

PUA ALMEIDA

and His Sunset Serenaders

LIVE AT THE MOANA HOTEL BANYAN COURT



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From its earliest days, Waikiki was a paradise...

Fed by three streams from the Ko'olau range, this vast wedge of land running from the mountains to the sea, called an ahupua'a, formed a natural wetland and served as a breadbasket for early Hawaiians. Taro terraces fed by fresh water springs stretched most of the way to Diamond Head. Fish ponds and offshore fishing were bountiful.



As merchants, whalers, and missionaries began to arrive in Hawaii in the first quarter of the 19th century, Waikiki remained a quiet farming community with a fine beach, where Hawaii's royalty liked to refresh.

In 1865, the Waikiki Road was built, which followed approximately the same route of today's Kalakaua Avenue, and it brought change to Waikiki. The Hawaiian royalty kept their beach cottages, but now the wealthy local residents of Honolulu began to add their own structures, and a small settlement began to take shape.



Queen Kapiolani, c. 1883. Photographer unknown. US public domain photo.

Named in honor of King Kalakaua's Queen, Kapiolani Park officially opened with an enormous celebration on Kamehameha Day, June 11, 1877. With approximately 170 acres of open space landscaped with ten thousand trees, a race track, and a polo field, the park created a huge swath of green beauty at the base of Diamond Head.

On beach land once owned by Queen Kapiolani, ground was broken in January 1900 for the Moana Hotel, the first major Waikiki hotel in Island history. The site where the Moana stands was once called Ulukou, and was a sacred compound for O'ahu's highest ranking chiefs.

The majestic Moana Hotel rose in 1901 and was by far the largest structure in Waikiki. It boasted modern conveniences such as separate baths, electric lights, a roof garden, and even telephones. At the time of its completion on March 11, 1901, it was one of the tallest buildings in the Hawaiian Islands. Delightfully open and airy, the building followed no Mainland format, but instead was built expressly as a resort hotel for Hawaii. Its commanding presence dominated the beach in a manner surpassed only by nearby Diamond Head.



Moana Hotel, c. 2005. Photographer: Gerald Farinas. Non-copyrighted photo.



An Indian banyan tree was planted in the courtyard of the Moana in 1904. Eventually, the tree stood 75 feet high, with a canopy spreading 150 feet across and a trunk circumference of 40 feet. The Moana Hotel's historical Banyan Court has always displayed the spirit of Hawaii in song and dance. *Na Kupuna Nights* was a long-running popular evening concert in the courtyard of the historic hotel. Pua Almeida and His Sunset Serenaders were often the featured act.

John Kameaaloha Almeida is remembered fondly as The Dean of Hawaiian Music. Charleston Puaonaona Almeida was born to Johnny Almeida's younger sister, Annie, on February 17, 1922. Annie approached her older brother, and offered him the opportunity to hanai her son Pua. Johnny and his wife Elizabeth Nahaku of Pa'ia, Maui, were overjoyed, as they had no children of their own. Pua Almeida became his hanai father's primary protégé. Pua became a gifted guitarist, bassist, and steel guitarist, with an exceptional tenor voice. He first performed at the age of six, and turned professional at sixteen, working tirelessly in Hawaii. He lived and worked extensively on the Mainland US as well.

For fourteen years, Pua Almeida performed nightly at the Moana Hotel Banyan Court with His Sunset Serenaders. The original group featured leader Pua Almeida on guitar and lead vocals, Billy Hew Len on Hawaiian steel guitar, vocals, and percussion, Benny Saks on keyboards and vibraphone, Kalakaua Aylett on guitar and vocals, Tony Kwan on bass and vocals, and Pappy Bowman on drums.



(l-r) Pappy Bowman, Kalakaua Aylett, Billy Hew Len, Benny Saks, and Tony Kwan.



(l-r) Pua Almeida, Billy Hew Len, Tony Kwan

Pua also appeared often on the *Hawaii Calls* radio show and he recorded extensively on the Waikiki Records label. In 1962, Pua worked for Mr. Kogi Ohta of Japan for three months, appearing on NHK television and at Sankei Halls on the south side of the country. In 1965, Pua returned for another three months to perform for the north side of the country. The growing Japan visitor market in Waikiki is evidenced by a Japanese language version of a tropical Hollywood film favorite in this set.

