

Hula hui solicits funds for documentary

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The Hula Preservation Society has launched a Kickstarter campaign to raise the remaining \$20,000 needed to finish "The Hawaiian Room," a documentary film about the dancers and musicians who graced the popular entertainment venue in Manhattan.

The online fundraising campaign started Saturday and ends Feb. 20.

The Hawaiian Room was a glamorous showroom at the Hotel Lexington in New York that opened in 1937. During its 30-year run, it spotlighted Hawaiian musicians and hula dancers.

Since 2011 the hula society has been conducting oral histories with the singers and dancers from the Hawaiian Room, building an archive of photos from their personal collections.

Independent filmmaker Ann Marie Kirk was the videographer for the project and became inspired to turn a 10-minute video into a full-length documentary.



COURTESY HULA PRESERVATION SOCIETY

From left, dancers Mealii Boyd, Iwalani Carino, Leialoha Kaleikini and Ehulani Enoka in the late 1950s at the Hawaiian Room in the Hotel Lexington.

As she filmed the interviews, Kirk said, she realized there was more to be told on a larger scale, particularly while the kupuna, who are well into their 70s and 80s, are still here to share their memories.

"When they share their

story, it's an enormous gift to all of us because it allows us to experience what they experienced," she said. "The story could easily be lost in another 10 to 20 years."

The first cut of the film debuted at the 'Oiwi Film Festival in November 2012 to a

sold-out audience.

Funds are primarily needed to purchase rights to the footage of the dancers from commercial stock houses, according to hula society director Maile Loo. Ultimately, the goal is to offer the film on DVD and Blu-ray.

"When you see the fluid, moving image of the hula, you'll understand why these women were so celebrated," Kirk said.

For a pledge of \$25 or more, Kickstarter backers will receive a 5-by-7-inch photo from the Hawaiian Room archives; a pledge of \$100 or more results in two copies of the finished documentary DVD signed by former Hawaiian Room performers and Kirk, along with an 8-by-10-inch photo.

For a minimum \$2,500 pledge, donors will get a private hula lesson from the Hawaiian Room dancers on Oahu.

ON THE NET:

>> To donate, use the link goo.gl/RoGiBO or visit kickstarter.com and search for "Hawaiian Room."