

Art & Soul/AfroComicCon 2023

Sunday, September 17, 2023 ▪ Downtown Oakland

ARTISTS BIOS – Plaza Stage

Latyrx & Friends

Latyrx is comprised of Bay Area alternative hip hop luminaries **Lyrics Born** and **Lateef the Truthspeaker**. The two began making music together while studying at the University of California, Davis, where they founded the Solesides label and collective. They released their first eponymous single, also titled *Latyrx*, in 1996, and recorded their sophomore album 17 years later in 2013, titled *The Second Album*. When reviewing the album, NPR's Robert Christgau commented that "Lateef is the activist firebrand; Lyrics Born the one-step-at-a-time philosopher of moderation and what he calls "entrepreneurial spirit." But both make it their business to look forward."

Lyrics Born relocated to the United States from his birthplace of Tokyo, Japan right around the time Hip Hop was exploding on the East Coast. From the moment he heard Sugar Hill Gang's 1980 classic "Rapper's Delight," he knew he had found his calling. Over the years, Lyrics Born has obliterated the stereotypes of what an MC is "supposed to" look like and captured the hearts of countless fans who gravitate to his distinctive voice. He's the only Asian-American MC to release 10 studio albums and the first to play major music festivals like Coachella and Lollapalooza. Earlier this year, Lyrics Born's most popular song "Callin' Out" was mentioned as one of the "100 Greatest West Coast Hip-Hop Songs of All Time" by Rolling Stone.

Lateef the Truthspeaker was raised in East Oakland, where his father was the security detail for the Black Panthers. His mother, a Panther medic, was a roommate and political associate of Angela Davis. Growing up in a politically charged household set the stage for an MC who has gone on to be as politically outspoken as he is creative. The Grammy®-nominated MC is also known for his role in the Bay Area rap collective, Quannum Projects which ushered in the "Underground" era of Hip-Hop in the early to mid-90's.

Alphabet Rockers

Alphabet Rockers – Led by Kaitlin McGaw and Tommy Soulati Shepherd, Alphabet Rockers create brave spaces to shape a more equitable world through hip hop, as 2023 GRAMMY®-winners, four-time GRAMMY® nominees, Othering & Belonging Institute Fellows, and industry leaders for change. As touring and resident artists, the collective has been featured by The Kennedy Center, the Smithsonian Museum of African American History and Culture, SXSW, Lollapalooza, and festivals around the country, in addition to 50+ schools each year.

Women in Hip Hop Revue

Breathless

Breathless is a bi-coastal (Atlanta, GA & Oakland, CA) emcee, songwriter, voice over actor and event curator. Born in Tachikawa, Japan she received an Omaha Entertainment Award for Best Hip Hop/Rap artist, performed on The Warped Tour circuit, Outside Lands, Oakland Art & Soul Main Stage, San Francisco Pride Main Stage, and Oakland Pride (Womyns & Main Stage). She voiceovers on-air talent for the cartoon character, Carrie, in the animated YouTube hit, Ghost Bus Kids. She has a viral song sample on TikTok at 1.4 million streams. Breathless joined forces with all female powerhouse group, FemmeDeadlyVenoms based out

of Oakland, CA, whose album *Femmenomenon* charted as most added Hip hop album in NACC and got placement on Queen Latifah's CBS show, *The Equalizer*. She received the Local Sirens grant with collaborator Lil MC from Women's Audio Mission in San Francisco, CA to record their new EP. *Breathless* is currently recording her newest project at Georgia State University's School of Music and has been awarded the Creative Industries grant from Invest Atlanta to help with its release.

Coco Peila

Coco Peila is a Bay Area bred, Hip Hop & Alt-R&B Afro Diaspora flex. The Brooklyn-based MC, songwriter, and record producer developed her irresistible sound while working in artistic activism and anti-oppression facilitation as a teaching artist, cultural organizer, and strategist. She's shared stages with artists and leaders Talib Kweli, The Pharcyde, Slum Village, Dead Prez, J Rocc, and President Obama among others. Her work and collaborations have been featured by The Kennedy Center, Stanford, Yale, *The New Yorker*, Museum of African Diaspora, *BUST Mag*, and on Hip Hop historian Davey D's Artists to Watch lists. Her EP *Confessions of A Black Feminist Rapper pt 3* and the *Above That (Black Joy)* remix are out now.

