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Electronic jazz artist Dana Leong gets into island groove

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By [Jeanne Cooper](#)



Dana Leong

Redwood Shores native **Dana Leong**, an innovative composer, cellist and trombonist now living in New York, will return home Nov. 22 for the [College of San Mateo 17th Annual Jazz Festival](#). But first, Leong will add an island vibe to his signature electronic sound when he makes his Honolulu debut in a casual show tonight at [Gordon Biersch](#).

“We have assembled a super fun cast of Hawaiian musicians, singers, rappers and more,” said Leong, referring to a lineup that includes award-winning artist and producer **Shawn Pimental** (drums), **Michael Grande** (keys), **Jon Hawes** (bass) and **Bin Yasuno** (electric guitar). They’ll play many of the songs from Leong’s albums “Anthems of Life” and “Milk and Jade,” the versatile musician noted, but will also include classic rock and reggae songs.

Leong owns and runs his own recording studio, Life After Dark, in New York, where he moved at age 18 to attend the Manhattan School of Music. A musical prodigy since the age of 3, Leong’s resume includes backing musicians such as **Whitney Houston** and **Earth Wind & Fire**, as well as recently recording with renowned Hawaiian musician **Keali’i Reichel** on the latter’s upcoming album. Still humble yet driven, Leong has been a part of two Grammy-nominated groups, **Paquito D’Rivera’s** Jazz Chamber Trio (often filling in for a chair frequented by Yo-Yo Ma) and **Dafnis Prieto’s** Absolute Quintet.

Leong enjoys escaping to the islands to clear his mind and regroup from the busy city life, with six visits in almost four years. “There was always so much going on in New York and you always feel like you are missing out on something. I needed to remove myself and start with a clean slate, so what better place than the islands,” he explained. “The more I come here, the more attached I get.”

In Hawai’i, Leong has been able to find a balance and creative focus. Three years ago, he was introduced to Pimental through a mutual friend, although the two only recently began to play music together. “We are in early discussions to collaborate on a fusion of our two musical styles to see what happens,” Leong said.

See here for the [official music video](#) of his 2011 cello composition, “Rain.” For more tour dates and information, go to www.danaleong.com.