

## Symposium Luau

Our welcome dinner at Symposium 2008 took place on Monday night and it was truly one of the best ever! The theme of the evening was "slack key guitar festival" and the line-up was unbelievable. Guests arrived to the mellow sounds of slack key master Ledward Kaapana. This Hawaiian legend commands enormous respect from his fellow musicians and the minute he began to play it was easy to see why. He is an extremely accomplished guitarist who seems not just to be playing the instrument - rather he IS the instrument!

After Ledward's set Jeff Peterson took the stage and added a touch of jazz to the theme of traditional slack key. Jeff also paired with Raiatea Helm, a stunningly talented Hawaiian singer, for several songs. It was a joy to see these two up-and-coming stars on the stage together, so young and yet so accomplished.

The evening was capped off by Jake Shimabukuro and his band. Jake takes the ukulele to places it has never been before, and in the process expands the hearts and minds of his audiences. Together with his talented bandmates Jake "wowed" our group and left them eager to hear more.

Although we've had many great entertainers over the past 14 years of symposia, several people came up to me afterwards and said that Monday night's luau was the single best evening of entertainment they had ever experienced in their lives. That's a big statement but I have to agree that this was a particularly magical evening. To sit with 900 people who can all be called your friends, at a private concert under the stars, is good right from the get-go. Then to have that concert take place on a balmy evening in Hawaii, with the pounding surf in the background and the palm trees swaying overhead, heightens the magic. Where it really goes over the top is when you get the feeling that this is almost historic - that someday you will turn to somebody and say, "yes, I was there, I saw Jake and his band, Jeff, Raiatea, and Ledward, and it was the best concert ever" - and that's when you'll remember, how magical it all really was.

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