

Singer comes up with ideas on planes

By Jae-Ha Kim
Tribune Content Agency

Born and raised in Hawaii, singer-songwriter Mikah said every day felt like he was in paradise.

"The beach is right there, the weather is almost always perfect, you see rainbows nearly every day, and you drive home after school with the most beautiful sunset in front of you," said Mikah, 26, who lives in Shanghai.

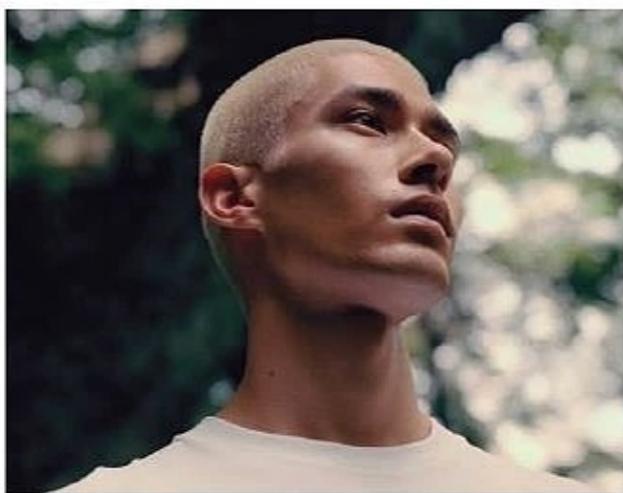
"Being a kid in Hawaii is like having a huge playground you can explore endlessly. I used to hike to watch the sunrise, surf, bodysurf, dive, bike around the island, skateboard ... the list just goes on. I always think back to my childhood and reminisce about how beautiful it was."

His songs "Escape," "In Between" and "Dream" are dreamy, self-reflective tales that speak of who he is.

This interview with Mikah has been edited for clarity and length.

Q: You've lived and worked in the U.S., Japan and China. What kind of challenges did you face?

A: There were countless challenges I faced while moving around, but the biggest ones were leaving my friends and family, making new friends and dealing with language barriers. Even now, I still feel the pain I felt when I left Hawaii. It's like I lost a part of my life that I can never get back, and the only way I can feel that same joy again is by reminiscing about it. When it comes to making new friends, ever since I left Hawaii, I haven't been able



Mikah said that even though he grew up in Hawaii, it's still his favorite vacation spot. **PIERRE BOISSEL & MATHIAS PONARD**

to build the same kind of close friendships. Because of that, I really miss the friends I grew up with. I moved to two places that speak completely different languages, and having to learn them — not just to live and work, but also to sing and write music in them — was a huge obstacle.

Q: As a global artist, how have your experiences in other parts of the world made their way into your music?

A: I'd say it helped me learn more about the music people listen to in other countries. Because of that, when I create music, I naturally consider those influences, so my songs can reach a wider audience and hopefully be appreciated by more people.

Q: What do you remember about your first professional gig?

A: It was probably a small show I did when I was around 17 or 18 with my band, Intersection. I remember being so nervous that I could barely open my (mouth) to sing or even move my body. When I first started, I was really introverted, unconfident and couldn't stand in front of an audience. But after each show, I slowly learned to accept it. I still get nervous, but it's like 10 times better than before.

Q: What is your favorite vacation destination?

A: Hawaii. Even though it's my home and my parents still live there, I kind of see it as a vacation destination now because I rarely have time to go back. So when I do get that once-a-year chance, it feels rare and rewarding, almost like a vacation. And on top of that, Hawaii really is a vacation capital, so every time I go back, I feel that same sense of relaxation and the warm, beach vacation vibe.

Q: Have you written or worked on any songs while you were on the road?

A: I usually write lyrics and come up with creative concepts when I'm on a plane. I travel about six times a month, so I use that quiet, disconnected time to brainstorm and write lyrics for whatever song I'm working on.

Q: What is your bucket-list venue that you have yet to perform in?

A: Coachella or Head in the Clouds.

Q: What was a trip you took as a child that stands out?

A: I think one of my earliest memories was a trip I took to Colorado and Utah to visit my grandma, but also camp and snowboard. I think that trip made me love and appreciate the outdoors more and is the reason I love nature now.

For more from the reporter, visit www.jaehakim.com.



QUESTIONS? CALL 1-800-TRIBUNE

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2025

BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

Chicago Tribune

WINNER OF 28 PULITZER PRIZES FOR EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM