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Kollaboration Star 2012: Empowerment and Fun

Wed, 11/14/2012 - 08:43 APIA in arts and entertainment crywolf violin dustin ako jayne rio kollaboration Kollaboration sf monsters calling home outer sunset Paul PK Kim peter chung soulfull team loopkicks



San Francisco--"Empowerment Through Entertainment," that's the motto of Kollaboration, according to founder Paul PK Kim. My opportunity to experience one night of Asian-Pacific Island American (APIA) music, dance, and empowerment came when I attended Kollaboration-SF 2012 this past September 8th.

Officially, Kollaboration's entertainment festival is based upon a theme of musical and dance competition, rather like American Idol. So far, Kollaboration has produced 15 shows across 14 cities in North America. By coordinating and drawing from emerging rock musicians at each locale, Kollaboration provides the ideal backdrop for entertainer exposure. It's even become the unofficial APIA entertainment headquarters on a national scale, archiving annual premier events.

Prior to attending the Kollaboration-SF 2012 extravaganza, I was able to read musician bios and sample clips from each finalist at <http://kollaborationsf.org/show/kollabsf2012/>. As a Meet 'n Greet journalist, I had some homework to do, but it was pleasurable to hear and anticipate the various guests. When show time arrived, with so many in the lineup, including dramatic poetry by **Mush** and SF stand-up club comic **KT Tatara**, the program seemed to advance on a march. Each finalist was allowed to perform only one song.

Even so, it appeared that many in the audience at UC Berkeley's Zellerbach Hall were intimately familiar with finalists and special performers' tunes from the internet. I was treated to the roaring enthusiasms of many APIA students, donors, and patrons, waving their red flashy LED batons and shouting out the names of their favorite performers. Some of the female audience was clearly swept off their feet, singing along and webcamming their idols, whether **Joseph Vincent** ("If You Stay"), or YouTube sensation, **Jeremy Passion**.

Kollaboration-SF 2012 had attracted visitors and staff from faraway places, including Chicago, Seattle (**New Heights** band), and Korea. Photographers and DJ were on-hand to capture and balance finalist sensations such as American Idol vocalist **Jayne Rio**'s synergy, and Filipino **Dustin Ako**'s sexy "Killing Me Softly" cover.

I really wished I could hear each finalist play a bit more. For instance, being a New Age jazz enthusiast from outside the Bay Area, it was such a treat to hear virtuoso **Corey Wolffs** (CryWolffs!) sizzling electric violin number (http://www.youtube.com/user/syphor281?feature=results_main). Or to whet my appetite for some cool night jazz by LA band **Outer Sunset**.

Music is, of course, a form of empowerment because it carries such personal agency. Even Angry Asian Man digs and follows LA Indie-folk ensemble **Monsters Calling Home** in their gentle meanderings (see <http://blog.angryasianman.com/2012/09/monsters-calling-home-get-their-big.html>) which included performing "Fight to Keep" at Kollaboration-SF.

Between competitor pieces, there were also lively guest performances of Asian Hip-Hop by **VIP San Jose**, and a number of amusing flatulence control jokes by the MC himself, Paul "PK" Kim. No, seriously, where and from whom else can one hear this mix with anecdotes about invites to the White House? For similar reasons, everyone dug Team Loopkicks, a fancy mix of free-dance, kickboxing, and exciting combat moves. (Both VIP and Loopkicks are based in San Jose—kudos to both for volunteer community hours!)

During the intermission, I interviewed one Loopkicker who assured me that they practice as a team at least several hours a week, and give many free performances in schools around the country. For some reason this reminded me of Step Africa! Company's live performance I had seen at the Millennium Stage in Washington, DC.

The second part of the program included UC Berkeley's **Soulfull**'s contemporary Christian rock group, followed by moving guitarist-singer **Peter Chung**. It was a really close call among the audience with everyone screaming out their favorites. No one really seemed able to make up their mind. The judges, choreographer Ellen Kim, singer Jeremy Passion, NBC anchorwoman Janelle Wang, and SF Assemblywoman Fiona Ma, retreated behind the curtains in consultation with one another while PK allowed the vocal singers then freestyle dancers to wow the audience with their voices and feet.

It was just such an unforgettable evening. There were so many take-aways, just like the Kollaboration staff promised. "One show can change the world," PK Kim says in the About Kollaboration video (<http://www.kollaboration.org/about/kollaboration>), "You're not just the money you make." Or, "We provide a venue for people to just express themselves," according to staffer Jenny. "You leave the show feeling accepted in a sense," a Kollaboration Intern expressed with concision, undoubtedly a sentiment conveyed by the many volunteers as well.

Now Peter Chung, winner of the Kollaboration-SF 2012, and audience favorite, Soulfull, thankfully have a reason to continue to compose authentic mainstream American music and follow their unique artistic dreams.

Knowing how Asians can be so focused on achievement sometimes, I was worried about the competition, but despite the star-studded program, the environment felt relatively low-key and festive. In fact, I couldn't recall when I had seen so many enthusiastic young Asians thronged together within the spacious Zellerbach Hall. But most definitely, I am now convinced that there are many multiple-talented APIAs, ones worth commercial air time, too, if they could just be offered the decent chance.

Kollaboration is all about giving APIAs a chance to become recognized entertainment names. The final round for the national Star title is currently underway. This **Friday, November 16th** at 8pm, the regional finalists from the West, East, Mid-West, and South will gather for the **Kollaboration Star 2012 Finale** at Alex Theatre in Glendale, California.

Tickets start at only \$20, and there will also be an after-party.

Sources:

- She is doing a really great
1 year 29 weeks ago
- Being a member of a community
1 year 32 weeks ago
- These days everyone has to be
1 year 32 weeks ago
- I am so proud of Janet in her
1 year 36 weeks ago
- Greatly moved that Janet is
1 year 37 weeks ago

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<http://www.kollaboration.org/news/upcoming>

<http://kollaborationsf.org/show/kollabsf2012/>

<http://www.hyphenmagazine.com/blog/archive/2012/10/kollaboration-city-winners-will-compete-kollaboration-star-2012>

Photo and article prepared by Chriswong, free-lance journalist (columbiapress.org)

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