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A Brutalist Hotel Explores the B-Side of Waikiki

By Eunica Escalante



When the hospitality company Dovetail + Co. first envisioned a Hawaii outpost for Wayfinder, the boutique hotel brand whose original Rhode Island location is beloved for its Newport-specific charm, the group's owner, Phil Hospod, knew he wanted to design a place that drew from "the B-side" of Waikiki, a reference to the lesser-known songs often found on a record's flip side. The Wayfinder Waikiki is accordingly situated not on the oceanfront but on the (relatively) quiet Ala Wai Boulevard, with sweeping views of Diamond Head and the Ko'olau mountain range. (Still, it's just a short three-block walk to the white sands and surf breaks.) The hotel's rough-hewn '60s Brutalist structure — a rarity among the neighborhood's muted high-rises and tiki kitsch — now features eclectic, tropical interiors courtesy of the local design studio the Vanguard Theory. Drawing inspiration from the islands' rich heritage, custom furnishings and textiles blend multicultural motifs for the 228 rooms. (Think: checkered palaka prints on pillows with aloha shirt designs and Japanese obi belt-inspired patterns decorating headboards.) A three-story Spanish terra-cotta building, housing rooms with kitchenettes, overlooks a 70-foot saltwater lagoon pool. Determined to give visitors a more insider experience of the island, Hospod and his team have partnered with a number of local businesses and organizations such as the record label Aloha Got Soul, which supplies the lobby with rare Hawaii vinyl reissues. The Bishop Museum, a century-old institution dedicated to Hawaii's culture, is involved in creating a volunteer program for guests. In April, the hotel plans to open two on-site dining venues that will join its B-Side coffee bar: the first Waikiki location of Redfish (the popular Honolulu spot known for its inventive poke bowls) and the poolside bar Lost + Found, which will focus on local microbrews and tropical cocktails.