Hapa-Haole tunes, most notably "Beyond the Reef." Randy put this outstanding group together only for these recordings. Randy and Alvin did all of the arrangements, as they were both accomplished at reading and writing music. Steppy and Buddy were also good "readers," while Pua wasn't as well schooled, but had an incredible feel for the music. The resulting efforts are pure magic.
- **3 Hawaiian Hula Eyes** *Randy Oness' Select Hawaiian Serenaders* [3:09] This Hapa-Haole tune, "Hawaiian Hula Eyes," was composed during World War II, and some of the lyrics were classified until the war was over: "On the sands of Lunga Bay, where the sighing Zephyrs play, I'm reminded of the one I love." Lunga was actually located on Guadalcanal, an island ninety miles long and twenty-five miles wide, part of the British Solomon Islands archipelago in the southwest Pacific, about 1200 miles northeast of Australia. The Guadalcanal campaign was eventually won by the American forces and their Pacific allies, but at a high cost. "Zephyrs" is a reference to clouds overhead. Back home in Hawaii, William Harbottle asked Randy Oness to arrange and publish his song. Randy chose Alfred Apaka to be the first vocalist to record it.
- **4 Makalapua** *Randy Oness' Select Hawaiian Serenaders* [2:41] Mrs. Eliza Holt's adaptation to music of a chant presented to Queen Lili'uokalani on her birthday by Mary Adams Lucas, Naha Harbottle Hakuole, and Mrs. Auld was originally known as *"Makalapua Lei O Kamaka'eha."* or *"Lei of Kamaka'eha."* Mrs. Holt arranged the chant to the music of the Christian missionary hymn, *"Would I Were With Thee."* Today it has become known as just *"Makalapua."* Johnny Noble acquired the copyright in 1928 as part of the Hawaiian News Co., Ltd. collection. It proves to be the perfect vehicle for "Hawaii's Golden Baritone," Alfred Apaka. Once again, he is accompanied by Randy Oness' Select Hawaiian Serenaders.
- **5 Moon of the Southern Seas** Randy Oness' Select Hawaiian Serenaders [3:01] "Moon of the Southern Seas" is one of composer Alvin Kaleolani Isaacs' personal favorites, a Hapa-Haole song of love, set under the South Pacific moon. As moonbeams begin to light the tropic skies, the air is like wine, with a lilt in the swirling ebb of breeze, underscored by Pua Almeida's unique fade-away style of playing his Hawaiian Steel Guitar and the velvet vocal styling of Alfred Apaka.
- **6 Twilight in Hawaii** Al Kealoha Perry & his Singing Surfriders [2:39] George "Tautu" Archer achieved great success as a transplanted Tahitian performing both Tahitian and Hawaiian Hapa-Haole songs for audiences in Hawaii. George "Tautu" Archer and the Pagans also recorded many sides for the Bell Record Company in Honolulu. His wife, Audrey Robinson Archer, composed the beautiful "Twilight in Hawaii" with his assistance, and it was copyrighted in 1941. Introduced by Al Kealoha Perry & his Singing Surfriders, it soon became so recognizable as a Hapa-Haole favorite that it became the theme song of "Hawaii Calls," the "Coast to Coast Radio Broadcast via Mutual Networks." Alfred Apaka's interpretation of the romantic lyric reveals just how he became a Hawaiian heartthrob.
- **7 Two Shadows on the Sand** Al Kealoha Perry & his Singing Surfriders [2:39] Alfred Apaka steps in front of Al Kealoha Perry and his Singing Surfriders for this Hapa-Haole "torch" song, one of the many Hapa-Haole classics to come from the prolific pen of composer R. Alex Anderson, the "Godfather of Hapa-Haole Music." Born in Honolulu on June 6, 1894, Anderson lived to see not only the birth of Hapa-Haole music, but witnessed every step in its evolution through ragtime, big band swing, and Hawaiian-style hula before his death at age 100 on May 30, 1995.
- **8 Na Molokama** *Alfred Apaka & his Hawaiians* [2:33] Alfred Aholo Apaka begins this set of Bell recordings with his Hawaiians with another composition by Alvin Kaleolani Isaacs. Alvin was born on September 9, 1904, and by the time he was buried at Laie on May 26, 1984, he had written over 300 compositions, both in the Hawaiian and English languages. Several of the Bell Records family of musicians would sit in on these recordings with Alfred Apaka, as his popularity was continuing to grow. Apaka took the opportunity to recall his early years as a side man in Hawaiian music, as he joined guitarist "Steppy" De Rego and Steel Guitarist Tommy Castro for some tight three-part harmony on "Na Molokama" also known as "Uina Uina."

