1 is Stronger!

Limelight

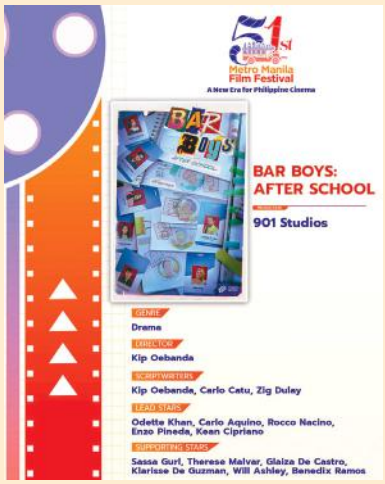
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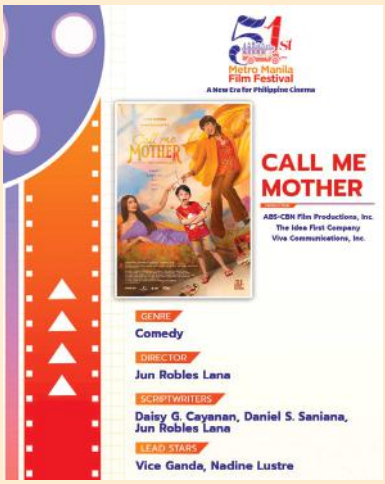
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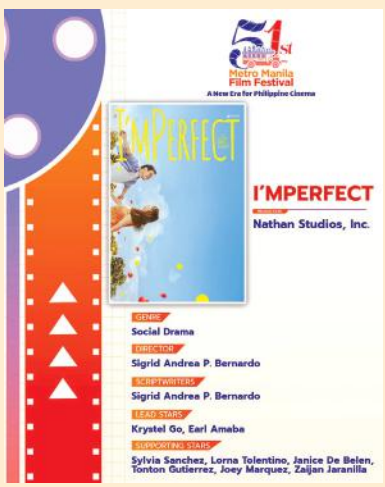


STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART • LYN BAUTISTA: WOMAN OF LASTING IMPRESSION • MHEL PECHERA: TO SERVE WITH A GRATEFUL HEART • MAINE MENDOZA AT 10: GRACE & GRIT • INTELE BUILDERS: BRAVO'S LEGACY

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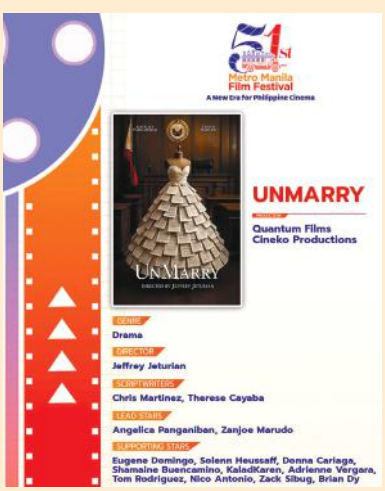












Thrills, Tears & More at the MMFF

THE Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF) 2025 lineup is here — and it's serving up a powerhouse blend of laughter, love, and terror that will capture your heart.

Call Me Mother (Jun Lana) unites Vice Ganda and Nadine Lustre in a heartwarming comedy-drama about family and self-acceptance.

Rekonek (Jade Castro) dives into modern family chaos with Gerald Anderson and Carmina Villarroel.

Manila's Finest (Raymond Red) puts Piolo Pascual in the gritty heart of justice.

Shake, Rattle & Roll: Evil Origins revives the horror legacy with a star-studded cast.

I'm Perfect (Sigrid Bernardo) breaks barriers with a love story starring actors with Down syndrome.

Love You So Bad, UnMarry, and Bar Boys After School round out a powerhouse lineup of youth, passion, and second chances.

With its thrills, tears, and triumphs, the MMFF proves that Philippine cinema is stronger than ever. ♦

Limelight
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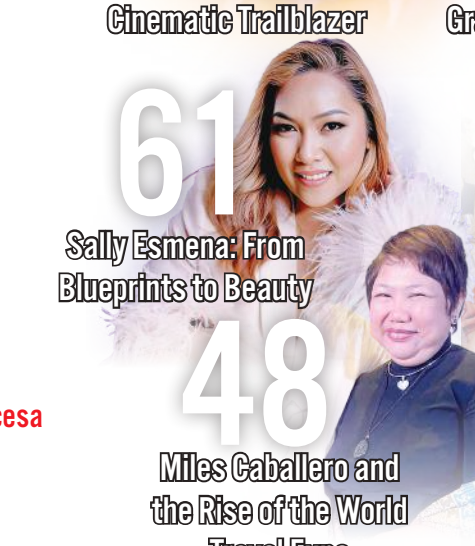














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Limelight
1 is Stronger!
Your Voice Matters!

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About the cover...

SINCE this is our premium issue, our team decided to come up something on the cover we felt closer to our hearts. And the amazing *InnerVoices* was the complete answer to our wishes. Why *InnerVoices?* Ohhh…the band clearly offers a nostalgic trip for those who remember their early hits and introduces their music to new fans. It definitely relives and celebrates the music of the '90s.

By supporting *InnerVoices,* you are supporting original *Pinoy* Pop music. This helps promote and preserve Filipino musical heritage.

After a hiatus, the band's reunion and continued performance demonstrate their passion and resilience. Supporting them encourages their continued growth and creativity.

And, of course, the band members have maintained close friendships over the years. Supporting *InnerVoices* means supporting a group of friends who share a love for music.

Editor's Note



FRIENDSHIP, a cornerstone of human experience, thrives on shared values, mutual respect, and unwavering support. But what truly elevates a friendship from good to extraordinary is the attitude each individual brings to the table.

A positive attitude acts as a magnet, drawing people closer and fostering deeper connections. When we deal friendship with optimism, understanding, and a willingness to forgive, we create a safe space where vulnerability can flourish. This, in turn, allows for authentic communication and stronger bonds.

Conversely, a negative attitude – marked by constant criticism, jealousy, or a lack of empathy – can erode even the strongest friendships. It creates distance, breeds resentment, and ultimately, diminishes the joy that friendship should bring.

Nurturing a positive attitude within our friendships isn't always easy. Life is short, and we all have our moments of weaknesses. However, by consciously choosing to focus on the good, practice gratitude, and offer unwavering support, we can encourage friendships that not only withstand the test of time but also enrich our lives in countless ways.

Let us, therefore, strive to be the kind of friend we ourselves would want to have – someone who radiates positivity, offers a helping hand, ad celebrates the successes of others. For in the realm of friendship, attitude is not just everything, it's the very core upon which lasting bonds are built.

And because of this, my heartfelt thanks to my Coffee Buddies and to my colleagues who have given their undeviating support with this endeavor. And of course, to Atty. Rey Bergado, the generous stalwart behind the durability of the amazing InnerVoices. Thank you for the trust and unrelenting support.

Til then…

Maryo Banlat Labad



Maine Mendoza at 10: Grace & grit

■ BY ANNE VENANCIO

MAINE Mendoza has never been one to shy away from the truth. This year sees her marking a milestone: ten years of staying power in showbiz. Along the way, she revisits the kilig-filled chaos of her AlDub years, making candid confessions that set the internet buzzing, and standing by her husband, Rep. Arjo Atayde, as politics puts him under the microscope.

She recalls how a viral audition for *Eat Bulaga*! in 2015 flipped her life overnight. To mark the moment, she shared then-and-now photos on Instagram with the caption: "A decade already? Just wow. Truly grateful for the journey … Having Eat Bulaga! as my home all these years has been such a blessing."

Her post quickly sparked a flood of memories. "*Parang kailan lang, sobrang kinikilig kami sa Kalyeserye.* Now, she's still here, still shining," one netizen wrote. Another added, "What makes Maine different is she's stayed real—*hindi siya nagbago kahit sikat na.*"

Maine's Dabarkads celebrated this milestone, proof that her authenticity has given her a rare kind of longevity in an industry where many burn out too soon. Maine made a surprising admission on the *Tamang Panahon* podcast. At the height of the AlDub phenomenon, she confessed that she did fall for Alden Richards. *"Na-inlove talaga ako kay Alden… vocal ako sa lahat ng tao,"* she reveals, clarifying that while Alden knew it, he never pursued her. The confession sent fans into a throwback frenzy. "*Kinikilig ako ulit, parang balik* 2015 feels!" one tweeted. Another wrote, "AlDub will always be legendary—*walang makakapalit.*"

But Maine isn't about to let nostalgia turn messy. She tempered the buzz with a reminder on social media: "All is well among the Dabarkads … We can revisit and reflect on the good and the bad with a peaceful heart." In other words: remember the magic, but leave the drama behind."

Maine didn't flinch when questions linking her husband to a flood control project surfaced. She stood by her husband, calling the talk baseless and reminding everyone of his commitment to service. For Maine, it wasn't about statements or spin—it was about loyalty.

A fan praised her inner strength: "Maine will always have Arjo's back—that's the kind of partner she is."

Maine Mendoza has weathered a decade of fame with equal parts grace and grit. She's a reminder that you can look back without bitterness, stand in the now without flinching, and face the future without fear. Ten years on, Maine isn't just surviving showbiz—she's rewriting how to last in it. ♦



Straight from the Heart

■ BY ANNE VENANCIO

WHEN Heart Evangelista goes live, the internet listens. And on that tense Tuesday night—September 23, 2025—she didn't just talk. She unloaded. With teary eyes but unflinching resolve, the actress, fashion muse, and global influencer finally faced the storm of criticism that swirled around her for weeks—the kind of scandal which blends politics, privilege, and perception into one viral cocktail.

It wasn't the first time Heart was under fire. But this time, it was different. No stylist was smoothing her hair. There was no designer backdrop framingg the moment. It was just Heart, in the soft light of her own home, speaking straight to her phone camera.

"I'm not here to prove anything anymore," she said, voice trembling but steady. "I'm just here to be me."

It was a declaration not of defiance, but exhaustion—and, in a strange way, peace.

Life in Full View

Few celebrities have lived their lives so publicly, yet so artfully, as Heart does. For over two decades, she straddled two worlds: the rarefied elegance of couture and the harsh scrutiny of the online crowd.

She has been muse and target—her every choice analyzed, aestheticized, often weaponized. And she endured.



"It's really about doing what you love and staying consistent."

From her early days as a young starlet to her rebirth as global fashion icon, Heart has mastered the art of reinvention. Paris knows her as the Filipina who turned the front row into her runway. The internet knows her as the woman who paints Birkin bags, rescues aspins, and posts tearful confessions that somehow still feel chic.

But beneath the curated imagery lies a woman who, by her own admission, is still learning how to just be.

"People think I have everything figured out," she said in an interview. "But I'm still trying to understand myself."

Behind the Glamour, the Grit

Heart's story has always been a balance of light and shadow. Her marriage to Senator Chiz Escudero has often been romanticized—and politicized. Her fashion pursuits, once celebrated as aspirational, are now dissected as symbols of excess.

Her social media presence, a masterclass in aesthetics, has also become a battleground for criticism about wealth and privilege.

That Tuesday night, though, all that shimmer fell. What was left was a woman confronting her reflection—not in a gilded mirror, but in the glare of public opinion.

The irony? Heart has never seemed more real.

The Art of Soft Strength

What sets Heart apart isn't just her beauty or her brand—it's her ability to embrace vulnerability as part of her power. In a culture obsessed with perfection, she has turned imperfection into poetry.

Her quiet tears on live stream, her candid laughter in interviews, her openness about anxiety and loneliness paint a portrait of a woman who has learned that grace is not the absence of struggle, but the elegance of surviving it.

Fashion may have made her famous, but resilience has made her relatable. As she continues to navigate fame, politics, and the ever-hungry gaze of social media, one thing remains clear: Heart isn't just living a beautiful life—she's fighting for it.

"I've realized I don't owe anyone perfection," she said near the end of her live stream."I just owe myself honesty."

And she smiled. It was not the practiced kind for the cameras, but a tired, human smile—the kind that says, I'm still here.

Because when Heart speaks from the heart, the world listens—not just to what she says, but what she feels. ♦




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JOSELITO ALTAREJOS'
HUWAG MO AKONG SALINGIN
IPINAKIKILALA SI:
Lynn Bautista
DIREKTOR AT MANUNULAT: JOSELITO ALTAREJOS, DGPI
ITINATAMPOK SINA: GERMAINE GALE B. SALAZAR, JAL GALANG, VICTOR BERNARDINO SY, MATEO MANABAT, ADAM AGUSTIN
TAMPOK: MGA GOWN NI RENEE MAGTIBAY SALUD AT ALAHAS NI MILAGROS BERBOSO IMSON
TAGAPAGPATUPAD NA PRODYUSER: LYNN BAUTISTA | PRODYUSER: MANUEL GARCELLANO, MARCO BERTILLO MATA, JAY ALTAREJOS, 2B76 KOLEKTIB
DIREKTOR NG POTOGRAPIYA: MARCO BERTILLO MATA | KATULONG NA DIREKTOR: MANUEL GARCELLANO | TAGAHABI NG PELIKULA: JAY ALTAREJOS AT MARCO BERTILLO MATA
TUNOG AT MUSIKA: ARBI BARBARONA | DISENYONG PAMPELIKULA: 2B76 KOLEKTIB | TAGAPAGSALAYSAY: RYLLAH BERICO PARUNGAO

Lynn Bautista:
A Woman of Lasting Impression

■ BY PILAR MATEO

A dedicated philanthropist known for her unwavering commitment to uplifting communities and championing meaningful causes, she uses her influence and resources to inspire change and foster hope among those in need.







Whether wearing her crown as Noble Queen Ambassadress or gracing fashion events as an icon, Lynn S. Bautista is undeniably a charmer not to be missed. A trailblazing Filipina leader, she is making a forceful wave across diverse fields.

The highlights of her life.

Awards and Recognition: She received the prestigious Global Trends Business Leaders Award for Exemplary Woman in Infrastructure Leadership, becoming the first Filipina to achieve this honor. The award ceremony was held in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Film Industry Involvement: Lynn Bautista executive-produced and starred in the indie film *"Huwag Mo Akong Salingin,"* directed by Jay Altarejos. The film showcases her versatility beyond the business world.

Philanthropy: As a Noble Queen of the Universe 2024, Lynn Bautista is committed to giving back to the community, reflecting her dedication to charitable causes.

Leadership: She's a respected figure in the male-dominated construction industry, advocating for women's empowerment and voices.

A multifaceted person who has the luxury of showcasing her various passions in the different fields she dips her fingers into. And she continues to excel with each.

As the Noble Queen of the Universe's "Most Prominent Woman" and esteemed Ambassadress, a true fashion icon in every sense, she always leaves a lasting impression.

Loveliest, indeed, with a good heart! Especially if it's for a cause. Art and fashion in philanthropy.

Always in every season. There's more than what meets the eye. A crown...a scepter. A cape. But it's her warm smile and open hands that truly captivate everyone's hearts. ♦



"Huwag Mo Akong Salingin," A Cinematic Mediation on History, Fiction, and Protest



■ BY PILAR MATEO

THE synopsis vividly conveys the film's themes. "Huwag Mo Akong Salingin" (Touch Me Not) is an 18-minute short film that reimagines the women of Jose Rizal's "Noli Me Tangere." It combines fashion, history, and feminist protest through a cinematic lens.

Weaving Rizal's women with contemporary voices, the film explores how the narratives of Maria Clara, Sisa, and Salome transcend the page to confront patriarchy, violence, and colonial memory. Blurring the lines between fashion, literature, and performance, it becomes both a lament and a battle cry --- a reminder that the struggles of the past still reverberate in the bodies of women today.

Portrayed by Lynn Bautista, Maria Clara, Sisa, and Salome emerge not as passive figures of sorrow but as embodiments of resistance, dressed in elaborate ternos, framed against ancestral hills, and immersed in water as rituals.

Alongside performances by Germaine Gale Salazar, Jal Galang, Victor Bernardino Sy, Adam Agustin, and Mateo Manabat , the film confronts the ghosts of patriarchy and reframes Rizal's women as timeless rebels.

In the 18-minute feature, a woman enters a dreamlike ancestral house and slips into the memories of Maria Clara, Sisa, Salome --- each reborn as defiant voices confronting the men and systems that silenced them.

The creator, Joselito "Jay" Altarejos states that "*Huwag No Akong Salingin"* exists because Lynn Bautista believed in transforming her love for fashion into a work of cinema. She is not just the star of the film but its pulse, bringing Maria Clara, Salome, and Sisa to life with courage and presence. In a world that often sidelines women, Lynn's vision and strength made this project a powerful act of creation and defiance."

Featured in the movie are gowns by Renee Magtibay Salud. And the pieces of jewelry were provided by Milagros Berboso Imson.

"*Huwag Mo Akong Salingin*" marks Altarejos' first short film, continuing his commitment to stories at the intersection of history, politics, and the resilience of the Filipino spirit.

It's set to tour and be viewed at different festivals abroad soon! ♦







BINI: Milestones and Challenges in 2025

■ BY ANNE VENANCIO

BINI is an eight-member P-pop girl group composed of Maloi, Jhoanna, Stacey, Colet, Aiah, Mikha, Sheena, and Gwen. Best known for its hits Pantropiko and Salamin, Salamin, the group continues to score milestones in 2025 while addressing controversies that test their resilience.

Earlier this year, BINI became the first P-pop group—and the 15th OPM act overall—to surpass one billion streams on Spotify. This highlighted its growing international footprint and the unwavering support of their fans, the BLOOMs. In June, the group released Shagidi, a single inspired by Filipino childhood game Shagidi Shapopo. Member Maloi designed the cover art, while the vibrant music video showcased choreography rooted in Filipino street culture.

Award-giving bodies recognize the band's success. At the New Hue Video Music Awards 2025, BINI took home Group Artist of the Year and Concert of the Year honors for their Grand BINIverse show. They also earned five nominations at the 2025 Jupiter Music Awards, including Female Group of the Year, Album of the Year (BINIVerse), and three nods for their collaboration Cherry On Top (BINIMo Remix feat. Agnez Mo). The group recently secured a win as Female Group of the Year at Indonesia's Jupiter Music Awards.

The year also has its share of challenges. In May, a leaked video involving members Jhoanna, Stacey, and Colet drew criticism online. The group issued a public apology, and admitted that "Nagkamali kami" (We were wrong)," a move widely viewed as an act of accountability.

In August, BINI filed a criminal complaint after a "People vs Food" clip was maliciously edited, portraying distorted reactions to Filipino street food. The complaint cited cybercrime and unjust vexation, underscoring harassment and damage to reputation. Amid the controversy, the group stressed the importance of defending their integrity and mental well-being .

Despite setbacks, BINI remains focused on their artistry. It will cap the year with BINIfied: The BINIest Year-End Party on November 29 at Philippine Arena. The huge concert will feature new music, solo performances, and surprise collaborations. It solidifies BINI's status as one of the most prominent forces in Philippine pop. ♦



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Baby F. Go: Producing films, producing hope

■BY EJ BOROMEO

IN the ever-changing world of Philippine cinema where art meets purpose, Baby F. Go—or Madam Baby, as she's fondly called—stands tall as one of its most dynamic figures. She is a producer, entrepreneur, and philanthropist whose life story blurs the line between art and advocacy.

Since founding BG Productions International Inc. in 2013, Madam Baby has gone far beyond producing films. She has opened doors for artists, revived the spirit of indie cinema, and brought Filipino stories to audiences across the world.

"I didn't come to compete. I came to contribute," she says with quiet conviction. "Every film I produce, every business I build, must have meaning and purpose."

A Story Told Through Film

Her filmography reads like a catalogue of courage. Under her watch, BG Productions has produced 17 acclaimed titles—films that speak of truth, humanity, and resilience.



Among them are *Lihis, Lauriana, Homeless, Bigkis, Tupang Ligaw, Laut, Area, Almost A Love Story, School Service, Child Haus, Sekyu, Siphayo, Latay (Battered Husband), Iadya Mo Kami, Balatkayo and AbeNida.* Her latest, *Madam*, will feature her onscreen with Allen Dizon, Rico Barrera, and Mygz Molino under the direction of Ralston Jover. Each project carries her trademark: realism with heart.

"Film is my language of truth," she says. "When I tell a story, it must speak for the voiceless and remind us of our shared humanity."

Bringing Filipino Stories to the World

BG Productions has become one of the Philippines' most decorated independent film outfits. All of its 17 films have earned recognition from international festivals in Europe, Asia, and the United



States.

Her productions have won awards for Best Film, Best Actor, and Best Actress, proving that independent cinema can stand proud on the world stage.

Allen Dizon has earned multiple Best Actor honors for *Sekyu, Area, and Latay.* Ai-Ai Delas Alas won Best Actress for *Area,* Barbie Forteza took home the same title at Fantasporto for *Laut,* while Aiko Melendez and Nathalie Hart were recognized for *Balatkayo and Siphayo,* respectively.

"Awards are only symbols," Madam Baby says. "What matters most is the respect we've earned for Filipino stories—and the pride we bring home."

A Creative Renaissance

Madam Baby shows no signs of slowing down. With six new films in development and collaborations with veteran directors Joel Lamangan, Louie Ignacio, and Lester Dimaranan, as well as a partnership with Borracho Films Production and Atty. Ferdie Topacio, she continues to advance a new wave of Filipino cinema.

"I built BG Productions with faith and guts," she says. "You don't wait for doors to open. You build your own door—and if you have to, your own house."

She finances her films independently to keep her creative freedom intact. For her, independence isn't just a business model—it's a mindset.

Building Beyond the Screen

Through BG World Group, Madam Baby has expanded her influence beyond film. Her businesses include:

Media and Publications – BG Showbiz Plus magazine that celebrates Filipino success stories

Real Estate and Food Ventures – Creating jobs and supporting local industries

Philanthropy through PC Goodheart Foundation
– Helping orphans, senior citizens, and displaced film workers

A Healing Vision

Among her many ventures, Thai Relax Massage in Pasig City stands out as a personal favorite. What started as a wellness hub has



grown into a symbol of recovery and livelihood.

The spa offers authentic Thai therapy blended with Filipino warmth, employing therapists who lost their jobs during the pandemic. With its steady success, Madam Baby is preparing to franchise it across Metro Manila.

"A business should heal not just the body but the community," she says.

The Heart That Grounds Her

Behind her many roles is a woman deeply rooted in family. Madam Baby is a devoted mother, grandmother, and godmother to many in the industry who fondly call her Ninang or Mamita.

"Family keeps me grounded," she says with a smile. "No matter how busy I get, I make time to cook for my apo (she has six), listen to their stories, and remind them that love is the real legacy."

Her nurturing spirit extends to her artists and staff. She treats them like family, guiding them with warmth but never without discipline.

Failure and triumph cannot shake her resolve.

"I've fallen many times but I never stayed down," she reflects. "Every failure is just a rehearsal for success."

Looking Ahead

The coming year will mark another milestone as several BG films are slated for international premieres in Dubai and Australia while Thai Relax Massage prepares for its next phase of expansion.

Madam Baby's work continues to grow, but her mission stays the same—to create, uplift, and inspire.

"Success in business isn't about profit," she says. "It's about purpose and people."

Why She Matters

In a world where art and business often clash, Madam Baby Go has built a bridge between the two. Her empire isn't driven by vanity but by vision and service. From the red carpet to community outreach, she isn't just producing films—she's producing hope.

"I don't chase fame or fortune," she says. "I chase purpose. That's what keeps me shining."

That purpose still centers on spreading love.

"At the end of the day, I'm still a mom, to my kids (she has four), my apo, or my artists—because love is the greatest business of all." ♦

Intele Builders:
Bravo's Legacy

■BY PILAR MATEO

THANKS to her supportive husband, her contributions to both society and the industry continue to be a source of inspiration and excellence.

Cecilia Bravo—also known as Madam, Mama, Tita, Sis, and Ka-Fam—embodies generosity and philanthropy. As one half of a powerful legacy, her reputation is built on genuinely improving the lives of others.



Before earning recognition as Topnotch Women Achiever 2025, Ambassador of Goodwill, Queen Philanthropist of the Year, and the recipient of the Gawad Rosa Rosal Award, Cecilia Bravo was, and remains, the devoted wife of Señor Pete "Pedro" Bravo.

Acting as the driving force alongside her husband, she helped grow Intele Builders and Development Corporation (INTELE), guiding the company's passionate team to lasting success since its founding.

Intele Builders and Development Corporation is a distinguished name in the telecom contracting industry with a legacy spanning 38 years. Established in November 1986, shortly after the 1st People Power Revolution, Intele began its journey as a single proprietorship under the visionary leadership of Mr. Pete Bravo.

Originally known as Intele Integrated Telecommunications and Engineering, the company started with a team of fifteen dedicated employees committed to excellence. Over the years, fueled by dedication and unwavering commitment, INTELE has evolved into a prominent corporation, now known as Intele Builders and Development Corporation.

Behind the company's ongoing success stands Cecille Bravo, whose constant dedication and vision keep INTELE's mission alive.

Intele Builders and Development Corporation has received prestigious industry awards. On May 19, 2024, at the Manila Hotel, they were honored with the "National Outstanding Telecommunications Industry Solutions of the Year" award by the Excellent Filipino Awards, accepted by Sir Miguel and VP Madam Cecille Bravo.

On May 16, 2024, at Aberdeen Court, Quezon, we were awarded the "Most Trusted and Highly Recommended Builders and Development Company of the Year" by the International Golden Awards Philippines 2024, accepted by Sir Jhun Andres, QAC Head, and Sir Rocky Autor, HR Head. These recognitions reflect their commitment to excellence and the trust of their clients and partners.

As the years pass, the rewards continue.

Madam Bravo's remarkable achievements reflect her unwavering commitment to excellence, service, and humanitarian advocacy. Her leadership and generosity continue to elevate not only the name of Intele Builders and Development Corporation but also inspire countless individuals in the community and beyond.

In receiving the 2025 3rd Gawad Rosa Rosal Legacy Awards from Richard Hiñola's Best Magazine, she was bestowed one of the highest honors given to individuals whose lives are lived in service of others. Now in its third year, the award celebrates extraordinary Filipinos whose legacies mirror that of the great Rosa Rosal—selfless, enduring, and quietly powerful.

A recognition that goes beyond accolades—it honors a life where the heart leads the way. A life of humility, quiet courage, and unwavering compassion. With this third recognition, Madam Bravo believes it's a rare honor and a testament to her pure heart.

For the third time, Ms. Cecille Bravo received the Gawad Rosa Rosal Legacy Award—an unprecedented recognition that reflects not just consistent service, but a love for others so deep that it cannot be measured.

Emotionally, Madam Bravo spoke with tears in her eyes, "Walang sawang serbisyo, walang sawang pagmamahal..." she utters. She was not seeking attention, nor was she asking for applause.

She just continues giving. Endlessly! ♦



Hon. Marcos Mamay:

From Mountain Boy to Cinematic Trailblazer

■ BY ERIC BORROMEO

FROM selling secondhand clothes in the streets of Cagayan de Oro to walking the red carpet at the 73rd FAMAS Awards, Hon. Marcos Mamay has proven that greatness isn't inherited — it's earned.

Through grit, grace, and an unwavering commitment to service, the Vice Mayor of Nunungan, Lanao del Norte, has transformed adversity into inspiration and inspiration into cinematic achievement. His life, now immortalized in the award-winning biopic *MAMAY: A Journey to Greatness,* stands as a testament to perseverance—a journey from poverty to purpose, and from public service to cinematic glory.

Roots of Resilience

Amid the misty mountains of Lanao del Norte — where clan conflicts and poverty once dictated fate — a young Marcos Mamay dared to dream differently.

"I didn't dream of riches," he recalls. "I dreamed of freedom — from fear, from poverty, from hopelessness."

He sold ukay-ukay clothes in Cagayan de Oro to support his family, walked kilometers to school, and navigated a world divided by rido. Every peso earned was a promise — that one day, his story would be different.

Even as a child, there was something magnetic about him: a quiet charisma, a steady confidence that hinted at the leader he would become.

"I made a vow to change not just my story, but my town's future."

That vow would one day lead him back home — not as the boy who left to survive, but as the man who returned to rebuild.

The Mayor Who Rebuilt a Town

When he became Mayor of Nunungan, Mamay didn't just restore order — he reignited hope.

His tenure became a benchmark for transformation: pioneering peace-building efforts, championing education, and bringing warring clans to reconciliation tables. Under his watch, Nunungan rose from its troubled past to become a model of grassroots governance in Mindanao.

He rebuilt schools, launched scholarship programs, and ensured that no child would have to trade dreams for safety.

"Leadership isn't about power," Mamay says. "It's about presence. You show up, you listen, you act."

Now serving as Vice Mayor and National Vice President of the League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP), Mamay continues to prove that empathy is not weakness — it's the foundation of lasting leadership.

Culture, Tourism, and the Spirit of Nunungan

Once overlooked, Nunungan now thrives with life, color, and culture.

At the heart of this renaissance is the breathtaking Lake Nunungan — often called the Switzerland of Lanao del Norte — a place of peace and reflection that has become the town's crown jewel.

The annual Nunungan Summer Festival, launched under Mamay's leadership, celebrates Maranao artistry in full bloom: from traditional weaves and dances to kulintang music echoing across the lake.

"Tourism isn't just about scenery," Mamay emphasizes. "It's about dignity. When people visit Nunungan, I want them to see that peace can thrive even where war once ruled."

He also empowered local entrepreneurs through community-based tourism — eco-lodges, craft cooperatives, and small enterprises that give residents both livelihood and pride.

"When you give people hope," he says, "they



stop leaving. They start building."

Film as a Tool for Healing

When the pandemic silenced film sets across the country, Mamay saw an opportunity — not for fame, but for compassion.

As Adviser of the Actors Guild of the Philippines (KAPPT), he witnessed the devastating loss of income for artists and crew members.

"Our actors had no projects. Our crew couldn't feed their families," he recalls. "As someone who loves film, I couldn't just watch from the sidelines."

From that conviction, Mamay Productions was born — a Mindanao-based studio dedicated to storytelling, livelihood, and hope.

"If the government supports agriculture to feed







the body, then film feeds the soul," he says. "And it provides real jobs — that's meaningful work."

The company's debut feature, *MAMAY: A Journey to Greatness,* directed by Neal "Buboy" Tan, became both memoir and movement — a story of faith, resilience, and destiny.

The powerhouse cast includes Jeric Raval as Mamay, Ara Mina as his wife, and Teejay Marquez as the young Mamay, alongside Polo Ravales, Ali Forbes, Victor Neri, Julio Diaz, Devon Seron, Sabrina M, Ron Angeles, Jethro Ramirez, Alvin Fortuna, Dennis Coronel, Sheila Delgado, Baby F. Go, John Arcenas, Via Veloso, Katrina Paula, Toni Co, Tonz Are, EJ Malik, Dan Mabano and Shiela Torres Lintan, who also serves as an actress and Line Producer.

Mamay himself served as Assistant Director, ensuring the authenticity of every frame.

"I wanted this film to prove that your birthplace doesn't define your greatness," he says. "I'm just a boy from the mountains who refused to give up."

A Legacy in Motion

At the 73rd FAMAS Awards, held at The Manila Hotel, *MAMAY: A Journey to Greatness* swept the night — earning ten nominations, five major wins, and two special honors for Mamay himself.

Awards Include:

- Best Supporting Actor – Jeric Raval
- Best Cinematography – Gilbert Obispo
- Best Production Design – Cyrus Khan
- Best Musical Score – Neal "Buboy" Tan
- Best Original Song – "Hamon" by Gerald Santos (composed by Vehnee Saturno)
- Presidential Award – Hon. Marcos Mamay
- Film Producer of the Year – Mamay Productions

"I didn't expect the trophies," Mamay says with quiet humility. "I only wanted to help. But when you lead with your heart, God turns purpose into blessings."

His growing presence in entertainment also earned him recognition at the PMPC Star Awards and 53rd Box-Office Entertainment Awards, where he shared the stage with some of the country's brightest stars — Boy Abunda, Alden Richards, Kim Chiu, Paolo Avelino, Barbie Forteza, Marian Rivera, Dingdong Dantes, Jericho Rosales, Donny Pangilinan, Belle Mariano, Janine Gutierrez, and Coco Martin.



"Standing beside them reminded me that dreams know no region," he says. "Mindanao, too, has stars — and I'll keep opening doors for them."

Under Shiela Torres Lintan's line production, Mamay Productions already has a dynamic slate ahead — including concerts, music video projects, a coffee-table book, and four new films: *One Life to Leave, Babae sa Salamin, OFW, 48 Hours in Hell,* and a movie starring Ejay Falcon.

Beyond the Screen

For Nunungan, Mamay envisions a smart, sustainable municipality — one where eco-agri tourism meets digital innovation and youth entrepreneurship.

"My dream is to make Nunungan a model of peace-driven development," he says. "A place where our youth don't have to leave to succeed — success will find them here."



For the film industry, he dreams even bigger: a full-fledged Mindanaoan film studio that nurtures new voices, supports regional filmmakers, and tells stories that can stand proudly on the global stage.

"Showbiz isn't just Manila's world anymore," he asserts. "Mindanao has stories worth telling, actors worth seeing, and filmmakers worth believing in."

He's also laying groundwork for a Film & Arts Training Center in Lanao del Norte — a first-of-its-kind initiative designed to give young creators access to professional mentorship right in their hometowns.

"I want to leave behind more than buildings," Mamay reflects. "I want to leave behind opportunities."

His daughter, Alliah Mamay, now steps into the spotlight to continue his legacy — proof that his story is not about power, but purpose.



"Leadership is knowing when to lift others," he says. "That's how legacy becomes nation-building."

Final Frame

From the highlands of Mindanao to the glittering halls of FAMAS, PMPC, and 53rd Box-Office Entertainment Awards, Hon. Marcos Mamay stands as living proof that greatness isn't born from privilege — it's built through persistence.

"If my story proves anything," he smiles, "it's that you can come from the mountains… and still reach the stars." ♦



CECILLE BRAVO: BEAUTY, BRAINS & A GIVING HEART

■ BY ANNE VENANCIO

SHE'S a beauty queen, a business leader, a philanthropist, and one of the most admired women in the entertainment industry. Meet Cecille Bravo, Vice President for Administration and Finance of Intele Builders and Development Corporation and Ambassadress of Mrs. Universe 2025—a woman whose grace and generosity shine as bright as her achievements.

At the Mrs. Universe 2025 event, Cecille exuded elegance and confidence. But beyond beauty, she represents strength and compassion—a woman who uses her influence to uplift others through charity, art, and advocacy.

"Helping others has always been part of who I am," says Cecille. "Success means nothing if you don't use it to touch lives. Whether it's a charity event, a film project, or a concert, I want to be there—supporting, giving, and sharing joy."

Heart for Charity

Cecile's Intele Builders and Development Corporation partnered with Best Magazine to spearhead the 2025 Charity Event at Torres Farm in Naic, Cavite. The event marked the second anniversary of Kidz Groove TV, an entertainment and educational online show for children. It proved to be a celebration for neurodivergent kids and teens. More than 350 participants from Cavite, Laguna, and Batangas joined the event—a day filled with laughter, inclusivity, and compassion.

She also helps victims of calamities, particularly earthquake survivors, proving that her generosity goes far beyond corporate or social obligations. It comes from genuine empathy.

Cecille is also venturing into film. She stars in the upcoming Ang Aking Mga Anak, directed by Jun Miguel under Viva Films and Dreamgo Productions, and produced by JS Jimenez. The film is a poignant reminder that we are all God's children, each carrying our own struggles but bound by faith and hope.

OPM Champion

Cecille's passion for music is just as strong. She proudly supports Filipino artists by sponsoring concerts likeOPM: Then & Now – One Night, One Stage, Two Generations on Thursday, November 6 at the Music Museum. She's also known for buying multiple tickets to shows like Nonoy Zuniga's Beyond Gold Concert, treating her staff and friends as a way to celebrate Filipino talent.

For her outstanding contributions, Cecille received a Special Citation at the 37th PMPC Star Awards for Television and the Rosa Rosal Legacy Award 2025. These affirmed her place as a respected philanthropist and entertainment supporter.

Affectionately called the "ultimate ninang" and "darling of entertainment media," Cecille has earned the love of many.

"We can't even count how many awards she's received—she truly deserves every single one," shares her close friend and publicist John Fontanilla. "Her generosity is unbelievable, and her kindness leaves a mark wherever she goes."

Life Anchored in Love

Now celebrating over 30 years of marriage with Pedro M. Bravo, she continues to embody strength, compassion, and purpose.

For Cecille Bravo, success isn't about titles or trophies—it's about how much love you give and how many lives you lift. Through every project, every smile, and every act of kindness, she reminds us that true beauty begins—and endures—with the heart. ♦



Nes Astilla
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Ness Astilla: A Beacon of Resilience and Perseverance

■ BY MARYO LABAD

"In my field, I think legacy is about creating a lasting impact that goes beyond trends and products. It means building a brand and community rooted in authenticity, empowerment, and inclusivity - where people feel inspired to embrace their unique beaty and confidence. Legacy is also about mentorship, sharing knowledge, and uplifting others to succedd and innovate in the industry."

IN the constantly changing landscape of beauty and entrepreneurship, few names stand out as much as Nestor Astilla. Known affectionately as Mommy Ness among peers and loyal clients, his unique combination of creativity, authenticity, and business savvy has made him a genuine source of inspiration for aspiring beauty enthusiasts and emerging entrepreneurs.





A native of Barugo, Leyte, Ness left his province in search of a better future in the big city. Endowed with an eye for beauty and a skill for enhancing people's appearances, he seized the opportunity to work in one of the country's largest salons for decades, where he gained the necessary experience and confidence to become a well-rounded beauty expert.



Astilla's journey into the beauty industry is driven by his genuine passion for enhancing natural beauty and empowering individuals to embrace their uniqueness. His distinct style and insightful perspectives have earned him recognition from colleagues and the industry alike for his hard work and dedication in achieving his current status.

As a testament to his commitment to authenticity as a beauty guru, Astilla encourages everyone to promote self-love and confidence, making beauty accessible to all. This mantra not only helps him keep long-time clienteles, but challenges conventional beauty norms, paving the way for a more inclusive industry.

Beyond his role as beauty expert, Astilla embodies the spirit of entrepreneurship. He has successfully transformed his passion into thriving business ventures, offering services that reflect his core values of quality, sustainability, and innovation. So far, he has established three branches of Ness Astilla Salon (two in Mandaluyong - one in Mandala Park, along Shaw Boulevard, and along Libertad St., - and the third one in Quezon City).

This successful entrepreneur has been invited to various competitions, and represented the country as a judge, namely, in the Asia-Pacific Hairdressers Cosmetologists Association or APHCA International Hair & Makeup Competition held in different countries (Bangkok (Thailand), Taipei (Taiwan), HK and Seoul (Korea).

He was also one of the Philippine delegates to the Eurasia Beauty and Wellness Convention held in Istanbul, Turkey; a judge in Hair Olympics in Bangkok, Thailand in 2019; a judge Representing Philippines in All India Hair and Beauty National Hair & Makeup Competition held in New Delhi, India. As an active member in the industry, he was the former Vice President of PICA (Phil. International Cosmetologist Association).

Astilla's entrepreneurial journey is characterized by strategic thinking and a keen understanding of market trends. This approach not only meets the demands of conscious consumers but also sets a benchmark for responsibility in business. Through workshops, collaborations, and speaking engagements during conventions and fora, he shares his knowledge and motivates others to pursue their dreams with confidence and resilience.

From humble beginnings to a thriving business, Astilla's story inspires. It reminds us that with dedication, creativity, and a genuine connection with clients, you can achieve anything you set your mind on. His sharp business sense ensures continued success. He is a shining example of the power of passion, hard work, authenticity, and business savvy. These qualities not only elevate him as a beauty icon but inspires a new generation of entrepreneurs to build impactful brands and innovate with purpose.



As he continues to break barriers and set new standards, Astilla remains a shining example of how passion combined with strategy can transform industries and empower individuals globally. And that makes him truly a legacy in the industry he loves. ♦



LAGRO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

ALDUV: Spreading Kindness Beyond Boundaries

■ BY ANNE VENANCIO

A dynamic small group in Quezon City aims to unite passionate individuals committed to driving positive change through dedicated volunteerism and uplifting communities through coordinated action, unwavering dedication, and strategic initiatives. Meet ALDUV.

In the bustling neighborhoods of Greater Lagro, Quezon City, one group proves that true leadership isn't about titles or politics — it's about heart. Meet ALDUV, the Alliance of Leaders Dedicated and United Volunteers — a small but mighty organization led by the ever-passionate Madam Helen Cortes, whose mission to serve has turned everyday kindness into a movement.

From Campaign to Compassion

Founded on September 17, 2015, ALDUV began as a circle of supportive parents in Lagro — originally created to support then-Representative Alfredo Dumlao Vargas of Quezon City's 5th District. The acronym ALDUV was literally his name. But what started as political support soon blossomed into something far more meaningful.





Ms. Helen with Coun. Alfred Vargas and Teacher Jenny

"We organized ALDUV to show support for Alfred Vargas," Helen recalls. "But as time went by, we realized our calling wasn't just about one person — it was about helping many."

Encouraged by Vargas himself, Helen and her group redefined their purpose. "He told us to make ALDUV stand for something bigger. So we did. We turned it into a symbol of service and unity," she shares.





Where Helping Hands Have No Borders

What began as a simple outreach program at Lagro Elementary School — providing school supplies and Christmas gifts — soon reached farther than Helen ever expected.

"One teacher asked if we could extend help to Norzagaray, Bulacan," Helen says with a smile. "How could we say no? If there's a need, ALDUV will be there."

ALDUV's members are mostly family and close friends — unpaid volunteers united by compassion. Their guiding principle is simple yet powerful: to help others in any way they can.

Meet the Movers and Doers:

President:	Helen Cortes
Vice President:	Florida Genato
Secretary:	Alvina Patricia Samson
Treasurer:	Conch De Castro
PRO:	Magdalena Sabularse
Business Manager:	Cherry Mae Rivera
Advisers:	Irene Cruz, Marlou Cortes, Leonard Christopher Genato, Kristine Pangilinan

Their growing roster of members — including Zyrell, Paolo, Francezca, Fiona, Carla Mae, and many others — continues to fuel ALDUV's spirit of volunteerism.



Recognition and Resilience

ALDUV's dedication hasn't gone unnoticed. The group has earned the Gawad Kaagapay Outstanding Stakeholders Award for three consecutive years from the Schools Division Office of Quezon City, recognizing their consistent support of Lagro Elementary School during Brigada Eskwela.

Still, the journey isn't without its hurdles. "We don't have big sponsors or steady funding," Helen admits. "Sometimes we have to scale down. But we never stop. What matters is that we keep showing up — even when it's hard."

A Heart That Beats for Music, Too

Outside her community work, Helen discovered another source of joy — music. In March 2024, she stumbled upon the band InnerVoices at BAR 360 in Newport.

"I'm not even a night person," she laughs. "But when I saw them perform, I was overwhelmed — their talent, their energy! I went home, watched their videos, and soon my kids were fans too. We followed them everywhere — Aromata, BAR IX, 19 East, Hard Rock Café. They brought music back into my life."

Leading with Heart

Under Mam Helen's leadership, ALDUV



continues to redefine what volunteerism means. It's not about fame, fortune, or fanfare — it's about showing up, giving back, and lifting others one act of kindness at a time.

As Helen puts it, "We may be small, but our hearts are big. ALDUV will keep serving — because that's what love in action looks like."

With leaders like her, ALDUV isn't just an organization — it's a heartbeat of hope in the heart of Quezon City. ♦

Rising Star Isha Ponti Gears Up for Her Grandest Season Yet

■ BY JEMUEL CAINGLET SALTERIO

AT just 19 years old, Isha Ponti is fast becoming one of the most talked-about voices in the Philippine music scene, and with good reason. The Aliw Awards honored her in 2024 as the Best New Female Artist, recognizing a talent that already feels grown in heart and vision.



In recent months, she has been steadily weaving together a schedule of high-profile guestings and solo projects that signal not only ambition, but an artistry fully alive to opportunity. On November the 28th at the Music Museum, she will join Chad Borja's 'All That Sound' concert as a guest artist. Then, on December the 9th, she is set to appear in the repeat performance of Nonoy Zuñiga's golden-jubilee concert, 'Beyond Gold: Songs of a Lifetime', at the Newport Performing Arts Theater. And this is all leading up to her very own concert, 'The Next Ones', on December the 13th at 8:00 o'clock p.m. at the Music Museum, with Andrea Gutierrez, special guests, and the musical direction of Adonis Tabanda under the brilliant concert director Calvin Neria.



This December calendar reads like the launchpad to superstardom. Yet even with such a demanding slate, Isha is also meticulously building her identity as a songwriter. Her newest single, 'Dyahe', a composition she penned herself (with production by Ponti Entertainment Production) is already gaining traction.

In a recent interview, Isha reflected on how she views her music. "I don't want to create songs just to sound international. I want to make music that speaks from my own experiences … I tried stepping out of my comfort zone with 'Dyahe,' but it's still me."

Her approach is rooted in sincerity. In media features, she has emphasized that her songs are not mere trends, but emotional offerings to her audience. Moreover, she is not just a performer, she is the managing director of Ponti Entertainment Productions, making her both creator and producer at a very young age.

In September, during Nonoy Zuñiga's anniversary show, Isha took the stage early, performing her own originals like 'Tangan', 'Kabang Kaba' and 'Dyahe', backed by the League of Monsters dance group. In that same concert, she shared the spotlight with Andrea Gutierrez and other seasoned artists, a clear signal that she is already being welcomed into the ranks of OPM's next generation.

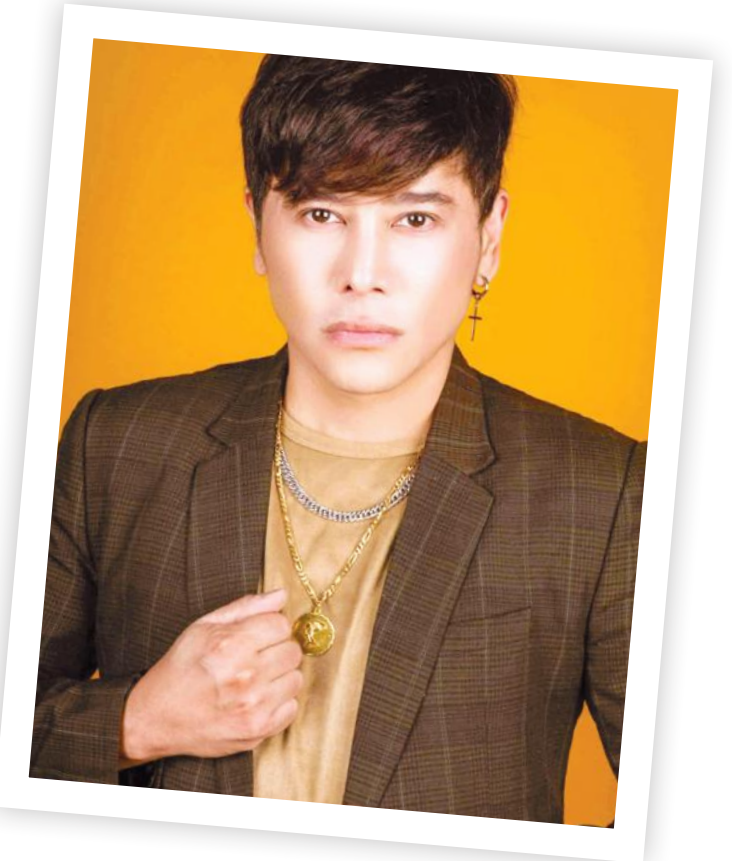
For 'The Next Ones' concert, Isha is poised to bring together everything she has been building, songwriting, performance, collaboration, in one definitive statement of who she is as an artist. With Adonis Tabanda as musical director, Calvin Neria helming the direction, and Andrea Gutierrez as co-star, she is surrounding herself with strong creative partners. The production is handled by her own Ponti Entertainment Production, a testament to her belief in creating her own path.

Even amid this rise, she remains grounded in gratitude. She often credits her mother as her anchor, the quiet force behind every rehearsal, every lyric, every risk. And though her discography is still young, with 'Dyahe' at its forefront now, her deeper catalog already includes emotionally resonant originals, each adding a new shade to her emerging musical identity.

As December the 13th draws near, anticipation is building. Isha Ponti stands not just on the cusp of a milestone concert, she stands at a turning point in her career. If her recent trajectory is any indication, she won't just rise, of she will command. And those who witness 'The Next Ones' may just say they saw a new Philippine pop icon come fully into her own. ♦


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LATEST
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SOCIALS
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ON DEC 13, 2025

Director's Notes



FIRST and foremost, THANK YOU for welcoming PhilStagers so warmly and readily into your hearts for 25 long years. Following the post-pandemic shows, we could not be more excited to present "Bonifacio…" as our full-season artistic offering. This re-run is long overdue, and it is our mission to be truthful storytellers, offering productions that are educational and relatable to a modern audience. We are here, we are ready, we are for you.

I cannot imagine a more perfect play than "Bonifacio, Ang Supremo" to shine with you as our flagship production on our silver anniversary. It is a prime example of the passion, honesty, and commitment that you can expect from us at PhilStagers. This play is intensely special to me, not only because I was given the opportunity to write and direct it in 2013 and now, but because, as a company of artists, we have pulled together to make dreams come true. I truly believe that the universe needed it to be done with these artists for this audience right now.

Throughout history, the theater has been useful in specific ways at particular historical moments. But even though Bonifacio's life happened several years ago, it remains our story. Thank you for being here. Enjoy.

Atty. Vincent M. Tañada
Artistic Director/CEO
PhilStagers Foundation

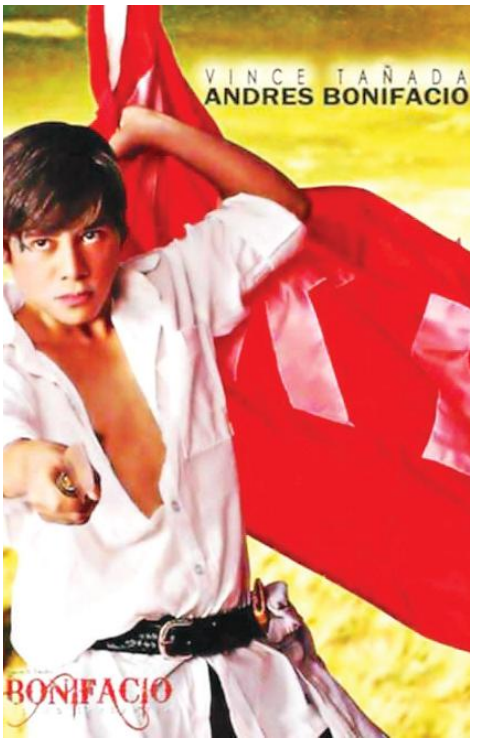


Director's Profile

ATTY. Vincent M. Tañada is a critically acclaimed, multi-awarded playwright, actor, director, producer, and educator. He has long championed theater as a tool to educate, entertain, and most importantly, inspire, believing it to be "the soul of the nation" and an essential instrument in nation-building. As the CEO and artistic director of the PhilStagers Theater Foundation, he has written all librettos for the company's major musicals, using the stage as a platform to promote patriotism, culture, and awareness of social issues. Tanada's exceptional contributions to theater have earned him multiple distinctions.

In 2009, he was awarded Best Director at the Aliw Awards for "Ako si Ninoy," which also won Best Musical. The following year, he received another Best Director award for "Enzo...Santo," and in 2011, he was named Best Director in the BroadwayWorld Awards for "Cory ng EDSA." He was later inducted into the Aliw Awards Hall of Fame for Best Director in a Musical after garnering his third award in the category for "Katips: Ang Mga Bagong Katipunero." His 2022 film "Katips," a musical adaptation of his 2016 stage play, earned 17 nominations and won seven major awards at the 70th FAMAS Awards, including Best Director, Best Actor, and Best Film. ♦

Vince Tañada's "Bonifacio: Ang Supremo: Isang Musikal"



ANG "Bonifacio..." ay isang dula na sinaliwan ng awit at sayaw, may tatlong yugto at higit sa dalawampung tagpo, tumatakbo ng hindi hihigit sa dalawang oras at gumagamit ng mga wikang Filipino (Tagalog), at ay kaunting Espanol.

Si Andres Bonifacio y de Castro (Nobyembre 30, 1863 – Mayo 10, 1897), ay isang makabayang Filipino at rebolusyunaryo. Siya ang tinaguariang "Ama ng Rebulosyung Pilipino" o "Ama ng Katipunan." Siya ang nagtatag at lumao'y nagging "Supremo ng Katipunan" o "Ama ng Katipunan" o Kataastaasang Kagalanggalangang Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan. Isang lihim ng samahan ng nagnanais ng kalayaan buhat sa Espanya sa pamamagitan ng sandatahang rebulosyun.

Noong Hulyo 7, 1892, si Dr. Jose Rizal ay ipinatapon sa Dapitan. Isang liblib na probinsya na malayo sa Maynila. Sa araw ring ito itinatag ni Bonifacio and Katipunan.sa walang pag-asa sa mapayapang reporma na isinusulong ng La Liga Filipino,isang asosasyong itinatag ni Rizal. Maipapamalas sa dula ang pagiging magkaibigan ni Bonifacio at Emilio Jacinto na sa pagsisimula ay nagpanggap na mga manlalayag sa barko na sinakyan ni Rizal ng siya ay ihahatid sa Maynila buhat sa Dapitan upang litisin. Pinilit na kumbisihin ni Bonifacio at Jacinto si Rizal na pamunuan ang Katipunan at simulant na ang rebolusyon. Hindi papaya si Rizal sa kadahilanang hindi pa handa ang mga rebolusyunaryo at kailangan pa ng mas masusing paghahanda.

Noong Agusto 30, 1896, pinamunuan ni Bonifacio and isang madugong pag-atake sa San Juan del Monte. Pinagwagian ni bonifacio ang laban ngunit hindi nagtagal ay dumating ang malaking pulutong ng mga Kastilang sundalo at sa dilim ng gabi'y marami ang napaslang sa mga Katipunero. Umatras ang pangkat ni Bonifacio at muling nagsanib pwersa sa Marikina, San Mateo at Montalban. Ang tagumpay ng unang pagatake na ito'y nagsilbing mitsa upang maipahiwatig sa bansa ang napipintong mas Malaki pang rebolusyon sa mga karating pook. Sa buwan ng Disyembre, taong 1986, tinanggap ng mga Kastilang awtoridad na malaki ang naging epekto ng mga rebolusyon sa tatlong pook, ang Cavite sa pamumuno ni Emilio Aguinaldo, Ang Bulacan sa ilalim ni Mariano Llanera, at Morong sa ilalim ni Bonifacio.

Synopsis:

At noong nagkaroon ng malaking hidwaan ang dalawang grupo ng mga Katipunero sa Cavite, and Magdalo at Magdiwang, inimbitahan si Bonifacio na mamagitansa dalawa.Pinagbintangan naman ng Magdalo si Bonifacio na kinikilingan ang Magdiwang dahil tiyuhin ng asawa ni Bonifacio na si Gregoria de Jesus ang pinuno nito. Ang kanyang layunin na mamagitan ay nauwi sa tawag ng halalan upang mapatunayan kun sino ang tunay na pinuno ng rebolusyon. At sapagkat ito ay ginawa sa Cavite at dahil sa kakulangan ng suportabuhat sa ibang probinsya sa panahong iyon, ang Cavitenong si Aguinaldo ang nagwagi. Si Bonifacio naman ay nahalal lamang na Direktor Pamahalaang Panloob, ngunit ito ay prinotesta pa ni Daniel Tirona, na nagwika na ang posisyon ay kinakailangang maibigay sa may mataas na pinag-aralan katulad ng isang abugado. Sa galit ni Bonifacio'y muntik na niyang mabaril si Tirona at nagwikang ang botohang iyon ay walang saysay at hindi niya gagalangin.

Nagpadala si Aguinaldo ng mga tauhan upang kumbinsihin si Bonifacio na galangin ang resulta ng halalan, ngunit hindi sila pinansin ni Bonifacio. Ang pamahalaan ni Aguinaldo ay nag-utos na arestuhin si Bonifacio, at inutusan niya ang dalawang tauhan upang magtungo sa kampo ni Bonifacio sa Indang. Hindi nalalaman ni Bonifacio ang planong ito kaya tinanggap niya ang mga tauhan ni Aguinaldo. Kinabukasan ay inatake ng dalawang tauhan ang kampo ngunit iniutos ni Bonifacio sa kanyang mga tauhan na huwag lumaban. Nasaksak si Bonifacio sa leeg, napatay ang kanyang kapatid na si Ciriaco at nasugatan ang isa pang kapatid na si Procopio. Ginahas naman ng isang tauhan ni Aguinaldo ang asawa na si Gregoria.

Nilitis sa Naik ang magkapatid na Andres at Procopio Bonifacio at sa kabila ng kakulngan ng ebidensya at halatang pagkiling ng mga tagapaglitis ka Aguinaldo, napatunayan ang dalawa na nagtaksil sa bayan at hinatulan ng kamatayan. Binaril si Procopio at sinaksak naman ng maraming beses si Bonifacio hanggang sa mamatay.

Ang dulang ito ay isang pagpapahayag ng labis na pagmamahal sa bayan, ang pa-ibig sa tunubuang lupa na matuturing na pinakamataas na uri ng pagmamahal. Ang pagkabayani ni Bonifacio ay hindi lamang nakadikit sa katapangan at pagamit ng armas upang ipagtanggol ang bayan at mamamayan kundi pati na rin sa kanyan pagmamahal sa kapatiran, masusi at malalim nap ag-iisip at lohikal na pagdedesisyon. ♦





Jeri Violago: His Unstoppable Love for Music

■ BY PILAR MATEO

THIS new kid on the block has slowly made his way into the world he wants to enter: showbusiness, specifically the music industry.



Jeri Violago captured attention by winning the Aliw Award for Best New Male Artist in 2023. He brings a new voice, a fresh style, and an abundance of charm!

But wait! People take a second look because he can be mistaken for Matteo Guidicelli. However, upon closer look, there are significant differences. For one, Jeri is younger, and unlike Matteo, he doesn't have Sarah Geronimo beside him. Additionally, Jeri could easily be mistaken for a foreign celebrity.

Music has become this lad's passion as he creates beautiful emotions woven into different stories in each piece. This season, Jeri offers a new "hugot" song for hopeless romantics: "Ako Na Sana."

It was released through Tarsier Records together with a music video, which was inspired by a reality dating show where he tried to find the right match. It also featured Jae Miranda as a host and Erika Davis, Julia Santiago, and Kanata Tapia as single ladies looking for love.



Familiar? Relate? Jeri wrote the track to express his hopes of winning over the person he loves. It was produced by the formidable team led by Jonathan Manalo, ABS-CBN Music's overall head of creatives, content, and operations.

Jeri pursued his passion for music by competing in various shows and singing contests while exploring multiple genres. He experimented with theatrical, classical, and pop music.

The pandemic inspired him to pursue songwriting and music production, leading him to open for and perform with various OPM artists, including Over October, Vina Morales, Jona Viray, Bo Cerrudo, Marco Sison, Nonoy Zuniga, and many more.

In 2023, Jeri had a remarkable year as he made his debut as a recording artist. He released two tracks, "Di Ka Mag-iisa" and "Gusto Kita," which led to him being awarded "Best New Male Artist" at the 2023 Aliw Awards.

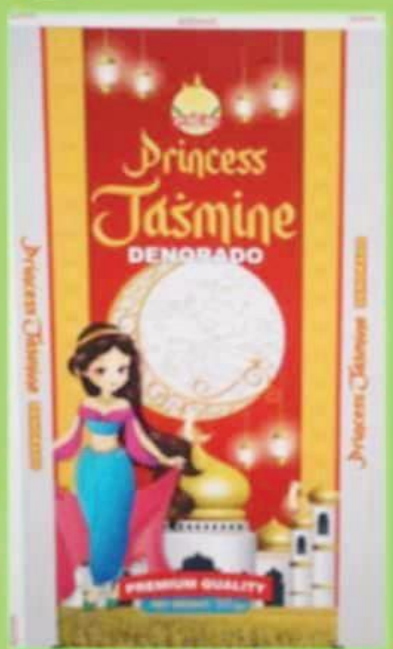
That distinct, mellow voice is sure to capture the hearts of listeners—those falling in love, those in a relationship, and anyone just needing to feel good in each moment. There's more to discover about Jeri. The swoons and applause are becoming thunderous.

Will his face be seen on the big screen? He says that he can wait because music is his priority, with seven more songs he's written now in the pipeline. He took the chance, trod the steps, and now he's right here where he belongs! ♦

JERI VIOLAGO

"AKO NA SANA"
ON SPOTIFY & YOUTUBE











Mhel Pechera: To Serve with a Grateful Heart

■ BY PILAR MATEO

LIONS are fierce. They roar with purpose.

Such are the qualities embodied by Imelda "Mhel" Pechera, the current First Vice District Governor for Lion Year 2025-2026 of Lions International District 301-A2 Philippines.

She is determined to have her voice heard and sees her ideas become action.

But who are they, the Lions?

"As an individual, it saddens me to see a lot of our fellowmen suffering primarily due to poverty, and so I always make it a point to share whatever blessings I have in my life to help alleviate their sufferings in my own little way.

"I joined Lions International, specifically District 301-A2 Philippines, because I have witnessed how this organization rolls up its sleeves in doing projects directly intended for the very grassroots of the marginalized sector of our society. Then, I thought to myself, if I can help as my own person a lot of my unfortunate fellowmen utilizing my personal resources, how much more if I belong to a Lions Club comprising of a lot of members who have the same passion for service as I am, therefore, more people can be served.

"That's when I decided to accept the invitation to Lions International District 301-A2 Philippines to organize a Lions Club; hence, my home club, Ayala Amity Centennial Lions Club 6PMJF, was born on October 19, 2017, right on the 100th Year of Lions International, where I assumed the position of its Charter President.

"Allow me first to give you a brief overview of what our organization is all about. Our association is the largest humanitarian organization in the world, made up of 1.37 million Lion members in 50,050 clubs as of today, who bring hands and hearts to the communities we serve in nearly every country on earth.



"We Lions, together with our Leos, help hundreds of millions of people every year. Our mission is to empower our Lion Clubs volunteers and partners to promote health and well-being, strengthen communities, and support those in need through humanitarian service and grants that impact lives globally and encourage peace and international understanding. And we fulfill it every day, everywhere we serve.

"In the course of my Lionism Journey, the advocacies of our organization, which touched the lives of so many Filipinos, have been engraved not only in my heart but also on the hearts of the other Lions of our district. These are the 9 global causes of our organization, as follows:

Vision. We help prevent avoidable blindness and improve the quality of life of people who are blind and visually impaired.

Diabetes. We help to reduce the prevalence of diabetes and help to improve the quality of life of those already afflicted with diabetes.

Hunger. We strive to improve food security and access to nutritious food to alleviate hunger and malnutrition.

Environment. We find ways to protect the environment, create healthier communities, and build a more sustainable world.

Childhood Cancer. We provide support for the needs of children afflicted and families affected by cancer.

Youth. We support young people so they can make positive choices, lead healthy and productive lives, and become the next generation of service leaders.

Disaster Relief. We take steps to meet the immediate needs and provide long-term support for communities devastated by natural disasters.

Humanitarian. We identify the most crucial needs of our communities and provide humanitarian aid where and when it's needed.

Mental Health & Well Being. This is the latest service initiative Lions International has adopted. Lions and Leos are shining a light on mental health and well-being by raising awareness, serving their communities, and advocating for positive change.

"As we always say – when there's a need, there's a Lion," abiding with our universal motto, which is "We Serve!"

"In summation, ask me who I am as a Lion and what my advocacies are? My answer is already stated in what I have said, with one primary mission – to serve with a grateful heart, sharing my blessings with our unfortunate fellow men, and to inspire others to do so. At least in our own little way, we can make them smile and be happy.

"I am Lion Charter President Imelda "MHEL" F. Pchera 55PMJF, incumbent First Vice District Governor for Lion Year 2025-2026 of Lions International District 301-A2 Philippines."

It's their 8th anniversary! To continue serving and to share, the Lions way! ♦


LEADERSHIP
SERVICE
MEMBERSHIP
PASSION
&
ACTION
LIONS
INTERNATIONAL
AYALA AMITY CENTENNIAL LIONS CLUB
DISTRICT 301-A2 PHILIPPINES
LIONS
INTERNATIONAL
Lion Imelda "Mhel"
Pechera, 55PMJF
1st Vice District Governor
Lion Year 2025-2026
DISTRICT 301-02

Gerald Santos makes another dream come true

■ BY JEMUEL CAINGLET SALTERIO

FRESH from winning the FAMAS Best Original Song award for Hamon (composed by Vehnee Saturno), theme of the acclaimed movie Mamay, Gerald Santos is again proving that talent and perseverance can take you far beyond the imaginable. For the singer-actor, this award is not just another accolade, but a symbol of years of hard work, faith, and artistic growth.





"It's an honor to sing this song by Tito Vehnee. This victory is not just mine but for everyone who believes in OPM," Gerald shared . The win follows his critically praised performance in MAMAY: A Journey To Greatness, and reaffirms his multifaceted artistry as singer and actor.

But even as the applause for Hamon' echoes, Gerald is setting the stage for what could be the biggest musical milestone of his career—his major solo concert, Dreams on WednesedDecember 3 at Newport Performing Arts Theater.

"'Dreams is all about songs I've always wanted to perform, songs that inspired me and shaped who I am today," Gerald said. "Every number in this concert has a story. It's my heart speaking through music."

Dreams celebrates music, mentorship, and memory. Under the musical direction of Jason Cabato and Antonino Rommel Ramilo's concert direction, Dreams is a grand showcase and deeply personal journey. The concert will feature a powerhouse lineup of special guests who mirror Gerald's journey through music and theater.

Special guests include, Jed Madela, the Philippines' 'Singer's Singer', whose vocal mastery has inspired countless performers, Na-Young Jeon, the international theater actress celebrated for portraying Fantine in London's Les Misérables and Marco Sison, an OPM icon whose timeless hits continue to define generations.

"To share the stage with these amazing artists is truly a dream come true," Gerald said. "They represent different chapters of my life—as a performer, dreamer, and student of music."

> *"'Dreams is all about songs I've always wanted to perform, songs that inspired me and shaped who I am today," Gerald said.*

Aside from his guests, the concert will include a moving tribute to OPM legends like Pilita Corrales, Freddie Aguilar, Hajji Alejandro, and Nora Aunor, with Gerald performing signature songs in their honor. "These artists shaped our music and our nation's soul. This is my small way of saying thank you," he noted.

From his humble beginnings in Navotas to winning Pinoy Pop Superstar at 15, Gerald has grown into one of the most respected voices in Philippine entertainment. He conquered the international stage as Thuy in the Miss Saigon UK Tour, performing over 550 shows, a testament to his discipline and artistry.

Dreams lets him step into a new chapter that merges every part of his journey, OPM singer, international stage actor, and passionate storyteller.

As Gerald put it, "Dreams don't expire. They evolve. You just have to keep believing, working, and singing your truth."

From a FAMAS trophy to the bright lights of Newport, Gerald Santos reminds us that every victory, big or small, is a song waiting to be sung. ♦

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Back to the future with InnerVoices

■ BY JOJO P. PANALIGAN ■ PHOTOS BY MON ALMAZAN



IT'S 9 p.m. and in some bar in the north, the energy has shifted.

That's because the members of InnerVoices are finally on stage and now stand (or sit, as in the case of the drummer) in position; music warriors poised to engage in sonic battle.

Earlier, during soundcheck, the audience was only mildly interested about their surroundings, the proceedings. For loyal followers of InnerVoices, they knew that time is best used for talk hobbies, travel, exes, office scandals, more office scandals, etc Later, there's nothing else but the music to consume them entirely.

As for the uninitiated, they sit there unprepared for the magic ahead.

Time has come. Members of the band look expectantly at Atty. Rey Bergado. Ever so slightly, the InnerVoices founder, first keyboard player and band leader raises his eyebrows, tilts his head, nods—and it begins.

It's *"Sailing"* by Christopher Cross! Well, so much for an opener from a band celebrated in the live local circuit for their thou-shall-stand-up-and-dance '80s songs.

But then again, it is music from the Decade of Decadence; topping the US charts on August 30,1980. The song won for Cross the Grammy Awards for Song of the Year—still, what the hell is it doing on top of InnerVoices playlist? Shouldn't they be doing an upbeat song as many do, and as actually expected from a show?

Rey does a quick survey of the faces in the crowd. Many are singing along and tapping their feet in sync with the snare drum. A slightly middle-aged couple holds hands, stardust in their eyes. A teenager who likely heard the song on TikTok, mouths the lines of the chorus so to show his tropa he knows his music "because anything is possible now with the internet."

Rey smiles. Once again, InnerVoices takes a gamble—and it pays off.

You know those, er, know-it-all dumbasses in concerts by international artists who spoil the show for everyone within earshot by dropping the title of the next song on the repertoire because they've researched it in advance? It will never happen to InnerVoices.

Because no night is the same for the band no matter how many times you watch them.

It's their style, their strength.

It's always a by-feel show.

***


PATRICK MARCELINO

Whenever Innervoices performs *"Change"* by Tears For Fears, it's not just the band indulging us with ear candy, but it's reiteration of how integral impermanence has been to their career.

"Change–you can change!" is the line from that New Wave classic that men (and women) in the bars shout when alcohol has taken the upperhand (or getting there).

