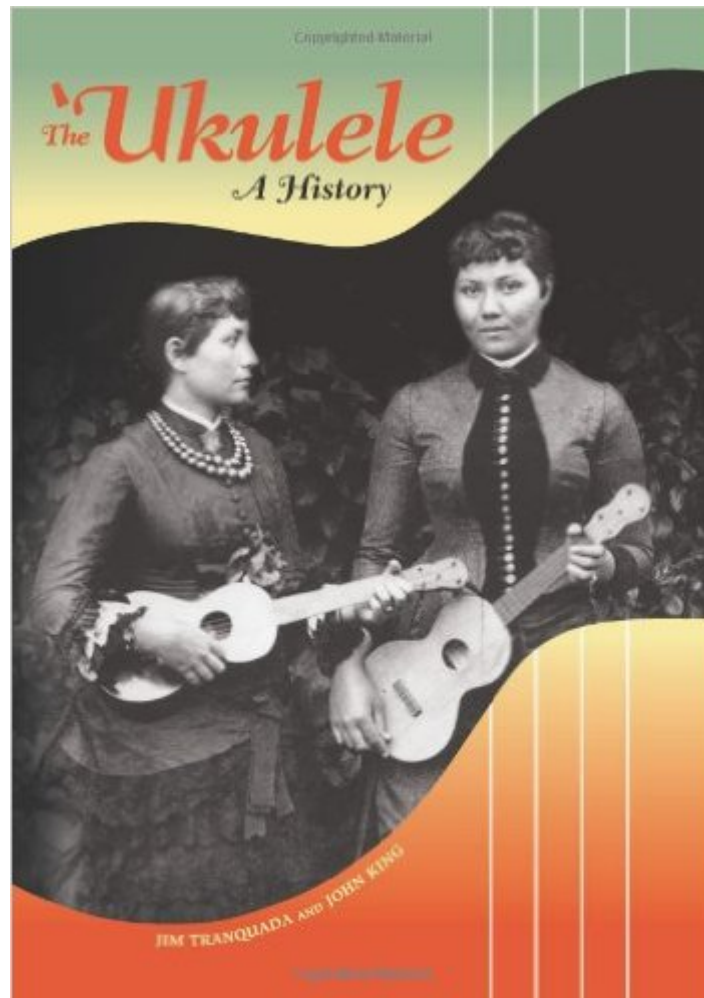


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# The Ukulele: A History



## Synopsis

Since its introduction to Hawai'i in 1879, the ukulele has been many things: a symbol of an island paradise; a tool of political protest; an instrument central to a rich musical culture; a musical joke; a highly sought-after collectible; a cheap airport souvenir; a lucrative industry; and the product of a remarkable synthesis of western and Pacific cultures. The *Ukulele: A History* explores all of these facets, placing the instrument for the first time in a broad historical, cultural, and musical context. Drawing on a wealth of previously untapped sources, Jim Tranquada and John King tell the surprising story of how an obscure four-string folk guitar from Portugal became the national instrument of Hawai'i, of its subsequent rise and fall from international cultural phenomenon to the Dangerfield of instruments, and of the resurgence in popularity (and respect) it is currently enjoying among musicians from Thailand to Finland. The book shows how the technologies of successive generations (recorded music, radio, television, the Internet) have played critical roles in popularizing the ukulele. Famous composers and entertainers (Queen Liliuokalani, Irving Berlin, Arthur Godfrey, Paul McCartney, SpongeBob SquarePants) and writers (Rudyard Kipling, Jack London, P. G. Wodehouse, Agatha Christie) wind their way through its history—as well as a host of outstanding Hawaiian musicians (Ernest Kaai, George Kia Nahaolelua, Samuel K. Kamakaia, Henry A. Pele, Bishaw). In telling the story of the ukulele, Tranquada and King also present a sweeping history of modern Hawaiian music that spans more than two centuries, beginning with the introduction of western melody and harmony by missionaries to the Hawaiian music renaissance of the 1970s and 1980s.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

