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The Hawaiians, Reflecting Spirit by Jennifer Berg

Too many of us, it seems, think of Hawaii as a cartoon island full of hula skirts, leis and a crooning, before-he-was-fat Elvis. On Saturday, April 30th, Chicagoans flocked to the Gene Siskel Film Center to dispel the *Blue Hawaii* myth by taking in *The Hawaiians, Reflecting Spirit*. The documentary of Hawaiian culture is the latest effort of Edgy Lee, a filmmaker committed to exposing the complexities and deep spirituality of her culture.

Before the film, guests gathered in the Film Center's reception area to nosh, mingle and get in the island spirit. Respected guests included Rowena Akana, trustee of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, members of the Chinese government and Edgy Lee herself. Despite the gravitas, the mood was kept light with festive music and dancing from members of Chicago's hula halau. Purple orchids were the accessory du jour, adorning everything from tabletops to necks to women's hair. While enjoying the entertainment, guests nibbled on springy snacks like sushi, coconut-encrusted shrimp and a papaya and avocado salad. The tropical atmosphere inside the Film Center was the perfect antidote to the late April rains outside.

After the film, Edgy Lee answered audience members' questions in a Q&A, shedding more light on her culture, problems Hawaiians are currently facing and ways that we can help. Factio was so taken with the filmmaker's poise, intelligence and passion that we couldn't resist asking her to join our women of style; be sure to check out [Edgy's Woman of Style interview](#) with Factio founder Melissa Maynard!

Pao



Producer Edgy Lee (third from left) surrounded by guests



Gene Siskel Film Center in downtown Chicago

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