



BIG BOYS DO CRY

When he was a boy, Hawaiian roots musician **Kalani Pe'a** ran away from his parents in a JC Penney. "They caught me singing to a mannequin," he tells me over the phone. For a child, none of this behavior is out of the ordinary. What makes Pe'a's story unique, however, is that his parents found him singing without the speech impediment he'd struggled with since he was 4 years old.

"I couldn't say certain phrases. I couldn't pronounce certain words," he explains. After trying and failing to find the right speech therapist, Pe'a and his parents realized the answer was simple: music. "They realized I loved the music," he remembers. "I got into choirs. I learned music theory. The music helped me."

Now the Grammy award-winning musician returns to Eugene supporting his sophomore release *No'Ane'i*. Pe'a's debut album won a Grammy for Best Regional Roots Music Album, and this year *No'Ane'i* is nominated in the same category.

So what was like when Pe'a learned he was nominated for a Grammy — not once, but twice?

"I dropped to my knees and I cried," he says. "All I did was cry. I cried all day long. I was overwhelmed with joy, surprised. Big boys do cry."

On his latest release, Pe'a says he was looking to push the envelope with more originals and a little more vocal work. "This album means a lot to me," he says. "This album talks about people I love, places I love, people that annoy me. All of that. It talks about identity. This album hits home."

"I say thanks to my parents allowing me to sing," Pe'a adds.

Kalani Pe'a performs 7:30 pm Saturday, Jan. 26, at The Shedd; \$23-\$31, all-ages. — *Will Kennedy*

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