It's the same words that have become absolute reality to band leader and keyboard player Rey Bergado, lead guitarist Rene Tecson, drummer and percussionist Jojo Esparago, bass guitarist Alvin Herbon, second keyboard player Joseph Cruz and vocalist Patrick Marcelino.

"When we started as a quartet in the '90s, our original songs were dark," said Rey in an interview held in a photography studio. "Almost all were written in minor key *kaya bagay sa pagka-seryoso nung* name *ng banda."*

Who would've thought that more than three decades and three changes in lead vocalist later, in 2025, Innervoices will put out songs neither angry nor sad? *"Saksi Ang Mga Tala," "Idlip," "Meant To Be," "Galaw,"*—all in major keys and these actually move the feet or slow down heartbeat.

But if you ask them, it's not the change in mood or writing style that dumbfounds. Not the musical evolution.

Rather, it's simply that the band is still around, slugging it out with the likes of Dilaw, Lola Amour and December Avenue .

"We thought we ended in 2016," Rey said of the time they went on hiatus. *"Pero kaninang umaga lang,* Joseph and I were saying *mas* solid and *banda*, *mas maingay, mas madaming gig---at may pictorial pa!"*

It's the winds of change whistling through the cracks, howling down the streets, and rattling the trees with utmost temerity.

Change has come for Innervoices yet again and, as before, they roll with the punches.

"We feel something good is about to happen," admitted they, feeling flushed and expectant to the bone.

It's not wishful thinking: It's inner voices demanding to be heard.

***

Patrick Marcelino is in a quandary. Well, sort of.

See, it's the last set of InnerVoices, and he had already sung their death-defying Queens medley that includes *"We Are The Champions," "We Will Rock You,"* and the vocally punishing *"Bohemian Rhapsody."* As in the previous show, and the ones before that, the band delivered well enough to have roused the entire room on their feet and chanting..."Moooore!"


ATTY. REY BERGADO

Really? More?? After that mini feat, isn't it that the band could have died and gone to heaven and their lives would have already mattered?

But, no, there they were shouting lustily what could either be a delightful or a daunting word for a band that has seemingly given their all already.

That word: More.

Fortunately, Patrick is not just some vocalist, in the same way that InnerVoices is not your average band. He, after all, has sung internationally and for so many years. Innervoices, well, they are multi-awarded, to say the least.




RENE TECSON

So, of course, they were born ready. As Rihanna puts it, they came to win, to fight, to conquer. To fly.

Night after night; and then, yet again, perhaps till Kingdom Come.

The boys look at each other. Atty. Rey Bergado makes the signal and—boom—it's the intro of *"Shut Up And Dance"* by Walk The Moon.

It's a clever choice: It doesn't aim to top the Queens medley, no, sir. It does something else—it ends the night in uppity vibe.

The song underscores why we were there in the first place. To have fun, to feel alive. To remember that music can swoop down and save you from doldrums or even from the depths of despair, if you allow it.

And somehow, beer tastes better when everyone's laughing and dancing and singing along. When it's dance time in an InnerVoices show.

Hey, wait, question: Isn't "Shut Up And Dance" kinda...current? Isn't Innervoices an '80s act, a nostalgia band?

That---and more.

Final answer: More.

***

GENESIS

For the current members of Innervoices, when asked how each got into music, they'd say that in the beginning, as far as the interest or the means goes, sometimes there was... nothing.

"Meron lang kasi ako na auntie na nagtuturo ng classical music," Joseph recalled. "*May piano siya so pinapapila kami sa kanya para maturuan niya.* Eventually, *kung yung iba, gusto mag-basketball, ako*, I chose to learn how to play piano."

Alvin didn't see himself in a band until high school when his cousins, from a lark, asked him to join one as a bass player—even before he knew how to play!

"Sabi sa kin ng mga pinsan ko, 'Apat na strings *lang yan* (bass guitar), how hard could it be?'" he said, laughing.

The same goes with Rey. If you see him able to play now the likes of, oh, just *"Take On Me"* and *"Bohemian Rhapsody"* as easily as *"Do-Re-Mi,"* there was a time he "could barely play (keyboards)."

"I just knew a few chords dahil gitara talaga ang alam kong tugtugin" confessed he, who, together with the rest of the members of Innervoices, has mastered play at least 100 cover and original songs. "So, nag-aral ako ng isang taon dahil yun ang kailangan sa banda, keyboard-ista."

He was always musically-inclined, though.


ALVIN HERBON

In high school, when his music teacher gave an assignment for students to put fresh lyrics to an existing song, Rey pushed it to the next level by writing an original.

"It's called 'Please Stay,'" the band leader said. "Then in college, when the first batch of Innervoices was asked to play during a school program, we did that. Natuwa ang mga nakarinig and many told us, 'Ba't di niyo i-record...?'"

Innervoices eventually did, released under Universal Records.

Same as Rey, necessity prompted Jojo to learn how to pound away at stretched skins. "Drummer daw ang kulang, so nag-self-study ako," he said.

Patrick, who joined Innervoices just this year (but has been friends with the other members for, like, forever), said he got his love for music from his dad.





"Mahilig siya kumanta at may grupo din siya that did acoustic music of songs by such artists as Cliff Richards, Jose Mari Chan," the singer said. *"Bata pa lang ako, naririnig ko na siyang kumanta at siya talaga ang nag*-push *sa akin, sa aming magkakapatid* to sing."

His father would even enlist Patrick to join singing contests *"hanggang sa nagustuhan ko na ang pagkanta"* which was further honed when he got in the church choir.

The singer joined a band when he was in college upon the invitation of a classmate. *"Sumama ako sa* rehearsal, *pumunta ako sa gigs nila hanggang yun na,"* he said.

Patrick was so good at it that in just a year's time, he was able to use his talents to work abroad; specifically in Singapore, where he was based for many years as a singer.

***


JOJO ESPARRAGO

From where we were seated, Alvin looks either amused or bemused.

And who can blame him? InnerVoices has started playing *"The Promise"* by When In Rome which, in the recorded version, the bass part is obviously programmed.

Yet there he was approximating the playing. Is it a classic example of Man versus Machine? What the hell was InnerVoices thinking, at least as far as the bass player (that's Alvin) is concerned? Are they trying to kill him?

Kidding aside, he is doing a great job. For a guy. For a human.

At one point, his finger semi-slipped and the timing was off. Just a teeny weeny bit. But it was enough for Rene to glance at him with a friendly smirk. Of course he heard, everyone did. Later, we're sure Alvin won't hear the end of it.

Sometimes it's Jojo who effs up. Or even Rey. Always, you see on their faces that they will just laugh it off and do better next time. They don't take themselves too seriously—what for? It's not rocket science, for crying out loud, it's music.

You see in InnerVoices that they are foremost friends who support each other, and who won't go on if being part of the band has ceased to be fun.

Otherwise, what's the point? That's a good question right there.

GAMUT

On their Spotify account, Innervoices wrote this about themselves.

"Innervoices started in 1992 as a bunch of college buddies with a common passion in music. They came from mere hanging out playing instruments and writing lyrics and melodies until they got lucky to score gigs. Inspired by their different influences from the '80s, pop rock tunes, and contemporary classics, the band became regulars at different bars in the 90s while covering all genres as well as playing their originals.

"While juggling both their professional and musical careers, the band came up with their own album and wrote their own songs in 2014. With the rightful direction from the renowned record producer and hitmaker Vehnee Saturno, their debut album 'Find A Way,' released via Universal Records, became a hit.

"One of the tracks in the same album titled 'Paano' even won for them the Best Performance by a New Group Recording Artist at the 28th Awit Awards..."

Indeed, they set out to be known for their own songs. But because they are also so


JOSEPH CRUZ

good at covering songs of so many kinds of genres—staying painstakingly "faithful" to the arrangement of the original version down to triangle and tambourine—Innervoices is celebrated in the live circuit as kings of covers, most especially '80s songs.

From New Wave and pop to R&B and rock, InnerVoices delivers the hits of yesteryears and then some. Most of the songs are crowd favorites but some aren't obvious choices (e.g. *"Hypnotize Me"* versus the more popular *"Let's Go"* by Wang Chung).

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INNERVOICES:
My Thoughts and Their Music

■ BY ERIC BORROMEO ■ PHOTOS BY MON ALMAZAN

FORMED in the '90s, InnerVoices is a pop-rock band that doesn't chase trends or algorithms. They just want to play because it's who they are. The band carries the soul of the classics - Christopher Cross, Earth, Wind and Fire, Keny Loggins - but filters it through their own timeless groove. It's the kind of music that doesn't age, just deepens.

The lineup: Atty. Rey Bergado (band leader and keyboardist), Patrick Marcelino (vocals), Rene Tecson (lead guitar), Jojo Esparrago (drums and percussion), Alvin Herbon (bass), and Joseph Cruz (second keyboardist).

More Than Music. It's Family

"We thought it was over in 2016," Rey once told me — half laughing, half remembering. "Someone said we were too old for the scene. Even our families asked if it wasn't too late." But then came a voice of reason–the legendary Vehnee Saturno.

"A beautiful song is a beautiful song," he told Rey. "It will reach the young." That line stuck. It lit a fire. And instead of resisting the new age, Rey leaned in, like the AI-assisted composition and high-end keyboards that let him improvise freely.

"While others fear AI (Artificial Intelligence)," he said, "I use it to find new patterns, new possibilities."

That spirit of openness defines the band. They argue, sure — like any barkada does — but they always find their way back to the music. No egos, no drama. Just respect.

It Feels Like Home

"Mauubusan ba ako ng kuwento tungkol sa InnerVoices?" I once asked myself.

Maybe not. Maybe never.

Because watching them live has quietly become one of my favorite habits — Aromata, Hard Rock Café (Makati and Manila), Noctos, 19 East, and some random bars with bad lighting and great acoustics — I've probably been there. And every single time, I walk out lighter.

There's something healing about their gigs. You show up exhausted, nursing a week's worth of stress, and the moment they play that first chord — everything else fades. The music just wraps around you, like an old friend saying, "Relax. You're home."

It's not just a show; it's a reunion. You look around and everyone's smiling, clapping, singing along. For a few hours, no one's too old or too busy. It's just good music and good people sharing a moment that feels right.

Songs That Speak...and Stay

2025 has been a busy, beautiful year for the band. Their newest originals — *"Saksi ang mga Tala," "Sayaw sa Ilalim ng Buwan," "Meant To Be," "Galaw," "THAL (Tubig, Hangin, Apoy, Lupa),"* and *"Idlip"* — are all streaming online, each with its own story and soul.

My personal favorite? *"Idlip."* Maybe it's Alvin's seductive bassline. Maybe it's the perfect blend of chill and ache. Or maybe it's that lyric — *"Magkita tayo sa dulo… sa dulo."*

It's haunting in the best way. The kind of song that lingers. And just when you think they've emptied the tank, they tease something new — "I Will Wait For You in the Rain."

Rey grins every time he talks about it. "We're letting it all out this year," he says. *"Hanggang kaya pa namin."* And he meant it.

34 Years…Still Jamming Like It's Day One

I first saw InnerVoices two years ago at Aromata. I went out of boredom, not expectation.



But the moment they played, the air changed. Their sound was familiar yet new. It sounds fresh.

I didn't hear music that night. I heard their story – years of gigs, laughter, heartbreak, and brotherhood poured into every note.

Today and three decades later, thet're still tight, still joyful, still hungry. Their sets are always a trip through time: Bill Wither's' *"Lovely Day,"* Lionel Richie's *"All Night Long,"* Earth, Wind & Fire's *"September."* And when they start their Queen tribute medley – *"Radio Ga Ga," "We Will Rock You," "We Are the Champions,"* and *"Bohemian Rhapsody"* – forget it. It's pure magic.

As Rey once said with that trademark grin, *"Wala kaming fans. Pero marami kaming kaibigan."*

I came for a gig.

I stayed for the story.

And somehow, I think I'll always be listening. ♦



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According to Rey, the band has banked at least 100 cover songs. Indeed, Rome certainly wasn't built in a day and these took InnerVoices years to curate and master even as they try to learn new ones.

Asked about staying faithful to the original arrangement of the songs when it could be easier for them to just improvise and save time for each member scrutinizing each note for every instrument played, Rey said it's not for ego but for practical reasons.

*"Para kung may mag-absent man sa banda o mawala, madaling aralin nung mag-*substitute *yung part na na-*vacate. He can just listen to the original version from wherever he is—no need *na magkita-kita pa kami* to jam the song—then *pagtugtugan niya,* shoot *yung gagawin niya* with the rest of us *dahil lahat kami ang basis ay yung* original arrangement," Rey said.

All the hard work is worth it come show time When people hear the synth intro of *"King of Wishful Thinking"* by Go West or the kaleidoscope, glittery feel of *"Electric Dreams"* or the intricate harmonies in the middle of "Bohemian Rhapsody," people nod in approval and the euphoria is as real as it gets.

People think, "This is exactly how we remember the song. This is how it moved us, shaped us. This is how it should be done."

It's the power of familiarity at fore.

Sticking to the original arrangement comes with a price, as in literally. It is not for financially-limited folks. Rey disclosed candidly that they invest in their instruments and many of these, if not all, are top-of-the-line with more functions than the not-so-expensive alternatives.

them even before he settles his things. He looks at the next table and introduces himself with a smile, makes small talk.

The rest of the band do the same as they trickle in. Everyone is just so sincere, genuine. Anyone would feel right at home right away.

On stage, the band acknowledges everyone warmly. Patrick greets those celebrating their birthdays, grants song requests written on pieces of paper handed to him by the waiter, keeps his spiel short knowing the people came for the music and not to hear him talk (too much).

At the end of the show, Rey, again, thanks those who are still at the bar. He takes note of the comments and he is humble when praised. He looks genuinely happy and always smiling.

People come to InnerVoices shows again and again because there's a sense of community grounded by a common love for music, good times and friendship.



You hear the difference in their originals too. We once told Patrick that we think if their new songs are put side by side with the best of Neocolours, Side A, South Border and Freestyle, all stand toe-to-toe, quality-wise.

No, you don't need to be devout InnerVoices disciples to have the confidence to say that.

As Jesus said in the Bible, "Listen, if you have ears!"

***

How can InnerVoices manage to fill up every venue they play in even on weekdays?

Rey has just arrived at the venue. He sees people he knows in one of the tables and he goes to greet and thank

Watching InnerVoices is like coming home except that you enjoy the best music in full blast without waking up the neighbors.

GARGANTUAN

Having lasted more than three decades in the music industry, InnerVoices has seen it all. They have had gigs when the only ones











watching are two waiters and the cook—and recently to 100,000 people in this regional festival.

The band still has its eyes on the future.

"Definitely more original songs," Rey said. "*Kundi din lang kami makakatugtog ng* originals, *ititigil na namin ang pagbabanda. Ganun kahalaga sa amin yon. Kung panay covers lang, di na kami tutugtog."*

With the generation gap diminished drastically by the Internet, more than ever, everyone can find their place in the spectrum.

Young listeners continue to discover "new old music," the playing field has been leveled. Those who grew up in the '80s now have purchasing power.

It's a good time be InnerVoices.

Even with Artificial Intelligence supposedly threatening to take away jobs from creatives and artists, the band remains unfazed.

"We don't see A.I. as a competitor but merely a tool," Rey said. "We use A.I. *Ngayon mas madali* when we want to compose *dahil ma-i-*inspire *ka* using the technology. *Kumbaga may* idea *na naibibigay sa yo.* We make A.I.a reference but we don't solely rely on it."

Like in any relationship, the members have had its share of misunderstandings.

"But we always settle it right away, usually within the day," they said. "We don't let it fester."



Neither will critics tear them apart or discourage them from soldiering on.

"We've known for a long time now that you can't please everyone," said Rey.

The future looks brighter, bigger for InnerVoices.

"We'll play till we're past 60. *Walang rason para huminto."* ♦



Miles Caballero and the Rise of the World Travel Expo

■ BY ANNE VENANCIO

DRIVEN by a visionary spirit, this woman transformed a modest fair into a national tourism movement. As an esteemed entrepreneur and business leader, she's poised to redefine global tourism by showcasing cutting-edge travel experiences.

When you think of travel expos, you imagine booths, brochures, and a blur of "promo fares." But for Miles Caballero, Managing Director of AD Asia Events Group OPC and the creative force behind the World Travel Expo Philippines (WTE), it was never just about selling plane tickets. It was about moving the tourism industry forward—one connection, one partnership, one story at a time.

From Vision to Voyage

Nine years ago, when the first World Travel Expo (WTE) took off, the local travel scene was still finding its rhythm after a turbulent period for global tourism. Many saw it as another short-lived event. But Caballero, with her mix of corporate grit and entrepreneurial heart, envisioned something bigger: a unified platform where tourism stakeholders, content creators, and travelers could collaborate under one roof.

"She's been the woman behind the World Travel Expo since day one," industry colleagues often say—a title that comes with both pride and pressure.

Under her direction, AD Asia Events Group has consistently expanded WTE's reach, transforming it from a modest city fair into the country's most anticipated annual travel and lifestyle showcase.

A Journey of Growth

Now in its 9th year, the World Travel Expo 2025 is turning up the excitement with a first-ever double edition: October 17–19 at SPACE, One Ayala, Makati City, followed by November 14–16 at Ayala Malls Manila Bay.

This groundbreaking move marks a new chapter for the event, one that expands its reach and impact across two major city hubs. The dual-venue strategy embodies WTE's mission—to make travel accessible, experiential, and endlessly inspiring.

During the official press launch, industry partners, exhibitors, and members of the media captured the expo's essence through their heartfelt messages. Among them were leaders and representatives of Philippine travel and hospitality: Mr. Rico Duque of GDS International Travel Agency, Mr. Mon Aldrich Monacillo of Manila Prince Hotel, Ms. May Abigael Legaspi-Maguigad of The Manila Hotel, Ms. Marlene Schmidt of Mandarin Bay, Ms. Miles Caballero of AD Asia Events Group OPC, Mr. Jed Ernest Uytiepo of Arpan Air, Inc. Phils. – Royal Caribbean, Ms. Ashley Macalalad of PATA LPU – LPU Manila Student Chapter, Ms. Irish Lyn Duque of Travel M8, Mr. Manolito Pineda of DMCI, Ms. Jane Andres of La Jolla Luxury Beach



Resort, and Ms. Sheila Sun-Hernandez of Must Be Sun Retail Corp.

Their presence reinforced what WTE stands for—a collaborative celebration of the Philippine travel and hospitality community.

From its early editions in 2017 through the record-breaking Year 8 (2024)—which featured over 160 booths and 3,000 square meters of exhibition space—WTE has evolved into more than just a trade fair. It's now a movement celebrating the spirit of exploration, championing both local destinations and international travel partnerships.

The Woman Behind the Expo

Miles Caballero is no stranger to challenges. Organizing a multi-city event that brings together airlines, hotels, tourism boards, and digital creators is no small feat. Yet her leadership has always been marked by a calm authority and a





relentless drive to innovate.

Her philosophy? "Travel is not just leisure—it's livelihood."

And that's why every year, she ensures WTE goes beyond discounts and deals. The expo features industry networking, cultural showcases, influencer challenges, and interactive competitions, such as "Dance Your Destination," which bridges generations and platforms in the name of travel.

Rebuilding Tourism, One Expo at a Time

Caballero's approach aligns with a broader national goal: to reignite Philippine tourism. Supported by the Department of Tourism and regional government partners, WTE highlights destinations like Bohol, Palawan, Boracay, and Siargao, while fostering international ties with emerging markets such as Taiwan and South Korea.

Even in a time of economic uncertainty, her optimism stands out. "Despite what's happening in the country right now," she said during a recent press launch, "there are still so many reasons to explore, to connect, and to rediscover the beauty of the Philippines."

That statement sums up the core of the WTE mission—hope through travel, resilience through reinvention.

The Next Destination

Looking ahead, Miles Caballero envisions a future where the World Travel Expo doesn't just happen once or twice a year—but across multiple Philippine regions, perhaps even internationally. Plans are quietly brewing for Visayas and Mindanao legs, bringing the travel conversation closer to local communities.

As WTE 2025 prepares to open its doors, one thing is certain: Miles Caballero has done more than build a brand. She's built a bridge for dreamers, doers, and destinations—a living testament that when vision meets purpose, the journey never truly ends.

"The world is wide," she likes to say, "but so is the heart of a Filipino traveler."

And for the thousands of wanderers who find their next adventure inside the halls of the World Travel Expo, that heart beats stronger every year. ♦

MYGZ MOLINO: TALENT & HEART

■ BY ANNE VENANCIO

"HELLO mga Kabunso!" That familiar greeting always brings smiles and warmth to thousands of hearts. But this time it carries even more meaning as Mygz Molino gears up for a double celebration: his birthday and Christmas party on Sunday, December 14, 4 pm at Hotel Marciano, Calamba City, Laguna.

Be Our Guest, BidaBest on Dada's Day!

Fans and friends can join the festivities by registering through the official event link, https://forms.gle/sDbaN8pb7foBdnR16). The ticket includes a buffet dinner, photo booth souvenir and a Christmas giveaway for VIP guests. More than that, it's a night of connection and gratitude.

"Every event is not just a celebration of my life but a thanksgiving for everyone who stayed—my Kabunso, my family and those who believed in me since Day One," Mygz shares .

Giving Back with *Kabunso* Yakap Foundation

Mygz continues to prove that fame means nothing without purpose. Last September 6, he and his *Kabunso* Yakap Foundation, partnered with Jollibee West Zamora Foundation for an outreach event for the benefit of God's Little Angel Miracle Warriors.

Mygz and his team also visited the House of Somang's Jubilee Hope 2025 where they spread love and laughter to *lolos and lolas*, a gesture that touched hearts online.

"As much as I love performing, nothing compares to the happiness I feel when I see others smile," he says. "That's the real gift, to give joy back."

Star with a Heart

Last August 3, Mygz held a Fun Day Fans Day and the turnout was overwhelming. Supporters came all the way from different provinces and even abroad, all to celebrate their "Dada."

"I'll never stop being grateful," he says. "Every *Kabunso* who spends time, effort or even just sends messages, you're part of my journey. You all remind me why I keep going."

The Passion Continues

Mygz is again making waves on screen through *Coming Home,* a heartfelt film by award-winning director Neal Tan. The movie, which also stars Pantene Palanca, Keanna Reeves, Janice Jurado, AJ Soma, Brian Scott Lomboy and Phil Tungul, explores life, sacrifice and love in all its forms.

"Acting gives me a chance to tell stories that heal, inspire and remind us to love deeper," he reflects. "This project is very close to my heart."





He's also part of *OPM: Then & Now — One Night, One Stage, Two Generations!* on November 6, 8 PM at Music Museum, produced by TEAM (The Entertainment Arts & Media Organization, Inc.). Proceeds will go to young cancer patients at the Child Haus.

"It's an honor to stand on stage with icons and new voices. Music connects generations. It heals and unites," Mygz says.

Love That Transcends

Through all his success, there's one name that remains forever in his heart—Mahal, his beloved "Baby Partner" (the pint-sized actress-comedienne-vlogger who passed away in 2021 -- Ed).

"I will never forget Mahal," Mygz says softly. "She's my angel now, my inspiration to be kind and to keep going. Every laughter I share, every project I do, she's always part of it."

That love, pure and enduring, continues to guide him in all he does.

Grounded by Gratitude

Behind every achievement stands a strong support system. For Mygz, that includes his manager Jeth Carey, his sister Rachelle and ever-loyal *Kabunso* family.





