

The Maui News

BREAKING NEWS

Water line break in Kihei Thursday morning

Halemanu infuses jazzy rock with Hawaiian soul



Halemanu, winner of last year's Na Hoku Hanohano Award for Island Music Album, performs with his band at 7:30 p.m. Friday in McCoy Studio Theater at Maui Arts & Cultural Center in Kahului. Photo courtesy the artist

Last year's well-deserved Na Hoku Hanohano Award for Island Music Album shone a spotlight on Halemanu, one of Maui's talented musicians.

Describing his music as “*jazz infused rock & roll with Hawaiian soul*,” Halemanu produced the winning “*So the Story Goes*,” which featured a number of standouts like the jaunty original “*Ala Kahikio o Hana*” (Old Hana Road), the rockabilly swing of “*Carwheelah Ride*” with its tale of frozen Lahaina-bound traffic, and a cover of Palani Vaughan's famous “*Ka'a Ahi Kahului*,” about Hawaii's first passenger train.

An impressive jazz guitarist, Halemanu also expressed his talent on ukulele with Peter Moon's “*Pandanus*” and his love for Hawaiian music with the classic “*Waiulu*.”

A very versatile artist, he can rock too, as seen in online videos such as unleashing “*Stairway to Heaven*” at a Zeptember show, and backing Aerosmith's Steven Tyler on “*Dream On*” at a Mala Wailea New Year's Eve event.

With Hawaiian music as a foundation, Halemanu likes to infuse some jazz into his songs, “*and the rock and roll aspect is more along the lines of the '50s and '60s' style*,” he explains. “You might hear some surf beats like the Ventures and some rockabilly.

“I used to play in classic rock bands, and I grew up on my parents’ record collection which consisted of a lot of ’50s and ’60s’ popular music.”

Growing up between Hana and Kahului in a musical family combined with advanced education at the Musicians Institute in Los Angeles led to his fusion of Hawaiian rhythms, culture and storytelling with contemporary sounds.

Current projects include collaborating with acclaimed guitarist Henry Kaleialoha Allen on a Hawaiian jazz album.

“The concept is two local boys with similar backgrounds that love jazz and grew up with Hawaiian music,” he says. “We both play steel guitar, and I play slack key guitar and ukulele. We’re bringing together two different generations.”

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Maui, *“Aloha Surf Hotel,”* directed by Stefan Schaefer.

“Stefan asked me to score the movie,” says Halemanu. *“I told him its right up my alley because I love the Ventures. I can give a Hawaiian spin on ukulele and guitar.”*

Looking forward to his MACC show on Friday, Halemanu will be joined by James Somero on drums and Eddie Aviles on bass. In his shows, he plays a double-necked guitar and ukulele combo.

“I started playing guitar later in life; I only played ukulele,” he explains. *“I would switch off on stage, and I thought it would be wonderful if I had a guitar ukulele combination. And about 16 years ago, I had someone build it. We have a good show planned at the MACC. I’m really excited.”*

Halemanu and his band perform at 7:30 p.m. in McCoy Studio Theater at Maui Arts & Cultural Center in Kahului. A portion of ticket sales will benefit The Maui Farm, Aloha House and Imua Family Services. Tickets are \$28 for general admission, \$43 for VIP (includes seating in the first three rows and a signed CD) and \$23 for kupuna ages 65 and older as well as students with valid ID (plus applicable fees). Tickets are available via the MACC box office, at www.mauiararts.org or by calling 242-7469.
