Chinese Artist Eric HZ Joins Recording Academy Dialogue on the Future of Asian Pop

CAFAC founder shares a Chinese artist's perspective on the new Best Asian Pop Music Performance category: "Asian Pop should be a door, not a wall."



Chinese singer-songwriter, music producer and cultural exchange advocate Eric HZ.

DALLAS, TX, UNITED STATES, September 7, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Chinese singer-songwriter, music producer and cultural exchange advocate Eric HZ (Hechen Zhao) participated in the Recording Academy's A Conversation with Leaders in Asian Music on September 3, sharing his perspective on the newly established Best Asian Pop Music Performance category and on how Asian music can strengthen its cultural identity while continuing to engage with the global music community.

The industry conversation brought together Recording Academy leadership and governance members, GRAMMY-winning and nominated music professionals, and artists, songwriters, producers and representatives of the Asian music community. Participants included Recording Academy CEO Harvey Mason jr., Board of Trustees Chair Dr. Chelsey Green, current Trustees and music industry professionals, as well as Chinese music producer Christian TJ, CEO of Notes Entertainment Group and President of the Chinese-American Federation of Arts and Culture (CAFAC).

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>
> *Eric HZ*

The Recording Academy introduced Best Asian Pop Music Performance for the 69th Annual GRAMMY Awards, recognizing contemporary Asian pop originating from or widely recognized within Asian markets, including K-Pop, J-Pop and C-Pop, with meaningful use of one or more Asian languages.

For Eric HZ, who grew up primarily in China and later continued his musical and professional

development in the United States, the new category represents more than recognition of a growing music market. It raises a larger question about how Asian music can become more visible globally without allowing the label “Asian” to become a boundary for Asian artists.

“Every artist’s voice and artistic expression are shaped not only by technique, but also by the language, culture, aesthetics and musical traditions that have nurtured them,” Eric HZ said. “Creating a dedicated GRAMMY category for Asian pop is not about separating Asian music from the world. It gives the world a clearer window through which to see, hear and understand Asian music.”

He also expressed support for the category’s meaningful-use-of-Asian-language requirement, describing language as an integral part of cultural and artistic identity rather than simply a vehicle for lyrics.



Chinese singer-songwriter Eric HZ performs at the 21st Chinese American Film Festival and Chinese American TV Festival.

At the same time, Eric HZ emphasized that recognition of Asian pop should expand opportunities rather than define the limits of Asian artists.

“If an Asian artist creates music that belongs more broadly in global Pop, R&B or another field, that artist should have the same opportunity to be considered alongside artists from anywhere else in the world,” he said.

“Asian Pop should be a door, not a wall.”

For Eric HZ, bringing a Chinese perspective into an international music-industry conversation is closely connected to his own artistic journey.

“Chinese culture is not something I need to leave behind in order to enter the world,” he said. “It is one of the most important things I can bring with me. I am not trying to leave my culture to enter the world; I hope to enter the world carrying my culture with me.”

That philosophy also extends beyond his work as a recording and performing artist. Eric HZ is the founder and chairman of the Chinese-American Federation of Arts and Culture (CAFAC) and a co-initiator of the Chinese American Music Festival. Through music, performance, arts education and cultural initiatives, he has worked to create connections between Chinese and American

artists, audiences and communities and to bring Chinese music and culture into broader international dialogue.

“I have always believed that music is a gentle bridge between people,” Eric HZ said. “Someone who knows very little about China may hear a song and become curious about the language, the people, the stories and the culture behind it. If music creates that first moment of curiosity and understanding, then it has already built a connection.”

This year also marks Eric HZ’s fifth consecutive year submitting his music for GRAMMY consideration. He views that continued participation not simply through the lens of awards, but as part of a broader commitment to keeping his music engaged with the international professional community.

“An award is meaningful, but the value of music cannot depend only on whether an artist wins one,” he said. “The stage keeps the life of a musician alive, and the GRAMMY process gives me an opportunity to bring my music into a much broader conversation.”

Through CAFAC, the Chinese American Music Festival, his own music and ongoing cultural initiatives, Eric HZ hopes to create more opportunities for Chinese music and Chinese artists to participate directly in global cultural dialogue, while also bringing international perspectives, professional experience and the values of mutual respect and listening back to Chinese-speaking music communities.

“Cultural exchange is not about asking one side to become the other,” he said. “It is about giving people the opportunity to truly know and listen to one another. A song cannot resolve every difference, but it can make someone willing to listen.”

At the conclusion of the Recording Academy conversation, Eric HZ thanked the Academy for creating a clearer platform for Asian pop and for listening directly to voices from the Asian music community.

“Because listening, in itself, is a form of respect.”

For Eric HZ, that principle reflects a broader purpose behind his work: enabling people from different languages and cultures to hear one another through music and helping bring greater understanding, love and peace back into communities.

About Eric HZ

Eric HZ (Hechen Zhao) is a Chinese singer-songwriter, music producer, performer and cultural exchange advocate whose work spans original music, live performance and international arts initiatives. Raised primarily in China and later continuing his musical career in the United States, he is the founder and chairman of the Chinese-American Federation of Arts and Culture (CAFAC)

and a co-initiator of the Chinese American Music Festival. His work focuses on bringing Chinese music and culture into broader international dialogue and fostering cross-cultural understanding through the arts.

About CAFAC

The Chinese-American Federation of Arts and Culture (CAFAC) is a U.S.-based nonprofit cultural organization dedicated to building connections between people and cultures through music and the arts. Through performances, arts education, cultural programs and international collaboration, CAFAC works to expand opportunities for cultural exchange and mutual understanding between Chinese, American and international communities.

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