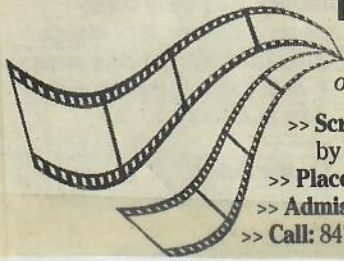


HULA FILM FESTIVAL



"Keepers of the Flame: The Cultural Legacy of Three Hawaiian Women":

- >> **Screening time:** 7 p.m. Tuesday; entertainment by Eddie Kamae starts at 6:30 p.m.
- >> **Place:** Atherton Halau, Bishop Museum
- >> **Admission:** \$5; free to museum members
- >> **Call:** 847-8296 or visit www.bishopmuseum.org

Preserving the culture



a/14/2008 HSB

By Burl Burlingame

bburlingame@starbulletin.com

As the Tony Todaro song says, when you're watching hula, keep your eyes on the hands. But that's hard to do in an oral culture, or even in a reading culture. There's nothing like seeing the real thing. Luckily, Tom Edison invented the movies more than a century ago. The visual intricacies of hula are being preserved — but it took a while to catch on.

Bishop Museum's "Traditions of the Pacific" 2008 Hula Film Festival is a case in point. The latest in the series of classic documentaries about the Hawaiian dance will show Tuesday. "Keepers of the Flame: The Cultural Legacy of Three Hawaiian Women," a film by Eddie Kamae, tells the tale of kumu hula Mary Kawena Pukui, 'Iolani Luahine and Edith Kanaka'ole, women who "helped revive the flame of traditional Hawaiian culture — a flame that had almost died," said Kamae.

Kamae, who — with wife and producing partner Myrna — completed this film in 2005 as part of his massive Hawaiian legacy documentary series, was a student of Pukui. "I was so fortunate to meet her — she set the course for me and all the work I've done," said Kamae.

"What matters is that the culture goes on for the children, to carry on. Hula plays a big part in the culture of the Hawaiian land, and without these kumu sharing, where would we be? Hula is so visual that it cannot be easily described. On film, it lives forever."

"Every time we run the film, I'm struck by how much of the historical footage comes from Bishop Museum archives," noted Myrna Kamae. "So, it's a perfect place to share the film. Some of the footage of 'Iolani Luahine was shot by Francis Haar in the 1970s, and is in the collection of the Honolulu Academy of Arts."

"Myrna and Eddie had already been collecting material and footage for ten years, so there was plenty to work with," said writer-editor Lisa Altieri. "But in true documentary fashion, there was additional shooting up to the last minute."

HISTORIAN Nanette Napoleon coordinated the hula series, beginning "with an exhaustive look at what was available — some historical, some from collections, some modern — and then we figured out which one we could get approval to show."

Napoleon said the series has drawn "turn-away crowds," with enough interest to perhaps warrant a mini-festival next year over a weekend.

"Considering that hula is such an integral part of the Hawaiian culture, it's too bad there isn't more of it captured on film," she said. "The first real spurt was in the 1940s and '50s when George Bacon realized that his wife, Pat, and mother-in-law, Mary Kawena Pukui, were masters of the art, and he captured their craft on film in documentary fashion. Other than that, about the only hula on film was touristy stuff."

"The next big thing was the Hawaiian Renaissance in the early '70s, and much film dates from that period." And the annual Merrie Monarch Festival in Hilo provides a wealth of contemporary material.

"It's very useful for any kumu hula to study old films of hula," said Napoleon. "The different styles can inspire today. More than that, you can't really understand it by descriptions or by reading about it. With hula, it's hard to get it unless you see it."

>> A historian takes questions about hula on film. F3



BALAZS
2008

GEORGE BALAZS
Marine Turtle Research
NOAA NMFS PIFSC
2570 Dole Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96822

GEORGE BALAZS

4327

(808) 286-2899

(808) 395-6409

APRIL 14, 2008 TO
DECEMBER 31, 2008

gbalazs@honalab.nmfs.hawaii.edu

gbalazs@honalab.nmfs
edu

APRIL 14, 2008 - DECEMBER 31, 2008