By the time Tony Kwan made this live recording on July 23, 1966, only leader Pua Almeida and charter group members Billy Hew Len and Tony remained. Lucky Vioria had taken over keyboards and vibes for Benny Saks, and Ronnie Souza had replaced Pappy Bowman on the drums. Pua was the only guitarist after Kalakaua Aylett's departure.

The *Don Ho Show* had exploded on to the Hawaiian music scene just across Kalakaua Avenue in 1964, and Don's unique sound was influencing Pua's show, evidenced by a Kui Lee composition in this set. Pua Almeida and Billy Hew Len had been playing together for two decades, and their arrangements always reflected their current influences. The Club Sound style perfected by Pua Almeida and the Sunset Serenaders in the late 1950s and early 1960s had now evolved into a jazzier lounge sound.

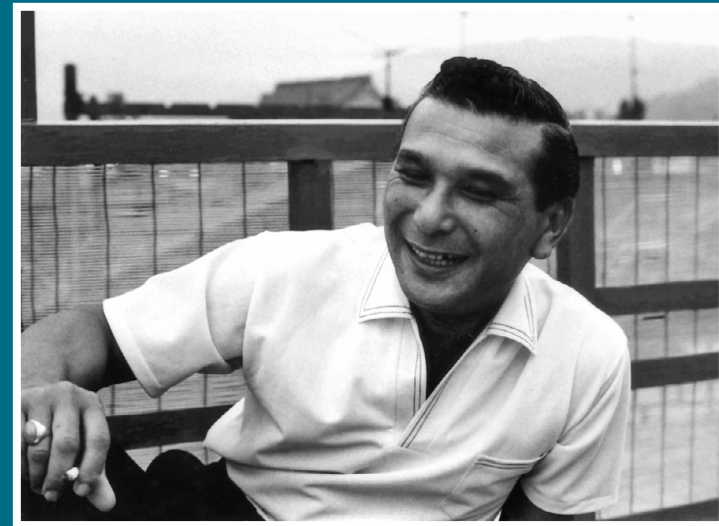


(l-r) Pua Almeida and Billy Hew Len



On Friday, February 9, 1974, Pua Almeida was now performing at the Blue Dolphin Room in the Outrigger Hotel with Billy Hew Len. Arriving home after the gig, Pua suffered a massive heart attack and died at the age of 51.

Billy Hew Len passed away at the age of 66 on Nov. 23, 1987. Tony Kwan passed on at the age of 68 on Dec. 29, 1988. Lucky Vilorio passed away at the age of 86 on March 14, 2005. Ronnie Souza passed on at the age of 76 on Jan. 22, 2013.



Pua Almeida, c. 1960s

Carol Atkinson, Ronnie Souza's partner in life, chose Cord International to restore and share this historic live recording nearly 50 years after it was made, and nearly 115 years since the majestic First Lady of Waikiki was opened. We know that you will enjoy Pua Almeida and His Sunset Serenaders Live at the Moana Hotel Banyan Court on the evening of July 23, 1966.

— Harry B. Soria, Jr.



