

Traditional Hawaiian Vamps

In 5 Basic Keys....

Hawaiian vamps are important to know if you play any traditional Hawaiian songs on ‘ukulele. A vamp (or “turnaround”) is usually added in the beginning of a song and between verses. The initial vamp is important because it allows the dancers, singers and musicians to start at the same time. The Hawaiian vamp is also often placed between the verses of the song. Vamps are also used as outros.

If you think of the vamp as a standard 8 count, the first chord is played for 2 counts. The second chord is also played for 2 counts. Finally, the last chord (in the series of 3 chords) is played for 4 counts. Often, the whole vamp is repeated creating a 16-count introduction, or bridge between verses.

A ukulele vamp in Hawaiian music is three chords: The first two chords get two counts (//) and the last gets four (////). If you are playing a down-up strum, one count equals down and up. Apply the numbers to a key (C) and you end up with: D7// G7// C////

(D7: DUDU G7: DUDU C: DUDUDUDU).

You will hear the term “picking vamp” as if it’s something fancy, but all it is, is a melody that follows the same sound as the chords, so they fit together. You could strum a C vamp and your friend could pick a C vamp.

6 Hawaiian ‘Ukulele Strumming Vamps:

KEY:

- **C:** D7// G7// C////
- **D:** E7// A7// D///
- **E:** F#7// B7// E///
- **F:** G7// C7// F///
- **G:** A7// D7// G///
- **A:** B7// E7// A///