

Once, the islands' forests  
overflowed with the delicate  
beauty of Hawai'i's tiniest creatures.



**PIC**  
PACIFIC ISLANDERS  
IN COMMUNICATIONS



# After the Endling

a short film



**'OHINA**

## PRESS INFORMATION

### Basic information

A short shadow puppet film by Daniel A. Kelin, II inspired by the story of a pūpū kani oe named Lonely George.

### Contact

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### Logline

Once, the islands' forests overflowed with the delicate beauty of Hawai'i's tiniest creatures. Until...

### Short Synopsis

This is a story of a pūpū kani oe (Hawaiian tree snail) named George and a tiny, yet vital, battle against extinction. Presented in a vibrant shadow puppet style, the story follows Lonely George struggling to survive invasive threats as an endling, the very last of his species.

### Long Synopsis

Deep within the forests of Hawai'i, pūpū kani oe, 'shell that sounds long,' maintain a harmonious relationship with their environment, caring for the flora as the flora feeds them. But then invasive creatures sail in, disrupting the tiny island creatures' trusting lifestyle, none more ominously than Rosy Wolfsnail, which stalks its own distant snail cousins. George is born into this threatened reality. Upon his parents' death, George becomes an endling, the very last of his species. For more than ten lonely years, George struggles to survive, waiting for a mate. On New Year's Day 2019, as the world around him celebrated a new beginning, Lonely George's wait ended, as his species came to an end.

### About the film

AFTER THE ENDLING focuses on the rapidly evolving story of a tiny creature that is in an ongoing fight for its very life, which few seem to realize. It is the story of resilience against the palpable threat of extinction. It is the story of how the careless introduction of nonnative forces upsets the natural balance of endemic existence. AFTER THE ENDLING tells of the particular plight of the pūpū kani oe as a symbol of contemporary, prevailing threats to indigenous populations; environmental and human, spiritual and cultural.

### About the director

Daniel A. Kelin, II started experimenting with puppet films during the pandemic. Many were featured in puppet slams across the US and Canada. '°C RISE' became a New Delhi Film Festival selection. Pacific Islanders in Communication awarded him a Short Film

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grant for AFTER THE ENDLING. A theatre artist, Daniel has been affiliated with theatres in the US, American Samoa, Marshall Islands, Pohnpei, Guam and India.

### Director's statement

Imagine sitting on your lanai and watching the sun set over the mountains. You pull down a translucent screen to dim the sun's glare. The view transforms. You still recognize the sun, clouds, water, land, trees and other parts of the island, but they become kind of ethereal in their muted colors. The images are real, you might not be surprised if a pair of hands reached into those images and manipulated the shadowy figures within your view to help advance the narrative of your sunset story.

The story of the pūpū kani oe and George is told through this kind of shadow puppet-inspired approach. A shadow puppet world captures recognizable island imagery simultaneously in real and fantastical manners while allowing for, in fact requiring, the artists to break the boundaries of scope, size, perspective and movement. The film presents the vastness of a mountain vista at the same time as an intense close-up of an otherwise tiny pūpū kani oe. It invites viewers to sense the enormity of the tiny land snail's world and, more importantly, experience the dangers snails face, all within the space of a single leaf. This shadow puppet world replicates pūpū kani oe's favorite part of the day, sunset to dawn, hinting at a daily existence otherwise hidden from the human eye and ear. Utilizing a shadow puppet approach doesn't turn reality into a full-fledged fantasy, rather presents a world that we well know and gives it a kind of folkloric feeling that engages the audience both imaginatively and emotionally.

A shadow screen also matches in size and shape the small glass aquarium that housed Lonely George for most of his life. While a shadow screen allows the film-maker to depict the entirety of a Hawaiian forest, it can also create a feeling of confinement. As the story transitions from the welcoming comfort of the forest to the restricted space of a laboratory aquarium, the actual size of the stage, as it were, never really changes. In truth, pūpū kani oe's world isn't much bigger than the aquarium space, as many snails spend a whole lifetime in a single tree or on a lone branch.

### Links

Stills, Behind the Scenes and Film link available upon request.

### FAQ

**Relevance:** Many biologists have concluded that the earth is in the midst of a massive biodiversity extinction crisis caused by human activities. Yet only around 800 of the planet's 1.9 million known species are officially recorded as extinct by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) "Red List". But the real loss far exceeds the number reported as extinct on the IUCN Red List, because their assessment essentially **excludes invertebrates** such as pūpū kani oe. Hawaii'i is oft considered the extinction capital of the world. George's life and lonely death unmistakably

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symbolizes this. As sparks and explosions lit up the island's New Year night, in a small Bishop Museum aquarium George quietly and nearly anonymously passed away, as far too many other creatures have in these and other islands across the Pacific. Although his passing was worldwide news at the time, his story isn't as well-known as more huggable animals. Here is one of the more fascinating questions about this story: Why has pūpū kani oe, the land snail, endemic to Hawai'i and unique in the world, remained so underappreciated?

This issue and specific story represent a microcosm of endless changes that face Hawai'i and the greater Pacific. Pūpū kani oe isn't the only one who faces a dwindling home environment and outside forces that increase the rate of demise and disappearance. The story of George's family captures both the challenges of our present and potential promise for a more sustainable co-existent future.

**Artists:** 'After the Endling' benefits from the talents of a range of Hawai'i artists. The visual world of the film and the colorful shadow puppets were designed and built by visual artist Meleanna Meyer and puppeteer Bonnie Kim. Taupōuri Tangarō composed an original song that echoes in the background of the film, while Mattea Mazzella, who has scored Emmy award-winning videos for Honolulu Theatre for Youth, composed the aural world of Lonely George. Veteran film-maker Gerard Elmore captured the visual and aural splendor of the work of both experienced and novice puppeteers and performers to help make this film representative of, and a tribute to, the world George inhabited.

### Credits

**Produced, Written and Directed by** Daniel A. Kelin, II

**Co-Producer** Ciara Lacy

**Director of Photography** Gerard Elmore

**Assistant Camera** Eric West

**Editor** Gerard Elmore

**Music Composed and Performed by** Mattea Mazzella

**Production Design** Meleanna Meyer

**Puppet Construction** Bonnie Kim

**Puppeteers**

Danica Rosengren, Stephanie Conching, Meredith Enos, Daniel A. Kelin, II, Eric West

**Intern Puppeteers/Performers**

Cyan Enos, J5 Davis

**Sound Mixer and Engineer** Mattea Mazzella

**'Pūpū.Kani.Oe.Oe' song** na Taupōuri Tangarō

performed by Kūpe'ehina McGinn

performance coached by S. Mailelauli'i Naki

**Cultural Consultant** Meleanna Meyer

**Shadow Puppet Consultant** Tom Lee

**Snail Consultant** David Sischo, Director, Snail Extinction Protection Program