

SHOWBIZ & STYLE

JOURNAL

Has Ruffa found a new love?

by RICARDO F. LO
Philstar.com

SINCE she broke up with Yilmaz Bektas, Ruffa Gutierrez hasn't been seen (that is, caught on camera) with a "most probable" date—until three weeks ago, that is.

According to Funfare's Agent Olca, Ruffa was introduced by a mutual friend to a dashing 6'2" Polish-Persian-American named John Faizad who got so smitten with Ruffa that he followed her to LA. John, 30, is said to be working in an entertainment-consulting firm. Like Ruffa, he just got out of a seven-year "committed" relationship and is, well, "searching." During a dinner with friends at Sky Car on Sunset Boulevard in LA, John was "over-protective" toward Ruffa.

But in an interview with Funfare recently for her and Ai-Ai delas Alas' new daily show on ABS-CBN, *Ruffa & Ai* (which premieres on Monday, Feb. 16, 10:15am, Ruffa insisted that she is "loveless" (while the divorce case between her and Yilmaz is pending).

"I have no time for love," she

said. "I'm busy. Monday to Friday, I go 'live' for *Ruffa & Ai*. Evenings, also Monday to Friday, I'm seen on *I Love Betty La Fea* and on Sundays I'm on *The Buzz*. I devote my free days to my daughters (Lorin and Venice) who I sometimes bring with me to the set."

Like Ruffa, Ai-Ai has gotten used to spending Valentine's Day alone.

"I've been Valentine-less for seven years now," admitted Ai-Ai. "Okay lang because every Valentine's Day I always have a show," reiterating that, since July last year, "I have been celibate. Honest, cross my heart!"

On Ruffa & Ai, the two "loveless" damsels will surely jibe beautifully. Twenty years ago when they were new in the business, Ai-Ai played yaya to Ruffa and fellow Regal Babies Carmina Villarroel and Aiko Melendez in the Regal-produced TV show *13, 14, 15* on IBC 13.

"I was their yaya even off-screen," said Ai-Ai. "*Ruffa & Ai* is Ruffa and my first project together in 20 years."

Sheena arrives minus luggage

Even if she arrived last Wednesday, Feb. 11 minus several pieces of luggage, Sheena Easton showed up at an exclusive interview with Funfare at the Heat Cafe of EDSA Shangri-La (where she and her entourage are billeted) with a big smile and a warm hug for this writer. She was cool and unruffled where other people would have lost their temper in a similar situation.

"I don't know where they are," said Sheena, referring to her luggage which contained her clothes and the musical instru-

ments needed for her *For Your Love Only* concert last night at the Araneta Coliseum, lost in transit between her flights from Las Vegas to Hawaii to Manila. "So the first thing I did this afternoon was go shopping for clothes at a nearby store."

Danee Samonte (Steve O'Neal) to the rescue. In a jiffy, Danee was able to negotiate with a local back-up band for Sheena. Hopefully, last night's show went well as Sheena promised "a marvelous" time in this her first visit to Manila.

For sure, Sheena (who's turning 50 this year) sang her hits, including the immortal *For Your Eyes Only*, the theme song of *James Bond*.

In an earlier exclusive phone interview with Funfare, Sheena said that the best lesson that she has learned in her 25 years in the business is not to take anything

or anybody for granted.

Asked which of her songs is her favorite, she gave the same answer that all singers do—none.

"It sounds like a cliché but all my songs are like my children. I love them all."

But of course, the one song that we'd rather remember her for is, yes, *For Your Eyes Only* which has perhaps unwittingly become her signature song.

By the way, let's hope that by this time, even if late, Sheena and company have already retrieved their lost luggage. ■



Ruffa Gutierrez and John Faizad during dinner with friends (one of them identified only as 'Samantha') at the Sky Bar on Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles.



Sheena Easton

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