



The City is Yours.

{Luxury Condos Priced from the \$350s}

[click here for more info](#)



[boston.com](#)

Arts & Entertainment

your connection to The Boston Globe

[Home](#) [News](#) [A&E](#) [Business](#) [Sports](#) [Travel](#) [Your Life](#) [Cars](#) [Jobs](#) [Personals](#) [Real Estate](#)

[Movies](#) [Restaurants](#) [Food](#) [Calendar](#) [Music](#) [Theater/Arts](#) [TV](#) [Books](#) [Celebrity news](#)

[HOME](#) > [A&E](#) > [MUSIC](#)

## Hawaiian punch

The Boston Globe

### Waitiki throws a Polynesian party to play the music of Juan Garcia Esquivel

By Joan Anderman, Globe Staff | March 4, 2005

Waitiki is different from other bands. It's not just that the group plays exotica, a term better suited to a decorating motif or a category of porn than a musical genre. Or that by all accounts it's one of two ensembles in the world that still performs exotica, which was named after a 1957 album by Martin Denny and is best described -- and not well at all -- as an island-flavored blend of drums, marimbas, birdcalls, and woodwinds. Or that Waitiki shows have been known to include kung fu and watermelons.

ADVERTISEMENT

The members of the Boston-based ensemble are on a mission to create a Polynesian experience that goes beyond the ears. Formed in 2003 by native Hawaiians Randy Wong, a bassist, and drummer Abe Lagrimas Jr., who moved to Boston to study, respectively, at the New England Conservatory and Berklee College of Music, Waitiki wants to transport an audience as far away from Boston (or Pittsburgh or Newport) as they can get without buying a plane ticket. If that means hauling tiki lamps, trees, martial arts experts, hula dancers, bananas, storytellers, and their own drink menu into snow-fringed nightclubs and urban lounges, that's fine.

"There are no restrictions on what we can do," says Brian O'Neill, Waitiki's vibraphonist, who with wind player Jared Laufou completes the four-piece lineup. "It's a perfect escape."

Tonight at the Lizard Lounge in Cambridge, Waitiki is presenting a very special show, even by Waitiki standards. The group will swell to a 20-piece ensemble, dubbed Waitiki Orchestrotica, for a rare live performance of the "supersonic space-age bachelor pad" sounds of the late Juan Garcia Esquivel, variously known as the King of Lounge, Mexico's Duke Ellington, and -- oxymoronic though it may sound -- an easy-listening innovator.

Esquivel, who died in 2002 at the age of 84, blurred the lines between cheesy lounge music and quirky experimentalism. Influenced by progressive jazz pioneers of the '40s like Stan Kenton and Maynard Ferguson, a 1950s Esquivel record might feature a 28-piece big band with electronic flourishes, slide guitar, and a choir of voices singing nonsense syllables. After three decades of relative obscurity following his heyday in the 1960s, Esquivel enjoyed a remarkable resurgence in popularity thanks to a revival of interest among alt-hipsters in space-age pop and lounge during the mid-'90s, when Esquivel was championed as a cutting-edge pioneer.

"He was a genius the way he combined instruments and exploited the new world of stereo sound," says Brother Cleve, whose band

#### TOOLS

- [PRINTER FRIENDLY VERSION](#)
- [SINGLE-PAGE FORMAT](#)
- [E-MAIL TO A FRIEND](#)
- [TOP E-MAILED ARTICLES](#)

#### SEARCH GLOBE ARCHIVES

[GO](#)

- Today (free)
- Yesterday (free)
- Past 30 days
- Last 12 months



[Advanced search](#)

#### SPONSORED LINKS



[Click Here](#)



Dream Big! Win Big! Click to win \$25,000 for your community!

Combustible Edison was at the forefront of the '90s revival and who befriended and collaborated with Esquivel in the last decade of his life. "It's not elevator music. He opened up a whole realm and created a new style of music." *Continued...*

1 2 **Next** ▶

---

 [PRINTER FRIENDLY](#)  [SINGLE-PAGE FORMAT](#)  [E-MAIL TO A FRIEND](#)

---

#### RELATED ADVERTISING LINKS

[About these Ads](#)

#### **Ab Lounge Injury?**

Injured by Ab Lounge? Free  
Attorney Consultation  
[www.shlpc.com](http://www.shlpc.com)

#### **The Ab & Thigh Trainer**

4 exercises, 4 minutes, 4  
days/week On Corey Everson's  
proven system  
[www.mpdirect.com](http://www.mpdirect.com)

#### **Ab Lounge - 17% Off**

The Ab Lounge is Easy to Use  
& Fun. Order Today & Lose  
Weight Tomorrow!  
[www.TaylorGifts.com](http://www.TaylorGifts.com)

[feedback](#) | [help](#) | [site map](#) | [globe archives](#) | [rss](#)  
© 2005 The New York Times Company

**Save 50% on  
home delivery!**



[click here](#)



## Hawaiian punch

The Boston Globe

March 4, 2005

Page 2 of 2 -- The members of Waitiki had never heard of Esquivel until last November, when O'Neill happened to stumble upon a recording in a used record store in New Hampshire with a tiny exotica section. Deciding that it was the perfect complement to Waitiki's own music, O'Neill turned the rest of the band onto Esquivel's recordings, and they decided to get their hands on some charts and prepare an evening of his music.

