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## Kani Ka Pila Grille Continues Its Legacy as Launchpad for Hawaiian Music Talent During Na Hōkū Week

*Last four OUTRIGGER Talent Search winners earn Na Hōkū nominations as venue celebrates nearly two decades of preserving and advancing Hawaiian music*



2025 KKPG Talent Search Winners 'Ōlauniu – who took their name from the wind of Kapālama - from L-R with Luana Maitland – Keali'iokalani Kalima (guitar), Kyle Moriguchi ('ukulele) and 'Elia Akaka (bass).

**HONOLULU** – As Hawai'i's music community gathers this week to celebrate the 2026 Na Hōkū Hanohano Awards, one of Waikīkī's most enduring stages for Hawaiian music has reason to celebrate of its own.

Each of the last four winners of the annual Kani Ka Pila Grille (KKPG) Talent Search competition - 'Ōlauniu, Rickey Kama'i, Kahiau Lam Ho and Anthony Pfluke - earned a Na Hōkū Hanohano Award nomination this year, underscoring the success of OUTRIGGER Resorts & Hotels' nearly two-decade commitment to discovering and developing Hawai'i's next generation of musical talent.

The milestone comes as OUTRIGGER hosts and sponsors a week of events celebrating Hawaiian music, including the Na Hōkū Hanohano Awards Pre-Show Pā'ina in conjunction with the Hawai'i Academy of Recording Artists, the International 'Ukulele Festival of Hawai'i Saturday performances, Waikīkī Steel Guitar Week and the release of the Cirque du Soleil 'Auana soundtrack.

For nearly 20 years, Kani Ka Pila Grille at OUTRIGGER Reef Waikīkī Beach Resort has served as a gathering place where legendary Hawaiian musicians perform alongside emerging artists in an intimate setting rooted in community and culture. Named by legendary slack key guitarist Cyril Pahinui - who gifted the venue its name and performed there regularly - the restaurant carries forward the tradition of kanikapila, informal gatherings where music is shared among family and friends.

The celebration extends beyond Kani Ka Pila Grille to neighboring Waikīkī Beach Walk, located across the street from the OUTRIGGER Reef, and Hawaiian Aroma Caffè at the OUTRIGGER Waikīkī Beachcomber Hotel.

"Music has always been one of the most meaningful ways people connect with Hawai'i, and for OUTRIGGER it's far more than entertainment, it's an essential part of who we are," said Sean Dee, Chief Commercial Officer of OUTRIGGER Hospitality Group. "You can't manufacture a cultural institution, it has to be earned over time. For nearly two decades, Kani Ka Pila Grille has earned the trust of Hawai'i's music community by giving legendary artists a home, creating opportunities for emerging musicians and welcoming millions of guests to experience Hawaiian music in an authentic setting. Seeing the last four Talent Search winners recognized on Hawai'i's biggest music stage is a proud reminder that when you invest in culture consistently, you help shape its future."

Since opening in 2008, Kani Ka Pila Grille has welcomed many of Hawai'i's most celebrated recording artists, including Ledward Kaapana, Kapena, Ho'okena, Weldon Kekauoha, Sean Nā'auao, Nathan Aweau and Kawika Kahiapo, while also featuring special guest appearances by Jake Shimabukuro, Amy Hānaiali'i, Paula Fuga, Kimié Miner, Kalani Pe'a and many others.

Under the leadership of Luana Maitland, the annual KKPG Talent Search has become one of Hawai'i's premier artist development programs, providing mentorship, paid performance opportunities, marketing support and professional exposure for emerging musicians. Many alumni have gone on to record albums, receive Na Hōkū Hanohano Awards and establish successful careers while carrying Hawaiian music forward for future generations.