"Kuya Jeth believed in me when others didn't. My sister has always been my rock. And my Kabunso, you are my energy, my motivation, my extended family," Mygz says. "Everything I do is for you and because of you."

A Family Man at Heart

Mygz shines not just because of his talent. He shines with his heart. He treats everyone, from co-stars to fans, like family.

"I always tell my *Kabunso*, this is our journey together. *Hindi lang ito* showbiz. This is love, laughter and life shared," he smiles.

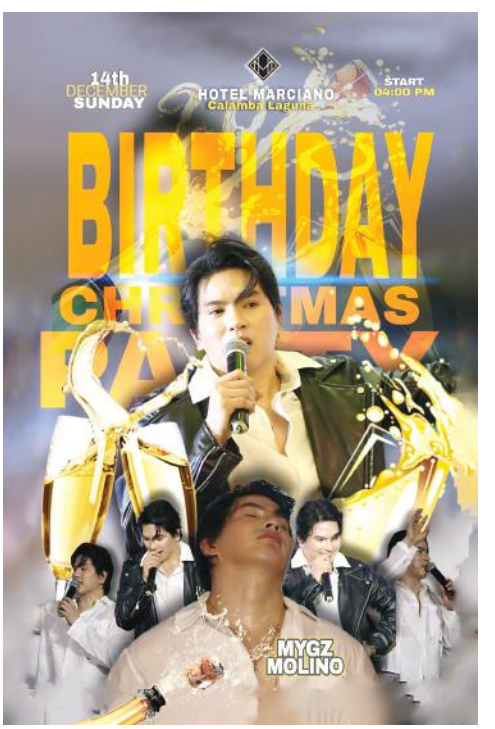
Looking Ahead with Hope

As Mygz continues to conquer new heights in film, music and philanthropy, one thing's sure: he remains grounded, grateful and full of heart.

"My dream is simple," he concludes. "To make people happy, to inspire others to love more and to keep Mahal's legacy alive through kindness."



This December, as lights shimmer and carols fill the air, Mygz Molino reminds us that true celebration isn't about fame. It's about faith, family and the love we give back. ♦



Kadena Queen

“What Goes Around, Comes Around,” Says Kadena Queen

■BY PILAR MATEO

SORT of a mantra that keeps playing in her mind, especially now, that her world has turned around.

"I didn't come from a well-off family. Natutunan ko lang ang pagne-negosyo na nagsimula sa pagbebenta-benta ng kung anu-ano. And then came the time when I was into jewelry, especially gold, talagang naging goal ko na to keep on doing it,"

She is Mylene Taguaim Olarte. A daughter. Sister. Wife. Mother. Apart from her gold and jewelry business, Mylene saw herself immersed in proliferating a much easier income-generating lot - gadgets and accessories.

In the heart of Virra Mall in Greenhills, one wouldn't miss the stalls that say MA GADGET STORE. Selling wares for your gadget needs. Owned by Mylene but is known as the store of the Kadena Queen.



With bestfriend Diego Llorico

And who is Kadena Queen? She wouldn't be missed. She personally attends to all her customers. Such a hardworking lady. Yet, you wouldn't see that beauty sweat. She can be mistaken for a celebrity. Her stalls smell like a box-office cinema with customers queuing to get their best bargain.

Kadena? Her arms say it all!

Strings of different bracelets of all designs and sizes. Some colored. Some just gold, bronze, and silver. All adorning her alabaster arms.

For Filipinos, these bracelets symbolize opulence. However, Kadena barely notices the ornaments in her arms.

"Parang, I would like to think that each strand symbolizes what I have gone through in life. Each piece is a prize,” she said.

"Sa kabila ng lahat ng pagsubok na dumaan sa buhay natin, kahit gaano kasakit palagi nating tatandaan na hindi pa huli ang lahat. Lumubog man ang araw, sisikat at sisikat pa rin ito.

"Palaging may panibagong bukas. Ang importante kasama natin si God sa hamon ng buhay.

Ang mga anak ko, namin ni Hubby ko ang most -prized possession namin, our treasure. Kasama natin mga anak natin at ang mga taong totoong nandiyan para satin sa hirap man at ginhawa.

"God knows kung ano nasa puso natin. Ang importante nakakatulong tayo sa mga tao at mahal natin sa buhay.

"My partner and our children are the gifts na walang pwedeng maging kapalit. Sila ang buhay ko kaya wala na akong hinihiling pang iba kay God kundi makasama ko sila ng matagal at maging okay kaming lahat. They are my life.

"They're all I've got. And I will do everything for them. Sila lang sapat na. Grabe yung pagmamahal ni Lord ano?

"Ang dami nating pagkakamali sa buhay pero never niya tayong pinabayaan..Patuloy pa rin yung blessings niya sa atin. So, all we have to do is be grateful for everything being bestowed to us.

“These are the lessons I learned sa pagharap ko sa buhay. Mga kahinaan ko na nalabanan ko. Kaya 'di ko nakakalimutan na magpasalamat sa Kanya. Always with me in all of life's challenges.”

Now in the limelight, it can't be helped that she gets a share of bashers all around her. "That I don't care. Pero natutunan ko, thanks to my good friend Diego (Llorico) hindi ako kailangan magtanim ng galit sa mga taong gumawa ng masama sa akin. Kahit pilit man nila akong hinihila pababa, pilit nila akong sinisira, hindi ako gaganti sa kanila. Hahayaan kong ang tadhana ang magbalik ng anuman sa kanila,” she stressed.

"I believe kasi na ang buhay, may panahong may araw at minsan ulan. Minsan nga unos. Dadating din ang time na they will realize, ‘di man ngayon, soon alam ko dadating din yun. Si God na bahala.”

Her bracelets may be the chains that bind her to the memories of each piece. These are the same chains that inspired her, thanks to her grandfather, who she feels is continuing to guide her through her life's journey.

“Each and every time, I still feel his presence in so many unexpected ways,” she narrated. “Playful kasi si lolo, eh. And I know he's just around. Minsan magugulo mga gamit ko. May mawawala...tapos bigla, bulaga, nandyan na uli. And I believe it in my heart, with God's grace, kaya rin hindi natatapos ang swerte sa family ko, it's through his guidance.”

More realizations came when the recently concluded PMPC Star Awards for Movies bestowed upon her the “Breakthrough Social Media Star.”

“Huwag kang magalit sa mga taong pilit kang sinisiraan,” she stressed. “Let us remember na ang punong hitik sa bunga ay kaakit-akit sa paningin ng mga taong gustong pumukol sa iyong mga bunga!

“Kapag sinisiraan ka huwag kang gumanti. Huwag mo ng sayangin ang oras mo sa kanila dahil kahit anong gawin nilang paninira sa'yo mananatili kang matino sa mata ng mga tunay na nakakakilala sa iyo! Be kind pa rin!”

In her TikTok world, many collaborations are brewing, including with Jojo Mendrez, Boss Toyo, Ynez Veneracion, and other celebrities.

One gadget at a time while she’s still in her prime! ♦


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The Gem of San Pablo: From TV Darling to the People's Champion

■BY WENDELL ALVAREZ

A former TV darling. A devoted wife to former San Pablo City Mayor Vic Amante. A proud mother. And now, a relentless force of goodwill who proves that you don't need a title to make a difference.

In San Pablo City, one name echoes with charm, compassion, and charisma — Mayora Gem Castillo. She's not just a familiar face from That's Entertainment or a soulful singer from the '90s — she's a woman who turned the spotlight into a torch of service.

From Stardom to Service

Long before she became "Mayora Gem," she was Gem Castillo, the singer-actress whose star shone bright on That's Entertainment. Her voice, warmth, and grace earned her fans nationwide.

But when she married Mayor Vic Amante, the glitz of showbiz transformed into the grit of public service. "Mayora" became more than an affectionate nickname — it became her calling card.



She led countless community programs, showing up for seniors, mothers, and kids — always with a smile, never with pretense. "I've always believed that leadership means being there — heart first, always," she shares.

The 2025 Election: A Campaign of Heart

In October 2024, Gem made a bold move — announcing her run for Vice Governor of Laguna alongside actor-politician Dan Fernandez. Her campaign was not built on political machinery but on authenticity and love for people.

"I didn't run for power — I ran to give people a voice," she said during her



campaign launch. But even without a victory, Mayora Gem's name became synonymous with hope.

She gained 224,258 votes — a testament to her growing influence and genuine connection, synonymous with hope.

In town after town — from San Pablo to Nagcarlan — people flocked to her events. Her bond with senior citizens became legendary. "Mahal na mahal namin si Mayora!" locals say proudly.

Beyond Politics: Service Never Stops

After the elections, Mayora Gem Castillo didn't slow down — she shifted gears. No longer bound by politics, she continues to serve as the people's champion, driven by heart and purpose. Her outreach never stops: from school supply drives and feeding programs to charity visits that bring smiles to every corner of San Pablo.

Always thinking outside the box, she launched the community-favorite "San Pablo Laguna Spotted," where locals join fun challenges, win prizes, and feel connected to their city in new and exciting ways.

But Mayora Gem doesn't just lift up her people — she puts her city on the map. She proudly brings well-known personalities like Alice Eduardo, Small Laude, Dingdong Dantes, Gerald Anderson, Alden Richards, and more celebrities to visit San Pablo, showcasing the breathtaking beauty of Laguna and the warmth of the Lagunense spirit.

A Woman with a Mission

Gem Castillo's life is proof that kindness never loses an election. Whether on stage, in city halls, or by the lakes of Laguna, she continues to inspire through song, service, and sincerity.

Because real leadership doesn't need a position — just a heart that listens.

Gem Castillo — a mayora by heart, a voice for the people, and a soul who proves that love is the truest form of public service

Through her efforts, she's not just promoting tourism — she's highlighting what makes her hometown extraordinary: its people, its pride, and its boundless heart.

And when recognition came, she received it with pure gratitude.

"I'm overwhelmed with thankfulness. God is good all the time," she said after being honored as 2025 Humanitarian and Philanthropist of the Year and Woman of the Year at the Laguna Excellence Awards.

"Every award reminds me to serve harder, love deeper, and never stop giving." ♦



Mga Munting Tala and Sinagtala: Twin Lights of Hope

■ BY ANNE VENANCIO

IN the world of Filipino youth and family films, one filmmaker stands out for his sincerity and emotional depth — Errol Ropero. Known for heartfelt storytelling, Direk Errol captures not only the struggles of life but the enduring hope that comes with it.

His two latest works, *Mga Munting Tala and Sinagtala,* may bear different titles, yet they share the same heart — two reflections of one story about childhood dreams, family ties, and the quiet power of hope.

"These are not just films," Direk Errol says. "They're stories about light—about how children, even in their darkest moments, continue to shine."

A Tale of Two Lights

Mga Munting Tala brings audiences into the world of young dreamers — children navigating poverty, friendship, and family challenges, yet holding on to kindness and courage.

Leading the film are Potchi Angeles (Caleb), Franchesco Maafi (Aaron), Shira Tweg (Rose), and Kyle Almenanza (Isaac), with the "Munting Tala kids" — Ryrie Sophia (Hannah), Scarlet Alaba (Scarlet), Francis Saagundo (Noah), Drey Lampago (David), and Yassi Ibasco (Mary) — adding warmth and authenticity.

"Gusto ko talagang gumawa ng pelikula na simple pero totoo—tungkol sa kabutihan ng mga bata kahit nasa gitna sila ng kahirapan… para silang mga maliliit na bituin sa madilim na mundo," Direk Errol shares.

Completing the ensemble are Jeffrey Santos, Miles Poblete, Richard Kuan, Patani, Lito Napolitano, Jessica Nogas, Paul Espinosa, and Jordan Pacheco — a mix of veterans and rising talents who bring the story to life.



Two Films, One Vision

Unlike most youth stories that center on one lead, Mga Munting Tala interweaves multiple lives — each one real, relatable, and deeply human.

"Hindi ito tungkol sa iisang bida lang," explains Direk Errol. "May lalim at aral ang pelikula. Every child in the story has something



to teach us."

Working with child actors, he says, is a joy and responsibility.

"Kapag masaya sila, mas maganda ang resulta," he laughs. "They're so honest. I learned as much from them as they learned from me."

Stories for Every Generation

Each of the twin films speaks to a different audience but springs from the same compassionate core.

Mga Munting Tala — for younger viewers — celebrates kindness, friendship, and perseverance. Sinagtala, meanwhile, explores the growing pains of adolescence: family sacrifice, separation, and finding strength in love.

"Isang puno, dalawang bunga—isang kuwento, dalawang pananaw," says Direk Errol. "It's one story told through two perspectives."

Together, they form a single cinematic journey from innocence to understanding.

Heart-tugging Music

No Filipino film is complete without music that touches the soul. Sinagtala's theme, performed by Miles Poblete and produced by Edward "Mamu" Lagan, captures the bittersweet tones of love and longing. Mga Munting Tala, on the other hand, features Scarlet Alaba's tender rendition that mirrors the purity of childhood.

The songs don't just accompany scenes — they connect audiences to the films' emotional core.

The Heart Behind the Camera

Behind the success of these films stands Edward "Mamu" Lagan, producer and founder of Mamu's Talent House.

Through his company, Mamu nurtures child actors and aspiring artists, helping them build confidence and discover their gifts.

Mamu's Talent House, located at 81 President Tower, 8th Floor, Timog Avenue, Quezon City, is a haven of creativity and



growth.

"Helping these kids discover their gifts and giving them a platform—that's what our mission is all about," Mamu shares.

"I'm very proud of this film. All the hard work, sleepless nights, and sacrifices were worth it. *Naiyak ako habang pinapanood ko*— everyone, from the talented young actors to the dedicated staff, crew, and directors, gave their all. It's truly a masterpiece born from passion and heart."

It's this mix of heart and hard work that turns a film into an experience.

From Screenings to Success

Mga Munting Tala and Sinagtala have touched audiences through nationwide screenings — Ayala Malls Legazpi (October 5), Robinsons Galleria Santa Rosa (September 20), and Laguna (September 3). Parents, teachers, and students gave glowing reviews to the film.

For Mamu, these screenings are about something bigger than box office numbers.

"Bringing these films to different schools and cinemas isn't just about showing a movie," he explains. "It's about sharing a message—that even in darkness, children can be the brightest stars."

The applause and tears that follow each screening prove that these stories resonate deeply with audiences.

A Light That Lasts

Mga Munting Tala and Sinagtala are reminders that hope, once lit, never fades.

"Ang Munting Tala ay kuwentong nagbibigay-inspirasyon sa ating lahat—na sa kabila ng mga pagsubok sa buhay, huwag tayong mawawalan ng pag-asa," Direk Errol says.



His brilliance lies not in spectacle but in empathy — in stories that celebrate innocence, resilience, and the light of the Filipino child.

In every laughter shared on set and every tear shed in theaters, Errol Ropero's light continues to shine — one story, one child, one heart at a time. ♦





Jojo Mendrez named Trending Social Media Personality

■ BY WENDELL ALVAREZ

THEY call him the Revival King—and it's a title he wears with pride. Singer and businessman Jojo Mendrez has built a remarkable career breathing new life into some of Original Pilipino Music's most beloved classics, proving that good songs never truly fade—they just find new voices.

But where did the title come from, and why does it fit him so perfectly?

*"Ako kasi 'yung pinaka-*first *na nag-*remake *ng kanta ng Apo Hiking Society na Tuyo Na'ng Damdamin (1982),"* Jojo recalls with a smile. *"Nasundan 'y'on ng kanta ni Florante na 'Sana' (1983) at 'yung 'Handog' (1978)—na nanalo pa sa* PMPC Star Awards for Music as Revival Song of the Year."

Those heartfelt renditions opened the door to more revivals, including *"Magkabilang Mundo" (2011)* by Jireh Lim and the timeless *"Somewhere in My Past,"* originally sung by the late Julie Vega. The latter became his signature piece, earning him the reputation of being one of OPM's most soulful revivalists.

His first major concert at the Newport Performing Arts Theater cemented that legacy, showcasing not only his vocals but also his gift for blending nostalgia with a modern touch.

A Star Beyond the Stage

At the 37th PMPC Star Awards for Television, Jojo Mendrez took home the "Trending Social Media Personality" award—proof that his charm and creativity now extend well beyond the music scene.

From heartfelt performances to engaging digital content, Jojo has built an online community that thrives on positivity and interaction. He's not just an artist anymore; he's a storyteller, entertainer, and digital innovator rolled into one.

New Era, New Music

In March 2025, Star Music released Jojo's latest single, *Nandito Lang Ako*, an original composition by hitmaker Jonathan Manalo.

"This one's close to my heart," Jojo shares. "After all the revivals, *gusto ko rin ipakita 'yung sariling boses at emosyon ko."*

It marks a new creative chapter for him—one where he explores fresh material while still paying homage to his OPM roots. He followed it up with the revival of *I Love You Boy* and reteased more upcoming remakes, including I *Love You Babe.*



On September 26, his birthday, Jojo treated fans to a performance video of Somewhere in My Past, a nostalgic nod to the song that started it all.

The Comeback King

Jojo officially signed with Artist Circle Talent Management, headed by Rams David, on July 29, 2025. The move signals a full-force comeback, with plans for new collaborations, digital shows, and nationwide concerts.

He's also been reconnecting with old friends in the industry. Recently, he teamed up with StarStruck alumnus Rainier Castillo for guest appearances in digital series such as Encashlator and Haharangin Kita. Fans can also catch him live this November at a major event in Gateway, Quezon City.

Online, Jojo continues to show his flair for engagement. With over 1.1 million Facebook followers, he created the interactive fan game Super Jojo, where participants guess the cash inside a jar for prizes—a fun mix of entertainment and community-building that keeps fans coming back.

A Star Backed by Stars

Throughout his journey, Jojo has earned admiration from showbiz icons like Maricel Soriano, the late Nora Aunor, Claudine Barretto, and Snooky Serna all of whom praise his sincerity, perseverance, and generosity.

Behind the glitz and music, Jojo remains grounded. He's an artist who knows fame is fleeting, but impact lasts.

As he continues to reinvent his sound and reconnect with audiences old and new, one truth rings louder than ever:

Jojo Mendrez isn't just reviving songs. He's reviving the soul of OPM itself. ♦





Roderick Paulate: A Timeless Comeback of Laughter!

■ BY WENDELL ALVAREZ

FROM his early days as a child actor to his powerful re-emergence through Mudrasta: Ang Beking Ina!, this comedian proves that true talent doesn't age—it simply waits for its next standing ovation.

The big return of Roderick Paulate to the big screen is more than a comeback—it's a celebration of one of Philippine entertainment's most enduring and beloved comedy icons.

After decades of success in show business, Paulate extended his service to the public, serving about six years as Councilor for Quezon City's 2nd District from 2010 to 2016. Though his journey in politics came with its share of trials, it reflected the same grit and compassion he carried throughout his acting career.

Then came the long pause. But like every true artist, Roderick Paulate couldn't resist the call of the stage. His newest film, Mudrasta: Ang Beking Ina!, directed by Julius Ruslin Alfonso, signals a triumphant homecoming. Here, Paulate plays Victor "Beki" Labrador—a loving yet chaotic single parent whose mix of humor and heart captures the beautiful mess of family life.

Mudrasta isn't just another comedy; it's a story of redemption, resilience, and unconditional love—mirroring Paulate's own journey through life's highs and lows. His signature wit, expressive timing, and emotional depth remind audiences exactly why he remains one of the most brilliant performers of his generation.

Reflecting on his return, Paulate shared, "Coming back feels like going home. Comedy has always been my language of love—and it feels good to make people laugh again."

With Mudrasta, Roderick Paulate reclaims his place in Philippine cinema—not just as a comedian, but as a storyteller whose legacy continues to uplift, entertain, and inspire.

Because when Roderick Paulate laughs, the whole country remembers how to laugh with him. ♦

Sally Esmena:
From Blueprints to Beauty

■ BY ANNE VENANCIO

IN Seattle, beauty isn't just about appearances—it's a story of confidence and transformation. At the center is Sally Esmena, the visionary CEO and founder of Beauté Me, a brand born from passion, precision, and purpose.

When Sally moved to Seattle from Saudi Arabia in October 2020, right in the middle of the pandemic, she found herself starting over.

"I wanted to start a new chapter doing something I truly loved," she shares. "My background was in civil engineering, but after ten years as a stay-at-home mom caring for my children, I was ready to pursue something I was truly passionate about."

Encouraged by her friend Ate Sol, she enrolled in the Master Esthetician program at Paroba College in Everett and trained at Beauty Angels International in Bellevue.

"Balancing two courses and motherhood was challenging," she admits, "but I pushed through because I wanted to prove to myself that it's never too late to chase your dreams."

Once she graduates from the Master Esthetician and Brow Artist program weeks from now, Sally's new path is clear.

"While waiting for my state board exams, I started offering services from my apartment's living room," she recalls. "To my surprise, I earned $10,000 in my first month. That's when I knew this was my calling."

Photo & Video:
Team Alvin Mark Buen
Model:
Sally Esmena
Photographers:
Reyneil Comia Perez & Russell Bitalac
HMUA:
Beauty for Ashes / Joan Mae Quindipan
Gown:
Missmatch Dubai
Coordinator:
Lyn Gonzaga

Beauté Me officially launched on February 5, 2022.

"Beauté Me was born from passion, purpose, and perseverance," she said. "It was my dream come true."

Building a Brand

Now nearing its fourth year, Beauté Me continues to grow through trust and innovation.

"As a Master Aesthetician and Permanent Makeup Artist, I believe what sets Beauté Me apart is my commitment to continuous learning and excellence," Sally explains. "The beauty industry is constantly evolving, and I make it a priority to stay ahead through education and advanced training."

She tests every treatment on herself before offering it to clients.

"When people trust you with their skin, it's not just business—it's personal."

Award-Winning and Empowered

Her dedication has earned her multiple honors, including Most Outstanding Master Aesthetician of the Year (America Excellence Award 2023–2024) and Most Outstanding Skincare Specialist (America Prestige Award 2024–2025).

This October, she will receive the Confidently Beautiful with a Heart Award from the Association of Filipino American Engineers of Washington, followed by another recognition in Hollywood on November 8.

Beauty Expert to the Stars

Her talent quickly drew celebrity attention.

"Fun fact," she laughs, "according to Mr. David Pomeranz, I was the very first one to give him a facial—at age 62!"







Her growing clientele includes Brian Termulo, Isabel De Leon, and international model Gab Borromeo. Ganap Magazine, impresssed by her Dubai photo shoot, featured Sally on its August 2025.

"It started as just a fun fan shoot," she said. "But to my surprise, Ganap Magazine reached out and invited me to be their cover model. It was an unforgettable experience!"





Trials That Strengthen Her

"One of the biggest challenges I faced when starting my business in the U.S. was balancing my time between being a mother and running a business," she says. "Life here is very different. In Seattle, I didn't have a maid or a driver, so I had to manage everything on my own."

"Taking my kids to school, accommodating clients by appointment, doing household chores, and attending networking events—it wasn't easy," she adds. "But through hard work, consistency, and determination, I made it happen."

