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Kani Ka Pila Grille Artists Shine at 2026 Na Hōkū Hanohano Awards

Kani Ka Pila Grille (KKPG) alumni and performers capture Hawai'i's highest music honors, reinforcing nearly two decades of OUTRIGGER's commitment to Hawaiian music



KKPG 'Ohana from L-R: Dane Fujiwara (Ei Nei), Anthony Pfluke, Kala'e Camarillo, Rickey Kamai, "Auntie Luana" Maitland, Grant Kono (Ei Nei), 'Ekolu Chang (Ei Nei) and Makana Arce at the 2026 Na Hōkū Hanohano Awards.

HONOLULU – OUTRIGGER Resorts & Hotels is celebrating another milestone for Kani Ka Pila Grille as several of its resident artists took home top honors at Saturday night's 49th Annual Na Hōkū Hanohano Awards, further cementing the venue's reputation as one of Hawai'i's most influential stages for Hawaiian musicians.

Leading the evening was Ei Nei, winner of the 2017 KKPG Talent Search, who captured six of the ceremony's most prestigious honors including Album of the Year, Group of the Year, Island Music Album of the Year "Ei Nei, Look At Us," Single of the Year and Song of the Year for "Hawai'i Forever" and Favorite Entertainer of the Year - the only award selected by public vote. In addition, Ei Nei group members Dane Fujiwara and Grant Kono also won individual awards for composing "Hawai'i Forever." The group plays at KKPG every Wednesday night from 6-9pm.

The celebration continued with recent Talent Search winners earning major recognition across multiple categories. 'Ōlauniu, the 2025 KKPG Talent Search champion, won Hawaiian Language Performance of the Year, while member Kyle Kamalani Moriguchi received Haku Mele (Composer) of the Year for "Nā Pu'u 'Ekolu."

Anthony Pfluke, the 2022 Talent Search winner, earned Contemporary Acoustic Album of the Year for “Ku’u Lei Lokelani” and also shared Hawaiian Music Video of the Year honors with Kamaka Camarillo for “E Ola Kākou E.”

KKPG resident artists Kala’e Camarillo, who performs on Tuesday nights, received Contemporary Album of the Year for “Drifting On Island Time” and slack key guitarist Glen Smith of Ho’okena (Saturday nights) was honored with the prestigious Kī Hō’alu Legacy Award.

"Seeing so many Kani Ka Pila Grille artists recognized on Hawai’i’s biggest music stage is incredibly rewarding because it reflects years of investing in culture, creating opportunities for musicians and sharing authentic Hawaiian music with millions of guests from around the world," said Sean Dee, chief commercial officer of OUTRIGGER Hospitality Group.

Under the leadership of Luana Maitland, OUTRIGGER’s director of cultural experiences, the annual Kani Ka Pila Grille Talent Search has grown into one of Hawai’i’s premier artist development programs, providing mentorship, paid performance opportunities, marketing support and professional exposure to emerging musicians.

"My heart is so full after Saturday night's Na Hōkū," said Maitland. "I'm incredibly proud of every one of our KKPG artists. They give so much of themselves every time they step on stage, sharing their music and spirit of aloha with everyone – guests and locals alike. Seeing them recognized by their peers is truly meaningful, and they have all earned it."

For nearly 20 years, Kani Ka Pila Grille’s Cyril Pahinui Stage at the OUTRIGGER Reef Waikīkī Beach Resort has served as one of Hawai’i’s premier venues dedicated exclusively to live Hawaiian music. Named by legendary slack key guitarist Cyril Pahinui, who performed there regularly, the venue continues the tradition of kanikapila - informal musical gatherings where stories, culture and music are shared among family and friends. The venue remains one of Hawai’i’s longest-running and most consistently programmed stages devoted exclusively to Hawaiian music and continues to partner with the Hawai’i Academy of Recording Arts, Mele Mei, the Hawaiian Slack Key Guitar Festival and the Henry Kapono Foundation’s ON THE RISE program, among others.

The next chapter begins August 22, when the 19th Annual Kani Ka Pila Grille Talent Search returns during the Made in Hawai’i Festival at the Hawai’i Convention Center. Until then, you can catch award-winning Hawaiian music nightly at Kani Ka Pila Grille. Learn more at kanikapilagrille.com.

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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](#) – 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 or visit @OUTRIGGERResorts on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

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