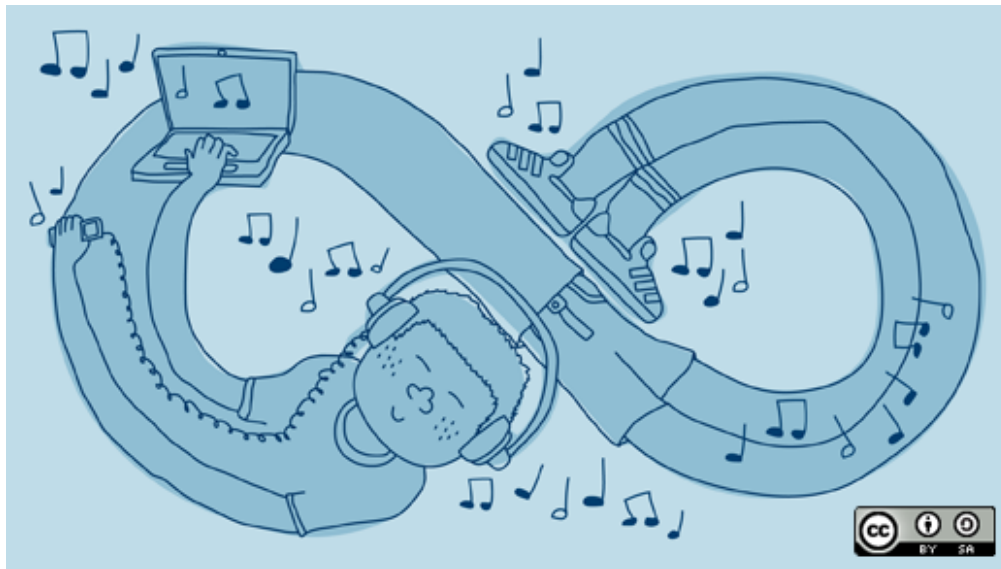


# Asian American Musicians: More Than a Trend

Asian American musicians have gained more visibility in the music industry, and are often reduced to their identities rather than being recognized as artists first. While musicians such as Mitski, Thuy, and Keshi are becoming mainstream, the music industry still struggles to see Asian American musicians as artists first and foremost.

## Representation vs. Stereotypes

Asian Americans have generally been associated with STEM careers rather than entertainment. This perception makes it difficult for Asian American musicians to be recognized on the same level as their non-Asian counterparts. The success of K-pop and anime has put Asian culture in the spotlight in the U.S., but this often excludes many Asian American musicians who don't really fit into those categories.



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Additionally, well-known record labels have historically not considered Asian American talent, assuming there no mainstream appeal for them outside of niche genres. While platforms like YouTube and TikTok have helped independent Asian American musicians gain popularity, breaking into the **mainstream industry** remains a challenge due to historical media bias and lack of representation overall.

# The Struggles of Asian American Musicians

## 1. Expectation to Fit a Cultural Narrative

Artists including Francene Rouelle, a Filipino American musician, expressed the difficulty of balancing their cultural identity with their musical expression. There often exists pressure to center their music around their Asian American experience, regardless of authenticity.

Many artists may be expected to include traditional Asian sounds in their music, even if their style aligns more with pop, R&B, rock, or other genres. This expectation limits their creative freedom and reinforces stereotypes without allowing their musical identity.

## 2. Financial Barriers

Music is expensive. Period. Independent artists often struggle to fund their careers, which can be even more apparent for Asian American musicians who may not have sufficient connections or support. Waverly, the Cambodian American founder of mHart Media, emphasized the need to financially support artists to allow full potential of artistry.

Record deals and sponsorships can be harder for Asian American musicians to secure, as many labels hesitate to invest in them unless they fit into a marketable trend. This forces many artists to rely on **self-funding, crowdfunding, or independent labels** to stay afloat, making it significantly more difficult to compete with artists that have these deals and sponsorships.

## 3. Limited Mainstream Media Support

Asian American artists gained traction, radio stations, award shows, but music publications often overlook them. Artists like Rina Sawayama had to fight for eligibility in certain award categories due to perceptions of Asians. Even well-known Asian American musicians like Joji, whose music gained mainstream popularity, do not receive the same treatment as their peers. [This funny video explains why Asian American musicians may not be as popular.](#)

## The Mission of mHart Media

mHart Media, the first Asian American music label based in Austin's, works to shift the industry for Asian American artists. Their mission showcases and validates the Asian American experience in mainstream music. Instead of forcing a specific narrative, mHart allows its artists to create music that is true to who they are regardless of their identity.

By giving Asian American musicians a **platform, financial backing, and creative freedom**, mHart addresses the barriers that have historically kept these artists from breaking into the industry on their own talent. Labels such as mHart prove that **Asian American musicians don't need to conform to a preconceived stereotype** for success.

## How to Support Asian American Musicians

Asian American musicians deserve recognition beyond just their identity. Here's how you can support them:

- **Follow their work.** Engage with their music on streaming platforms, social media, and YouTube.
- **Attend events.** Support artists at local events and showings.
- **Share their music.** Word of mouth and social media help increase popularity of Asian American artists.
- **Request their music.** Ask radio stations, DJs, and event organizers to include Asian American artists in their playlists.
- **Challenge stereotypes.** Recognize Asian American musicians as artists first and foremost, rather than defining them only by their heritage.

## Conclusion

Asian American musicians are more than just a trend. They deserved to be recognized for their music on the same level as their peers. While we are progressing, there's still work to do in crushing stereotypes and ensuring authentic representation in the industry. By actively supporting these artists, we can help create an environment where Asian American musicians are recognized for their talent—not just their background.

As the industry constantly evolves, more platforms like mHart and independent Asian American artists push for **greater representation and creative freedom**. The next step, **listeners, media, and industry professionals fully embracing their artistry without the added label**.