Today, KKPG welcomes approximately 146,000 guests annually, with an estimated 2.6 million guests having experienced live Hawaiian music there over the past 18 years. It remains one of Hawai'i's longest-running and most consistently programmed venues dedicated exclusively to Hawaiian music, drawing both kama'āina and visitors seeking an authentic cultural experience. The venue's longstanding partnerships with the Hawai'i Academy of Recording Arts, Mele Mei, the Hawaiian Slack Key Guitar Festival and the Henry Kapon Foundation's ON THE RISE program further reflect OUTRIGGER's commitment to preserving Hawai'i's musical traditions while supporting the artists who keep them thriving.

## **Upcoming Music Events**

### **Friday, July 10 at Kani Ka Pila Grille/OUTRIGGER Reef Waikīkī Beach Resort**

6-9:30pm - Na Hōkū Hanohano Awards Pre-show Pā'ina with performances by Kahiau Lam Ho and a long, decorated list of Hawai'i's top musicians nominated for Na Hōkū's playing kanikapila-style. [Learn more.](#)

### **Saturday, July 11 at Waikīkī Beach Walk**

5:30-7pm - International 'Ukulele Festival of Hawai'i Saturday night with performances by POEPOE JAPAN, Keiko with Singing Aloha, Nihon 'Ukulele Association, Shinachichi with Hālau O Wahine Hele Ia, 'UKULELE PEACE Hiroshima, Sweet Strings 'Ukulele Orchestra, Ukulelist of Malaysia and Samba! SOU AZUL (Dance) & Kilyamashoten. [Learn more.](#)

**Saturday, July 11 at Sheraton Waikiki**

5pm - Na Hōkū Hanohano Awards, proudly sponsored by OUTRIGGER Resorts & Hotels, where OUTRIGGER Director of Cultural Experiences, Luana Maitland ("Aunty Luana"), will present two awards. The evening is meaningful for OUTRIGGER as several KKPG artists are up for awards and Anthony Pfluke will be performing as will OUTRIGGER Waikīkī Paradise Original, Taimane, with her hit single Pīkake Princess - a tribute to Princess Kaʻiulani, the last heir to the Hawaiian monarchy, and her former home, ʻĀinahau, where the OUTRIGGER Waikīkī Paradise Hotel now stands. [Learn more.](#)

**Sunday, July 12 at Waikīkī Beach Walk**

5-6p - Mele Haliʻa in conjunction with Waikiki Steel Guitar Week Finale w/Alan Akaka & Ke Kula Mele. [Learn more.](#)

**Tuesday, July 14 at Hawaiian Aroma Caffe/OUTRIGGER Waikīkī Beachcomber Hotel**

6pm - Cirque du Soleil ʻAuana Soundtrack Release Celebration. The music of acclaimed Hawaiʻi resident production, ʻAuana, first official original soundtrack, which will be available worldwide on all major streaming platforms beginning July 17. The soundtrack showcases an extraordinary lineup of Hawaiʻi artists, including renowned musician Taimane Gardner, vocalist Alana Kahiapo and award-winning Kumu Hula Hiwa Vaughan, alongside the production's live musicians John Signor, Christina Souza and Joshua Tavares, whose performances audiences can experience nightly in ʻAuana. [Learn more.](#)

**Saturday, August 22 at the Hawaiʻi Convention Center**

The Kani Ka Pila Grille (KKPG) Talent Search contest returns for its 19th year. Up-and-coming musicians from across Hawaiʻi are invited to enter for a chance to perform live at the finals (submissions deadline July 15). The competition will take place live during the 32nd Annual Made in Hawaiʻi Festival. [Learn more.](#)

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**ABOUT OUTRIGGER RESORTS & HOTELS**

For more than 75 years, OUTRIGGER has charted a journey of discovery – expanding from Hawaiʻi to premier resort destinations including Fiji, Mauritius, Thailand and the Maldives. The privately held hospitality company invites guests to ʻCome Be Hereʻ with authentic Signature Experiences and the [OUTRIGGER DISCOVERY loyalty program](#) – a member of the award-winning Global Hotel Alliance (GHA). OUTRIGGERʻs 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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