IN THE MIX weekly
BY MIC DIAZ PRESENTS
VOL. 1 • ISSUE 17 • OCT 4 – OCT 10, 2026

The Lore We Keep: Preserving Filipino Heritage

BY MIC DIAZ | PUBLISHER



Photos by Mic Diaz

Philippine folklore, mythology and the stories that connect generations took center stage during **"The Lore We Keep: Mountain Spirits in America,"** held October 7, 2026, at the Philippine Consulate General in Koreatown, Los Angeles. Celebrating Filipino American History Month and Museums and Galleries Month, the gathering explored how ancestral traditions continue to shape Filipino-American identity and find new expression through literature, film, animation and cultural exhibitions.

Featured speakers included Filipino historian and cultural storyteller Kirby Araullo, authors Waverley Lim and Peter Bautista, who explored the importance of preserving Philippine folklore and sharing cultural narratives with new generations. The discussion highlighted how traditional stories continue to reach contemporary audiences through books such as *TikTik*, films like *Forgotten Island*, and animated works such as *The Mask of Haliya*. These creative interpretations help connect Filipino-Americans with their heritage while introducing younger generations to the richness of Philippine mythology.

The event also highlighted Mountain Spirits: Rice and Indigeneity in the Northern Luzon Highlands, Philippines, an exhibition at the Fowler Museum at UCLA running through January 2027. Exploring the traditions of indigenous communities in northern Luzon, the exhibition examines the spiritual, cultural and mythological significance of rice cultivation, ancestral knowledge and agricultural practices. It offers visitors an opportunity to understand how these traditions remain deeply connected to Philippine cultural identity.

For Filipino-Americans, preserving folklore is more than remembering stories from the past. It is about maintaining connections to ancestral roots while creating new ways to share those traditions across generations. "The Lore We Keep" served as a reminder that Philippine mythology remains a living part of Filipino culture, inspiring contemporary storytelling and strengthening the sense of identity, heritage and belonging within the Filipino-American community.

ENTERTAINMENT

Caren Mempin Celebrates “Sana Ay Ikaw Na Nga” with Star-Studded Concert

BY MIC DIAZ | PUBLISHER

Filipino recording artist **Caren Mempin** celebrated the release of her new single, “Sana Ay Ikaw Na Nga,” with a concert last Friday, October 9, 2026, at The Noypitz Bar & Grill in Long Beach, California. The evening brought together Filipino performers in a celebration of music, collaboration and community. The event was hosted by Mic Diaz of Mic Diaz Presents and *Chat With Mic*, alongside co-host Christian Ylagan, who also performed during the concert.

An award-winning vocalist signed under Starlink Music and Starlink Promotions, Mempin began her musical journey through singing competitions in the Philippines before performing professionally in Japan and eventually settling in the United States. Her achievements include Breakthrough Artist of the Year at the 2024 Amerika Music Awards and a Best Pop Artist of the Year recognition in 2025. She also earned Top 2 Judges' Choice recognition at the International Indian Icon competition in Chicago.

The concert featured an impressive lineup of artists, including Criss Angel, Precious Cejo, Christian Ylagan, Imelda Bosing, Michael Luke, Malou Toler, Kevin Hermogenes and Janice Javier, a former finalist on The Voice of the Philippines. Also performing were JC & Company, led by veteran musician Jun Caberte with vocalists Ivy and Ferds Bondoc, and Garth Garcia, known as the Fil-Am Prince of Pop. The performers brought together different generations and musical styles, from OPM and classic rock to pop, soul and R&B.

Mempin's performances included “Nosi Balasi,” “Kung Kailangan Mo Ako,” and collaborations with fellow artists, including “What's Up” with Malou Toler and Imelda Bosing, “Sinta” with Michael Luke, “Forever” with Criss Angel, and a duet with Garth Garcia. She also performed a multilingual selection and “Never Enough” before closing the evening with her new single, “Sana Ay Ikaw Na Nga.”

