

The Road to the Crown Begins

Miss Philippines USA 2026 candidates make their runway debut

BY MIC DIAZ | PUBLISHER



The journey to the **Miss Philippines USA 2026** crown officially began on June 28 as candidates made their first runway appearance during the Runway Challenge at Hotel Indigo in Downtown Los Angeles. Hosted by Anthony Whitt, better known as Ubi, the event introduced this year's contestants to supporters, sponsors, and the Filipino-American community.

Candidates first showcased their personal style in denim before returning to the runway in elegant formal wear, demonstrating confidence, poise, and individuality. Guest designers Tehrani and Kiel Ortega also presented their latest collections, while local vendors added to the festive atmosphere with fashion, beauty, and lifestyle products.

Celebrating its 15th anniversary, Miss Philippines USA continues to expand its mission of promoting Filipino culture, leadership, and community service. This year's competition features Miss Philippines USA, Mister Philippines USA, Miss Young Philippines USA, Ms. Philippines USA Empress. The addition of the new Junior Miss Philippines USA division gives even more young Filipino-Americans an opportunity to develop confidence, leadership skills, and cultural pride.

The afternoon also featured a special performance by

Thor Valiente, Mister Philippines USA 2025 Second Runner-Up, whose energetic performance entertained guests throughout the event. The gathering provided contestants with their first opportunity to connect with supporters and begin the journey toward becoming the organization's next titleholders.

Founded in 2011, Miss Philippines USA is dedicated to developing ambassadors of goodwill for both the Philippines and the United States while celebrating the beauty, fashion, art, and rich cultural heritage of the Filipino community. As the 2026 candidates continue their journey to coronation, they will represent not only beauty and talent, but also leadership, service, and pride in their Filipino heritage.

THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

- Miss Philippines USA 2026: The Road to the Crown
- Honore and Purple Generation Brings Prince to Life
- Fourth of July at Grand Park
- A Taste of Sampa

ENTERTAINMENT

When Prince Lives Again!

Honore brings the purple legacy to life.

BY MIC DIAZ | PUBLISHER

The music of Prince came alive in spectacular fashion on Friday, July 3, as **Honore**, one of the nation's premier Prince tribute artists, and his acclaimed band, **Purple Generation**, took the stage during the City of La Mirada's annual Independence Celebration at La Mirada Regional Park.

Performing before thousands of residents and visitors, Honore captivated audiences with his remarkable vocals, electrifying stage presence, and uncanny ability to capture the energy and charisma of the legendary Prince. The band helped kick off one of Southern California's most anticipated Fourth of July celebrations.

Held as the city's official Independence Celebration, the annual event featured live entertainment, food vendors, family activities, and a spectacular fireworks finale. Sharing the evening's entertainment with Motown tribute band Stone Soul, Purple Generation delivered a high-energy performance featuring Prince classics including "1999," "Let's Go Crazy," "Kiss," "Little Red Corvette," and the iconic "Purple Rain."

Known for his authentic performances and deep respect for Prince's musical legacy, Honore has built a reputation for delivering an unforgettable concert experience that resonates with longtime fans and new audiences alike. Families danced in front of the stage while concertgoers sang every lyric, proving once again that Prince's timeless music continues to unite generations.



As fireworks illuminated the night sky, Purple Generation provided the perfect soundtrack to an unforgettable Independence Celebration. The performance reaffirmed the band's reputation as one of Southern California's premier Prince tribute acts, honoring one of music's greatest icons while creating new memories for audiences.



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ENTERTAINMENT

Downtown L.A. Lights Up

Grand Park's 4th of July celebration brings live music, family fun, and a spectacular drone light show.

BY MIC DIAZ | PUBLISHER

Thousands of Angelenos gathered at Gloria Molina Grand Park on July 4 for the City of L.A.'s annual Summer Block Party, transforming six blocks of Downtown Los Angeles into a vibrant celebration of music, culture, and community.

Recognized as the West Coast's largest free Fourth of July celebration, the event offered an evening of live entertainment, interactive experiences, and family-friendly activities for visitors of all ages.

