

Rave Reviews

"Very well organized. One of the best Asian events I've ever attended in the state of Florida." -Clyde Diao Chief Economist for State of Florida / Chairman of Asian Coalition of Tallahassee

"One of the best events I've ever attended. Very beautifully organized. Attendees had a chance to taste the fruits, food, and dessert of our cultures. Truly a great event for the National Asian Pacific American Heritage Month"

-Vincent Thuy Nguyen President, Vietnamese Community of Florida

"One of the very, very best events we've attended and participated in Florida"

-Jim Yu President, Sono Elite Performance Group

Celebrity Guests

Singer Alex San Dinero is the first Laotian American to sing Lao-Spanish in Laoggaeton, an upbeat Latin-hip-hop style. A community activist as well as a decorated Veteran and military hero, Alex is a natural-born leader and networking guru.



Actor Jack Ong has appeared in over 75 movies, TV and stage shows, including "Cold Case," and "Friends." He has been nominated for various awards during his acting career, including a Grammy for "100 Most Loved Poems." He was honored with the AMMY Award for activism in 2002.



Hip-Hop artist Gumby was nominated for the Twin Cities First Annual Hip-Hop Awards in 2007. In addition to being nominated for "The Best Kept Secret," he also made history by being the first Asian hip-hop artist to win the Minnesota award.



Ketsana Vilaylack's journey has taken her from Laos to around the world. She has 10 albums under her belt and an 11th album releasing this Summer.



Julia Nickson has appeared in television and feature films as a supporting actress. Nickson made her feature-film debut in Rambo: First Blood, Part 2 (1985). She was cast in Harry's Hong Kong by Aaron Spelling, and guest starred opposite David Soul, her husband. Over the course of her career, Nickson has appeared on numerous television productions including Babylon 5, Walker, Texas Ranger, and Nash Bridges. Nickson is also a singer/songwriter, and her first album is presently available on Amazon UK.



Sarah Liu, Miss Asian America 2010-2011, has aspired to benefit the community through partnering with organizations such as Hep B Free SF, Asian American Cancer Support Network, and Fashion Your Mind Organization. Liu hopes to help those in need.



Rapper praCh has been hailed by Newsweek as "The Pioneer of Khmer Rap" and "The First Cambodian Rap Star." He utilizes his genre to craft masterful lyrics, educating audience members.



Comedienne Fe De Los Reyes infuses her Pinoy (slang term for Filipino) brand of humor with "comedy cabaret." She starred in Amerikana, Made in America, a musical-loosely based on her life about one woman's story of uprooting from Manila to the U.S. Most recently, Fe's new show, entitled "Fe's Book," is a collection of spiels, spoofs, and song parodies.



Miss Asian America 2009-2010 Amy Chanthaphavong is the first Miss Asian America of Laos descent. She holds a bachelor's degree in political science with a minor in Business from the University of San Francisco.



At the age of 11, Brooke Demetri is already a seasoned vocal performer and entertainer who has been invited (for the past four years) to sing "America the Beautiful," at the US Open Tennis grand slam event in New York City. She won 2nd Prize in a summer-long global talent competition (the only youngster alongside semi-professional adult contestants). She has starred in productions of "Annie" and "The Wizard of Oz." She sings regularly with the Nassau Symphony, is a champion figure skater and straight-A student.



Gary Perez's incredible talent gave him a chance to perform back to back with Eric Clapton, Paul Williams, Chuck Berry, Blood Sweat & Tears, Canned Heat, and other well-known US bands. Today he serves as a mentor to our younger generation. He continually encourages people to come out and show their talent at any type of setting. His life example teaches us to follow our dreams, no matter how great.



celebrate asia - May 7, Hyatt Regency



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Celebrate Asia, a multi-cultural gathering of colorful exuberance, returns to Downtown Jacksonville for a second year this Mother's Day weekend, Saturday, May 7 at the Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront hotel. It's a dazzling, color-filled entertainment experience that features celebrities, performances and a bevy of delightful Asian food.

Visiting Jacksonville for this years Celebrate Asia will be Sarah Liu- Miss Asian American 2010- 2011, Amy Chanthaphavong- Miss Asian American for 2009- 2010, actors Jack Ong, Julia Nickson and Bee Vang along with singers Brooke Demetri, Ketsana and Fe De Los Reyes. Asian hip-hop artists Gumby aka PRYCe, praCH and Alex San DiNero, along with guitar master Gary Perez, will also be at the event.

Film, television and stage star Jack Ong will emcee Celebrate Asia 2011. Jack is well known in Hollywood as has appeared in dozens of TV shows including Touched By An Angel, Friends and as an animated character in The Simpsons. On the big screen Ong has been in Akeelah And The Bee, Art School Confidential and a recently released short, Journey of a Paper Son.

In a recent interview with EU, Ong was asked: what if Jersey Shore was set in an Asian neighborhood? "To have a show like Jersey Shore set in ANY American neighborhood with Asians in the leading roles would be an answer to prayer, frankly. We've been struggling and advocating for more diversity in the media for decades now, and I'm hopeful that the networks will step up their efforts," he explains. "Asian Americans for the most part are still portrayed in fairly stereotypical roles, but it's slowly--verrrrry slowly improving. I think of Tim Kang in The Mentalist, the casting in Hawaii 5-0 and Outsourced, Asian American stars like John Cho, Daniel Dae Kim and Lucy Liu along with the super talented Asian Americans Jenna Ushkowitz and Harry Shum, regular cast members of the wonderfully diverse show Glee."

"TV commercials are quite diverse in their casting nowadays, and I think they represent more of the actual "American scene" than the regular network programming. We need to educate our scriptwriters to simply be color-blind in their writing as much as possible."

"Oh, what role would I play in Jersey Shore? The same kinda role I'd love to play on most TV dramas and sitcoms today – the uncle or parent of one of the leads, or one of the adults who has some impact on their day-to-day lives. Just not another waiter, please. Unless it's a regular role and pays well, of course!"

One entertainer who is sure to pick up the pace will be Cambodian hip-hop artist, praCH Ly. praCH was acclaimed "the first Cambodian rap star" by Newsweek and is a noted lyricist, musician, writer, producer and activist whose Dalama albums have battled oppression via rhyme and lyrics. "I'm really excited to be returning to Celebrate Asia. I still call Florida my second home... I have friends and family there in Jacksonville"

When asked who he would invite (anyone) to Celebrate Asia 2011, praCH paused for a moment and emphatically stated "My parents... I asked them but my dad is in Cambodia. I wish for them to actually join a celebration showing the unity of Asians... to see us unite, peoples from Thailand, Viet Nam, China, would be great. My parents went through the Killing Fields"

On the subject of Jersey Shore praCH says, "I don't think it would work with Asians... it is disrespectful... respect is what Asian culture is made of." For being a pioneer in hip-hop rap, a music style mostly accused of being an in-your-face gangsta gripe, praCH's latest album is not gangsta. DALAMA..."memoirs of the invisible war," has a unique style that switches songs from English to Cambodian to English and back with a delivery that is compelling and contagious. praCH has done the music for a new baseball film, Rice Field of Dreams, that is premiering in Long Beach on April 13th, and also has an Oscar short-listed project called Enemies Of The People.

Ong and praCH will enjoy a delightful evening with incredible native costumes, a dragon march and a smorgasbord of delicious Asian foods including Asian Sesame Balls, sushi, Filipino Lumpia, Laotian Papaya Salad, Pad Thai Noodles, Thai Red Curry and Vietnamese Summer Rolls.

For tickets to Celebrate Asia, more info and to see photos from last year's event, visit www.celebrateasia.net.