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‘Ōlauniu Crowned 2025 Kani Ka Pila Grille Talent Search Winners

Keali’iokalani Kalima, Kyle Moriguchi and ‘Elia Akaka receive performance contract for four shows in 2026 at Kani Ka Pila Grille - Waikīkī’s home for Hawaiian music



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HONOLULU – On Saturday, August 16, 2025, ‘Ōlauniu captured the top honor at the 18th Annual Kani Ka Pila Grille Talent Search competition, held live on the Made in Hawai’i Festival main stage at the Hawai’i Convention Center.

Taking their name from the wind of Kapālama, ‘Ōlauniu features -from L-R in pictures above - Keali’iokalani Kalima (guitar), Kyle Moriguchi (‘ukulele) and ‘Elia Akaka (bass), who first met as classmates at Kamehameha Schools. United through their experiences in the Concert Glee Club and later at the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa, the trio crafts harmonies inspired by the elegance of the Kahauanu Lake Trio. Their leo nahenahe sound pays homage to an earlier era of Hawaiian music, carrying listeners gently like the breeze of Kapālama.

As the 2025 winners, ‘Ōlauniu receives a performance contract for four shows in 2026 at Kani Ka Pila Grille, Waikīkī’s home for Hawaiian music, plus a customized social media marketing package including a professional electronic press kit and recording session at Honolulu Community College’s Mike Curb MELE Studios.

“We’re proud to support upcoming Hawaiian music entertainers through the Kani Ka Pila Grille Talent Search competition. Our tradition of presenting Hawaiian music seven nights a week in Waikīkī began 18 years ago with Uncle Cyril Pahinui, and it continues strong today,” said Luana Maitland, OUTRIGGER’s Area Director of Cultural Experiences. “Each year, this contest brings new voices to the stage and reminds us how deep and vibrant Hawai’i’s musical roots truly are. ‘Ōlauniu carried on this tradition beautifully on Saturday, and we are honored to give them a platform to share their music with the world.”

Kani Ka Pila Grille is a renowned poolside restaurant at the OUTRIGGER Reef Waikiki Beach Resort that celebrates Hawaiian music on the Cyril Pahinui Stage. Its name, “kanikapila,” was gifted by Pahinui, inspired by the informal, joyful backyard jam sessions he and his family hosted.

This year’s other finalists, Makana Arce and Moon Kahele, also impressed audiences and judges with their heartfelt performances, highlighting the diversity and talent of Hawai’i’s next generation of musicians.

Before the contest began, the audience was treated to performances by the past three Kani Ka Pila Grille Talent Search winners: Rickey Kamai (2024), Kahiau Lam Ho (2023) and Anthony Pfluke (2022). Emceed by Billy V and Bruddah Wade, each artist then took the stage to share three songs and were scored on their performances by an esteemed panel of judges that included:

- Kawika Kahiapo – Na Hōkū Award-winning musician, singer-songwriter, slack key award winner
- Milton Lau – CEO of Ki-Ho‘alu Foundation and Founder of the Hawaiian Slack Key Guitar Festivals
- Bobby Moderow Jr. – award-winning musician, singer-songwriter, slack key award winner
- Eric Lagrimas – Assistant Professor, Music & Entertainment Learning Experience at Honolulu CC

Find the full, hi-res recording of the competition on [Facebook.com/hawaiianmusiclive](https://www.facebook.com/hawaiianmusiclive).

All-Time Kani Ka Pila Grille Talent Search Winners:

2025 – ‘Ōlauniu	2016 – Pu‘uloa
2024 – Rickey Kamai	2015 – Waimānalo Sunset Band
2023 – Kahiau Lam Ho	2014 – Kaiao
2022 – Anthony Pfluke	2013 – Na Pali Trio
2021 – Kekoa Correa	2012 – Kamakakehau Fernandez
2020 – Hui Mele	2011 – Ke‘Oahu
2019 – Hawaiian Blend	2010 – Pule Ohana
2018 – Ke Olu	2009 – Kūpaoa
2017 – Ei Nei	2008 – Manoa Voices

OUTRIGGER’s support of Hawaiian music continues this Saturday, August 23, 2025 at the Makalauna Celebration honoring the legacy of Gabby “Pops” Pahinui at Waikīkī Beach Walk (4:30pm) and at the 43rd annual Slack Key Guitar Festival at the Waikīkī Aquarium at 5pm. On Sunday, August 24, 2025, Henry Kaponō’s Duke’s on Sunday Summertime LIVE Series tribute to Jimmy Buffett can be enjoyed in-person at Duke’s Waikīkī at the OUTRIGGER Waikīkī Beach Resort or on YouTube [@OUTRIGGERResorts](https://www.youtube.com/@OUTRIGGERResorts) starting at 4pm HST.

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ABOUT KANI KA PILA GRILLE

Located poolside at the OUTRIGGER Reef Waikiki Beach Resort, Kani Ka Pila Grille is Honolulu’s premier venue for nightly live Hawaiian music. Guests can enjoy ono local fare in an open-air setting while listening to award-winning musicians such as Kawika Kahiapo, Sean Na‘auao, Ho‘okena, Nathan Aweau, Kala‘e Camarillo, Ei Nei and Ka Hehena—with special guest appearances and impromptu jam sessions always a possibility on Cyril Pahinui Stage. Open daily 11am–9pm, with live music starting at 6pm. For reservations, call (808) 924-4990 or visit [outrigger.com](https://www.outrigger.com).



ABOUT OUTRIGGER RESORTS & HOTELS

For more than 75 years, OUTRIGGER has charted a journey of discovery – expanding from Hawai‘i to premier resort destinations including Fiji, Mauritius, Thailand and the Maldives. The privately held hospitality company invites guests to ‘Come Be Here’ with authentic Signature Experiences and the [OUTRIGGER DISCOVERY loyalty program](https://www.outrigger.com/discovery) – a member of the award-winning Global Hotel Alliance (GHA). OUTRIGGER’s multi-branded portfolio includes OUTRIGGER Resorts, Hawaii Vacation Condos by OUTRIGGER®, The Kapalua Villas Maui and OUTRIGGER Honua Kai Resort & Spa while also managing select properties from top international hotel brands including Embassy Suites by Hilton®. Find out more at [OUTRIGGER.com](https://www.outrigger.com) or visit [@OUTRIGGERResorts](https://www.facebook.com/OUTRIGGERResorts) on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/OUTRIGGERResorts) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/OUTRIGGERResorts).

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