



## ISLAND MATTERS *Mufi Hannemann*

# The Story Of Kuleana Breakfast Club

As far back as I can remember from my brother Nephi's professional career, Hawaii's gifted musicians and entertainers have been called upon time and time again to contribute their talents for all kinds of charitable events and causes. People in the 1980s love music, so practically no special event or activity is complete without "local kine" entertainment. The expectation in many instances has been to have them offer their services for free or at a huge discount. And these world-class troupers more often than not always come through for a good cause. "No can" simply is not in their vocabulary.

Fast forward two, three and four decades later, and many of these same musicians and artists who have brought so much joy and happiness to us all over the years are experiencing health and physical challenges. Hence, a relatively new group has been formed and has made it its mission to help fellow entertainers in their time of need, especially since many of them are in the twilight of their careers and years.

This brings me to the story of Kuleana Breakfast Club (KBC) as shared with me by estate Sen. Brickwood Galuteria, who's a talented lifelong



Brickwood Galuteria and Michael Seda, aka The Pule Kakou Band, perform in a 'Throwback' concert

PHOTO COURTESY MELODY CABRERA-LUNA

entertainer and musician. We have been chums since high school. I'll never forget when he was part of a Hawaiian Air ensemble that accompanied my brother Nephi and his group to help me throw a Hawaiian luau show at Harvard. I fondly recall that it was the hottest ticket on campus. The Kamehameha Schools alum also teamed up with Kimo Kahoano, and later Frank B. Shaner, and for many years was a popular fixture on KCCN and KINE radio.

"Brick" tells me KBC began in late 2014, when several of his friends and contemporaries began having breakfast together twice a month for the sole purpose of talking story, catching up and supporting one another where needed, musically or otherwise. One of the positive benefits of having such a group is

the fellowship and reminiscing about the good ol' days, when Waikiki was filled with live local entertainment up and down Kalakaua Avenue and the adjoining side streets. Naturally, many of them were an active part of that amazingly vibrant entertainment scene.

Gary Mijo's Asahi Grill Keeaumoku, home of the popular oxtail soup, is one of their favorite venues. Sometimes, to use the local vernacular, "they would eat not till they full but until they tired." And, of course, jokes, humor and laughter fill the air.

My fellow Fern Elementary School classmate Michael Seda, who is known as a consummate bassist/vocalist primarily with popular group Simplicity, made the initial call-out. He recalls: "We got togeth-

er for breakfast one morning to reconnect, revisit and rekindle old musical friendships. Well, we got to talking about the challenges of other lifelong musical friends, and decided to organize an effort, using our talents, to give back to fellow musicians who had fallen on hard times. We felt it was our kuleana (responsibility) and tagged the crew Kuleana Breakfast Club."

Thus began, from one shoutout call of aloha, an extraordinary mission of fellowship, caring and giving. In August 2015, KBC produced its first "Throwback to Give Back" benefit concert. Among the star-studded cast for that successful show were Willie K, A Touch of Gold, Simplicity, Harmony, Jeff Rasmussen and Robi Kahakalau, and Josh Tatofi.

What KBC also tries to do on a monthly basis are smaller productions that members have dubbed "Throwback Pop Up" shows, at Lola's Bar and Grill on Keeaumoku, a club they adopted to perpetuate the giving. The events have varied in scope, but with the guidance of beneficiary friends and an established cap, each makana (gift) averages around \$1,000, the largest being \$1,600. Each has been meaningful for the donors and recipients alike.

To help process and facilitate the donations, it tapped Pacific Gateway Center, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, whose executive director Dr. Tin Myaing Thein, according to Galuteria, didn't hesitate to help when asked.

"They know that it's not how much we give, but how much love we put into giving. Each need is centered on quality of

living for each friend we help. Perhaps it will provide simple home improvement, a technology or application that helps return our friend to the music they once created, money to help buy medication or a funeral plan, or simply to provide funds for daily needs ... it doesn't matter," states KBC member Franklin Makaawaa-

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## Throwback To Give Back

wa. Or as his brother and fellow member Billy opines, "It's all about aloha. Every 'Throwback to Give Back' concert, every 'Throwback Pop-Up' is an invitation for us to brighten someone's day. It's in giving that we receive."

KBC returned to the big stage Aug. 21 and produced the second annual "Throwback to Give Back" at Pier 11. The lineup was a stellar cast of performers that not only included all the stars from the inaugural concert

in '15, but also Henry Kapono; Nueva Vida; Rolando Sanchez and Salsa Hawaii; Pule Kakou Band; Sam Solatario and Harmony; "Little Albert" Maligmat, formerly of SOS; 808 Caravan; and Shakka da Band, the recently formed Santana tribute band. The concert amounted to an unbelievable seven-hour action-packed performance. Even the emcees were gold-standard caliber: Kimo Kahoano, Billy V, Rodney Villanueva and Galturia.

Beneficiaries to date, all of them performers, include Kivin Kalauli of Oasis Night Club; Steven Hall with Peter Moon Band; John Sexton, a member of Simplicity; late jazz bassist Steve Jones; arranger-bassist Imaikalani Young, who was a member of my brother's first professional band, Nephi & the City and County; late legendary crooner Jimmy Borges; extremely gifted singer-guitarist Cyril Pahinui; late guitarist Eddie Pascua; popular comedian Andy Bumatai; David Choy,

jazz saxophonist with Kalapana; Wally Suenaga, bassist with Olomana; and guitarist/vocalist Kuki Among.

"We have a large network of friends we want to help, and we've carved a path for local musicians to give back to our entertainment community in ways both big and small," says Brickwood. "To be sure, the makana is important, but letting your friends know we care is equally, if not more, beneficial."

Another KBC charter member, Rhonda Osurman, a

professional hula dancer with Cyril Pahinui and producer of the annual Gabby Pahinui Kanikapala Festival in Waimanalo, sums it up succinctly: "Happiness doesn't result from what we get, but from what we give. In a unique way, we now have a 'giving garden,' and as we all know, the simple arrangement with plants is that we give them love, they give us flowers!"

It is so heartwarming and inspiring to witness the excitement, enthusiasm and example of Kuleana Breakfast

Club. Its motto is a classic: "Giving is living ... musicians helping musicians ... friends helping friends."

Stay tuned for details of the next exciting KBC fundraising production, a "Throwback Pop-Up" at Lola's Grill titled, "Four Part Harmony ... Hawaiian Style." It promises to be another successful and fun event. You can keep up and follow the KBC schedule and activities on its Facebook page.

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