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Caren Mempin, Garth Garcia, Cristiani Rebada, Kevin Hermogenes
Photos by Mic Diaz

ENTERTAINMENT

Caren Mempin Celebrates "Sana Ay Ikaw Na Nga" with Star-Studded Concert (*Continued from Page 2)*

A particularly meaningful moment came during Mempin's performance of "Never Enough," accompanied by videos of her performance at the International Indian Icon competition and her feeding program in the Philippines. The presentation connected the song's themes of longing and striving for more with Mempin's desire to make a difference beyond the stage. Proceeds from concert T-shirt sales were designated to support her feeding programs for underprivileged children in the Philippines, India, Bangladesh and now Africa, reinforcing the message that there is always more we can do for others.

The release of "Sana Ay Ikaw Na Nga" marks another milestone in Mempin's musical journey. More than a celebration of her latest recording, the concert highlighted the camaraderie among Filipino-American artists and the power of music to bring people together for a meaningful cause. For Mempin, the evening reflected both her passion for performing and her commitment to using her platform to give back.

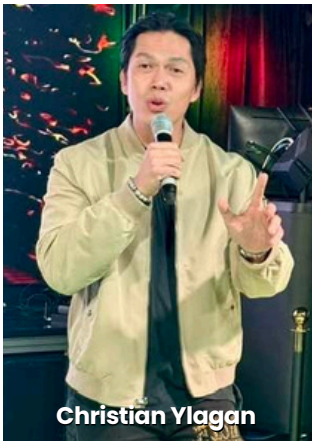

Crissangel


Janice Javier


Kevin Hermogenes


Mic Diaz


Imelda Bosing, Caren Mempin, Malou Toler


Christian Ylagan


Precious Cejo


Michael Jurolan


JC & Co.



Starlink Artists Photos by Mic Diaz

CREATOR SPOTLIGHT

Playback Jukebox Celebrates Its Debut Album, *Songs From the Edge of the World*

BY MIC DIAZ | PUBLISHER



Photo by Photo Ops Studio / Paul Pablo

Los Angeles-based trio **Playback Jukebox** has reached a significant milestone with the release of its debut album, *Songs From the Edge of the World*, a collection of 16 original songs exploring love, relationships and everyday experiences. Composed of **vocalist Benjie Collantes, keyboardist Jj Buencamino and drummer Paco Arespacochaga**, the band brings together three seasoned musicians with a shared passion for songwriting, collaboration and creating music that connects with listeners.

Drawing from their individual musical backgrounds and years of experience, the trio has developed a creative identity centered on original compositions. Drummer Paco Arespacochaga and keyboardist Jj Buencamino are both members of the multi-platinum Filipino band INTRoVOYS, while vocalist Benjie Collantes is a prominent figure in the Filipino-American music scene who had stepped away from performing years earlier. Encouraged by Arespacochaga to come out of retirement, Collantes returned to music as part of Playback Jukebox, bringing his experience and distinctive voice to the collaboration. Together, the three musicians have embraced a new creative chapter, combining their talents to produce original music that reflects their shared artistic vision.

Together, the three musicians have embraced a new creative chapter, combining their talents to produce original music that reflects their shared artistic vision.Released independently through Paco's Place Records and recorded at ABC Studio, *Songs From the Edge of the World* was written and produced by the band members. Described as a musical storybook about everyday people, the album explores universal emotions and situations, from love and longing to regret and reconciliation. Each composition presents a different perspective on relationships and personal experiences, reflecting the group's commitment to storytelling through music.

Among the album's featured songs is “Damdamin,” released in August 2026 as its carrier single, along with “Lungkot” and “Malabo.” Another notable track, “Won't You Come Home (I'm Sorry),” was the band's first original release. Centered on setting aside pride and finding the courage to apologize, the recording features bassist Nathan Azarcon of Rivermaya and guitarist Ira Cruz, who was also a member of INTRoVOYS and is known for his work with Passage and Bamboo.

