

## Jam Sessions

The Creative Lab Hawaii Music Immersive program is helping to bridge the gap between Hawai'i and the mainland, offering musicians the rare opportunity to work directly with top industry professionals and music executives. This year, FLUX Hawaii partners with Creative Industries and the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism to feature two Music Immersive artists in Los Angeles at the FLUX Hawaii General Store.

TEXT BY ANNA HARMON

IMAGES COURTESY OF TERRY WARNER (HAWAII ISLAND) & CID/DBEDT



Hapuna Beach Prince Hotel is a sprawling estate with quiet, tiled walkways that seem to stretch for miles, and an expansive open-air lobby that looks out onto a pool, which looks out onto a sprawling Kohala Coast beach, which lines the seemingly endless horizon of ocean. The hotel's isolated spaciousness quiets the activities of daily life taking place here, like the chatter from visitors lounging on a couch, or the singsong voice of the receptionist on the phone. But in June, an intimate group of talented musicians, songwriters, and producers gathered here, bringing fits of energy and lyricality to its conference rooms and open spaces.

For five days, 10 participants—Hawai'i-based Kimié Miner, Isaac "Izik" Moreno, Ryan Higgins, Brent Magstadt, Maelan Abran, Ryan Hiraoka, and Sebastian Hughes, along with three others from the mainland—took part in the Creative Lab Hawaii Music Immersive, founded by the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism, Creative Industries Division (CID/DBEDT). "Creating the space for strategic partnerships to emerge while expanding new markets for our singer-songwriters is key to igniting opportunities to monetize IP for Hawai'i creatives," says Georja Skinner, chief officer of CID/DBEDT. "Through our industry leaders Charles Brotman and Jerome Spence, this inaugural Creative Lab Hawaii Music Immersive is off the charts, and a welcome

addition to our media and fashion programs."

Music Immersive participants networked with and learned firsthand how to create music to license for television, film, and commercials from seasoned songwriters, producers, and music supervisors from Los Angeles and Nashville. Together, they put talk into action during the program: For three of its five days, participants and mentors split into six groups of three, starting at 10:30 a.m. and staying up late to co-write and produce potential songs for one of six assigned projects, including crafting a tune for an advertisement for a major cellular phone company, a primetime hit TV show, and another for a major motion picture.

"As a Hawaiian, it makes me so proud to have this opportunity to connect, and to share our culture through music on a much bigger scale, through film and television," said Miner, a Nā Hōkū Hanohano award-winning musician from Big Island. "I mean, what's bigger than that, getting across everywhere, the world? To me, we're creating a new legacy for Hawaiian music."

Jerome Spence, vice president of film, television, advertisement, and business development at the Los Angeles company Secret Road, was the program's co-director who brought the mainland talent to mentor and collaborate with artists such as Miner. When it came to creating the combined groups for daily work

# CONGRATULATIONS to the Inaugural Creative Lab Hawaii Music Immersive

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2016 Creative Lab Hawaii - Music Immersive group photo

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sessions, he tried to match personalities to the projects. For the creation of a potential R&B song for a primetime show on Fox network, Spence knew Hawai'i participant Izik would be a great fit for vocals, and mentor Cheapshot for producing, since he had experience with hip-hop production.

Executives from Disney, Starz Network, and Format Entertainment even spent time with the participants, giving them guidance on the technicalities that make songs more appealing for licensing (for example, the more breathing space the better, to allow for cutting up a track to fit its accompanying visual), and on the impacts to strive for. On one such day, Gwen Bethel Riley, who is the head of business affairs music at Disney Consumer Products and Interactive Media, even took a group to the beach to remind them of the inspiration for their projects.

This intensive program was co-directed by Nā Hōkū Hanohano award and Grammy award-winning producer Charles Brotman, who also serves as the president of the Hawai'i Songwriters Festival. It was at this event in 2015 that Spence shared a concept inspired by music industry executive Miles Copland's retreat for top songwriters at his chateau in France. Explained Brotman, "A lot of famous writers go and they just hang out and write, and at the end of the week, there's a whole bunch of new songs that come out, just a creative synergy." For Brotman, licensing music helped support his career from early on, starting when he was creating his first solo album in his 20s after graduating



**“This made all of the local Hawai'i writers step their game up, and it just shows the potential that they have, and that we all have.”**

—Jerome Spence, co-director, Creative Lab Hawaii Music Immersive

➔ Hawai'i musicians took part in the Creative Lab Hawaii Music Immersive, a five-day program where participants learned firsthand about composing for film and television, as well as about music licensing from seasoned industry professionals.



with a master's in music from University of Hawai'i, so the program made immediate sense.

