



Kyla Uilaniokekaimalie Maunakea (Miss Killa)

Family Story

The story of my music connection begins with my communities in Moku O Keawe (The Big island of Hawai'i), extending to the greater Pacific Northwest. In 2015, I left Hawai'i island to find my life's purpose as a strong independent wahine flourishing in the big but little city of Portland, Oregon.

My Native Hawaiian background is the fuel behind my music, and my story is not complete without sharing my Hawaiian heritage. My great grandmother, Kupuna Katherine Maunakea, was a prolific native Hawaiian speaker, educator, traditional healing practitioner, published author, and composer of over 100 songs. She was also recognized in 1991 by the State of Hawai'i and Library of Congress as a "Living Treasure" for her contributions to the preservation and perpetuation of Hawaiian culture. Kupuna Katherine's daughter and my grandmother, Yvonne Maunakea, was a teacher, musician, lauhala weaver, and mother of five children born on O'ahu. On the other hand, my grandfather, Alexander Auna, was a fourth-generation Chinese-Hawaiian descendant of taro farmers in Waipi'o Valley. In the early days, he played bass with Aunty Genoa Keawe, another prominent 20th century Hawaiian musician. These ties influenced my father, Iopa Maunakea, to passionately pursue music in his own life and founded the band 'Bruddah Kuz.' My mother, Donalda (Kyryluk) Maunakea, was born in Canada to a culturally rich Canadian-Ukrainian family. For her side of the family as well, music and dance was a part of everyday life.

With a diverse, prolific family history in song and entertainment, I was raised surrounded by culture, art, music, and dance. At the age of 14, I studied bass and shortly after became the bass player for 'Bruddah Kuz,' my father's band. Not long after, I learned guitar, started composing my own songs, and later started several bands.

Currently based in Portland, this city has given me many opportunities to create music with a variety of different groups and collaborate with an array of artists, some with Hawaiian roots and similar stories. Contemporary Hawaiian music is a way of finding, making, and building these connections to each other.

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