Continued on Page 5

CREATOR SPOTLIGHT

Playback Jukebox Celebrates Its Debut Album, *Songs From the Edge of the World* (*Continued from Page 4)*

The band held its official album launch celebration last Saturday, October 10, 2026, at Gerry's Grill in Artesia, California, marking an important occasion for the musicians and their supporters in Southern California. The album is available on digital streaming platforms, with plans for physical editions, including a double-LP vinyl release and CD. The release represents the culmination of the trio's collaborative work as songwriters and recording artists.

For Playback Jukebox, the project also reflects the value of creative independence. By producing and releasing their music through an independent label, the musicians have maintained the freedom to pursue their own artistic direction. Their collaboration demonstrates how experience, shared interests and a commitment to developing new material can bring together musicians at different stages of their careers.

With *Songs From the Edge of the World*, Playback Jukebox establishes its identity as a recording group with a shared artistic vision. For Collantes, Buencamino and Arespacochaga, the debut album represents more than a collection of songs. It is a celebration of their creativity, musical partnership and commitment to telling stories through music on their own terms.







Photo by Photo Ops Studio / Paul Pablo

FILM & TELEVISION

FilAm Creative Honors Filmmakers at Awards Gala

BY MIC DIAZ | PUBLISHER



Photo by Steven Lam

Filipino and Filipino-American filmmakers, actors, producers and creative professionals gathered at Give Hope Studios in Los Angeles on Sunday, October 4, 2026, for the **Awards Night Gala of the 4th Annual FilAm Creative Film Festival (FACFF)**. The celebration marked the culmination of three days of film screenings, industry discussions and community gatherings, recognizing outstanding achievements in filmmaking and storytelling. Held during Filipino American History Month, the gala brought attention to the creative talents shaping Filipino representation in cinema while providing a space for filmmakers to celebrate their accomplishments and connect with fellow industry professionals.

Among the evening's major winners was *USA (Deer)*, which received three awards: Best Director for Matt Oflas, Best Cinematography for Jeremiah Gener and Best Supporting Performance for Gail Noel. *Roommates* also earned multiple honors, winning Best Lead Performance for Ryan Cruzado Gatus and Best Editing for Michael Merino, Kirsten Hoang and Jonathan De Guzman II. The Best Short Film award went to *Dyahe Piece*, directed by Coco Tolentino, while *LOLOBATMAN*, directed by Madonna Diaz-Refugia, received the Jury Award. These recognitions highlighted the contributions of both performers and behind-the-scenes professionals whose work brings stories to life.

The festival also recognized excellence across documentary filmmaking, animation and music videos. *Bridging Our Stories* by Rafael Bitanga received Best Documentary, while *Hugs & Kisses*, directed by Alexandra "Lexie" Orr, earned Best Animation. The Best Music Video award went to "Easy Peasy" by Jonavi, directed by Monica Silverio. Meanwhile, the Audience Award was presented to *The Unfortunate Side Effects of Drinking with a Crippling Want* by Steven Soria, recognizing a film that connected with festival viewers. Together, the award recipients reflected the range of creative approaches and storytelling formats represented at this year's festival.

Under the leadership of Festival Director Charles Jon Gray, the October 2–4 festival showcased a diverse selection of films exploring identity, family, heritage and contemporary experiences. Among the featured productions were *Treasure of the Rice Terraces*, a documentary directed by Kent Donguines, Khryz Donguines and Nicolle Rufino, and *Mabuhay*, a narrative feature directed by Arjonel Villaflor. The festival's programming also provided opportunities for emerging filmmakers to introduce their work to

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FILM & TELEVISION

FilAm Creative Honors Filmmakers at Awards Gala (*Continued from Page 6)*

new audiences, exchange ideas and build pprofessional relationships. Through screenings and discussions, the event emphasized the importance of developing platforms where Filipino and Filipino-American creatives can share their perspectives.

The Awards Night Gala reflected FilAm Creative's ongoing commitment to supporting Filipino-American talent in the entertainment industry. Festival organizers, including Angel Quinsay, Rommel Rojas and Christianne Sykes, helped bring together filmmakers and creative professionals for an event centered on artistic recognition and community collaboration. Beyond the awards themselves, the festival offered opportunities for networking, mentorship and dialogue among writers, directors, producers, actors and other industry professionals. Such gatherings contribute to a growing creative network that encourages collaboration and helps open doors for the next generation of Filipino-American storytellers.