Dakini Star

Bay Area artist Dakini Star is more than just a lyricist, she is a periodic table of elements in her own right. Versatility, ingenuity, and boldness define her songwriting and performing styles. A shape-shifting artist, she weaves and cross-pollinates genres with fierce delivery and soulful content with influences from hip-hop, rock, world beat, bass, electronic, and pop. She is recognized for her ability to lace powerful and inspiring lyrics over any given aural soundscape. Rocking mics since 2006, she has had the honor of sharing stages with artists such as Common, Talib Kweli, The Grouch & Eligh, The Halluci Nation, The Coup, Jhene Aiko, MC Lyte and Les Nubians.

Co-founder of renowned Bay Area collective Goddess Alchemy Project, her mission to create platforms to uplift the feminine voice and inspire empowerment has always driven her creative direction. The song 'Femmenomenon' from her current project, *Femme Deadly Venoms*, can be heard in the CBS show 'The Equalizer' with Queen Latifah. Long time collaborator with Bay Area legends Jazz Mafia, her release 'Set it Free' is a testament to the unbreakable spirit of the human soul.

Her latest release, *DRIIIP* marks the second collaboration/duo with Action Paxton. The record boasts an enchanting beat, deep bass, and lyrics that champion female empowerment. Dakini Star's seductive vocals blend effortlessly with Action Paxton's detailed production.

Gina Madrid

Gina Madrid, formerly known as Raw-G, is a Mexican, Oakland-based rapper, community organizer, activist, and core member of the renowned group Audiopharmacy. With her distinctive cross-cultural background, multilingual abilities, and politically charged lyrics, she has become a vibrant force in the Bay Area music scene captivating audiences with her passionate performances.

Gina has had the privilege of sharing the stage with esteemed artists such as KRS One, Rakim, Raekwon, Ghostface Killah & Immortal Technique and has music collaborations with influential figures like DJ Shadow, Gift of Gab, and Michael Marshall.

In addition to her musical achievements, Gina is deeply committed to social activism and community organizing. Through her powerful lyrics and actions, she strives to bring about positive change and empower those around her.

Gina's journey in the United States began in 1999 when she relocated to Oakland. Immersed in the vibrant hip-hop culture, she learned English by translating rap lyrics, honing her craft, and finding her own unique voice. Today, Gina Madrid stands as an influential figure, using her music, activism, and community work to uplift and inspire others while making a lasting impact on the world around her.

LadyRyan

LadyRyan is a Bay Area favorite – inspiring a sense of safety, joy, and belonging as a spiritual conductor and dedicated professional. Her passion for music can be heard throughout the bay area and beyond at Warriors games, one of her celebrated SOULOVELY or Sweet Spot parties (creating space for QTIBIPOC community). Or on the airwaves of KALW. With a deep range and knowledge of multiple genres of music balanced with the right touch of nostalgia mixed with her ability to conduct high vibrations, she is a sure shot for any dance floor. LadyRyan has played and opened up with artists such as George Clinton, Erykah Badu and Anderson Paak.

RyanNicole

GRAMMY®-nominated quadruple *treat*, RyanNicole “utilizes every gift available to her for the liberation of all people.” Affectionately titled the “4A” RyanNicole seeks opportunities to empower and inspire by way of her pursuits as an award-winning artist, actress, athlete, and activist. RyanNicole is a GRAMMY®-nominated ([Alphabet Rockers](#)) MC & Poet whose lyrical prowess has been exploited on international stages and web platforms ([Team Backpack](#)), garnering fans in the thousands across the globe. She is a TEDx Fellow, whose musical compositions include a solo mixtape, entitled [Dis’Onance](#) and several collaborative efforts with her group Nu Dekades and other artists. RyanNicole has performed with a wide array of artists and persons of influence, most notably President Barack Obama. She is an alumna of NYC’s Public Theater Fellowship #BARS Workshop as a writer & performer. Ryan developed and directed ACT’s Lyrical Cabaret in 2019 and June 2023 she presented *Currency*, a hip hop theater performance. She is also a cast member of the show, “IRTS!” (I Remember That Song!) in its 7th season and co-creator of the KQED vodcast 'What's Pimpin'?

