

today

HIP- HOP HOT

A fireknife competition will be set to an urban beat in Laie

By Samone Yuen
Special to the Star-Advertiser

You've seen them in luau shows, those bare-chested dancers in lavalava spinning flaming fireknives to the beat of Polynesian drums. But tonight, the traditional Samoan dance will be performed to a very different beat — old-school hip-hop — during the Vaimatina King of the Streets Fireknife Battle at the Polynesian Cultural Center's Hukilau Marketplace.

"It's exciting because there is nothing else like it. When you see how you can do the Dougie with the fireknife, it's crazy," said event emcee Jason Ava, 36, referring to the hip-hop dance style.

"You can count on PCC to deliver that traditional fireknife dance, but what you are going to see at the street battle is something you can't say you've seen before."

Please see FIRE, D2



Alex Galeai, inset, and Aaliyah Ava, both 14, are part of a group of young fireknife hip-hop dancers in Laie.

VAIMATINA KING OF THE STREETS FIREKNIFE BATTLE

>> **When:** 9:30 p.m. today, followed by open dance

>> **Where:** Hukilau Marketplace, Polynesian Cultural Center, 55-370 Kamehameha Highway, Laie

>> **Cost:** Free

>> **Info:** Email galeaid@gmail.com



PHOTOS BY DEBORAH MANOG / SPECIAL TO THE STAR-ADVERTISER

Fireworks, music set to light up Waikiki

By Star-Advertiser staff

Enjoy tonight's New Year's Eve fireworks show off Waikiki with the help of your smartphone.

New this year is the free Fireworks by Grucci app that provides access to the music accompanying the choreographed show at midnight. Just download the app and tap on the Waikiki Improvement Association logo to listen.

A radio works too: Tune into Hawaiian 105 KINE FM.

More than 1,800 shells will be launched from an offshore barge, bursting into displays of palm trees, rings, strobes, sparkling fans, falling leaves and other designs that will be visible along Waikiki Beach. The fireworks show will start at 11:55 p.m., with a countdown shell fired every minute until a minute before midnight to get the crowd's attention. Then, at the stroke of midnight, a barrage of colorful salutes accompanied by "Auld Lang Syne" will signal the start of 2016 in Hawaii. Music by local recording artists also will be featured during the 10- to 12-minute fireworks display.

The event is sponsored by the Waikiki Improvement Association and a host of hotels, retailers and other businesses.

You can also head downtown to enjoy the fireworks display at the Aloha Tower Marketplace, which will have hourly firework salutes from 9 p.m., concluding with a 15-minute show at midnight, and to the Waialae Beach area to take in the Kahala Hotel & Resort's music-synchronized fireworks show at midnight.

FIRE

Continued from D1

The New Year's Eve fireknife "street battle" debuted in 2013 after three-time world fireknife champion David Galeai and his cousin saw one of their nephews doing freestyle rap battles in which participants exchange colorful and often boastful rhymes. He said they thought "it would be cool to have fireknife like that."

"Get out on the street and just battle. No rules. You just come and you can dance hip-hop," said Galeai, 36, who cooks and performs at the Polynesian Cultural Center.

Ava, also known as MC PeekABoo, said combining the two dance styles was a way to keep younger generations of fireknife dancers involved in the activity. "They got bored, they wanted to do something else," he said. "We decided, hey, why don't we fuse the two so that way they can expand a little bit? And we watched how much fun they had and so we thought, 'You know what? I think we might be onto something.'"

The participants dress in hoodies and other street-wear; some perform as clowns, ninjas, magicians or other personas. Skateboards



Young fireknife dancers in Laie, above, blend traditional tricks with hip-hop moves and style. The group, pictured at left, includes Aaliyah Ava, 14, left, Malik Ava, 15, Viceson Galeai, 16, Monte Leui, 17, Quest Ava, 17, Vincent Galeai, 12, Alex Galeai, 14 (who was named after his father, a past world champion), and Chandae Ava, 14. Malik Ava, below left, tosses a fire knife under his leg.



Watch a video of hip-hop fireknife dancing at staradvertiser.com.

and bicycles are sometimes incorporated into the routines, and one of the dancers has been known to light his shoes on fire and break-dance. The stunts are designed to wow the judges, who this year will award a \$1,000 first prize in the senior division for ages 14 and older. "That will help in the one

minute you have. That's what separates this from a regular fireknife competition," said Alex Galeai, 38, a past world champion who helped organize the street battle and is another of David Galeai's cousins.

The judges are past world champion Umi Sexton, former intermediate world

score on entertainment value and crowd-pleasing ability, while choreographer Ui Kaitoku will be judging dance moves and creativity.

Most of the competitors are youths from the Galeai family, though "we want to get people from everywhere else to come participate," said Ava, who works in BYU-Hawaii's admissions office. The event is meant to be a positive experience for everyone, he said.

"We tell our kids you never have to feel like you are a loser or that you can't. The only negative thing is if you don't try. You are rewarded for trying."

In that spirit, all participants will go home with a prize. Sponsors include David Galeai's World Fireknife Productions, Polynesian Cultural Center, McDonald's, Goat Island T-shirts and Eagle Electric, which provided the cash prizes. First prize in the junior division for ages 13 and younger is \$100.

The event is free to spectators and contestants. Food stalls and trucks will be open. A public dance with music provided by DJs will follow at about 11:30 p.m.

Organizers emphasize the King of the Streets Fireknife Battle is a family show. "No swearing and keep the music clean," said David Galeai.

champion MJ Mata'u and Cap Tafiti, the main performer in the cultural center's nightly show, who will be looking for fireknife speed and flow, height of throws and difficulty of moves. Crichton Uale, a professional DJ and emcee, and Tanoa'i Reed, a stunt double for Dwayne Johnson, will