



Hawaiian Folk Songs for the Family

By Matt Ascione

A few weeks back I was visiting my In-laws in Florida on vacation (with my wife, of course), and I decided I would take my VS-1680 with me to practice and run through some song ideas. I usually keep a couple of mics in the case just to get some ideas down, (I'm a guitar player with The US Air Force Band in DC). My Father In-law (who is about 64) is Hawaiian and loves to sing old Hawaiian songs that he grew up with. One night while I was there, we decided to cut a few slack key songs on my machine and have him sing over the tracks. I figured it would be fun, and he would get a great kick out of the whole experience. So we went up to the master bedroom and pulled out the KM-184, and because I didn't bring a stand with me, I just stuck it on a pillow on the bed and pointed it at my Taylor 314. I proceeded to cut about 4 guitar tracks, and 1 Ukulele part (he has a great 30's Martin Uke that sounds awesome!) Then I pointed the mic toward him, put the headphones on him, and he sang away. It wasn't the best room to record in...you could kind of hear us rustling around, you could hear my sister-in-laws kids downstairs faintly....the heater was running..I used the mic-pre in the Roland...not great by any measure, but not horrible.

The only thing I had going for me, I thought, was that I was a professional guitarist, so I knew my parts would be in time, and musical, and I had a KM-184. Well, after only 1 take and a few overdubs, my Father-in-law was done singing. We were impressed with what we had done, and smiled quite a bit because the songs brought back many memories of his childhood (my wife even sang backup on one of the 2 tunes we did!) So the vacation ended and we came back up to MD. I eventually got around to mixing and editing what we had done, and I burned the tracks to some CD's, and off they went in the mail.

I was not prepared for the response from what we had done. My Father-in-Law called me the moment he got the CD, and holding back tears, told me how grateful he was for the opportunity to record these songs with me. He proceeded to make copies of the disc and sent them to his Sisters, in Florida and Hawaii. When they received the CD's of their brother singing Hawaiian songs from their childhood, they all cried!! I couldn't believe it. His sister in Hawaii actually videotaped the family reunion they had days later and you can see all of them holding hands and listening to the CD. Here I was just messing around with my average multi-tracker, with its average pre's, and my average recording environment, and this music was affecting people in a real way! It was, at the same time, a very average recording, and an extremely fulfilling musical experience.

Sorry if this was a bit long, but I thought it would be a relevant story for the R.A.P. group, which I enjoy very much. I think sometimes we all get so involved with "this gear sounds better than this gear", that we forget that the music is really what matters, not the few percentage points in sonic clarity we might gain from this machine or that machine. Then again, you all probably know that!:)

Anyway, just thought you might like the story ... Matt

