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## Island Mele: ‘Soul Sound Slack’

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REVIEW BY JOHN BERGER / [jberger@staradvertiser.com](mailto:jberger@staradvertiser.com)

### ‘Soul Sound Slack’ Stephen Inglis (‘Aumakua)

Slack key guitarist Steven Inglis is enjoying success on two career tracks. One is his partnership with slack key master Dennis Kamakahi; the duo won a Hoku Award (Slack Key Album) in 2012. The other is as a solo artist.

It’s Inglis the solo artist heard on this collection of 13 slack key instrumental recordings; unlike some “solo” projects, there are no guests and no studio players involved. The beauty of Inglis’ slack key technique — he plays acoustic guitar and guitarlele, a six-string cross between an ukulele and a guitar — is appreciated best on headphones or a serious, high-end audio system.

Inglis honors island traditions in several ways. His choices in terms of material include melodies by Helen Desha Beamer (“Kimo Henderson Hula”) and Mary J. Montano (“Beautiful Kahana”). His arrangements draw on the legacy of slack key masters Sonny Chillingworth and Ozzie Kotani.



Inglis contributes to the continuing evolution of slack key with several original tunes. One aptly titled original, “Guitarlele Adirondack Slack,” spotlights the sound of that modern guitar/ukulele hybrid instrument. The higher tones of the guitarlele stand out in contrast to the deeper sound of the guitar.

A jaunty rendition of “Hula Blues” expands the set list to include a hapa-haole classic from the 1920s.

Tunings are the foundation of Hawaiian slack key and although they were closely guarded secrets several generations back, no modern slack key release is complete without them. Inglis provides composer and arranger credits in the liner notes of the CD; the tunings and background information on the songs are posted at [www.stepheninglis.com](http://www.stepheninglis.com).

And, although Inglis doesn’t sing a word on “Soul Sound Slack,” he put the song lyrics and their English translations on his website too.

*John Berger has been a mainstay in the local entertainment scene for more than 40 years. Contact him via email at [jberger@staradvertiser.com](mailto:jberger@staradvertiser.com).*

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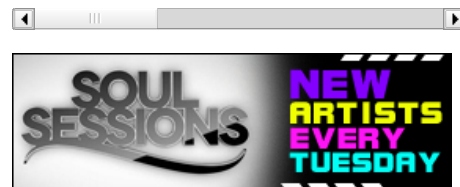


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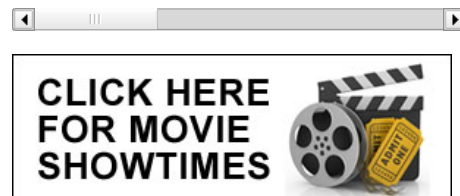
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