ADVERTISEMENT

But there was a problem. An unpaid bill at a storage facility in Las Vegas -- where Esquivel lived and worked for many years -- led to the destruction of nearly all of the composer's charts 10 years ago. There was no written music. So O'Neill decided to transcribe the densely orchestrated recordings himself, by ear, at a rate of roughly 20 hours per two-minute song.

"Sometimes I didn't know how many trumpets were playing, let alone what notes," says O'Neill. "Sometimes instruments will generate these overtones that aren't even being played. His stuff is out of this world. It's been a real job. But you feel like you've done something good, to bring this music back."

Bringing back the traditional exotica and tiki music native to his culture is gratifying on a deeply personal level for Wong, who moved to Boston in 1989 and has since earned a bachelor's degree in classical double-bass performance at Berklee and a master's in arts education at Harvard. In addition to Waitiki, Wong leads Akamai Brain Collective, whose music he describes as progressive island jams. He's a frequent guest player with the Honolulu Symphony.

"Both Abe and I grew up listening to exotica and tiki music, which has its roots in Hawaii," says Wong. "A few years ago this restaurant opened on Lansdowne Street called the Tiki Room, and we said 'Oh, neat. Let's see if there's live music.' There wasn't. And it dawned on us that there weren't any live bands in the continental US that perform this music anymore. So we thought we'd go back to our roots. I'm a fifth-generation Hawaiian-born Chinese and I write music that is, for me, an interpretation of that. There's a big Hawaiian contingent at the shows, but one of the greatest things is we seem to cater to a real diverse crowd."

How diverse? O'Neill enumerates: "Somerville bohemians, serious musicians, Harvard professors, my parents. More and more people are aware of this stuff. "

The band encourages jet set and aloha attire at tonight's Esquivel show; think mod pantsuits and flower-print shirts. Special guests Gato Malo will open, and Brother Cleve will speak, spin records, and (if he can score a projector and screen) show vintage slides and film footage of Esquivel at home in Mexico. There will be hula,

### TOOLS

- PRINTER FRIENDLY VERSION
- SINGLE-PAGE FORMAT
- E-MAIL TO A FRIEND
- TOP E-MAILED ARTICLES

### SEARCH GLOBE ARCHIVES

- Today (free)
- Yesterday (free)
- Past 30 days
- Last 12 months

[▶ Advanced search](#)



### SPONSORED LINKS



[Click Here](#)



Dream Big! Win Big! Click to win \$25,000 for your community!

and liquid accompaniment inspired by and named for each of Waitiki's members, and who knows what else.

For fans of good times, this night is a no-brainer. For devotees of the music of Esquivel, it will be a tribute to the art of subtle inflection and outsized attitude, an evening for basking in the deceptively breezy sound of 20 top-flight musicians translating a cult hero's pixel-precise arrangements into one chill party.

"In a way this music is heavy jazz, but it's very accessible," says O'Neill. "When you put in the antics and the visuals, people forget about trying to get it."

Joan Anderman can be reached at [anderman@globe.com](mailto:anderman@globe.com). ■

© Copyright 2005 Globe Newspaper Company.

► [More A&E](#)

 [50% off Globe home delivery. Order today!](#)

◀ [Previous](#) 1 2

---

 [PRINTER FRIENDLY](#)  [SINGLE-PAGE FORMAT](#)  [E-MAIL TO A FRIEND](#)

---

#### RELATED ADVERTISING LINKS

[About these Ads](#)

##### **Hawaiian Gifts**

Gifts and clothing by Hilo Hattie. The store of Hawaii.  
[www.hilohattie.com](http://www.hilohattie.com)

##### **Hawaiian Leis**

Leis & Flowers Shipped Fresh From Hawaii -100% Satisfaction Guarantee  
[www.HawaiiFlowerLei.com](http://www.HawaiiFlowerLei.com)

##### **Hawaiian Gifts & Flowers**

Hand made gift baskets tropical flowers and Hawaiian leis  
[withouraloha.com](http://withouraloha.com)

[feedback](#) | [help](#) | [site map](#) | [globe archives](#) | [rss](#)  
© 2005 The New York Times Company

[Home delivery for as little as \\$1.75 a week!](#)



[click here](#)