King and Tranquada worked for years on this book, and the love, care and devotion they put into it shine on every page. (The footnotes alone are worth the price of admission.) Even if you don't play 'ukulele -- heck, even if you have no interest in music at all -- you'll find this extremely-well researched effort to be a wonderfully entertaining trip through over 120 years of American and international history and culture. The reader effortlessly rides the "waves" of 'ukulele popularity and ubiquitous-ness that followed, or in many cases led, world-altering events such as the U.S.'s annexation of Hawaii, the commercial worlds' fairs of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, World War I, the Depresssion, World War II, and the successive emergences of popular sheet music, records, radio, television, and now the internet. While some of it is "old hat" (but really well-told old hat) for 'uke aficionados, a lot of the information is of the "who knew?" variety, including mention of the 'ukulele and professional baseball players, and the 'ukulele and the young Prince Edward (later Duke of Windsor). And very artfully and entertainingly written is how the 'ukulele, which once represented everything that was kitschy and co-opted about the Hawaiian Islands, later came to be a symbol of the emerging indigenous Hawaiian civil rights and social justice movement. Sadly, Mr. King -- himself a superb 'ukulele musician -- didn't live to see the book published, but his spirit certainly lives on in it. And if you're a non-musician who reads this book, my bet is that your next shopping stop after will be to your local 'ukulele store.

I've been playing the ukulele for about 12 years and have seen all kinds of books and info. I am very involved in the ukulele scene in So. Cal particularly at an ukulele "mecca" called Island Bazaar in Huntington Beach. I have seen NOTHING as educational and inspirational as this book. It was given to me for Christmas and I have now purchased 10 and given them as gifts to my uke friends. During visits to the Ukulele Guild Exhibition in Honolulu I had the real pleasure of seeing and hearing co-author John King (recently deceased) talk about the ukulele and perform. He was simply a genius. This book reflects that. Take a look at this scholarly work.....HALF of it is footnotes and index!!! But it reads like a novel. The two authors set up the milieu of where the ukulele came (Madiera/Portugal) from and the setting it came to (Hawaii). Then they magically take you through the journey of this amazing instrument to the U.S. Mainland and through the decades. It's wonderful. And the photos and graphics are soooo fun and informative. There are lots of turn-of-the-century photos, ads, posters that make this history come alive. The reader is taken through all the ups and downs of the popularity of the ukulele, right up to the explosion that is happening today. Like I said, I have seen NO other source that so entertainingly shows the ukulele and all its practitioners through

the years. Wonderful. That's why I am giving this as gifts to all my friends interested in this special diminutive instrument.

To anyone who is passionate about the history of the Hawaiian Ukulele, this book is the book you have been waiting for. It is a fitting memorial to John King's extraordinary dedication in mapping out the Journey of the ukulele's invention. The detail of his research is forensic. The footnotes alone are completely invaluable to any historian or enthusiast. The internet is awash with potted histories which have little value and are full of inaccuracies. Forget about them and enjoy a real authoritative and fascinating story of how a diminutive four-stringed, figure of eight, koa wood chordophone conquered the world. Congratulations to Jim Tranquada for seeing this project through. Oh if only there were accompanying photographs of instruments by key makers! For that you will have to seek out a copy of the Tony Ku Collection or visit The Ukulele Hall of Fame reference section.

IF YOU'RE NOT INTO HISTORY & ARE JUST LOOKING FOR PICTURES TO LOOK AT, DON'T BUY THIS BOOK. IF YOU'RE NOT A SERIOUS UKULELE "MACHETE" PLAYER, DON'T GET IT. BUT IF YOU ARE SERIOUS I HIGHLY RECOMMEND BUYING "THE UKULELE, A HISTORY." THIS IS DEFINITELY THE MOST INFORMATIVE BOOK ON THE HISTORY OF THE UKULELE WRITTEN TO THIS DATE. THANK YOU TRANQUADA & KING, FOR YOUR TIME & EFFORT IT TOOK TO TRACK ALL THE HISTORY DOWN. AND GOD BLESS THE "JIMI HENDRIX" OF THE UKULELE MR. JOHN KING!!! THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU'VE GIVEN THE UKULELE COMMUNITY!!!

A good history of the ukulele and its varying popularity through the years. If you like the ukulele and enjoying reading history, a good book. The appendix, notes, and bibliography are about one hundred pages of the book...appears to be a well documented history.

This book is a must have for anyone who plays the ukulele, or has any interest in learning about it and its historical place in Hawaii history, and how it won over musicians the world over. Co-written by the great great grandson of famed ukulele maker Augusto Dias, who could ask for anything more? I am sending a copy to my sister as I write. Great reference material.

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