As Filipino American History Month celebrates the contributions and experiences of Filipinos in the United States, the FilAm Creative Film Festival serves as a reminder that representation goes beyond appearing on screen. It also means creating opportunities for Filipino and Filipino-American filmmakers to develop, produce and share stories that reflect their communities and experiences. The October 4 gala celebrated not only the achievements of this year's award recipients, but also the collective efforts of a creative community working toward greater visibility in film. Through storytelling, collaboration and continued support for independent cinema, FilAm Creative is helping ensure that Filipino voices remain an important part of the evolving entertainment landscape.













Photos by Steven Lam



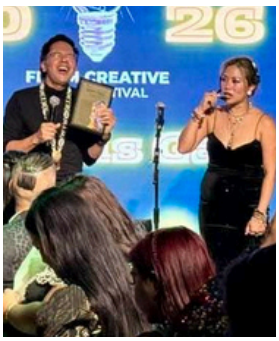














Photos by Mic Diaz

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

Diana Lua: Building a Business with Passion and Purpose

BY MIC DIAZ | PUBLISHER



For **Diana Lua**, founder of **Tang and Java** in Woodland Hills, entrepreneurship is more than a career choice. It is a way of life shaped by family, hard work and a desire to create something meaningful. Growing up in the Philippines, Lua learned the fundamentals of running a business from her grandparents, who operated enterprises ranging from construction and commercial properties to restaurants. In her February 10, 2026, interview on *Chat With Mic*, she recalled helping with inventory, finances and errands from the age of six, experiences that would later influence her own entrepreneurial journey.

After moving to Los Angeles at 18, Lua attended Los Angeles City College and began working at Circuit City. She later worked in hospitality and at a workplace compliance company, where she helped modernize operations and improve efficiency. Watching that company grow through multiple acquisitions eventually inspired her to build something of her own. She went on to establish businesses in the vaping industry before shifting her attention to family and, eventually, a new venture in food and beverages.

The inspiration for Tang and Java came during a deeply personal chapter of her life. After her twin sons were diagnosed with autism, Lua stepped away from daily business operations to focus on her children. Celebrating their developmental milestones with ice cream prompted her to take a closer look at the ingredients in commercially available desserts. She envisioned a coffee and gelato shop where she could offer products made with carefully selected ingredients. Determined to learn the craft, she sought i training from an Italian gelato chef before developing her own offerings.

Today, Tang and Java reflects Lua's commitment to quality, family and purposeful entrepreneurship. For her, success is no longer measured solely by financial accomplishments but by having the freedom to spend time with her children while pursuing work she loves. Her advice to aspiring entrepreneurs is simple: “Start with your passion.” Through Tang and Java, Lua continues to put that philosophy into practice, demonstrating how personal experiences can inspire new business opportunities.







***CHAT WITH MIC* Episode 56: Diana Lua**

Photos courtesy of Diana Lua and Mic Diaz

FILIPINO AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH

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HISTORY
CULTURE
COMMUNITY
CREATIVITY
OUR FUTURE

COMMUNITY EVENTS • OCTOBER 2026

Celebrating Filipino American history, culture, community and creativity across Southern California

OCT 11 SUN

- **FAHM Games & Kantahan** 4:00 – 6:00 PM
  Island Pacific Los Angeles, 4641 Santa Monica Blvd. | LOS ANGELES
  @islandpacific

OCT 13 TUE

- **Filipino American History Month Kickoff** 12 –2 PM
  Celebrating Kapwa: Honoring Community and Collective Resilience
  LBCC – TTC Campus (1305 E. PCH), Parking Lot 7 | LONG BEACH