The Backyard Stage featured an energetic lineup led by acclaimed trumpeter Tatiana Tate, whose blend of jazz, funk, soul, and hip-hop captivated the crowd. Jungle Fire & Friends kept the celebration moving with their signature mix of Afro-Caribbean rhythms, West African grooves, Latin influences, and classic funk, while Kaimera added dynamic dance performances. KCRW's Anthony Valadez hosted the Backyard Stage with live DJ sets, and Pangea Sound brought global beats from the Caribbean, Africa, and Latin America to the Front Yard Stage.

Beyond the music, guests enjoyed food trucks and vendors, interactive art installations, community exhibits, photo opportunities, children's activities, and a sports and wellness zone, creating a festive atmosphere that celebrated the diversity and creativity of Los Angeles.

As night fell, hundreds of drones illuminated the Downtown skyline in a breathtaking choreographed light show that served as the evening's grand finale. Replacing traditional fireworks with an environmentally friendly spectacle, the dazzling display brought the crowd together for an unforgettable conclusion to a celebration that showcased the spirit, culture, and resilience of Los Angeles.

The annual celebration once again demonstrated how Grand Park serves as a gathering place where Angelenos of all backgrounds can come together to celebrate community, culture, and civic pride. As families packed up their blankets and made their way home, many left with lasting memories of an evening filled with music, laughter, and a spectacular display that lit up the Downtown Los Angeles skyline.



Photos by Mic Díaz



FOOD & DRINK

Sampa Elevates Filipino Cuisine

BY MIC DIAZ | PUBLISHER

Sometimes the best dining experiences are the ones you don't expect. Singer and entertainer GG Starr and I recently visited **Sampa** in Downtown Los Angeles' Arts District, where we enjoyed a memorable dining experience that redefined our expectations of Filipino cuisine. Created by Chef Josh Espinosa, Sampa reimagines Filipino flavors through modern techniques and creative presentation. We enjoyed the Filipino Ceviche, the Crispy Pasta topped with crispy pork, the restaurant's elevated take on *Kuhol*, and a delicate puffed SkyFlakes cracker topped with A5 wagyu, calamansi crème fraîche, and Kaluga caviar, beautifully served atop a SkyFlakes cracker box—a playful nod to a beloved Filipino pantry staple. We ended the meal with the light and airy Ube Bibingka Soufflé, a modern twist on classic Filipino favorites.

Every dish was thoughtfully prepared, beautifully presented, and perfectly portioned, leaving us completely satisfied without feeling overly full. Sampa is the kind of restaurant I'd confidently recommend to friends, family, business associates, or anyone experiencing Filipino cuisine for the first time. With its innovative menu, impeccable presentation, and warm hospitality, it delivers a dining experience that is truly a cut above the rest. We left already looking forward to our next visit.



UPCOMING EVENTS

JULY 5

Self-Evident Truths Art Exhibition feat. Eliseo Art Silva at Avenue 50 Studio in Highland Park

JULY 9

DTLA ArtNight on Grand Ave. feat. Yoko Ono at The Broad, special collections at MOCA, and '80s music at Grand Performances at California Plaza

JULY 10

The Art of Crossfade at Grand Performances at California Plaza • Dance DTLA: Salsa at Jerry Moss Plaza, The Music Center

JULY 11 & 12

45th Lotus Festival at Echo Park Lake in Los Angeles feat. host country Sri Lanka

JULY 14

Bastille Day (French National Day) Celebration at California Plaza, DTLA

JULY 16

Garth Garcia Sings the Classics at Catalina Jazz Club

JULY 17

Miss Philippines USA 2026 Acoustic Night at Korner Hut, Historic Filipinotown, Los Angeles

JULY 18

Rey Zipagan Art Exhibition at ROK Art Gallery, 5029 W. Jefferson Blvd., Los Angeles

JULY 18

WONDER-FULL Tribute to the Music of Stevie Wonder feat. DJ Spinna, DJ Monalisa, Tatiana Tate and more!