

# *Talent Spotlight*

Where a hula dancing educator, a "Pretty Boy" journalist, a Financial Hype Woman, and 7 others are grabbing the world's attention

May 2023

## Talent Spotlight

Welcome to the May edition of Opus Agency's Talent Spotlight Report, brought to you by the Strategy team! This special edition includes a celebration of AANHPI Heritage Month, made in collaboration with our **EDI Changemakers** team!

Get informed on **what is happening** in the world and pop culture.

Read the highlights on which **cultural shifts, emerging trends, and consumer interests** are influencing media and talent.

Check out **emerging personalities and talent** to keep an eye on and consider for future stage opportunities.



# What's Ahead

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# AANHPI Heritage Month Spotlight

*In collaboration with our [EDI Changemakers](#) team*



May 2023

## May is AANHPI Heritage Month!

Asian American and Native Hawai'ian/Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month is an annual celebration that recognizes the historical and cultural contributions of individuals and groups of Asian, Native Hawai'ian, and Pacific Islander descent in the United States.

In honor of AANHPI Heritage Month, the May edition of this report invites you to learn about, and celebrate the significance and influence of the AANHPI community in popular culture, through:

- Educating on the influences and contributions AANHPI culture has made on American culture, music, and media.
- Providing resources to celebrate and uplift the AANHPI community.
- Spotlighting emerging AANHPI personalities and talent.



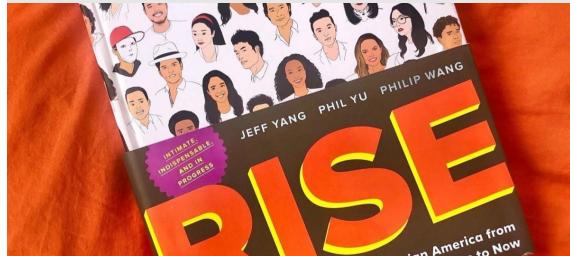
# AANHPI Influence

How the AANHPI Community has Influenced American Pop Culture, Music, and Media.

Korean pop culture on the rise in America



How Asian Americans are impacting the movies you watch, the music you listen to and the food you eat.



Asian and Pacific Islander Influence in the U.S. Music Industry

The Forgotten Story Of How Hawai'ians Transformed American Music



I've Waited My Entire Life For Everything Everywhere All At Once



Michelle Yeoh Gets Real About How Shang-Chi Broke Barriers For Asian Representation In Film



# AANHPI Representation in Media

Stories and art that educate, inspire, and/or center the AANHPI community, their experience, and have made progress toward increasing AANHPI representation and visibility in media.

## Read

- “Crying in H Mart” - Michelle Zauner
- “Gold Diggers” - Sanjena Sathian
- “Long Live the Tribe of Fatherless Girls” - T Kira Madden
- “Speak, Okinawa” - Elizabeth Miki Brina
- “Where We Once Belonged” - Sia Figiel
- “Year of the Tiger - An Activist’s Life” - Alice Wong

## Watch

- Always Be My Maybe (2019)
- Beef (2023)
- Boy (2010)
- Broken Bread w/ Roy Choi (2019)
- Crazy Rich Asians (2018)
- Everything Everywhere All at Once (2022)
- Parasite (2019)
- Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings (2021)

## Listen

- “Asian Enough” with Jen Yamato and Frank Shyong
- “Book Friends Forever” with Grace Lin and Alvina Ling
- “Shoes Off Inside with MKT” with May Lee, Kelly Hu, and Tamlyn Tomita
- “They Call Us Bruce” with Phil Yu and Jeff Yang
- “Time to Say Goodbye” with Jay Caspian Kang, Tammy Kim and Andy Liu

## Direct Actions

AANHPI Heritage Month is a time to celebrate and honor the Asian-American, Native Hawai'ian, and Pacific Islander communities. While we have made progress in AANHPI justice, representation, and understanding, there is still more to be done to create a world where everyone feels they belong. Below are additional resources to learn and take action, all year long.



GET INVOLVED

[Stop AAPI Hate](#)

A hub for resources and tools to fight for the AANHPI community and #StopAsianHate.



SUPPORT AANHPI BUSINESSES

[AAPI Business Collective](#)

a directory for businesses owned by AANHPI people to shop at- but don't forget to shop local!