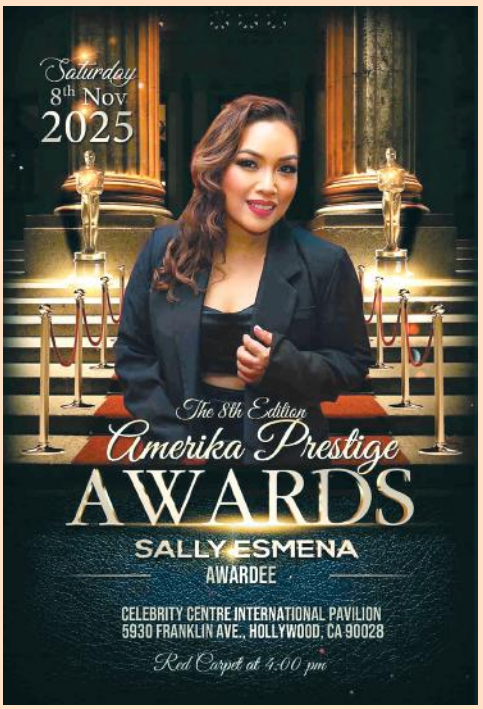
Transforming Lives

"I've had many beautiful success stories, but one that stands out is from a client who struggled with skin tags," Sally shares. "Seeing her confidence shoot up after the procedure reminded me exactly why I do what I do. It's not just about making money—it's about helping my clients feel beautiful and comfortable in their own skin."

The Beauty Philosophy

"One of the biggest misconceptions about acne is that it's caused by dirty skin," Sally explains. "Many people believe that washing more often or using harsher products will clear their breakouts—but that actually does more harm than good."





She stresses the importance of skin care.

"Understanding your skin and treating it with care—not aggression—is what truly leads to lasting results."

Family, Faith, and the Future

"My greatest joy is seeing my children grow into kind, well-mannered, and motivated young people," Sally says with pride. Her eldest, Karem, is in college, while her daughter, Yarah, just entered high school. Both are active in Trendsetter Production USA, a top-rated company that conducts modeling workshops, runway training, personality development classes and others.

"They're my true treasure," Sally smiles. "They motivate me to keep going, to be better every day."

She plans to launch her own skincare line, open a beauty school, and continue making Beauté Me a trusted national brand.

"My story is proof that it's never too late to start over," she muses. "No matter where you come from, if you work hard, stay consistent, and keep your faith—you can build the life you've always dreamed of."

From blueprints to beauty, Sally Esmena's journey continues to inspire—reminding us that true beauty begins the moment you believe in yourself. ♦

Binibining Pilipinas Globe 2025 Gears Up for Albania Finals







■BY KEY KALUH

THE Binibining Pilipinas Charities Inc. (BPCI) organized a send-off soiree for Binibining Pilipinas Globe 2025 Annabelle Mae McDonnell at the World Kitchens in Araneta City. She is scheduled to fly to Albania on Sept. 30, in time for the two-week pre-pageant activities of the Miss Globe 2025 competition.

"Always remember that the BPCI family is behind you, cheering for you. Wishing you all the best and success! Good luck, and we are so proud of you," enthused Ms. Irene Jose, BPCI Exe-Comm. member, who spoke on behalf of the chairman, Madame Stella Marquez de Araneta.

The Iligan-based beauty queen serves as a role model in resilience and determination. She was born in the United Kingdom but was raised by her Tito Tata in Lanao del Norte. She began working at a young age, balancing modeling and hosting, as well as other endeavors, to support her loved ones. A self-made woman and certified "raketera," Annabelle was a working student while also being a full academic scholar and a feature writer for her university publication. She graduated with a degree in Consular and Diplomatic Affairs from De La Salle College of Saint Benilde.

Annabelle is a staunch advocate for children's rights and welfare. She is a volunteer for Save the Children Philippines, which focuses on empowering children to reach their full potential through education and support. Her passion and commitment reflect her desire to uplift others and create lasting change.

"Embrace the moment. Make new friends. We can't wait for you to do your thing on the global stage," cheered BBP Exe-Comm. member Pia Roxas Ojeda.

The Philippines has won the Miss Globe crown in 2015 (Anne Colis) and 2021 (Maureen Montagne). Annabelle is aiming for the country's third win.

The 2025 Miss Globe coronation night will unfold on October 15 (Oct 16, Manila time) in the city of Tirana and will be beamed live through the Miss Globe channel on YouTube. ♦



"Always remember that the BPCI family is behind you, cheering for you. Wishing you all the best and success! Good luck, and we are so proud of you."

The 63rd Miss International Edition...Revamps!

■BY KEY KALUH

AS delegates from various nations converge and set to dazzle audiences worldwide, this year's competition promises to be modernized and a celebration of global unity and empowerment. Stay tuned as we spotlight the journey, achievements, and aspirations of these remarkable young ladies striving to make a difference on the international stage.



To modernize its 63rd edition, the Miss International organization is implementing several changes to better appeal to a 21st-century audience, including a revamped concept and updated format.

For starters, they will be using original music in the final show. Plus, a Miami-based company will distribute the broadcasting rights of the 2025 competition.

The 2025 Miss International pageant will have Manila-based production company AIKA Events & Productions to stage the final show on the last week of November in Tokyo, Japan, a first for the global tilt.

Moreover, the national costume competition show will be held in a venue with Mount Fuji in the background. This year's batch of contestants will be the first to sing and perform the brand new Miss International theme song.

Binibining Pilipinas International 2024 Myrna Esguerra, who will be representing the Philippines in the international finals, will depart for Tokyo on the last week of October. She hopes to join the ranks of Gemma Cruz (1964), Aurora Pijuan (1970), Melanie Marquez (1979), Precious Lara Quigaman (2005), Bea Rose Santiago (2013), and Kylie Versoza (2016) in proudly winning the Miss International crown for the Philippines.

The 63rd Miss International will unfold on November 27 at the Yoyogi National Stadium (2nd Gymnasium). Outgoing queen Huynh Thi-Thanh Thuy will crown her successor. Good luck, ladies! ♦





Binibining Pilipinas International 2024 Myrna Esguerra

> ***The 2025 Miss International pageant will have Manila-based production company AIKA Events & Productions staging the final show on the last week of November in Tokyo, Japan, a first for the global tilt.***



MISS GRAND PHILIPPINES 2025
WINNER EMMA MARY TIGLAO

Countdown to the 13th Miss Grand International

■BY KEY KALUH

BY month's end, the 2025 Miss Grand International competition will have been greenlighted. MGI president Nawat Itsaragrisil would have also dined with the top arrival contenders.

Miss Grand Philippines 2025 winner Emma Mary Tiglao is preparing for her trip to Thailand. Before the month ends, she will have flown to Bangkok in time for registration and the sashing ceremony, not to mention the anticipated arrival dinner with Nawat Itsaragrisil, MGI president & founder.



On its social media page, the ALV Pageant Circle (@msgrandphilippines) page wrote, "Philippines, are you ready? Because Emma Mary Tiglao is ready for Grand!

"This September, Emma will carry our nation's pride to Miss Grand International 2025 in Thailand. But this is no ordinary journey, this is the Philippines' quest for the golden crown and a chance to make history with a back-to-back victory."

During Angkol Nawat's visit to Manila last June for CJ's homecoming parade, he told national director Arnold L. Vegafria, during the press conference at the Grand Westside, that it would be possible for the country to achieve a back-to-back win if he chose the right representative.

"We are looking for our presenter, we are looking for our star! She is a queen who can take care of herself, like any professional person. You will win if you choose the right girl again," the MGI founder emphasized.

Angkol Nawat was part of CJ's two homecoming parades. The first time was when she returned as 1st runner-up, and then again when she was crowned as the new Miss Grand International queen for 2024.

The MGI president also noted that CJ wore the original 2013 crown, borrowed from a museum, because her crown was not yet available. An MGI crown is made once every three years, and 2024 is the last year of the existing crown, so CJ will be wearing the new crown when she turns over her title to the new queen.

The MGI organization is also working on a project with the United Nations, where they, together with CJ, will visit concentration camps to drumbeat their mantra to "Stop the War and Violence."

The 13th Miss Grand International competition will run from Sept 29 to October 19 in the cities of Bangkok and Hua Hin in Thailand. As the new titleholder, Christine Juliane Opiaza of the Philippines will crown her successor at the culmination of the crowning rites.

Stay tuned! ♦



Travels with Sarah & Matteo

■ BY CRISTY VENANCIO

2025 is a standout year for celebrity power couple Sarah Geronimo and Matteo Guidicelli, as they blend globe-trotting adventures with significant milestones in their music careers. From scenic European escapes to launching their own record label, the duo proves that love, travel, and creative ambition can go hand in hand.

Global Adventures

In August, Sarah and Matteo explored the picturesque towns of Spello and Solomeo in Italy, immersing themselves in the region's rich culture, history, and art. Fans followed their journey on social media, enjoying glimpses of scenic views, culinary experiences, and intimate moments between the couple.

Earlier this year, they embraced outdoor adventure in Switzerland, with horseback riding trips that combined leisure and quality time amidst tranquil landscapes.

In California, Sarah performed alongside Bamboo at San Diego's Pechanga Resort Casino. Matteo supported her onstage and documented highlights of their trip, giving fans a behind-the-scenes look at their shared adventures.

G Music: Launching a New Chapter in Filipino Music

In July, the couple launched G Music, their own record label designed to provide artists creative freedom and ownership of their work. Their first release under the label was a collaboration with Filipino group SB19, producing the single Umaaligid last July 30.

Matteo explained that G Music reflects their commitment to nurturing talent and fostering collaboration. "We want artists to own their music and express themselves freely," he said. This positions them not just as performers, but as mentors shaping the future of Filipino music.

Having a Baby

As of September 2025, Sarah and Matteo have not announced plans to start a family. Both have expressed a desire to have children, but are currently focused on their marriage and professional pursuits. Matteo stated he is "handang handa na" (fully ready) for fatherhood, yet the couple continues to prioritize life together and building their careers. ♦



Sandbox Chocolates & Convenience Store: The Sweet Spot Celebs Can't Get Enough Of!

■BY EJ BORROMEO

MOVE over ordinary convenience stores—there's a new hotspot in Antipolo that's turning heads and sweetening lives. Sandbox Chocolates & Convenience Store, tucked inside Neupetro Gasoline Station across from Infant Jesus Academy, is not just your go-to pit stop for snacks and essentials—it's fast becoming the sweetest trend in town, and the place where Pinoy celebrities and entertainment writers get their chocolate fix!

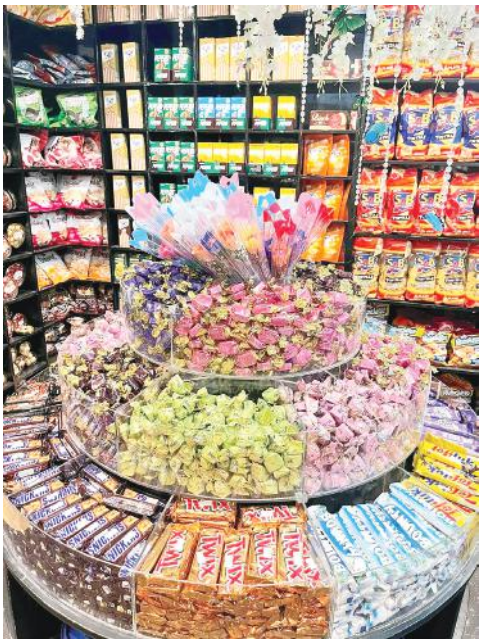
Chocolate Bouquets Fit for the Stars

Here's where it gets glamorous: the famed chocolate bouquets, meticulously crafted by Dhondhon Parillas, have become the go-to gift for Pinoy celebrities, entertainment writers, and VIPs. From birthdays to media events, these lush chocolate creations are turning heads, making Sandbox the talk of showbiz. Think luxury meets sweetness—because who says chocolates can't be chic?

Convenience Meets Community Charm

While everyone is swooning over the chocolate bouquets, Sandbox is still your reliable





neighborhood convenience store. Stock up on snacks, beverages, or last-minute essentials—perfect for school runs, road trips, or those "I deserve a treat" moments.

What sets it apart? It's family-run excellence. Owned by the Salas family—Emil Salas Jr., Beth, James, Erika, Junjun, and their siblings—Sandbox combines entrepreneurial savvy with that warm, welcoming vibe that keeps locals coming back.

What Makes Sandbox Stand Out?

- Premium Chocolate Selection Sandbox offers a curated assortment of both imported and local chocolates, catering to diverse palates. Whether you're a fan of classic brands or seeking unique local flavors, there's something for every chocolate enthusiast.

Celebrity-Approved: Dhondhon Parillas' chocolate bouquets are now official go-to gifts for stars and media personalities.

Family-Owned Magic: The Salas family ensures a personal touch in every visit, blending convenience with charm.

Prime Location: Right inside Neupetro Gasoline Station, it's easy to swing by whether you're fueling up or just craving a sweet pick-me-up.

Community Favorite: Friendly service, curated products, and a cozy vibe make it more than a store—it's a local hotspot.

Follow the Sweet Buzz

Stay updated on the latest chocolate creations, bouquet designs, and exclusive promos:

Facebook:
Sandbox Chocolates & Convenience Store

Instagram:
@smrchocolatesantipolo

Whether you're hunting for a celebrity-worthy chocolate bouquet, grabbing a quick snack, or simply enjoying the warm charm of a family-run store, Sandbox Chocolates & Convenience Store proves that indulgence, convenience, and style can all happen under one roof.

Step in, grab your favorite treats, and find out why everyone—from local stars to everyday sweet lovers—is buzzing about this Antipolo gem! ♦



BOOK

Out of Parian:
Unearthing the Secrets of Old Cebu

■ BY LIMELIGHT

THIS book unlocks Cebu's hidden history. Out of Parian: Essays on Cebuano Heritage is a profound, years-long devotion to uncovering the vibrant, vanished world of the Old Parian district, the very grounds upon which institutions like the National Historical Landmark Casa Gorordo Museum now stand.

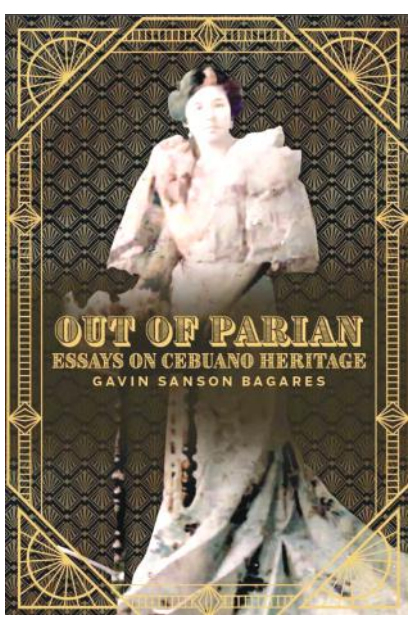
The author, Gavin Sanson Bagares, is not the usual content creator on social media; he is a nationally published public historian and social chronicler whose writing has appeared in major publications like the Philippine Graphic Weekly Magazine and the Philippine Daily Inquirer. He was a founding member and trustee of the defunct Kaguikan sa Parian Foundation, Inc.—an organization dedicated to the Parian's leading families—Bagares served as its authenticator and historian.



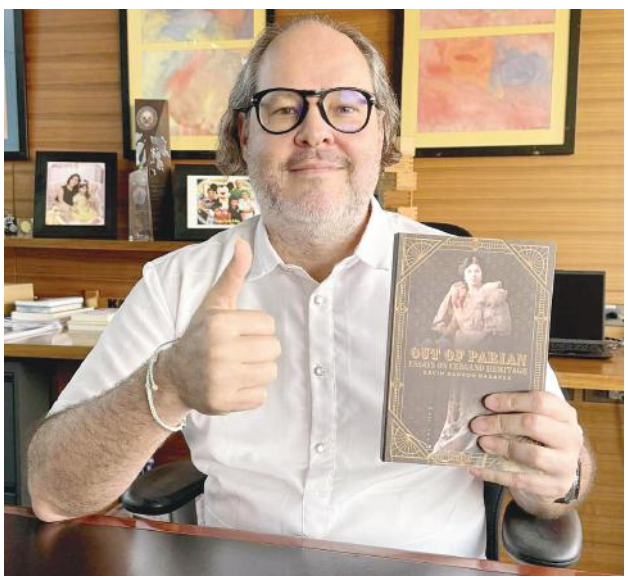
The author, Gavin Bagares

With deep, personal ties to the subjects he explores, Bagares has crafted the book's narratives to be deeply personal—a set of intimate glimpses into a world his own family inhabited once upon a time—yet they resonate as the collective memory of a lost era. This is not a dry account, but a vibrant collection the author playfully terms "history for dummies," designed to make the past pulse with life.

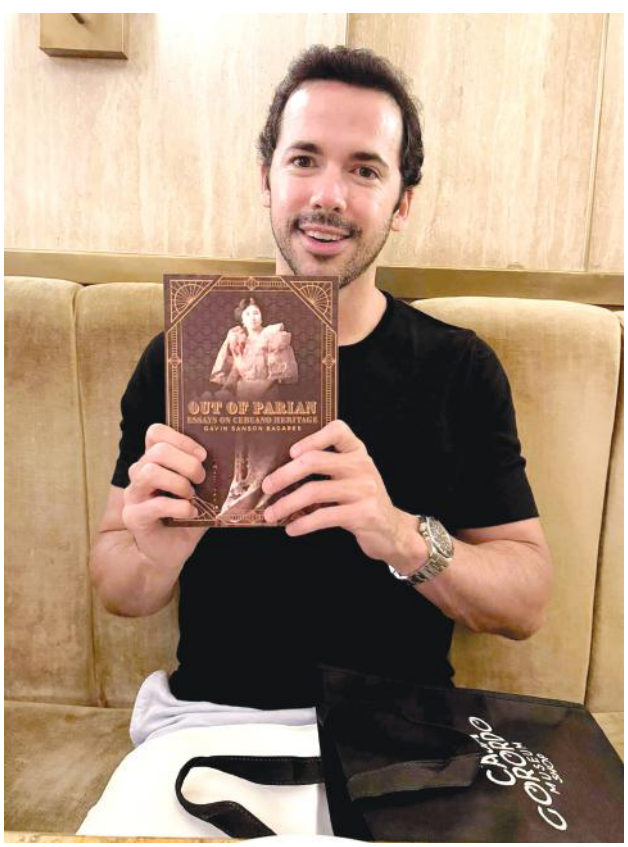
Bagares' work often counters popular misperception with meticulous historical fact. For example, he authored the widely-read Philippine Daily Inquirer feature, "'Kanto boy'? Duterte is so 'de buena familia' ('sa totoo lang')", where he used archival records to trace the Duterte family's roots in



The facsimile of Out of Parian featuring Cebu's first known province wide beauty queen, Señorita Remedios Duterte. She is the great grandmother of actor Ian Veneracion.



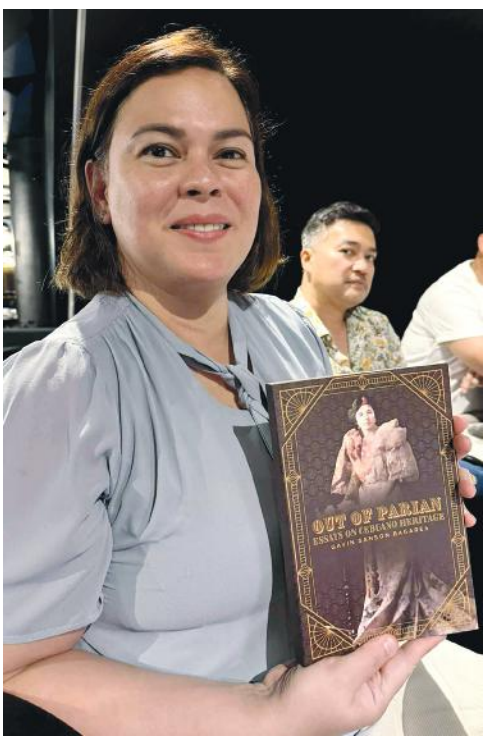
Honorary Consul of Spain in Cebu, S.E. Don Anton Perdices.
(PHOTO BY MICHAEL ACEBEDO LOPEZ)



Jokin Aboitiz of the family and firm is one of the photo contributors to the book.

Cebu back to the Spanish Creole gentry of the 18th century, demonstrating their deep connections to the city's earliest and most influential Spanish families. That article is updated as one of the essays in the book.

Within these pages, the reader will be swept into a dramatic literary investigation, the common thread of which is the Cebu Parian and the powerful families whose lives intersected there. As former RAFI Culture and Heritage Unit Director Florencio Moreño II notes, the book "pleasantly deciphers many enigmas about Cebuano culture and society," exploring the core themes of love and secrets that defined these ancestors—individuals full of itinerant triumphs and spectacular failures.



Philippine Vice President Sara Duterte holds a copy of the book while former Speaker of the House of Representatives Lord Velasco looks on.


Consul General of Greece, Michael Acebedo Lopez buys 25 copies of the book. To assist him is Ramon Aboitiz Foundation, Inc.'s top executive Sol Delantar Gonzalvo. Lopez is also a descendant of the cover star, Remedios Duterte, and is first cousin to Ian Veneracion.



The author, Bagares, in a casual moment with descendants of the first Supreme Court Associate Justice from Cebu, Don Manuel C. Briones. At the left is Dr. Monica B. Ceballos and at center is real estate top executive Monina B. Blanco.

A Legacy Connected to Stone and Shadow

The book meticulously covers both the tangible and the intangible heritage: from the very architecture of a classic "balay nga tisa" like Casa Gorordo to the shadow realm of urban legends and fading oral stories. Bagares' collected essays over the years appears as a curated volume, Out of Parian, and was launched as a centerpiece for the 40th Anniversary Celebration of the Casa Gorordo Museum in December 2023.


Cebu Province Governor Pamela Baricuatro and Pasig City Mayor Vico Sotto pose with a copy of the book. Each one got a copy for their collection.

How to Get Your Copy

Don't miss the chance to own this interesting 205-page (excluding covers) volume for anyone receptive to the decadent echoes of yesterday—only about 50 copies of the book are still available! If you purchase the book directly at the Casa Gorordo Museum in Cebu City, it is priced at just P1,650.00. For online orders or inquiries, follow the Casa Gorordo Museum Shop page on social media before messaging the page to place your order or ask any questions. ♦


Antique collector and former Cebu City Commissioner of Cebu City's Cultural and Historical Affairs Commission (CHAC), Ernesto "Don Benben" Chua. He provided many of the old photographs in the book.

Bambbi Fuentes

hair & make-up
STUDIO





Madam Juanita Delgado's Love for InnerVoices

■ BY ANNE VENANCIO

FOR Madam Juanita Delgado, music isn't just entertainment—it's a bridge of connection, celebration, and lasting memories.



Her bond with InnerVoices, the pop-rock band that has captured the hearts of OPM fans nationwide, runs deeper than mere admiration. Over time, she's become part of their extended family—supporting them not just as a fan, but as a true friend.

"I truly love InnerVoices," Madam Juanita says warmly. "They're fresh, unique—unlike any other band. Their voices are powerful and soulful. They don't just sing—they make



you feel every note. Hands down, they're the BEST OPM pop-rock and roll band out there."

Formed in 1992 by a group of college friends, InnerVoices is composed of Atty. Rey Bergado (manager/keyboard), Rene Tecson



(lead guitar), Joseph Cruz (keyboard), Joseph Esparrago (drums), Alvin Pelina Herbon (bass guitar), and Patrick Marcelino (lead vocals). Their talent has earned them multiple honors, including Best Performance by a New Group of Recording Artists and Best Duo/Group Artist at the 7th PMPC Star Awards for Music, plus Revival Song of the Year at the 14th Star Awards for Music.