Shy’an G

Shy'an (/SHY-yon/) G is a Berkeley born MC, producer and published poet who is approaching 15 years in the performing arts. She blends her love for the staple sound of the hyphy movement, with her influence from Soul, R&B, Jazz, Funk and Golden Age Hip-Hop, to display her conversational, action-engaging lyricism. She has opened shows for artists such as Smino, Rapsody, Cypress Hill, and more.

In 2018, Shy’an was named by KQED's "The Bay Bridged" as one of The Bay Area’s Standout Hip Hop and R&B Producers. In 2020, She was featured in the East Bay Express, as well as KQED art's award-winning hit podcast, "RightNowish" by Pendarvis Harshaw. Her full length project, “Let Me Go” was also named by KQED as one of The 10 Best Bay Area Albums of 2020. In 2022, she joined the list again as a featured artist for the “Tales of the Town” collective album, and a musical co-producer, for their podcast series. Shy’an continues to embrace her complex upbringing and champions her community full of fellow unique storytellers.

Suga-T

Suga-T, the First Lady of the multi-platinum and gold iconic group The Click, is a legendary multi-faceted recording artist, CEO, performer, writer, and speaker from Vallejo, CA. She also works as a producer, author, creator, and game-changing trendsetter. She celebrates 36 years in the music industry having produced 20 solo albums and 5 group albums while possessing a large catalog of soundtracks, independent & commercial releases on Jive and Sick Wid It Records. Suga-T recently released Heiress I Am, I Am Heiress, a double EP

dedicated to HER Museum and during the 50th year anniversary of Hip Hop, paired with the Hip Hop Her Exhibit.

In the midst of acting, performing and producing music and film projects, she built a social enterprise that includes Suga-T Music/Film, Media and Publishing, Sprinkle Me Learning Academy, Sprinkle Me Boutique (Beauty, Fragrance and Accessories), and recently added HER Museum to her list of visionary conglomerates. She is also the Executive Director of The Work It Well Project and specializes as a transformation wellness coach helping people turn their pain into peace, passion, prosperity and purpose, and a vision partner helping others create multiple streams of income.

Dr. Suga-T Stevens uses her national brand, education, and experience to make positive changes in the community, business, and the music industry and sacrificed her entertainment career to return back to school to acquire three Master's degrees and recently two Doctorate degrees.

Versoul

Versoul is a Japanese, Hawaiian, Filipina, Italian and Salvadorian-American Alternative Hip-Hop artist, producer, and sound engineer born in San Francisco and raised throughout the Bay Area. Since she was a baby, music has always been her outlet for self-expression and healing. Versoul began freestyling at the young age of 8, then learned to produce beats at 13 using FL Studio. She delivers a distinct and unclassified sound influenced by the sounds of early 80-90s music. Through her music she tells her story and in seeing the impact her music has made on others, Versoul dedicates her musical intention to inspire other mixed youth all around the world to tell their story and embrace their power to make a positive difference in their lives, and in the world. Through music, Versoul transforms her struggles into strengths, trauma to triumph and pain into power, while also embracing the real feelings and emotions brought on by some uncontrollable circumstances of life and what it means to be human.

Hip Hop For Change

Performing Artists: Daylite, Jamaica Rodriguez, Brooklyn Williams and the debut of "Small but Mighty" which is a collaboration with RyanNicole, Hip Hop For Change, and Unlearn the World.

Hip Hop For Change uses grassroots activism to educate people about socio-economic injustices and advocate solutions through Hip Hop culture. We raise funds for local causes that enrich marginalized and historically oppressed communities to enhance opportunities for marginalized people in the Bay Area, Hip Hop For Change Inc (HH4C) is reclaiming Hip Hop culture as a vehicle for education, empowerment, and cultural innovation. Out of displacement and neglect, inner-city neighborhoods birthed Hip Hop as an outlet for oppressed people to address socio-economic injustices and validate their experiences through music, artistic expression, and storytelling; however, this beautiful cultural art form has been co-opted.

Our core values stand with diversity, equity, and inclusion. Our goal is to advocate for all marginalized communities, including POC, LGBTQAI, Indigenous/Tribes, Immigrants, disabled bodies, poverty-stricken, systems impacted, and others affected by colonialism in all its forms.

<https://www.hiphopforchange.org/about-us>