THE SONGS

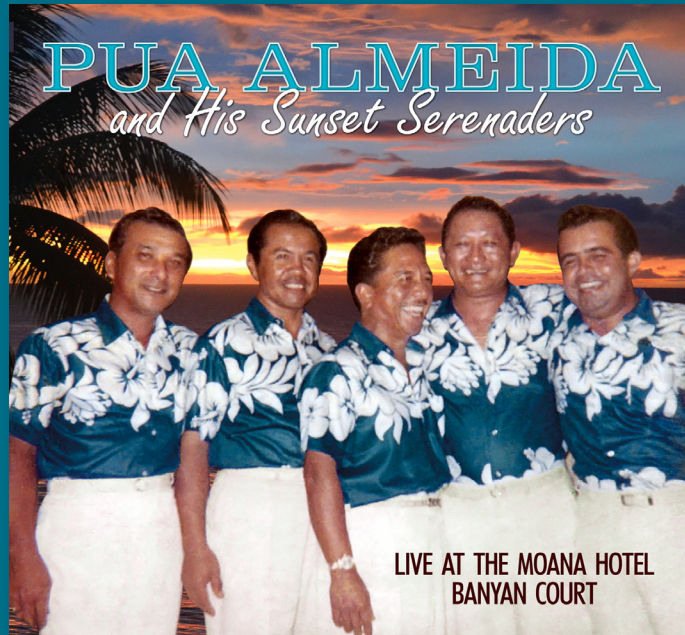
1. **Opening Medley: My Little Grass Shack in Kealakekua, Hawaii / Tahuwahuwahi (Hawaiian War Chant)** *Bill Cogswell, Tommy Harrison, Johnny Noble / Prince Leleiohoku, Johnny Noble* Pua Almeida begins the evening by dedicating this show to Ronnie Souza's wahine, Carol, and introduces the Sunset Serenaders, Pua Almeida, Tony Kwan, Billy Hew Len, Ronnie Souza, and Lucky Vioria. Two upbeat hapa haole favorites from the first decades of the 20th century are featured.
2. **To Make You Love Me, Ku'uipo** *Danny K. Stewart* Billy Hew Len's delicate steel guitar artistry takes center stage with Pua's incredible vocal on this exquisite interpretation of Danny Stewart's classic hapa haole love refrain.
3. **Susiana E** (Traditional) Billy Hew Len and Pua Almeida both knock out 1960s inspired dynamic electric solos on this very early traditional ditty.
4. **Medley: Analani E / Nani Waimea** *Alvin Kaleolani Isaacs / Sam Koki* The Sunset Serenaders pay homage to Alvin Kaleolani Isaacs, and his musical sons, Barney, Atta, and Norman via one of Alvin's compositions, then turn their attention to a Sam Koki tune popularized in Hawaii first by the Richard Kauhi Quartette and later by The Invitations.
5. **Lahainaluna** *Kui Lee* Kui Lee copyrighted this composition in 1966, so this is a brand new song performed at the Moana Hotel Banyan Courtyard by Pua Almeida and the Sunset Serenaders. This is the group's own arrangement of the Kui Lee gem.
6. **Medley: Dahil Sa Iyo / On A Tropic Night (Nangoku No Yoru)** *Mike Velarde Jr. / Agustin Lara, Ned Washington* Lucky Vioria, a talented Hawaii born Filipino pianist, brought this arrangement of *Dahil Sa Iyo* to the group. Pua had just returned from his second extensive tour of Japan in 1965, and brought back this popular Japanese language version of *On a Tropic Night*, first popularized by Dorothy Lamour in the 1930s film, *Tropic Holiday*. A memorable medley is the result.
7. **Anytime, Anywhere, Any Place** *Victor Young, Ned Washington* Pua Almeida brought this tune to the group from his time spent gigging in Hollywood. Tony takes the lead on a jazzy romp that was first popularized by the Nat Cole Trio.
8. **Blue Seashells** *Shelley, Gellens, Spencer* Pua showcases his vocal versatility as he resurrects an obscure 1930s ballad first recorded by Ray Kinney and his Hawaiian Musical Ambassadors while they were performing at the Hotel Lexington's Hawaiian Room in New York City.
9. **Hula Nova** *Walter Pohakulani O'Kert* Firmly in the 1960s musical mode, the group celebrates with a Hawaiian style salute to the Brazilian Bossa Nova.
10. **Maui Girl** *Sylvester Thomas Kalama* Pua, Billy, Tony, Lucky, and Ronnie, the Sunset Serenaders of 1966, clown around with each other on this fun jam in an original arrangement.
11. **Closing Medley: My Darling / To You Sweetheart, Aloha / Dream (when you're feeling blue) / Now Is The Hour / Time To Say Farewell And Aloha / Show Me The Way To Go Home** *Don Bestor / Harry Owens / Johnny Mercer / Clement Scott, Maewa Kaihau, Dorothy Stewart / Sunset Serenaders / James Campbell, Reginald Connelly* Pua Almeida and the Sunset Serenaders take us home with one of the most elaborate closing medleys ever heard in Waikiki.



(l-r): Lucky Vioria, Pua Almeida, Ronnie Souza, Billy Hew Len, and Tony Kwan, live at the Moana Hotel Banyan Court on the evening on July 23, 1966.



CREDITS



(l-r): Pua Almeida, Lucky Vilorio, Billy Hew Len,
Tony Kwan, Ronnie Souza, c. 1966.

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Artist photos courtesy of Carol Atkinson, Carmela Hula Almeida and Harry B. Soria Jr.

Special thanks to

Carol Atkinson and Carmela Hula Almeida



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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, however, the compact disc format can reveal source limitations. We believe you will be amazed at the sound quality. Keep in mind that these recordings are nearly fifty years old. And, for the first time, these classic recordings are available on compact disc. We are pleased to bring these "Vintage Hawaiian Legends" back to the Islands. Enjoy! Mahalo!



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