



To stand reveal

Earth Patriot –
The multi-cultural
sound of
Kumanu

by Lisa Malakaua

Faith Rivera

They've sung about the 911 terrorist attack, substance abuse and addiction, relationships, our Hawaiian rainforest, and now this, *Earth Patriot*. Kumanu addresses global environmental and social issues with a new CD release titled *Earth Patriot*.

Kumanu is a 13 piece vibrant global fusion group that consists of musicians, vocalists and dancers whose organization Performing and Fine Artists for World Peace (PFAWP), originated on the island of Kaua'i. However, it would be the strong influence and the demanding voice of Mother Nature that would make the final decision as to where the Executive Director for the Performing and Fine Artists for World Peace, Howard Shapiro, and his wife Marsha would live.

"Marsha and I lived through Hurricane Iniki which in 1992 destroyed many of the homes on Kaua'i. We stayed until 1994, but we always had a strong pull towards the island of Hawai'i. I never thought I would



live in Volcano, because I spent most of my time at the beach surfing for over 25 years first in Makaha and the North Shore on O`ahu then on Kaua`i. The first year living in Volcano was a little difficult, but I got used to the cool, wet weather and being so far from the ocean. Now Marsha and I love living in the rainforest in such a supportive community.”

Kumanu, which is made up of several well known Hawaiian based artists, includes Damon Williams, James McWhinney, Rupert Tripp, Jr., Tioni Tam Sing, Bruce David, Doug Espejo, Adam Kay, Randy Skaggs, Leilehua Yuen, Marsha Hee, Kamaluhia Woolley, Gregg Perry, and Howard Shapiro. The Earth Patriot CD also features special guest artists that include Grammy Award winning singer/songwriter Kenny Loggins, Emmy Award winning singer/songwriter Faith Rivera, and singer/songwriters Pamela Polland and Mikuak Rai. The group is on a mission to work with others to bring positive change to our community in Hawai`i and to communities around the world.

In 1986 Shapiro created Performing and Fine Artists for World Peace (PFAWP), a non-profit Hawai`i organization, as a means for other artists to create works that would address social and environmental issues. By 1987 his organization had received the Peace Messenger Award from the United Nations.

Gregg Perry, producer for the group’s newly released CD, Earth Patriot and music director for Kumanu noted, “The Earth Patriot project offered Howard and I the opportunity of having five lead vocalists interpret our music in their own unique styles and the final product has far surpassed our greatest expectations. We watched these phenomenal performers come together enthusiastically in support of our vision and they truly ‘gave it up’ with incredible grace, power and articulation. It is the sincere desire of the members of Kumanu that their music be a catalyst to encourage a grassroots discussion of how communities might solve the global problems that we face today, creating solutions that transcend governmental and nationalistic boundaries.”

Recycle Hawai`i and PFAWP are co-sponsors of the Earth Patriot CD and all proceeds support the programs

of these non-profit organizations. Both organizations through the Artists and the Environment Program bring artists, resources, educators, native Hawaiian cultural practitioners and community outreach staff into classrooms throughout Hawai`i Island by sharing with students the importance of protecting our environment and preserving indigenous cultures around the world. They address these issues through music, dance and



other artistic endeavors, utilizing performing and fine artists as positive role models and mentors. They are also working in partnership with the County of Hawai`i Department of Environmental Management (DEM) who is providing funding for the Art of Recycling School Competition sponsored by Recycle Hawai`i. This project motivates youth to create art objects from recycled materials while helping to save landfill space, energy, and natural resources. Keep Hawai`i Beautiful assists by coordinating volunteers to participate with youth in community cleanup and beautification projects. Peck Tunes LLC/Perryscope Records produced the Earth Patriot CD. And Kumanu Music is also invested as a supporter of the project. Music, trash and art coming together, who would have known? Obviously Shapiro and Perry did.

BIW: Well aren’t you just a bunch of busy bees in trying to help yourselves and others find peace surrounding our social and environmental issues?

Shapiro: We've been trying for a while but I think there are a lot of people in our community who are doing some exceptional things working towards peace and protecting our precious `aina.

BIW: Gregg, how did you and Howard meet?

Perry: I used to work for Recycle Hawai'i when I first moved to the Big Island about eight years ago. On Earth Day of 2003 I had a RH booth at the University and there was this guy sitting right behind me, we were back to back. My table was facing one row and his table was facing another row behind me. Howard was representing his Earth-Friendly Schools-Hawai'i program. We sat together and talked throughout the day and hardly accomplished anything in our booths because we got so enthralled discussing the projects we were working on regarding 911, projects that we had both donated as musicians and songwriters. So we realized that we had a lot in common and that's where we first connected. I left Recycle Hawai'i later that year and shortly after that I got a call from Howard. He had written this song called "Your Heart Will Lead You Home." He was looking for a producer and a mutual friend had recommended me. So Howard called, we reconnected, and I produced the Heart single for him. I came to find out that he had since filled my old position at Recycle Hawai'i as East Hawaii Coordinator.

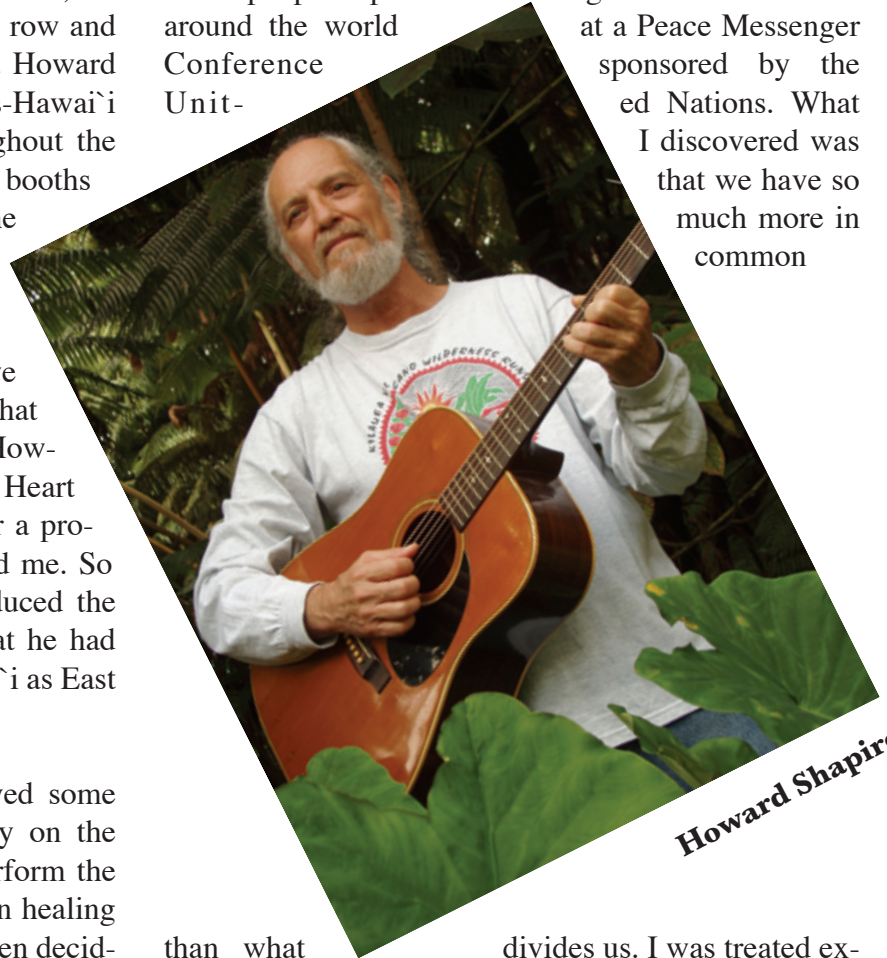
"Your Heart Will Lead You Home," received some very positive response from the community on the island of Hawai'i. Howard was asked to perform the song at gatherings and events that focused on healing those with drug and alcohol problems. We then decided to create a CD of uplifting and positive music. The CD, "We Are `Ohana -Songs of Hope", was released in November 2004. It received some respectable air-play on radio and was well received by listeners and the media."

"Then after we put "Your Heart Will Lead You Home" together we quite naturally moved on to put the "We Are `Ohana Songs of Hope" project together and we've been working together co-writing songs and co-producing projects ever since. The new CD Earth Patriot project brought Recycle Hawai'i and Howard and I back together again."

BIW: Howard, you've been invited and attended

conferences and cultural exchanges across the United States and in other countries. You have also made presentations internationally in Moscow, London, Brussels, Edinburgh, Belfast, Dublin, Auckland and Vancouver, British Columbia. Can you share with us some of their cultural issues that were discussed at those meetings?

Shapiro: Something very interesting Lisa is that I went to the Soviet Union just before it broke apart in 1991. I met people representing countries from around the world at a Peace Messenger Conference sponsored by the United Nations. What I discovered was that we have so much more in common



Howard Shapiro

than what divides us. I was treated exceptionally well. Because I was a songwriter, an artist, the Vice President of the National Artist Guild of the Soviet Union introduced me to other artists in Moscow and in Sochi where the conference was being held. I remember him telling me with much emotion that in his perspective the people of the Soviet Union have never felt anger towards the people of the United States. It is differences between our governments that lead to conflict. That was a pretty powerful thing to learn.

Through my discussions with delegates at the Peace Messenger conference I was invited to perform in Madrid, Spain for a group called Paz y Cooperacion. They were using the arts to educate young people about dif-

ferent peace related issues. They had a national art and essay contest and when I arrived I was surprised to learn that they wanted me to be one of the judges for their contest. I then performed at a number of venues the most impressive being the Cultural Center of Madrid, a beautiful theater. They treated me with so much respect. After a performance in a town outside Madrid I was introduced to a number of dignitaries. I had dinner with their mayor. I have some really wonderful memories of my time in Spain and Russia.

we spend on bombs and other weapons to build new schools, hospitals, parks, for health care, for sheltering the homeless and feeding the hungry. What kind of country we could be in the eyes of our own people and the eyes of those around the world.

BIW: What is your biggest concern for our future generation?

Shapiro: Well, there are a number of concerns, but I guess the clash of cultures that we have today and people seeing things so differently is my main concern. Polarization of opinions. Divisive politics. I certainly don't support terrorist attacks and suicide bombings, but there's a root cause as to why people are acting like they are. I think we've got to sit down and try to figure out what's happening in the world and find out why people are acting out and then extend ourselves through diplomacy. I see this all the time here in our own culture. Somehow it's perceived as weak to meet and talk with your enemies. It's easy to talk with your friends but it takes courage to talk with your enemies.

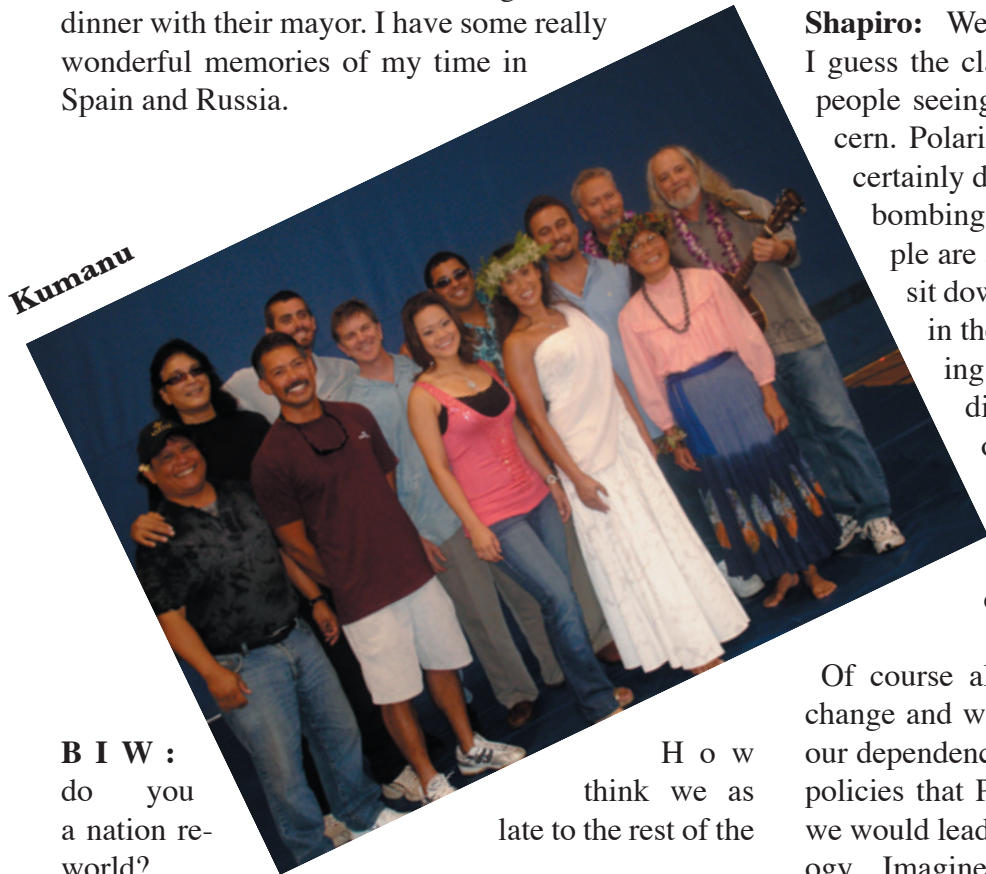
Of course also of great concern is global climate change and what's happening in the world as well as our dependence on foreign oil. If we had followed the policies that President Carter promoted 30 years ago we would lead the world in alternative energy technology. Imagine if 30 years ago we'd gone to alternative fuels -- I doubt that we would be at war today in Iraq or sending money for oil to people who preach hatred towards us and others around the world.