OCT 16 FRI

- **City of Los Angeles FAHM Honorees** 10:00 AM
  City Hall Council Chambers | LOS ANGELES
- **FilAm Fiesta** 5:00 – 9:00 PM
  Anaheim Packing District | ORANGE COUNTY | Kabataan Culture
- **City Hall FAHM Lighting Celebration** 6:00 PM
  Los Angeles City Hall | LOS ANGELES

OCT 17 SAT

- **Baryo Bazaar x Grand Central Market** 12:00 – 5:00 PM
  Grand Central Market | LOS ANGELES
- **Long Beach FAHM Celebration**
  Long Beach Civic Center Plaza | LONG BEACH
- **Pistahan sa Almuchow**
  Almuchow | WEST COVINA

OCT 18 SUN

- **Kultura Pilipino Day**
  Disneyland | ORANGE COUNTY | @dkababayan
- **2nd Annual Filipino American Fiesta**
  Museum of Ventura County | VENTURA

OCT 21 WED

- **The Filipino Mic Drop** 7:00 – 10:00 PM
  Mic Drop Karaoke, 8811 Santa Monica Blvd. | WEST HOLLYWOOD
  Filipino American community gathering.

OCT 22–24 THU–SAT

- **FilAm FunFest**
  OC FilAm Comedian Shows | ORANGE COUNTY

OCT 23 FRI

- **Katipunan Poetry Slam** 6:30 PM
  Historic Filipinotown, 1740 W. Temple St. | LOS ANGELES
  Community poetry and cultural expression.

OCT 24 SAT

- **Parol Pamilya Play** 2:00 – 5:00 PM
  KUBO LB, 3976 Atlantic Ave. | LONG BEACH
  Filipino community and family cultural activity.
- **Filipinup FAHM Fest** 6:30 – 10:00 PM
  The Post Climbing, 1100 N. Fair Oaks Ave. | PASADENA
  Community celebration.
- **Carson FAHM Celebration** 10:00 AM
  Carson Event Center, 801 E. Carson St. | CARSON
  Filipino American History Month community celebration.
- **Larry Itliong Day Festival** 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM
  Bresee Foundation, 184 Bimini Pl. | LOS ANGELES
  Commemorates Filipino American labor history.
- **Baryo x Grand Central Market Bazaar** 12:00 – 5:00 PM
  Grand Central Market, 317 S. Broadway | LOS ANGELES
  Recurring Filipino maker and small-business market.
- **Philippine Souvenir Woodwork Workshop** 12:00 – 2:00 PM
  Harte Neighborhood Library, 1595 W. Willow St. | LONG BEACH
  Hands-on cultural workshop.

OCT 25 SUN

- **Lumpia Laps** 9:00 AM
  Sports Basement, 2100 N. Bellflower Blvd. | LONG BEACH
  Community fitness gathering.
- **ManilaSound: Daytime Disco** 4:00 – 9:00 PM
  Benny Boy Brewing, 1821 Daly St. | LOS ANGELES
  Filipino music and community gathering.
- **FAHM & Howl O Ween** 12:00 – 7:00 PM
  Café 86, 301 S. Glendora Ave. | WEST COVINA
  Community seasonal celebration.
- **Piece of Philippines: Filipinos in Hollywood**
  Hollywood | *@pieceofphilippines*
- **1st Creative Book Writing Certification Workshop & WAC's Book Turnover Ceremony** 2:00 PM
  Glendale Recreation Center (ARC), Dinner Hall | GLENDALE

OCT 26 MON

- **Filipino American History Month Celebration** 12:00 – 6:00 PM
  Café 86 | WEST COVINA

OCT 27 TUE

- **Kuya Lord x Kasama Kamayan**

OCT 29 THU

- **Mahjong Lumpia Collab** 6:00 – 9:00 PM
  Green Cheek | ORANGE COUNTY

OCT 31 SAT

- **Mabuhay CU FAHM Poster Making Contest**
  MCU | CARSON

Know of a Filipino American History Month event we should add?
Send your event information to **Mic Diaz Presents.**

IN THE MIX A COMMUNITY CALENDAR BY MIC DIAZ PRESENTS


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