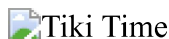


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RICHARD WALKER /

RWALKER@STARBULLETIN.COM

The Tiki Lounge at Anna Bannana's features entertainment by, clockwise from top left, the King Pins (Harvey Yamauchi, Dwayne Higa and Sanford Lee), tiki purveyor Fil Slash, DJ Mary Ann and DJ Book 'Em Ginger.

By Shawn "Speedy" Lopes
slopes@starbulletin.com

How ironic that, in the land that once spawned visions of lovely hula maidens and aloha-attired Hawaiian hipsters, the tiki bar, that venerable symbol of Honolulu cool, has become an endangered species. While enthusiasts worldwide continue to perpetuate the tiki lounge culture through fan clubs and occasional gatherings, our fair city has watched its once-thriving scene vanish with the tradewinds.

There are local proponents of the tiki lounge lifestyle, however, who are determined to see its resurrection.

"I've actually had this idea for over a year," confesses nightclub promoter Kristien Amer, whose own Tiki Lounge debuts tonight at Anna Bannanas. "I used to hang out at places like the Tahitian Lanai in Waikiki, and now I think it's kind of a bummer that we barely have any tiki bars with real, old-school Hawaiiiana decorations left. Now tourists come here and there are cover bands playing in all the hotels. It's not interactive, and there's not that authentic lounge atmosphere anymore. I thought that something needed to be done about it."

When Amer got word of the availability of Anna Bannanas' loft on Thursday nights, she approached the venue with her concept for a hip, retro-style shindig. While the famous university-area watering hole had never hosted a function like it before, both parties agreed its prime location, unassuming wooden interior and culture-cool clientele made the bar the perfect location for such an event.

The Tiki Lounge

Where: Anna Bannanas, 2440 S. Beretania St.

When: 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. today

Admission: \$5, 21 and over

Call: 946-5190

With the help of a cast of like-minded lounge-ophiles, Amer spent hundreds of dollars and countless hours looking for the perfect decor to transform Anna's into the ultimate tiki lounge. After scouring Honolulu thrift shops, fabric stores and party supply outlets for Hawaiian tablecloths, reed matting, candles, glass lamps and lava lamps with moderate success, she resorted to the Internet for the remainder of her furnishings.

"There's nothing at all here in Hawaii," she says, with more than a hint of exasperation. "That's the saddest thing. I can't tell you how difficult it was just to come up with these decorations." A 60-foot fishnet, for example, was ordered online from Louisiana and hand-dyed by the manufacturer for that vintage look. Plants and trees were plucked and purchased wherever possible, and department store-bought torches were hollowed out and mounted with flickering light bulbs to simulate the real article.

FOR entertainment, Amer, who will appear as DJ Ginger, and Erin Furuichi, known as Maggie the Cat during her tenure at KTUH-FM (and dubbed DJ Mary Ann for the evening), will play a wide array of platters of the era, from Martin Denny to the Ventures, spy themes to modern lounge ditties. Also slated to perform are surf rock/R&B/oldies band the King Pins, and Willow Chang, known for her work as a belly dancer and her appearances on the nightclub circuit, who will be outfitted in hula regalia.

"I expect it to be quite theatrical," Amer says. "There's gonna be a lot of people in costumes, so people who come are going to be surprised by all the little things going on around them."

A longtime Don Ho fan, she says she considered hiring a Don Ho impersonator for the event but decided to aim higher.

"I just kind of thought, I should just call his manager and invite him to come down," she recalls. "I wasn't expecting him to do it, but after a few days they got back to me and he said, 'Yeah, he'd like to come down.'"

While there is no guarantee Hawaii's original maven of cool will sing "Tiny Bubbles," Ho has promised to make an appearance at 11 p.m. after his show at the Waikiki Beachcomber Hotel lets out for a meet-and-greet with fans.



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