A fun-loving mother of four—Jacquh EL, Jacq Lazaro-Aguilar, Jhackie Lazaro-Torres, and Jacks Lazaro—Madam Juanita jokes, "I



can't join a beauty pageant—it's too serious! With my personality, I'm more of a comedian than a contender."

She's a familiar face at InnerVoices gigs, from Hard Rock Cafe Manila to the SMI75 Reunion 50th Golden Anniversary, always bringing joy and laughter wherever she goes.

Her bond with the band shines through special celebrations, such as Atty. Bergado's birthday bash at Hard Rock Cafe Makati on September 25, 2025. "He's the glue that binds them all—the never-retiring foundation of the group. We had so much fun and celebrated like family," she recalls.

InnerVoices has been unstoppable, releasing a string of hits including "Hari," "Isasayaw Kita," "Angel," "Idlip," "Meant to Be," "Galaw," "THAL (Tubig, Hangin, Apoy, Lupa)," "Handa Na Kitang Mahalin," "Saksi ang mga Tala," "Sayaw sa Ilalim ng Buwan," "I Will Wait for You in the Rain," and their Christmas single, "Pasko sa Ating Puso."

InnerVoices performs regularly at Hard Rock Cafe Makati, Bar IX Molito Alabang, and special shows at Noctos Bar, Tunnel Bar, and Resorts World Bar 360.

"Being with InnerVoices is like being part of a family," says Madam Juanita. "They've given me music, friendship, and joy that lasts a lifetime." ♦



Sinag Maynila

salutes young filmmakers

- BY MARIDOL RANOA-BISMARK
- PHOTOS BY DANILO BRENIO

AS film festivals go, Sinag Maynila Independent Filmfest has a lot going for it. The annual event known for showcasing standout full-length features, docus and short films from Filipino creative minds, is on its seventh year. It has survived the pandemic, shortage, even absence of government support, and other hurdles that could have crushed lesser festivals.

It puts the spotlight on talented student filmmakers, the future of local cinema.

Thus, the festival, founded by Solar Entertainment Corp. President Wilson Tieng and Cannes Film Festival Best Director Brillante Mendoza in 2015, proves local cinema is still alive and kicking. This, despite predictions about its demise. The industry is teeming with young filmmakers with a strong grip on social issues and the tools to bring them alive on the big screen.





From left: Best Actor JM de Guzman, Sinag Maynila founders Wilson Tieng and Director Brillante Mendoza and Best Actress Rita Daniela.

At the media conference, filmfest official Butch Ibanez announced that the body received entries from 26 schools. The 85 submissions consisted of full-length feature films, docus and student short films.

Madawag ang Landas Patungong Pag-Asa, directed by Joel Lamangan, whose story revolves around a small town wracked by conflicts that threaten elementary students' education, was named Best Film. It also bagged the Best Actress honors for Rita Daniela, Best Production Design for Jay Custodio, Best Screenplay for Eric Ramos and Best Musical Score for Von de Guzman.

Jeongbu, a drama film about the search for justice, took home the following awards: Best Director for Topel Lee, Best Editing for Crishel G. Desuasido, Best Cinematography for AB Garcia and Best Sound Design for Immanuel Verona.

Giovanni Piolo Rayla's Oscar Recipe won Best Documentary (Open Category), while Donnie Sacueza got the jury prize for Mga Bayaning Ayta.







For Short Films (Open Category), Daniel dela Cruz bagged Best Short Film honors for *Ang Gadya Sang Suba,* while JP Corton took home the Jury Prize for *Naghahanaw ng mga Aninipot.* Precious Paula Nicole was Best Performance for a Short Film for *Lip Sync Assassin.*

Colegio San Agustin-Bacolod's Trini Archie V. Garcia's *Taga-taga (Praying Mantis)* won Best Short Film in the student category for short films. Kristal Kaye C. Tagle took home the Jury Prize for *Walahanon.*

Phillip Altejos got a special citation for best performance for *Boi.* ♦





Hannah Nixon
Girl on the Rise

■BY ANNE VENANCIO

HANNAH Nixon is only 18. But she's already making waves in the entertainment industry. She's not just a promising singer and actress but a full-fledged multi-hyphenated artist who knows how to balance the glitz of showbiz with the grit of real life.

Auditions to the Big Screen

Many dream of entering showbiz, but Hannah has already achieved what others can only imagine. She starred in two films—Color Blind directed by Ranze A. Cariño, and Gusto Kong Maging—where she showcased her depth and versatility as a young actress.

Her debut single, "Mahal Na Pala Kita", penned by coach Alrey Zamora, is streaming on Spotify, Apple Music, and all major platforms, further cementing her as a rising voice in OPM.

Add to that her successful stints in high-profile commercials—Landers Superstore's viral ad with millions of views, endorsements for Master Siomai, Chingu Café, and a Tide TVC alongside Alden Richards—and you've got a young artist shaping up to be a household name.

Her breakout role as Daniella, the unforgettable mean girl in ABS-CBN's The Four Bad Boys and Me proves that Hannah isn't afraid to take on bold, scene-stealing roles.

"I'm beyond thankful for everything—movies, music, commercials, all of it. Every chance given to me feels like a blessing I'll never take for granted," Hannah says, her eyes lighting up with genuine gratitude.

Family First

Despite the whirlwind of projects, Hannah remains deeply grounded, thanks to her parents Adelfa Nixon and her dad, who've been with her every step of the way.

"If not for Mommy and Daddy, I wouldn't be here. They've always supported me—not just as parents, but as my cheerleaders and coaches. I owe them everything," she shares with pride.

Beauty & Brains

What sets Hannah apart from many rising stars? She's also a student determined to finish her education. Balancing academics and showbiz is not easy, but Hannah sees it as part of her journey.

She attends Star Magic Acting workshops, proof that she's not only honing her natural talent but investing in long-term growth.

Class, Fab & the Future

Hannah is part of Classy and Fab 10, recently featured in the 7th Anniversary Presentation, which shows her as one of the standout young performers of her generation.

Even as more projects and milestones await, Hannah measures success not in awards or streaming numbers.

It's in staying true to herself and the people who helped her along the way.

"I'm thankful for every opportunity, every fan, every challenge. But most of all, I'm thankful to God, to my parents, and to everyone who continues to believe in me. This is just the beginning." ♦



“I’m beyond thankful for everything—movies, music, commercials, all of it. Every chance given to me feels like a blessing I’ll never take for granted,” Hannah says, her eyes lighting up with genuine gratitude.



GMA, ABS-CBN, AND TV5 SHINE BRIGHT AT THE 37TH PMPC STAR AWARDS FOR TELEVISION

■BY ERIC BORROMEO

CONGRATULATIONS!

The spotlight beamed once again on Philippine television as the 37th PMPC Star Awards for Television unfolded on August 24, 2025, at the VS Hotel Convention Center in Quezon City. Presented by BingoPlus, the ceremony reaffirmed the industry's vibrance, honoring programs and personalities who defined the small screen over the past year.

Hosted by seasoned emcee Boy Abunda and singer-actress Pops Fernandez, alongside rising stars Gela Atayde, Elijah Canlas, and Robi Domingo, the night balanced prestige with energy. Performances from OPM icons Dingdong Avanzado, Jessa Zaragoza, Christian Bautista, and



Jed Madela punctuated the awards show, while direction by Vivian Poblete Blancaflor gave the program polish and flair.

Networks in Focus

The evening underscored network rivalries as GMA 7 emerged dominant, winning Best TV Station and sweeping multiple key categories. Its hit dramas *Maria Clara at Ibarra* and *Abot Kamay ang Pangarap* clinched Best Primetime Series and Best Daytime Drama Series respectively, while *Magpakailanman* reaffirmed its legacy as Best Drama Anthology. GMA's hold on comedy remained firm with *Pepito Manaloto and Bubble Gang* scoring wins for Best Comedy Show and its lead actors Paolo Contis and Chariz Solomon.

But ABS-CBN and its partner TV5 were far from sidelined. *FPJ's Batang Quiapo* brought Cherry Pie Picache her first-ever Best Drama Supporting Actress trophy, while Senior High earned Elijah Canlas the Best Supporting Actor award. Variety powerhouse It's Showtime maintained its pop culture dominance, winning Best Variety Show, with Kim Chiu also bagging Best Female TV Host. Meanwhile, Robi Domingo tied with Paolo Ballesteros as Best Male TV Host, proving his versatility across formats.

Celebrating Excellence

The acting races delivered thrilling results. Joshua Garcia (*Unbreak My Heart)* and Rhian Ramos *(Royal Blood)* took home Best Drama Actor and Actress, solidifying their positions as generational talents. Single-performance trophies went to Alden Richards and Rochelle Pangilinan for their emotionally charged portrayals in *Magpakailanman* episodes.

In journalism, 24 Oras was named Best News Program, while Karen Davila and Joee Guilas stood out as Best Female and Male Newscasters. Documentaries also shone, with The Atom Araullo Specials winning Best Documentary Program, alongside the enduring credibility of I-Witness hosts.

Newcomers had their moment too: Gela Atayde (*Senior High)* and John Clifford *(Pepito Manaloto)* were recognized as Best New Female and Male TV Personalities, signaling the industry's continued renewal.

Special Tributes

The PMPC also paid homage to trailblazers. The Ading Fernando Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Geleen Eugenio, Malou Choa-Fagar, Caridad Sanchez, and Ariel Ureta for their invaluable contributions to entertainment. Meanwhile, broadcast veteran Angelique Lazo received the Excellence in Broadcasting Lifetime Achievement Award, honoring her decades-long dedication to journalism and public service.

Why It Mattered

The 37th edition of the Star Awards did more than recognize winners—it reflected how Philippine television is adapting in an era of shared content across free TV, cable, and digital platforms. Once-rival networks now collaborate on programs, yet the competition for prestige remains fierce.

As the curtains closed, it was clear: the Star Awards remain a touchstone for Filipino audiences, a reminder that in a rapidly evolving media landscape, compelling stories and authentic personalities will always capture the nation's imagination. ♦

Savoring sumptuous Japanese cuisine

■ BY KEY KALUH

SUSHI, sashimi, tempura, gyudon, sukiyaki, and tonkatsu are some of the Japanese dishes well-loved by Filipino diners. When these dishes are prepared with a higher level of expertise, combined with state-of-the-art technology, the results are delectably spectacular!

Kiwami, the new Japanese food establishment conveniently located along Seaside Drive of SM Mall of Asia, has formally opened its doors to discerning diners and gourmets alike. It is nicely tucked on the ground level fronting Salomon's Sporting Goods.

The food concept began in 2022, just as lockdowns were lifted, and the metro was rising from its lethargy. "But the business started with Yabu some 11 years ago as a specialty concept.

"At Kiwami, we serve dishes that cater to our customers' tastes and preferences. Our selection of appetizers includes favorites such as sushi, sashimi, and maki, ensuring a delightful start to every meal.

This entire epicurean journey started after our family tasted delectable Japanese food in a hole-in-the-wall diner during one of our annual visits to Japan," shared brand manager Nicole Concepcion, during a media tasting event.





"The kitchens take 30 percent of the floor space. Our personnel of 115 are trained and audited annually. Our chefs are trained in Japan, or the Japanese trainers fly to Manila to train them, whichever is feasible."

Kiwami is comprised of five different kitchens, offering Japan-grade food options in each one: Ippudo ramen and yakitori; Koyo with Chef Mark Manaloto of New York; Hannosuke's heirloom brand tempura; Fukuda and Hachibei for celebratory meals; and Hokkaido Soft Cream for sweet endings.

"The kitchens take 30 per cent of the floor space. Our personnel of 115 are trained and audited annually. Our chefs are trained in Japan, or the Japanese trainers fly to Manila to train them, whichever is feasible," Nicole continued.

Seafood lovers would have a field day enjoying the many food options. Their Salmon Tare, that's perfectly grilled in skewers, is a must-try. The tempura tendon sets come in a variety of serving options, so your cravings are fully satiated. Ippudo's classic ramen is also another tasty dish.

The Hakata-style ramen is served with Ippudo's original 15-hour pork bone broth and fresh thin wheat noodles, that's topped with slow-cooked chasu slices.

The Yabu katsu sets are really delectable. And the unagi (eel) tamago, with its mixture of sweet potatoes, garlic, and onions, is a filling starter.

Each table also includes a guide on how to have the perfect koyo handroll experience. Featuring a specially designed cover, it ensures your handroll stays fresh and the nori wrap crispy, enhancing your dining experience.





Gourmands are also invited to discover Hachibei's yakitori and Hibachi-style dishes, expertly grilled over traditional binchotan charcoal. This method imparts a unique flavor and aroma to every bite, elevating the dining experience.

Other Kiwami dining concepts are located at the Alabang Town Center and the Bonifacio Global City in Taguig. Tabetai desu ne?







PTV 4 GM Malou Choa-Fagar

Destiny's child

■ BY MARIDOL RANOA-BISMARK

PEOPLE'S Television Network (PTV 4's) new general manager, Malou Choa-Fagar admits she's a child of destiny. And she's right.

A career in the broadcast industry was not in the veteran TV executive's mind when she enrolled at the University of the Philippines. The woman who would catapult noontime show *Eat Bulaga* to the top of the ratings game for decades wanted to take up Hotel and Restaurant Management. The free spirit didn't see herself a slave to working day in and day out, something which Mass Communication graduates do (think news and daily variety shows).

But she soon discovered social sciences didn't make her look forward to attending school daily. So she heeded her dad's advice to shift to Mass Communication.

"It's a glamorous job," he told her. Besides, dear dad, who was with the sales department of the radio network Allied Broadcasting Center, can refer her to friends upon graduation.

Dad was true to his word. Fagar worked as traffic assistant in Allied Broadcasting, where she scheduled commercials for radio stations. For her, the job was as exciting as learning math. She covered mistakes in the contract with Snopake (remember that little brush of coated with white liquid?) until it was error-free. Fagar the perfectionist didn't tolerate the slightest slip up. For her, TV execs need a neat, presentable contract with the perfect dotted line to sign on.

Eventually, she got bored. She lasted less than two months.

Eat Bulaga

A call from *Eat Bulaga* bore promises of change. The caller told Fagar someone from Triumph Court of Fashion, where she took her on-the-job training, highly recommended her. She grabbed the chance to start from the bottom – as production assistant.

She saw the hand of God at work right away. Fagar believes she wouldn't have landed that life-changing job had she graduated as originally planned two years before. The 1979 graduate was promoted to associate producer after her predecessor, Rocky Juliano resigned. Not all after, Fagar again moved up, this time as executive producer, after Guia Crisostomo resigned as well.

At that time, beating a Goliath like noontime show Student Canteen was unthinkable. It dominated its time slot. Its hosts, Coney Reyes, the late Helen Vela, Pepe Pimentel, Eddie Ilarde and Bobby Ledesma, were the best in their field.

Fagar recalls how no one wanted to guest in *Bulaga*, even if Management gave talent fees. The big bosses urged — start rating, or face cancelation.

Fagar and the staff shifted its focus on the CD class, with contests like *Macho Man, Maid in the Philippines, Little Miss Philippines* and others. It mined the social media market by creating AIDub (Alden Richards and Yaya Dub). The rest is history.

Fagar was appointed vice-president, and then senior vice-president and CEO.



Retirement followed, only to be cut short, when Fagar was invited to sit as part of TV UP's board of directors. Her stint as MTRCB (Movie and Television Review and Classification Board) member made her even more familiar with the way government runs.



It was a sign of things to come. A few months back, PTV-4 chair Vivian Recio asked her to send her resume to the government station.

The general manager position never crossed Fagar's mind. She applied as a member of the board. But again, God had better plans. Network execs took one look at her resume, and made her general manager right then and there.

All those late nights working for Bulaga, losing sleep over segments to launch, among others, finally paid off. She started reporting to work in her PTV office along Visayas Avenue, Quezon City, on Aug. 8.

Fagar wants to get more block-timers, to add to PTV 4's modest coffers. Since finances are important to make PTV 4 even more self-sufficient, Fagar attends congressional budget hearings (the station is under the Presidential Communications Office or PCO).

As of this writing, the government station has five block-timers, independent producers who purchase airtime. More of them is good, because PTV 4 only has a share of the PCO budget for other media offices.

Higher advertising revenue will allow Fagar to create more exciting fare like a dream docu such as the ones she watched in the defunct National Geographic Channel.

The challenge

"Compared to others," muses Fagar, "PTV is a clean station." It has no teleseryes, only news-oriented and sports programs. It airs the good things President Bongbong Marcos does. It has no intriguing talk shows.

The intrigues, she adds, come from within. It's inevitable. One wrong move, says Fagar, and she can be accused of plunder.

On Day One of her job, Fagar learned that previous management was facing a couple of complaints which should have been addressed before she entered the picture. Since she didn't receive any turnover briefing, Fagar was caught unawares. She had to ask questions about what happened, what was the former general manager's stand, and others? She had to get answers from station old-timers.

Young employees, on the other hand, help Fagar with content on social media (YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and X).

While being the boss is empowering, Fagar knows she mustn't be complacent. She just might wake up one day with orders to resign because of a change in PCO management. So she keeps her feet on the ground, and just gives it her all.

She listens to her millennial sons about pieces of advice on how to spot fake news (if it's on Google, it's genuine), what's in, and others.

Most of all, this Ading Fernando Lifetime Achievement awardee (care of the Philippine Movie Press Club) reminds herself of her purpose.

"Everything that happens in your life has a purpose. You can be an example to others in what you say or do," she stresses.

PTV 4 is in good hands. ♦

Fashion industry's Cinderella



■ BY MARIDOL RANOA-BISMARK

DENIM is the fashion industry's Cinderella. What used to be the poor working man's clothing has emerged as the go-to choice, even for the rich. Fashion icons Kendall Jenner and Rihanna wear denims. Katie Holmes, Jennifer Lopez, Justin Timberlake and super model Cindy Crawford are denim fans.

In the Philippines, fashion designers embrace denim as well. Here's why.

Oskar Peralta: Denim is forever

The first Filipino designer to land in the pages of Paris's prestigious Vogue magazine, is a denim fan. He may have dressed up such elite names as former first lady Imelda Marcos, the Violagos and the late Amalia Fuentes. But he's at home with denim, the staple of street fashion, and something even the street sweeper wears day in and day out.

"Denim is forever," he explains. Wear it with confidence, and you'll look elegant and rich even if your pocket is half full.

The 83-year-old designer advises pairing denim pants with a chiffon, lace, satin or brocade top to ooze with wealth. Better yet, invest in a Prada or Chanel jacket or blazer you can slip into over your favorite denim pants.

Never be afraid of flaunting your distressed denims, with its worn, aged and damaged tear marks to a formal party. Neither should you keep that old faded denim jacket in the dark corner of your closet. You can still look way above it all with your elegant top, chic bling-blings and stiletto shoes. A pair of flat shoes, open-toe sandals and sneakers add a touch of chic on informal occasions.

Socks with sandals are a no-no, adds Peralta, a.k.a. Tito O in industry circles. It makes people think something's wrong with your toenails.

Men, on other hand, can wear leather shoes or white rubber shoes with their denim to look well-coordinated, he says.

Color combos

Good color combos are musts as well. For that fashionista look, Peralta goes for khaki, mocca gray and fatigue green hues to go with denim – be it black, blue, white, brown and indigo.

Accessories are a godsend. Go ahead, wear that costume jewelry you love. Peralta says even the rich use it wherever they go, and just store their costly gems in the bank vault.

He advises everyone to choose those that fit their personality and lifestyle. Are you a shrinking makahiya? Are you outgoing, tall or petite? This should show in your accessories – including your bag.

Peralta walks the talk. Others may wear barong or Americana to a formal evening fashion show in Manila Hotel. But not him. He dared come in denim cropped jacket, long-sleeved white shirt, a pair of linen shorts and white rubber shoes and long pearl necklace. He emerged the rock star of the night.

What if your packed schedule leaves you no time to change clothes? Peralta assures you smart casual denim is versatile enough to carry from morning to nighttime. This saves you time, money and effort in switching from one outfit to another.

You can even wear denim over and over if you don't have time to wash it. This sturdy natural fabric made from cotton can withstand the elements. Its breathable nature keeps it from smelling bad as long as the wearer stays hygienic.

You can never go wrong with denim, Peralta smiles.

That's good news for the rich, the poor, the young and old who choose this versatile street wear from sun-up to sundown.

(For inquiries on Peralta's creations, call or text assistant designer Noel Flores at 0917-734-5006)



Denim is forever



Harley Ruedas Mother nature loves denim





Question: What accounts for the popularity of denim as daily outfit?

Answer: The denim popularity is global. You find it in every person's closet, regardless of gender, age, religion, work or social status.

What kind of denim fabric for daily casual wear do you recommend? Why?

All kinds of denim fabric is good for daily casual wear because its main component is cotton. Cotton is a sturdy organic material suitable to our tropical climate, even those in temperate regions.

What colors are best?

Basic shades of blue are classic. Neutrals and white are very popular and trendy this year.

How about length and style?

Length can be varied according to the design. All lengths of tops is suitable, depending on one's personal style.

What kind of shoes go well with denim? Why?

Since denim is versatile, stylish shoes or basic sneakers is fine. It depends on one's personality and confidence to pull it off.

What should be avoided? Why?

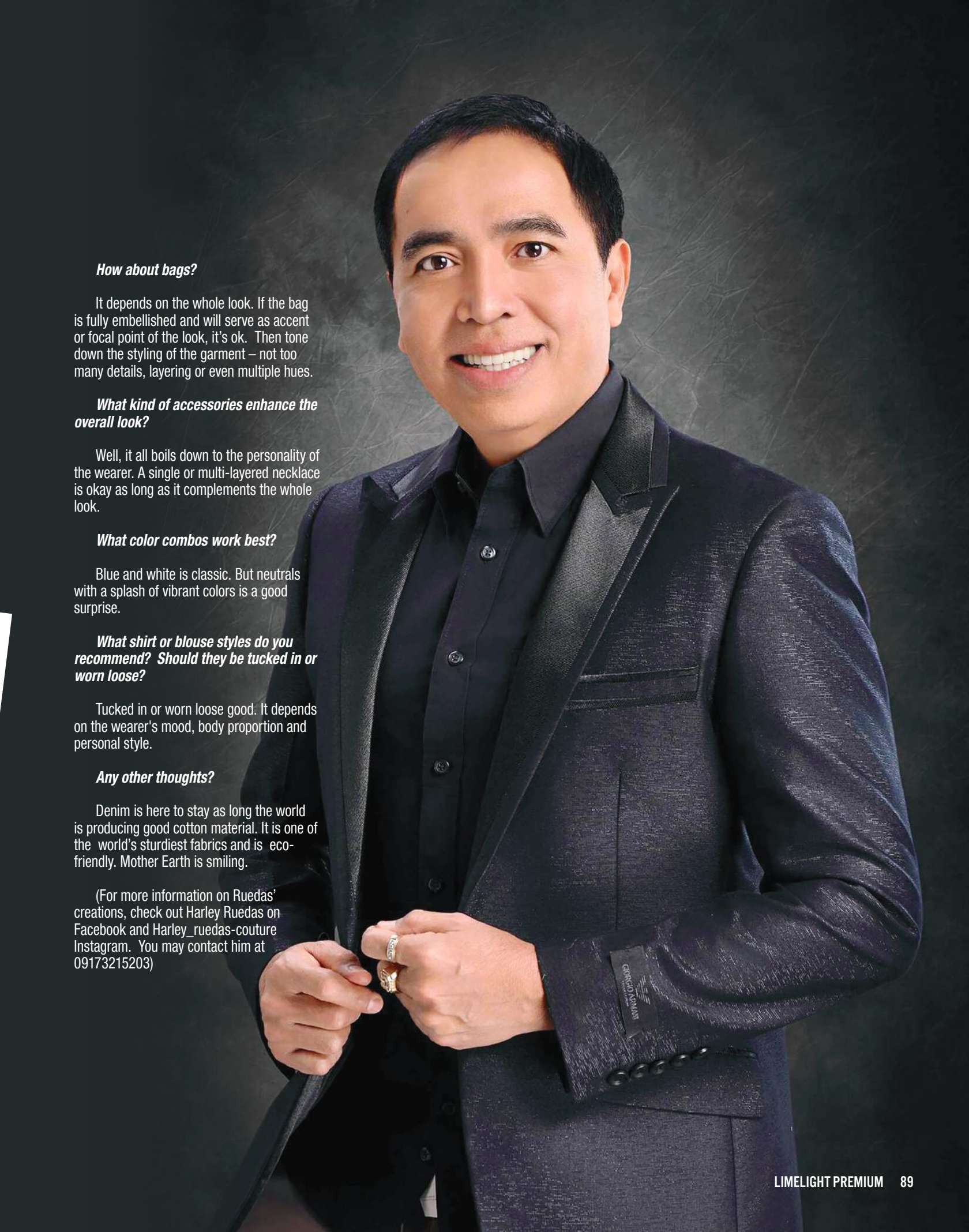
Don't wear denims in formal occasions, even if it is embellished with gems etc. Remember, denim is associated with street fashion.