THE SONGS (continued)

- **9 Across the Sea** Alfred Apaka & his Hawaiians [2:56] Originally published as "Hawaii Across the Sea" in 1934, "Across the Sea" is a collaboration of Ernest Kaai and Johnny Noble. It was originally featured by Ray Kinney, while he was an exclusive Decca recording artist, and was a favorite at the Hawaiian Room of the Hotel Lexington. Alfred recalls his time in New York City with this recording of the poignant musical lament, "Across the sea an Isle is calling me. Calling to the wanderer to return. Bidding me come back to fair Hawaii. To these sunny Isles across the sea."
- **10 Cast Your Cares to the Tradewinds** Alfred Apaka & his Hawaiians [3:03] Don McDiarmid wrote the lyric for "Cast Your Cares to the Tradewinds" while Jack Coale composed the music. The pair, who also collaborated on "My Tropical Garden" and "Beneath a Polynesian Moon," copyrighted this tune in 1943. It soon became the theme song of Don McDiarmid and his Orchestra. It is appropriate that McDiarmid's discovery, Alfred "Afat," since renamed Alfred "Apaka," chose to perform his mentor's number. Benny Kalama arranged the number for this recording and can be heard singing the high part in the harmony.
- **11 Na Moku Eha** Alfred Apaka & his Hawaiians [2:44] "Na Moku Eha," or "The Four Islands," was originally composed by Mr. J. Kealoha, but Charles E. King secured the copyright in 1920. As in the case of many other Hawaiian compositions to which Mr. King acquired copyrights, the song has become identified with the tremendous body of work that he actually did compose. Alfred Apaka puts his own individual stamp on this popular upbeat Hawaiian hula.
- **12 Waipio** *Alfred Apaka & his Hawaiians* [3:03] "Waipio" was originally written by noted Hawaiian composer Mekia Kealakai. Waipio, on Oahu, was the home of Mrs. Irene Kaalelaukoa Holloway, and this song was composed for her, one of Hawaii's charming daughters. The ever-present Charles E. King secured the copyright in 1923. Once again, Alfred Apaka's diction and clarity enrich a Hawaiian classic.
- 13 When the Angels Placed a Lei Around Hawaii Alfred Apaka & his Hawaiians [2:58] "When the Angels Placed a Lei Around Hawaii" was composed and copyrighted by Jack Pitman. It was the "Official 2nd Prize Winner" of the Aloha Week Song Contest, Honolulu, Territory of Hawaii, for 1948. The runner-up tune was introduced by Miriam Leliani and The Royal Hawaiian Band Glee Club. Alfred Apaka begins a tradition of recording Pitman tunes that would later include "Aloha Week Hula" and "Beyond the Reef." Tommy Carter can be heard playing the vibes in the background.
- **14** Hawaiian Style Alfred Apaka & his Hawaiians [2:43] "Hawaiian Style" by E. Billsborrow, features an arrangement definitely not written for the hula, as it is heavy on the downbeat and has too many words. However, its casual style evokes images of a simpler time in pre-Statehood Hawaii, when the lyric actually rang true. Alfred and his band help us recall those long ago customs and lifestyle.
- **15 To You Sweetheart, Aloha** Alfred Apaka & his Hawaiians [2:59] "To You Sweetheart, Aloha" was copyrighted by its composer, Harry Owens, in 1935. At the time, Owens was the Musical Director of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, performing with his Royal Hawaiian Hotel Orchestra. Originally from O'Neil, Nebraska, Harry Owens lived from April 18, 1902 to December 12, 1986. Most often remembered as the composer of "Sweet Leilani," which was named Song of the Year at the 1938 Academy Awards, Harry arranged scores of traditional Hawaiian songs in addition to writing dozens of Hapa-Haole favorites. This song was first introduced by Harry's vocalist at the time, Ray Kinney. It soon became the most popular "last dance" number of the period. Alfred's interpretation recalls a special time in Hawaii's musical past.
- **16 Aloha Oe** *Alfred Apaka & his Hawaiians* [3:04] "Aloha Oe" is one of the best known of all Hawaiian melodies. Hawaii's Queen Lili'uokalani wrote the lyric after she observed Colonel James Boyd being gifted with a lei of farewell during a weekend trip on horseback in Maunawili. Queen Lili'uokalani embraced the melody line of the Christian hymn, "The Rock Beside the Sea," by Charles Crozat Converse, for the musical arrangement of her original lyric. Captain Henri Berger of the Royal Hawaiian Band made an arrangement of "Aloha Oe" on December 10, 1884, but succeeding copyrights were acquired through the years by many others, including The Hawaiian News Co., Ltd. in 1907, Albert "Sonny" Cunha in 1914, Charles E. King in 1923, and Johnny Noble in 1928. Alfred Aholo Apaka recorded "Aloha Oe" many times during his illustrious career, and this performance is a fitting finale for this compilation of the early recordings of "Hawaii's Golden Baritone."

Hawaiian Legends - Volume Five

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Mahalo to Randy Oness, former leader of the Bell Records recording artists Randy Oness' Select Hawaiian Serenaders, featured on this collection, for sharing his memories of Alfred Apaka.

Previously released on Bell Records of Hawaii, Aloha Records, Tantalus Records and Hana Ola Records.

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Hana Ola Records has done extensive computer audio restoration and digitally remastered these original recordings from the best available original source. The utmost care has been taken to optimize the quality of sound. We believe you will be amazed at the sound quality. Keep in mind that some of these recordings are over fifty years old. And, for the first time, these classic recordings are available on compact disc. We are pleased to bring this "Hawaiian Legend" back to the World. Enjoy! Mahalo!