CELEBRATE INTENTIONALLY

[22 Ideas To Celebrate AAPI Heritage Month](#)

Actions to take to learn about, honor, and celebrate the AANHPI community, and be a better ally.

# Engagement

# Engagement Trends

## What content and people are grabbing consumer's attention

### Content Hungry

While some may think that attention spans have been reduced to a 30-second video, our behaviors tell a different story. The on-demand streaming industry has created content-hungry consumers that love long-form storytelling. [69% of Gen Z and Millennials](#) will seek out many mediums, episodes, and perspectives on a subject to get the full context of the situation, illustrating our insatiable desire to have all the details.

### Full Transparency

In the age of accountability and value-first consumers, people are desperate for transparency and progress, but feel that brands are missing the mark. [64% of consumers](#) think brands lack transparency and accountability, and [half of young consumers](#) would like to see brands making more commitments; as consumers push for brands to be more forthcoming, companies are forced to reckon with their impact more than ever before.

### AI Explosion

AI technology has been on the rise in recent years, and there has been a massive explosion of interest as AI technologies become more accessible to consumers. Every industry is looking for ways to integrate the technology to create buzz and enhance their brand, and with the recent success of the [Barbie AI-selfie promotional campaign](#), it is clear that the excitement of AI is far from wearing off.

### Nostalgic Comfort

The revival of retro and the ushering in of the [joyconomy](#): characterized of ageless play and [happy hacking](#), consumers are finding comfort and inspiration through things that remind them of their youth. From [products](#) and environmental design to content and branding, consumers are pursuing things that spark the childlike wonder and excitement they crave.



# Cultural Moments

Latest news in Media, Music, and Pop Culture.

CMT 2023 Awards had drag queens, best ratings ever despite backlash



Netflix's Beef is an Early Contender for Series of the Year



Why Cottage Cheese is Making a Comeback



Frank Ocean leaves fans stunned and angry after bizarre Coachella headlining performance

AI-powered official 'Barbie Selfie Generator' gives fans a personalized movie poster



Why Sydney Sweeney And Glen Powell Are Dominating Celebrity Gossip



# Emerging Voices

Speakers & Hosts



# Berna Anat (she/her)

## Industry of Focus: Finance and Media

Berna Anat is a first-gen Filipina-American producer, author, podcast host, and **Financial Hype Woman** with a mission to make money “less male, pale and stale” for young BIPOC everywhere.

Berna is the host and producer of the [“Money Please” podcast](#), and has a new book, [Money Out Loud](#), which is a fully-illustrated, deeply-unserious guide to money. As a content creator and educator, she has grown a following of over 97k through edutaining on all things finance, and her work has been featured in the New York Times, Forbes and BuzzFeed.

Berna is a force to be reckoned with in the finance and creator space, and has accrued many accolades for her work, such as being named the Plutus Award's **Most Entertaining Financial Content Creator** two years in a row, and named one of ABS-CBN's Global Pinoy Idols, recognized as one of the most influential Filipinx folks in the United States.

See for Yourself:



# David Yi (he/they)

## Industry of Focus: Author, CEO, and Influencer

David Yi is a journalist, author, and CEO who is best known for their highly successful blog, [Very Good Light](#), a beauty platform that aims to democratize beauty for all people, and redefine masculinity and men's beauty standards.

Born out of Very Good Light, Yi also launched their own gender-neutral skincare line, [Good Light](#), and is also author of the book, [PRETTY BOYS](#), an illustrative history of men's beauty.

He has been written about in renowned publications like the NYT, Forbes, and Allure as the **thought leader in men's beauty, identity, and Asian American advocacy**. David has championed DEI in his decade of journalism, and has written for the likes of the WSJ, GQ, and Vogue. Additionally, he is a founder of AIM, Advocates for Inclusion in Media, as well as a GLAAD and Webby nominee. Yi is a powerhouse in the advocacy, thought leadership, and beauty industry, inspiring all people to embrace and express themselves without boundaries.

See for Yourself:



## M. Brandon Lee (he/him)

### Industry of Focus: Technology and Media

M. Brandon Lee is a YouTuber, sound engineer, and businessman who has found success in the industry from hosting his YouTube channel, “This is Tech Today”. As a lover of tech, and resident tech support for family and friends, technology was a natural direction for Brandon's videography endeavors where he could mix his love for technology and videography into one.

On “This is Tech Today”, Lee delves into the ways technology intersects with our daily lives, businesses, and creative pursuits through product demos, reviews, and tests, creating content that is approachable, entertaining, and thorough to their over 287k subscriber base. Along with the expertise and high quality production that Lee provides, his candid and earnest personality shines through his content, making himself a respected and trusted voice within the tech community.

See for Yourself:

 [YouTube](#)

 [Instagram](#)

 [Twitter](#)

 [Website](#)



# Melemaikalani Makalapua McAllister (she/her)

Industry of Focus: Content Creator and Activist

Melemaikalani Makalapua (Mele) is a 19-year-old Polynesian Tik Tok creator who informs her audience on Hawaiʻian customs and traditions - all while performing Hula. She has rapidly gained social media stardom, reaching over one million followers on Tik Tok. After posting a video during lockdown educating on the pua behind a woman's ear, she realized that people did not know about other cultures as well as she thought they did, and it became her priority to help them learn.

Born and raised in California, and the daughter of a kumu hula, Mele has created videos on a myriad of Hawaiʻi-related topics that range from ethical tourism, hula and food sovereignty, to traditional views on menstruation. Her content has grown awareness for Hawaiʻian culture and history for people all over the world, and is a true celebration of Hawaiʻian and Polynesian culture that viewers are excited to join in on.

See for Yourself:

 [YouTube](#)

 [Instagram](#)

 [TikTok](#)





# Tanya Gupta (she/her)

## Industry of Focus: Photographer and Thought Leader

Tanya Gupta is a Forbes Under 30, former NASA aerospace engineer turned digital creator and creative director of her own creative brand, [Guptanya Studios](https://www.guptanya.com).

In 2021, Tanya became the first Indian American to be selected for the Adobe Creative Residency. She has styled, photographed, and edited 100+ portrait editorials including social media campaigns for Tom Ford Beauty, Lancôme, Aerie, and Claire's. She has since been featured in Vogue, Harper's Bazaar and Teen Vogue for being a leading Asian American in the creative industry.

Tanya's personal success also translates into a highly successful social media presence on Tik Tok and Instagram, where she inspires, uplifts, and connects with her audience of over 35k with her humor, art, and bright aesthetic-when scrolling through Tanya's feed, you can't help but smile.

See for Yourself:



# RECAP



**Berna Anat**  
Finance and Media  
[@heyberna](https://www.instagram.com/heyberna)



**David Yi**  
Journalist, Activist, CEO  
[@seoulcialite](https://www.instagram.com/seoulcialite)



**M. Brandon Lee**  
Tech Youtuber  
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**Melemaikalani Makalapua  
McAllister**  
Tik Toker, Activist  
[@melemaikalanimakalapua](https://www.instagram.com/melemaikalanimakalapua)



**Tanya Gupta**  
Digital Art and Media  
[@guptanya.mp4](https://www.instagram.com/guptanya.mp4)

# Entertainment

# Entertainment Trends

## The latest in music, film, and social media

### Musical Therapy

Burned out from endless pressure and expectations, people are finding strength in vulnerability and releasing their worries with music and podcasts. [60% of consumers agree](#) that music is essential for their mental health and well-being, and is telling of why topics of mental health continue to top social media, podcasts, and musical charts.

### Social Search Engine

When hunting for info,inspo, or how-to's, where are you going to look? If you are like most consumers, you are most likely heading to your social media channels, rather than a search engine. [82% of all generations prefer to search on social media rather than a search engine](#), making information sharing on social media more powerful than ever before.

### Atmospheric Albums

Musicians are [giving albums an immersive treatment](#) by mixing in soundscapes to create transportive musical experiences. Caroline Polachek's [newest album](#) shines for this, infusing tropical motifs that point to the opening track's "island" concept, making the album feel like a story with a setting. Similarly, Kali Uchis' [Red Moon in Venus](#) transports you to the forest with bird and waterfall sounds throughout. After these successes, we expect to see atmospheric albums explode in the coming year.

### Sped-Up Remixes

Taking songs and putting a quick, "chipmunked" twists on them is [running rampant on TikTok](#), with some users even saying that they like the sped-up version better than the original. The popularity of this trend allows viewers to enjoy a snippet of a song at a quicker rate, soundtrack a trendy dance, or turn a sad song into a happy one, giving users the ultimate power in how they experience music.



# Emerging Talent

# Anik Khan (he/him)

Anik Khan is a Bangladeshi-American rapper and singer based in Queens, who makes hip hop that travels. Drawing from his immigrant roots and his inner city upbringing, Anik focuses his art and music on identity, visibility, and community, and is also the founder [The Foreign Affair](#), a cultural consulting agency focusing on BIPOC and diaspora audiences.

Khan really gained traction in 2017 with his EP, Kites, launching his career and touching millions for its celebratory fusion of the sounds of his Queens/Bengali culture. Following that success, he released a double EP in 2021— “Denied”, then “Approved”—framed around his drawn-out struggle for recognized immigrant status in the United States.

He's been championed by various tastemakers and platforms including Billboard, NY Mag, Ebro Darden, Vice, and even Sir Elton John for his rare poetic flare, inclusive depth, and authentic sound that makes him a rising star to watch.

See for Yourself:



## Deb Never (she/her)

Deb Never has proved one of Gen Z's most unique talents. Born to Korean parents in the Pacific Northwest, she first earned her stripes in local grunge bands, before forging her own path - and sound - when relocating to Los Angeles. Early releases like the [House on Wheels EP](#) soon saw Deb land formidable co-signs from her peers, with Never opening for the likes of Tommy Genesis and Dominic Fike, and collaborating with Kenny Beats and Brockhampton.

When lockdowns struck in 2020, Deb further honed her songwriting craft, which led to her highly successful debut album, [Where Have All The Flowers Gone?](#), featuring tracks made with Michael Percy and Jam City (Olivia Rodrigo, Kelela, Troye Sivan). With its accompanying short film, displays Never's talent for visuals, which spills over into the fashion worlds with campaigns for Calvin Klein, Ganni, Burberry, and Givenchy. With these co-signs and accolades, Deb Never stands one of today's most cultured and compelling stars, always leading where others will follow.

See for Yourself:



# Priya Ragu (she/her)

Priya Ragu is a Tamil-Swiss singer-songwriter who flavors modernist electro-pop and sleek R&B with the vibrant sounds of her Tamil heritage. Priya has quickly become one of the most hotly tipped artists around, with her 2020 debut mixtape 'damnshestamil' leading to a rush of early acclaim, as well as an unforgettable TV debut on 'Later... With Jools Holland', with a stunning performance of 'Lockdown'. 'Illuminous' then continued her ascent when it was named as Clara Amfo's Hottest Record and playlisted at Radio 1.

Priya's reputation is also flourishing in the live arena. She has played shows as guests to Jungle and hit a global array of festivals including SXSW, Latitude and Primavera. Priya's slew of releases sees her delivering a feelgood demand to fill the dancefloor, and fans are captivated by her story and stage presence, that is sure to continue skyrocketing Priya as an inspiration and budding pop icon.

See for Yourself:

 [YouTube](#)

 [Spotify](#)

 [Instagram](#)

 [TikTok](#)





# sundial

Jisu Kim and Dorothy Chan are the pop-duo that everybody needs in their life. The two artists make up *sundial*, a project which has seen great success since its start over four years ago. Fusing electronic jazz, bubblegum pop, and samples from their bedroom, the two young musicians have created a unique sound recognizable anywhere.

They first began making music together in college and rose to popularity after the success of “your text” in 2016. The song was a viral hit and currently has over 14 million Spotify streams. Since then, the duo has continued to put together an impressive catalog which was marked by the yours EP and a group of non-album singles.

From songwriting to album art, Sundial’s art is celebrated throughout the world, garnering support from Chet Porter, Heroic Recordings, Epic Network Music, and Suicide Sheep.

See for Yourself:



## TRACE (she/her)

TRACE is an LA-based musician whose powerful history with anxiety has driven her music and her passion to creating conversation about mental health awareness. With a diverse discography of feel-good beats and moody vibes, TRACE's artistry and message has connected with fans all over the globe, and has created a unique bond with her fans about the struggles and triumphs of their personal mental health journeys.

TRACE even partnered with the non-profit organization National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI) on her single, "Anxiety" to raise awareness on anxiety in the entertainment industry.

With over 55 million streams across her catalog, and press support from Refinery 29, Teen Vogue, NYLON, Forbes, HypeBeast, C-Heads Magazine, The Line of Best Fit and L'Officiel TRACE feels she has only just begun creating a voice she hopes you keep coming back to.

See for Yourself:



[YouTube](#)



[Spotify](#)



[Instagram](#)



# RECAP



**Anik Khan**

Hip-Hop Artist

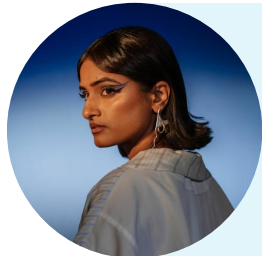
[Listen on Spotify](#)



**Deb Never**

Grunge Pop Artist

[Listen on Spotify](#)



**Priya Ragu**

Electro-pop Artist

[Listen on Spotify](#)



**sundial**

Bedroom Pop Duo

[Listen on Spotify](#)



**TRACE**

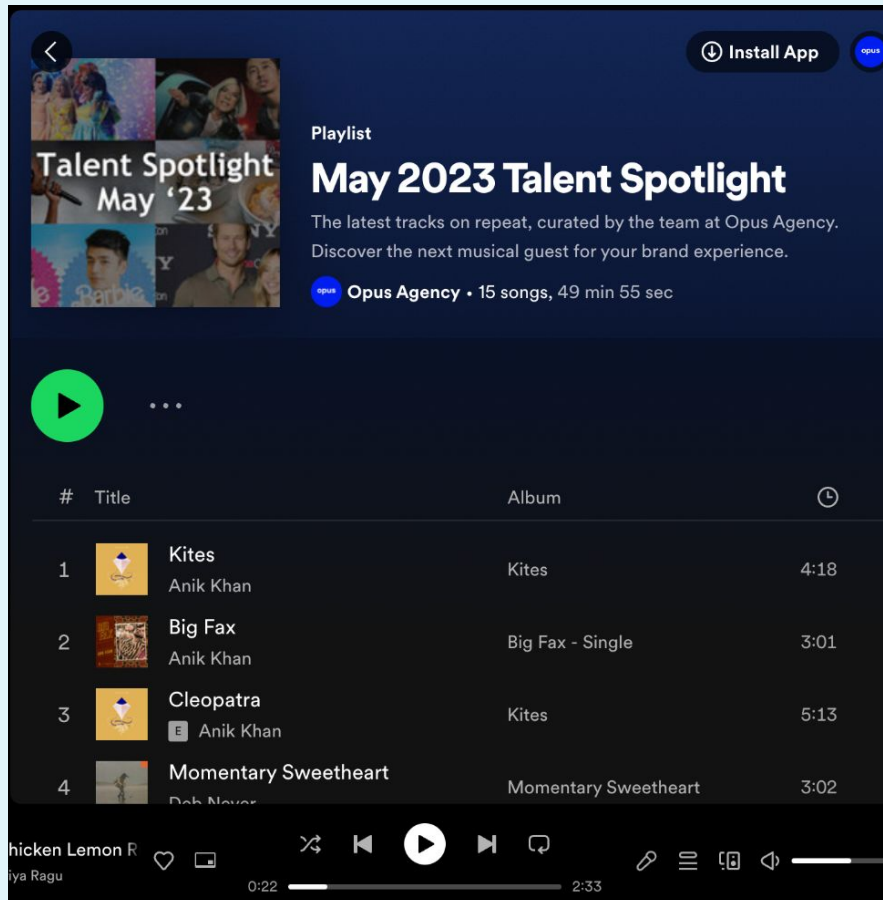
Synth-pop Musician

[Listen on Spotify](#)

# Check Out Our Playlist!

Check out our Spotify and YouTube playlists, showcasing our emerging talent picks for May, curated by the team at Opus Agency!

Head to our [Talent Reports Page](#) to listen now.





May 2023

## Talent Spotlight

Thank you for checking out the May edition of Opus Agency's Talent Spotlight!

To learn more about how to support the AANHPI community or find crowdsourcing support funds, head to [stopaapihate.org](https://stopaapihate.org)!

Want More?

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Questions, comments, feedback?

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Thank You.