Is wearing sandals with denim okay? Why or why not?

Of course, depends on one's comfort and style

Are blazers , jackets and sweaters good to wear with denim?

Definitely yes! Anything goes, just be careful with the color harmony.



How about bags?

It depends on the whole look. If the bag is fully embellished and will serve as accent or focal point of the look, it's ok. Then tone down the styling of the garment – not too many details, layering or even multiple hues.

What kind of accessories enhance the overall look?

Well, it all boils down to the personality of the wearer. A single or multi-layered necklace is okay as long as it complements the whole look.

What color combos work best?

Blue and white is classic. But neutrals with a splash of vibrant colors is a good surprise.

What shirt or blouse styles do you recommend? Should they be tucked in or worn loose?

Tucked in or worn loose good. It depends on the wearer's mood, body proportion and personal style.

Any other thoughts?

Denim is here to stay as long the world is producing good cotton material. It is one of the world's sturdiest fabrics and is eco-friendly. Mother Earth is smiling.

(For more information on Ruedas' creations, check out Harley Ruedas on Facebook and Harley_ruedas-couture Instagram. You may contact him at 09173215203)



Legacy of a lifetime

■ BY MARIDOL RANOA-BISMARK

AS a fresh graduate, Lord of Scents Joel Cruz hardly looked like the future head of the Aficionado business empire, with over 500 stores/kiosks nationwide, 20 branches in the country and abroad, and six commercial buildings in the US. The Psychology major (University of Sto. Tomas) wasn't armed with many necessary tools of the trade. Psychology did teach him something important: the value of relationships.





He learned to discern what Juan dela Cruz wants, how to choose good suppliers, empower his staff and resolve company conflicts. He treated employees as partners who can rise with him as his Aficionado perfume, grew. At the height of the pandemic, he encouraged them to become resellers and earn more.

"Never did I feel threatened by my employees' drive to succeed at being an entrepreneur," he said in his newly launched book, *Business 101 What Worked for Me* (Vibal Publishing). In fact, he encouraged their efforts to earn extra income.

Thank you messages

Nothing warms his heart more than getting an SMS brimming with gratitude from an employee. One parent dreamt of sending his child to a private school and get a better education that would be the key to a more secure future.



"Thank you, sir," the employee messaged Cruz, who at that time was on his knees, asking God why He blessed Aficionado so much.

A second message from another employee confirmed the purpose behind Cruz's good fortune. The employee said he now provides food for his mom, when it used to be the other way around.

Cruz absorbed this habit of seeking answers from God from his deeply religious mother. Her son tried to please her by taking up Psychology as preparation for a course in Medicine, her preferred path for Cruz. But the call to have a business was stronger. Thus did Cruz prove he's more of his entrepreneur father's son. As a student, the then future CEO sold imported goods from his travels. A 9-to-6 job never excited him.

His father's trucking business was his early training ground. When his dad named him general manager, Cruz handled accounting, processed human resource benefits, assisted with dispatch, computed salaries, set vehicle maintenance schedules and connected with clients. He sold airline tickets on the side.







It wasn't easy. But Cruz had big dreams: a mansion with a big swimming pool, a spacious garden and a beautiful chandelier such as those his dad's Forbes Park clients had. The young Cruz's eyes lit up as he watched the TV series *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous.*

He questioned his dad for not giving them these luxuries. He was young and blinded by material things.

New goals

Today, at 60, Cruz realizes there's more to life than riches. These things do not a happy person make.



Sure, a man like him who can rest on his laurels is content . At 25 years old, Aficionado is a brand Juan and Juana dela Cruz turn to in order to smell and feel good. They hardly know that when the pandemic set his business back, Cruz didn't lose hope but diversified into hygienic products like alcohol and sanitizers. The drive to empower his staff and leave a lasting legacy to his eight children (conceived through surrogacy) propelled him to go on.

But he knows success is nothing without divine guidance. Thus, he and his staff start and end the day with a prayer, as they did more than



two decades back when a struggling Aficionado occupied a tiny apartment at Ever Gotesco Grand Central, Monumento. Cruz kept watch at the humble office with eight sales people who displayed the first batch of perfumes on a borrowed table. He himself put the labels, checked the packaging, and held meetings way into the night to handle issues and improve operations.

He moved on from every setback (e.g. wrong packaging, unreliable suppliers) with the grit and discipline he learned from his dad. He remembered his US-based older sister reminding him that he can always open a new business if the first one fails.



Most of all, he looks at his young children and smiles, knowing that although they may not follow the path he chose, he's leaving them a legacy they can count on, in good times and bad. All were there -- garbed in emerald green jackets -- at the book launch Vibal Publishing sponsored for media one weekend.

On stage, Cruz urged the two eldest, both 13.

"Prince and Princess, you'll be 18 five years from now. You can help Daddy in the business. You can be whatever you want, but please, I hope you prioritize our business."

This way, his business will continue to provide jobs for many, and empower more employees. It will spread good vibes and make his children feel as happy as he is right now.

Profit is no longer Cruz's main goal. It's seeing people smile because they're wearing a scent that makes them feel confident without ruining their budget. It's sharing the joys and pains of creating a business from the ground up through a slim paperback that costs P510 each .

Legacy

"At the end of your journey, you'll close your eyes. People will look at your coffin and say, 'Thank you for all the kindness you shared and taught me.' They will pray for you," he muses.

This is the legacy he wants to leave behind. It's a legacy of honest hard work, deep faith and love for others. It's a legacy readers of his book will learn, and hopefully, pass on to others. ♦

Liza Soberano speaks out

■BY JHASLEY ANGEL BARNACHEA

LIZA Soberano is owning 2025—opening up about her breakup with Enrique Gil, confronting her childhood struggles, and stepping into the global advocacy spotlight while dazzling fans with her Hollywood-caliber style.

Breaking the Silence on Love

In a candid appearance on the Can I Come In? podcast, Soberano confirmed that her romance with Enrique ended nearly three years ago. She heeded Enriquez's request to stay mum about the breakup, because both feared it might affect her career and fan support.

"I don't want to speak for him…but we broke up…and it was scary…my career would go bad," she admitted. Despite the heartbreak, the ex-couple continues to maintain mutual respect and support, showing a maturity beyond their years in the spotlight.

Facing the Past

Soberano also shared difficult moments from her childhood, detailing experiences of abuse, neglect, and a traumatic foster care episode, including being kidnapped and mistreated. The Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) praised her courage, highlighting how her story sheds light on challenges many Filipino children face. Veteran talent manager Ogie Diaz describe her as napakatapang, and Soberano expressed gratitude to fans and her younger self for the strength to overcome adversity.



From Advocacy to Hollywood

Beyond personal revelations, Soberano discussed her advocacy work. She joined a global panel championing women's and children's rights, describing it as the start of a deeper commitment to social causes.

Her international influence is also on the rise—she turned heads at Coachella 2025 with a chic boho ensemble and captivated audiences at Netflix Tudum 2025 in Los Angeles, where she wore a sleek black gown solidifying her status as actress and style icon.

What's Next?

Soberano hinted at a reunion project with Enrique, while emphasizing that that it is still in the early stages. For now, her focus remains on her career, advocacy and expanding her global presence. ♦



COCO & JULIA: LOVE TO LAST

■ BY ANNE VENANCIO

THERE are love stories that burn bright and fast — all fire, no forever. And then there's Coco Martin and Julia Montes — the quiet flame that never flickers, the kind that simply stays.

They never needed the spotlight to prove anything. No loud declarations, no social media displays. Just quiet loyalty. Mutual respect. And a partnership that speaks louder than any post or hashtag.

From Leading Lady to Power Player

Once upon a time, Julia was Coco's leading lady. Today, she's his creative equal — a producer in *FPJ's Batang Quiapo*, the primetime powerhouse Coco leads and directs.

For Julia, it's not about chasing titles or staying in frame. "Personal development" is how she puts it — the desire to grow, evolve and expand her craft beyond acting.

And Coco? Ever the gentleman, ever the collaborator — he's right there beside her. No ego. Just pure support. It's the kind of partnership that thrives on trust, not control.

Solid as Ever

Rumors have swirled around them for years — secret weddings, love children, even quiet breakups. Yet through every round of gossip, the two have stayed grounded.

Julia laughs it off with the ease of someone who knows exactly who she is.

"Privacy isn't secrecy," she says. It's their way of protecting what's real in a world obsessed with spectacle.

Coco, for his part, has always kept it simple: love, respect, humility. No theatrics, no script, no grand gestures. Just real connection — the kind that doesn't fade when the cameras stop rolling.

More Than Just Showbiz

Julia has ventured into the wellness and business. Coco continues to dominate primetime. But rather than compete, they complement.

She stands behind his creative empire; he champions her entrepreneurial fire. It's a love story that's less about red carpets and more about shared dreams — two lives intertwining without losing their individuality.

That's the real power couple formula: not glitz, but grounding. Not attention, but alignment.

What's Next? An international fan meet that's long overdue? Another on-screen reunion? Maybe Julia stepping fully into the producer's chair? Whatever it is, one thing's clear: Coco and Julia are building something that goes beyond showbiz — a partnership anchored in purpose and patience.

In a world where love stories fade as fast as they trend, theirs endures. No noise. No drama. Just love built to last. ♦

South Pearl Villa:
The Kamuning Gem of Puerto Princesa

■BY EVO JOEL CONTRIVIDA

LOCATED in Sitio Caberyawan, Barangay Kamuning, this serene retreat is approximately 43 kilometers from the city proper, making it an easy 50-minute land trip.

Discover South Pearl Villa, the newest beachfront gem in Puerto Princesa, which officially opened in August 2025.

A Blend of Heritage and Tropical Style

Owned and operated by Ana Lacson and her family, South Pearl Villa was once a private summer house belonging to a foreigner. The Lacson family, experienced in running Airbnb





businesses in Batangas and the United States, saw the 22-square-meter property as a rare find—a true "gem."

Inspired by Palawan's reputation for high-value pearls, they aptly named their investment South Pearl Villa, reflecting its stunning location in the southern portion of the city.

Unique Accommodations and Amenities

South Pearl Villa is a beachfront resort boasting a refreshing swimming pool among its amenities.



A-Frame Villas: These villas offer three charming A-Frame-style rooms, each comfortably accommodating up to four people. The most striking feature of these villas is their open-sky comfort rooms—a unique, roofless design that gives guests an amusing and authentic tropical ambiance.

The Main House: The resort's main structure can host up to 50 guests. It maintains its original, intact Western-style look, featuring two large rooms upstairs, each complete with a single bed and private bathroom.



Open verandas on the first floor invite guests to unwind and soak in the tranquil surroundings, offering a perfect spot to relax and recharge after a long day. It also includes an open kitchen where guests are welcome to bring and cook their own food. Meals can be arranged in case you don't want to worry about cooking.



The Vision: Your Stylish Home Away from Home

Ms. Lacson and her husband, Judd, who hails from Virginia, USA, envision South Pearl Villa as a relaxing alternative venue - an extraordinary, stylish "home away from home" that provides the privacy guests need.

It is the perfect place for friends and families to create unforgettable bonding moments, whether by enjoying a bonfire on the beach or simply watching the stars from above.

Rates and Booking Information

The resort began accepting guests during its soft launch in November 2024, frequently hosting clients from Airbnb platforms—both foreigners and Filipino tourists—who desire a longer stay away from the city's noise, but with reliable internet and electricity.

Pricing Details...

*Entrance Fee (Day/Night Tour): P200 per person

*Exclusive Events start at P35,000.00 for 30 people*Couple Room Rate: P3,000 per night

*A-Frame Villa Rate: P6,000 per night (Good for 4 to 6 pax)

Transport Service: Arrangement from the City Proper to the resort is available.

Planning a trip to Palawan soon? Treat yourself to a stay in this lush, tropical paradise. Embrace the tranquility, disconnect from the hustle and bustle, and rejuvenate your spirit while savoring moments of rural solitude.

Contact Details:

Mobile: 09451661779
Facebook: South Pearl Villas - Palawan
Photo Credit: Byahe ni Basha FB Page ♦

Find Your Peace in Paradise at LA Casa Maranan



■ BY ERIC BORROMEO

LOOKING for a getaway that blends luxury with nature's charm? Welcome to LA Casa Maranan—a hidden gem in Brgy. Ilaya, Lemery, Batangas. Crafted with passion by Engineer Johny Maranan, this serene retreat promises the perfect mix of relaxation, adventure, and comfort for families, friends, and travelers alike.

A Quick Getaway from Manila

Just 2-3 hours by car, LA Casa Maranan is easily accessible from Manila. Wind through the scenic countryside, breathe in the fresh air, and let the lush gardens and inviting spaces instantly melt away the city's stress.

Stay in Style

Whether you're planning a family reunion, a friends' weekend, or a special celebration, there's a space for everyone:

LA Casa Uno – Perfect for up to 15 guests, featuring cozy bedrooms, a swimming pool, heated jacuzzi, full kitchens, a videoke lounge, and even a mini gym with a massage chair.

LA Casa Dos – Ideal for larger groups of up to 25, complete with triple rooms, separate quarters for staff, swimming pools, bar and kitchen areas, and a second videoke lounge.

LA Pabellion – Host up to 250 guests in this multifunctional space, complete with a stunning function hall, lounge areas, and four themed mini gardens—American, tropical, contemporary, and zen.

Amenities That Make You Feel at Home

From air-conditioned rooms and free Wi-Fi to entertainment zones, dining spaces, laundry facilities, and ample parking, LA Casa Maranan has thought of everything so you can focus on relaxing.

Explore Batangas' Charm

Step out and explore nearby attractions: the serene Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, the architectural beauty of Caleruega Church, the quaint Chapel On The Hill, or the whimsical fun of Fantasy World along Diokno Highway.

Book Your Dream Escape

Planning your getaway is easy! Contact Flor, Johny, or Malou at 0962 532 2977, 0927 515 152, or 0916 355 3947, email lacasamaranan@gmail.com, or follow @lacasamaranan on social media for updates and special offers.

LA Casa Maranan: Where Luxury Meets Nature

Whether it's a family reunion, romantic retreat, or corporate event, LA Casa Maranan offers the perfect combination of luxury, comfort, and natural beauty. Gather your loved ones and experience a rejuvenating escape that you—and your Instagram feed—will never forget! ♦



2025 shaping up as Rhian's year

■BY ANNE VENANCIO

MOVE over, everyone. Rhian Ramos is everywhere. With jaw-dropping performances, awards piling up, and a love life fans can't get enough of, she's proving she's not just a star—she's a phenomenon.

In Sinagtala, director Mike E. Sandejas' musical drama about confronting the past, Rhian shines alongside Glaiza de Castro, Rayver Cruz, Arci Muñoz and Matt Lozano. She also stole hearts in Unconditional with Allen Dizon. Rhian played Anna, a social media manager navigating love and identity against the dreamy shores of Siargao.

In Meg & Ryan, a rom-com tackling grief and addiction where she starred with JC Santos, Rhian proved all over again that she has what it takes to shine. Boyfriend Sam Versoza was by her side, cheering Rhian on through every premiere, press junket and red-carpet event.

On TV, Ramos snagged Best Drama Actress honors at the 37th PMPC Star Awards for Royal Blood. She was named Female TV Star of the Year, and earned a spot as one of the Faces of the Night.

Her dream role? Playing Mitena in Encantadia Chronicles: Sang'gre.

"Playing this role, I feel like this is a childhood dream coming true," she shares.

Adding to her milestone year, Rhian reaffirmed her loyalty as a Kapuso talent when she renewed her contract with GMA Network last August 12.

"Thank you so much for the patience all of these years. I literally grew up in this network," she said. GMA Network President and CEO Gilberto R. Duavit Jr. praised Rhian's versatility and professionalism, calling her "a fine example who makes us proud."

Off-screen, Ramos is just as candid about love. Once skeptical about marriage due to her parents' separation, she now envisions a future with Sam.

"I can see myself really taking care of this partnership and doing life with this person." He calls her "the one I have chosen in my life." So wedding bells may ring sooner than we think.

With blockbuster films, unforgettable TV moments, a renewed commitment to GMA Network, and a love story fans can't stop talking about, 2025 is truly Rhian Ramos' year—on screen and off. ♦



"I can see myself really taking care of this partnership and doing life with this person." He calls her "the one I have chosen in my life." So wedding bells may ring sooner than we think.



Maris Racal is on fire

■ BY ANNE VENANCIO

IN Sunshine, Maris Racal delivers a heart-wrenching performance as a young gymnast facing an unexpected pregnancy during national tryouts. Directed by Antoinette Jadaone, the film dives into themes of reproductive rights and personal choices.

The film premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival and wowed audiences at the Berlinale before hitting Philippine cinemas last July 23, when it raked an impressive P47 million. This makes Sunshine the highest-grossing local film of the year so far. Sunshine was also shortlisted as the Philippines' entry for Best International Feature Film at the Oscars, but the nod ultimately went to Lav Diaz's Magellan. Still, Maris's performance cemented her status as one of the country's brightest stars.

Awards and Recognition

Maris' powerhouse performance earned her international recognition:

Special Mention – Osaka Asian Film Festival 2025

Audience Award – Tartuff Festival, Germany

Narrative Feature Jury & Audience Awards – Austin Asian American Film Festival, Texas

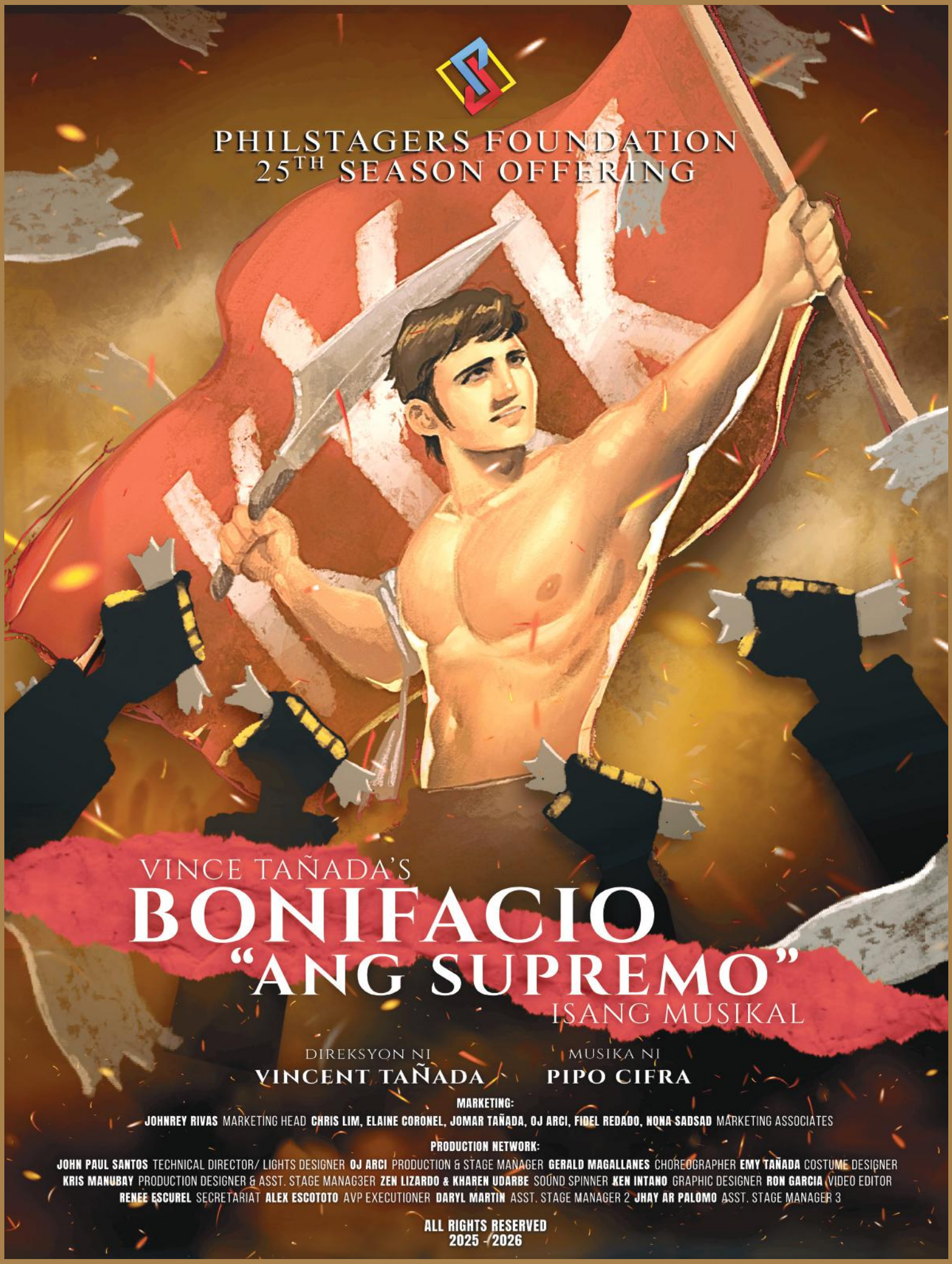
Fans couldn't be prouder.

Incognito shows her range

Maris didn't stop at the big screen. In the action-packed series Incognito, she takes on the role of Gab Rivera, a multilingual spy navigating a dangerous web of espionage. Fans praised her for bringing depth, nuance, and intensity to a role that demanded it all. Maris admitted, "Filming Incognito saved me."

With a blockbuster hit in Sunshine and a show-stealing turn in Incognito, 2025 is officially Maris Racal's year. Critics are raving, fans are swooning, and the industry is taking notice. This multi-talented singer-actress is on fire. ♦




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