

A Kris Aquino You Hardly Hear About



Hi!
Society
By MONET LU

I'VE ALWAYS been a keen observer of *Pinoy* entertainment and the players in it. I grew up watching Filipino movies and the stars that have graced in them. In general, I'm just fascinated with the big personalities that make the entertainment industry come alive.

Sympre, when we think of big, dominant personalities in Philippine showbiz, one particular name that comes to mind is the incomparable Ms. Kris Aquino.

Undeniably, she is a complex person with many facets. All at once she is vivacious, explosive, sweet, taklesa, classy and of course, extremely intelligent and well-read.

She is a walking contradiction. Her roller coaster career and personal life have played out like a dramatic reel before our eyes. There have been lows but also a lot of highs. Ultimately, she matured into the more sensible, kinder person that she is now.

Time has obviously been a factor in her growth. No longer rambunctious, this daughter of former president Cory Aquino is now settled with James Yap.

Watching her on TV throughout the years and in her more current projects on ABS-CBN, as host of *The Buzz* and *SNN*, you have to agree she's paid her dues to be named the "queen of talk."

Some people will say, "*Ang arte talaga nito ni Kris. Nakakainis siya!*" But deep inside, secretly they love her! Because of her brash honesty and wicked humor, people are always going to have extreme reactions toward her. Kris is not afraid to tell the truth and she is the first to admit her faults. She is the way she is and she makes no apologies for it.

However, there's a side to Kris that doesn't necessarily make headlines all the time. I was witness to this compassionate side of her 18 years ago when we were experiencing a health crisis in the family.

My niece, Lennie, had a seven-year-old daughter, Rhea Marie, who was diagnosed with leukemia. Like me, Rhea, my apo, was also a big fan of *Pinoy* movies. She idolized three of the hottest stars of that time--Rene Requiestas, Robin Padilla and Kris Aquino.

Ravaged by chemo, Rhea was still a surprisingly upbeat child. She gushed about her idols Rene, Robin and Kris and held on to the hope that she might get to meet them someday.

That was her wish, actually. My niece Lennie and her mom Angie (my sister) worked hard to find a showbiz connection. I guess God has a way of linking people. Entertainment columnist Cristy Fermin was able to arrange for then-sweethearts Robin and Kris to have some face time with Rhea.

The date was March 19, 1991 when Kris and Robin dropped by room 712 of the Capitol Medical Center in Quezon City to grant the wish of a terminally-ill child. They kept Rhea company and offered her encouragement. It was a touching moment. It was surely a highlight in Rhea's life!

Kris even donated funds to help out with Rhea's bills and she even personally invited her Pido Dida co-star Rene to visit Rhea at the hospital.

I'm grateful to Kris and Robin for making my niece smile before the cancer finally took her from us less than a month after their visit, on April 5, 1991.

Kris was such an angel to little Rhea. I never got to thank her personally until about six years ago when I had the chance to have lunch with her at Max's Restaurant in Glendale.

With all her faults, she is a remarkable woman. Her kindness meant a lot to Rhea and our family. Again, thank you Kris. More power to you.

Pageant With A Mission
I congratulate my friend Lou Baron for successfully launching her new website www.celestialbeauties.org. To aspiring beauty queens, this is the site for you! To know more about how to participate in this prestigious pageant, please go to their website. This is the pageant with a mission!



Kris Aquino



Rhea Marie Roque

Divas Live!
Please don't miss the Divas 4 Divas concert on March 28, 2009 at the Pasadena Civic Auditorium, a quality production by Starmedia Entertainment. The best women performers of our generation--Kuh, