toere drumming here, no golden vahine supine beneath swaying coconut trees. This collection presents poetry and sound that is at once expansively universal and intimately personal, embodying a new kind of blossoming of two very traditional genres of Pacific artistic expression.

KUʻUALOH A HOʻOMANAWANUI
University of Hawaiʻi, Mānoa


There is an acute need for recording projects such as this one, conceived for the purpose of preserving Pacific Islands music and disseminating it to a wider audience. Scott Stege, coordinator of the Majuro Music and Arts Society (a nongovernmental organization dedicated, among other things, to the digital archiving of Marshallese string band recordings), produced this compilation in his Moonlight Recording Studio in Majuro. Stege and his recording engineer, Ali Jeremiah, digitally remastered sixteen open-reel magnetic tapes and analog recordings from the WSZO (now V7AB) radio station archive, dating from 1976 to 1984. They have also included seven performances by contemporary "ukulele boys bands," popular components of the current Marshallese music scene. Thus, two eras of island contemporary music are represented on Moonlight Leta Volume 1. It is noteworthy that, in the booklet that accompanies the CD, Stege designates the earlier body of work, little more than a quarter century old, as "traditional" string band music, differentiating it from more recent keyboard-driven popular music.

Like Stege, many academics researching Oceanic music traditions have come across similar treasure troves, invariably in a state of slow deterioration due to tropical or subtropical environmental conditions. My own research in Tongan brass band traditions led me to just such an analog audio archive housed at the headquarters of the Tongan Broadcasting Corporation in Nukuʻalofa. It pained me to see such valuable sound documentation suffering the inevitable ravages of time—all the more reason to applaud Stege's efforts in creating a digital archive that will not be susceptible to such detrimental environmental effects.

As revealed in the CD notes, the producer's choices from the radio archive tend to focus on the most popular string bands from the "Battle of the Bands" era of the late 1970s and early 1980s, which Stege refers to as the "pre-electronic music" era in the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Clanny "cc" Clements, a member of the Kanana Ran group featured in 3 of the 17 vintage tracks, served as oral historian for the compilation, bringing to the project personal knowledge acquired through a decade of service at WSZO. Other traditional bands showcased through multiple inclusions are the Laura Settlers (3 tracks), Skate-
Em-Lā (2 tracks), and Exers Ran (2 tracks). The contemporary ukulele youth bands featured on the CD—the Small Islands Boys, the Rita Boys, and the MIECO Boys—are also represented by multiple tracks recorded in 2005–2006. A hallmark of both eras seems to be tight vocal harmonies in two or three parts. Guitar is the instrument of choice for the earlier groups, but ukuleles progressively gained favor with youth bands throughout the past two decades, due in large part to increased circular migratory flows between Hawai‘i and the Marshall Islands. According to a 2006 article by Stege in the Micronesian Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences (5 [1/2]: 338), an increasing supply of inexpensive (about US$15) ukuleles “literally swept the islands youth movement,” and subsequently Stege and his musical peers decided to incorporate this neo-traditional acoustic music into his weekly Moonlight Awa radio program (inaugurated in 2002) as well as this digital recording project.

Listeners whose primary frame of reference for Pacific Islands music is the popular song repertory of Hawai‘i or New Zealand will most likely find the traditional Marshallese vocal aesthetic to be an acquired taste. The preceding comment is not veiled criticism, but rather an acknowledgment that singers of acoustic Marshallese music have not radically modified traditional singing styles to emulate Western jazz-pop-r&b aesthetic values, as has happened throughout much of the Pacific, for example, in the Beamer Brothers’ “Honolulu City Lights” (1978) or the Herbs’ “French Letter” (1982). This non-conformity is striking because other evidences abound in this compilation to suggest that these artists had wide access to the Western popular music of their respective eras. For example, the track entitled “Ken Wewen An Laplok Dret In” (1983) is a near-complete musical paraphrase of the Bee Gees’ “How Can You Mend a Broken Heart,” originally released in 1971. Although the booklet annotations do not acknowledge this outside source, the description of this song makes it clear that it was not a Marshallese-language “cover” of the Bee Gees hit, but instead a musical appropriation paired with an original text about the Islanders’ ecological concerns. Other shorter musical paraphrases include a vocal verse strongly reminiscent of the Beatles’ “Get Back” on track 18, and a guitar riff/chord progression lifted straight from Creedence Clearwater Revival’s “Proud Mary” on track 19. More subtle emulations of Western blues–based rock appear in tracks 4, 8, 14, 16, and 21. These musical borrowings illuminate a propensity among Pacific Islander musicians to incorporate outside musical styles—and even specific song segments—in their original compositions. From this indigenous perspective, imitation is indeed the sincerest form of flattery.

Beyond the obvious sociohistorical value of the digital recordings, it is admirable that Stege and his colleagues made the effort to provide detailed print documentation as well. Few such projects incorporate a twelve-page booklet in the CD pack-
age because of the significant increase in production costs. The information presented here helps contextualize each performance and provides additional insights into the realities of music making in the contemporary Pacific. As I perused this booklet, I was reminded of Jay Junker’s excellent liner notes for a number of Hawaiian slack-key guitar CDs released on George Winston’s Dancing Cat boutique label (examples of which can be found on the Dancing Cat Web site: http://www.dancingcat.com/notes/08022-38052-2.php). Since all the selections here are sung in the Marshallese language, it would have been helpful to provide English translations of the lyrics, but this is a minor quibble, given the overall spirit of generosity embodied in this endeavor. Few compilations of this type would feature twenty-three tracks and seventy-four minutes of music—to the contrary, many producers would package this material in two volumes simply to increase revenue. Refreshingly, Stege also resists the temptation to imply that this music is inherently more legitimate as an expression of Marshallese culture than the electronic music that followed in the most recent quarter century.

Ultimately, the mission of the Majuro Music and Arts Society is to create a lasting archive of Marshallese music, art, and other performative cultural expressions and to share that archive with as wide an audience as possible. Moonlight Leta Volume 1 is a well-conceived and well-executed debut project, and I enthusiastically recommend it to anyone looking to become more conversant with the acoustic music of an important transitional era in the postcolonial Pacific.

DAVID KAMMERER
Brigham Young University-Hawaii

* * *


Epeli Hau‘ofa died in Suva, Fiji, on 11 January 2009. He was a friend and wantok (someone who speaks the same language) to so many of us, and he will be sorely missed. His words live on, however, and his place is firmly established in the pantheon of Oceanian scholarship. In depositing We Are the Ocean at the feet of his intellectual and spiritual heirs a few short months before his departure from this world, Epeli could leave no better legacy.

The writings included in this collection span a thirty-year period, from 1975 to 2006. This significant temporal reach is reinforced by two other qualities. One is the fact that Oceania as a whole is revealed as Epeli’s home, his roots being grounded in several institutions, islands, and countries: Misima, the University of Papua New Guinea, the University of the South Pacific, Tonga, and, metaphorically at least, the “Big Island” of Hawai‘i. These distinctive places figure in his writings as petals floating on the ocean; scattered, fragrant, and steeped in meaning. They collectively constitute at once a journey as much as a geography, a world full of revelations of the past and of the future of