Brotman's Lava Tracks Recording Studio in Kamuela was one of the three studios on Big Island (along with Kimo Lobo Studio in Kamuela and Twenty20 Sound Studio at the Global Virtual Studios in Kona) that was utilized in the program. Here, while helping artist Ryan Higgins and songwriter Nitane Paris Lawson record a demo, which involved Higgins singing soulfully and playing 'ukulele, Brotman explained the goal of the immersive: "We're trying to build bridges to the mainstream music industry. Because of the isolation here, there's a whole music source that is very unique," he said. "For me, the ultimate goal would be to have younger artists that are coming up to have all kinds of alternative sources of income that can be generated by staying in music and staying here, in Hawai'i." In the recording

room, Higgins sang, "I'll be standing here, with you."

Through this Creative Lab immersive, local musicians were able to make valuable connections that might otherwise have taken others years to accrue. These networks will be maintained throughout the following year, during which the participants will be mentored by the executives from Secret Road, as well as the music supervisors that were involved in the immersive. "So if they need guidance—if they have questions about song direction, maybe they want us to listen to a demo they're in the middle of, if they have business questions—we're going to give back in those ways," Spence said. "We're also going to foster the relationships of the writers and continue to help them set up co-writes." Like the other Creative Lab immersives, in September, three finalists of the 10 total participants will even be flown to Los Angeles to continue the

immersive with Spence. These finalists will be set up with co-writes with Los Angeles based writers and producers, meetings with the music supervisors from the immersive, and a performance showcase in front of industry tastemakers.

Time will tell if any of the 18 songs created as collaborations between the mentors and the participants will land their intended projects, or perhaps be picked up by something completely unexpected. But already, both the participants and the mentors have benefited, finding fresh inspiration and new connections over their five days spent on the Kohala Coast. "People are tripping out, to be so inspired," Miner said at the hotel an hour before boarding a plane to Los Angeles for an upcoming three-show tour. "I mean, look at where we are."



Image by Zach Mendosa



Image by Michael Vossen

CREATIVE LAB HAWAII MUSIC IMMERSIVE SPOTLIGHT

**Kimié Miner** HAU'ULA, O'AHU

Born and raised on Big Island, Kimié Miner won a Nā Hōkū Hanohano award for "Best Contemporary Album" for her 2016 self-titled album. "Since I could talk, I could sing," Miner said. "I always loved anything music." At 14 years old, as a boarder at Kamehameha Schools Kapālama campus on O'ahu, she began writing music because she wanted to sing from her diary and play along with her new guitar. While working on her most recently debuted album, she began dabbling in creating music for licensing with her producer from Indianapolis. "This was something I would go to Los Angeles to do and work with writers there, you know?" she said. "I love that Creative Lab is bringing it home."

**Izik** KAPOLEI, O'AHU

Izik, who is from Moloka'i, describes his music as a blend of alternative R&B ("R&B in the sense that the vocals are real R&B soul vocals, but the music behind it is an alternative to the typical R&B sound") and pop, with a touch of electronic elements. But when he started off writing music as a freshman at Kaiser High School, he sang when accompanied only by an acoustic guitar that a visiting cousin had left him. After a handful of years of doing so, he began to feel that his musical well had run dry. "So I got on my computer, and I have [Logic Pro, a digital audio workstation] on my computer, and they have all these little banks and loops of sounds, so I started messing around with that," he said. The results were what created the unique sound of his newly released album, *Obsidian*.

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—Kimié Miner, singer/songwriter

➔ Shown above are Kimié Miner and Isaac "Izik" Moreno, who both took part in the Creative Lab Hawaii Music Immersive. For more information, visit [creativelab.hawaii.gov](http://creativelab.hawaii.gov).

# CONGRATULATIONS

## to the Inaugural Cohort of the Creative Lab Hawaii Web-Series Immersive & Mobile Game App Immersive



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