BIW: With so many world issues at hand, is it difficult to choose which social or environmental issues to write sing and/or dance about next?

Shapiro: I think they're all interconnected. There are so many issues that are important and need to be addressed.

BIW: Tell us briefly as to how you were able to include Kenny Loggins, Faith Rivera, Pamela Polland and Mikuak Rai in your Earth Patriot CD?

Shapiro: It's very interesting with Kenny. I first had the idea for Earth Patriot in 1990. Right about that time I heard Kenny's song "Conviction of the Heart." I knew that had to be on this album. Gregg and I had previously worked with Sony/BMG in New York -- some



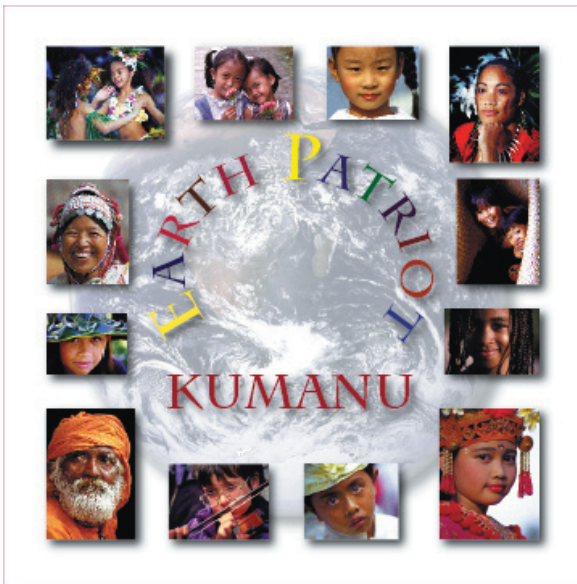
BIW: do you think we as a nation re-late to the rest of the world?

Shapiro: I think what's important to remember is that although we are a nation called the United States we are also 300 million people with our own lives and story's to share.

I think we relate to the rest of the world more on an individual basis, as individuals. I think many Americans have so much aloha and empathy. There is a lot of giving in this country. But I also think we sometimes look at things purely through our own perspective, our uniquely Western perspective. During my travels I found that many people respect the United States and our ideals, but I think they feel overwhelmed by the power we have and how we use that power. If we can lead with compassion and understanding and get away from our overt militarism then I believe we will be much more respected around the world.

Imagine if we budgeted a little more of the funds

licensing on a previous CD, and our contact there really liked our music. I contacted her about getting the license to use the original master of Kenny's version of "Conviction Of The Heart." She said, "Well, it's certainly okay with me but I've got to get approval from Kenny Loggins." So she contacted his manager. I saw the email that came back and it was pretty neat because it said, "Kenny fully agrees and thinks this is a fantastic project." And knowing that we are a non-profit organization, Sony/BMG gave us a really nice contract with them. We really appreciate all that they've done for us.



Earth Patriot CD

BIW: I understand that as Earth Patriot producers you and Gregg have in development proposals for a feature length film, a children's animated weekly series based on multi-ethnic Earth Patriot characters, and educational materials addressing social and environmental issues. The CD enthusiastically states, "Now is the time to stand with conviction of the heart and proclaim we are Earth Patriots!" Who will be playing the characters of the keiki?

Shapiro: We're just in the developing stages and much is yet to be determined. The Earth Patriot project is so much more than just a CD and the music is really the core and the foundation. Gregg and I have been working on a treatment for a full-length feature film. We have ideas of who we would like to play what roles but we're not at liberty to say because we're not quite there yet. We do have input from other people also, which is exciting for the rest of the group. They have ideas for a film, a play, I have an idea for a children's book with an

international artist I know; and the whole thing about this project, the goal and the vision, was always to use the concept of Earth Patriot as an educational tool addressing social, cultural and environmental issues, and it's happening, that's what's so exciting.

BIW: Does the group find themselves in the middle of heated arguments over global problems? I mean, I certainly wouldn't want to be in the room when you all decide what to write for the next verse to a song.

Shapiro: Well, we really came together as a group on this project. I think before on We Are Ohana Songs of Hope, people supported it, but it wasn't really a group effort but more a compilation album. When we started playing as Kumanu in the studio, it was just wonderful to see the collaboration and that we could all trust each other and create something new. Quite often some people have a bit of ego clash, you know how it can be with artists sometimes, but with Kumanu it's just really been a wonderful experience.

Perry: I think one of the real connections for Howard and I is we both firmly believe that we cannot change you, we cannot change the world directly, but I can change my outlook and my response to what goes on around me. And we're really connected at that level. We really believe with the social and environmental issues we're faced with today, that maybe we can't change say, Exxon particularly. We can't change our government directly, we can't change what you do, but what we can do is walk the talk in our own lives. It then becomes an attraction rather than a promotion. That is what we try to do on everything we work on. It's not to preach, but just to share our experience with people and if you're interested in it, you might ask about it, want to know more and possibly become a part of what we're doing. So when it comes to how or what issue we're going to deal with as artists it's all about empowerment. Empowerment is the key. The fact is that you hold the power. It all starts with you, it all starts with me. I have the power to facilitate change by choosing where I spend my consumer dollars. If I don't like the fact that General Motors builds Hummers, then I choose not buy one or support anyone or anything that does support the purchase and manufacture of products like that if at all possible. If we as consumers don't financially support certain products or technologies then they will not continue to be manufactured. It's that simple. We have the power! You too can be an Earth Patriot!

BIW: Some would say that they find it very difficult and frustrating as individuals to try and make changes in our system when there is so much corruption, deceit, etc...going on around us. They really don't know who to trust or believe anymore. What would you say to them?

Shapiro: I would say that you have to trust your heart. I know in life that people sometimes tell you not to go for your dreams and tell you that things won't happen because there's a lot of fear of the unknown. But if you believe in something, you should really go for it. And believe in your own capabilities. Trust your instincts. We as individuals can demand change. We as individuals have the power.

BIW: Anything more you would like to push out there to our readers regarding Earth Patriot?

Shapiro: I think it's important to say that Earth Patriot is reaching out to national and international organizations and we're proud of this CD. Without sounding too egotistical, I gave you some testimonials along with this interview and I think those are really important because they show that national and international organizations are seeing the potential of this CD and the project as a whole. It's way bigger than just us. We're proud of the people involved and what they've put into this project – their mana`o and their mana, their energy. Gregg and I feel it's all about integrity you know? We strive for integrity in all our actions as far as this CD and the things we want to do with Earth Patriot. We are selective of where we perform and we're selective of what products we produce. It's not about the money it's about the quality; it's the message and it's about integrity.

Although Kumanu has been performing for students at schools and theaters on the island of Hawai`i, their first concert open to the public will be on May 10, 2008 at KMC Theater at Hawai`i Volcanoes National Park. The concert is being sponsored by Volcano Art Cen-

ter. For more information about this and other Kumanu performances, please use the contacts listed below.

Members of Kumanu invite you to join them December 22 from noon-2pm at Basically Books in Downtown Hilo where they will be signing Earth Patriot CD's and posters for those who purchase the CD.



Gregg Perry

Photos Courtesy of:

Dave Gallagher

Marsha Hee

Nolan Hee

Gregg Perry

Kamaluhia Woolley

To learn more about the non-profit organizations Performing And Fine Artists For World Peace, Recycle Hawai`i and the Earth Patriot Project, and other Perryscope recordings with Kumanu, please call **808.985.8725** or go to:
www.artistsandpeace.org,
www.recyclehawaii.org or
www.pecktunes.com.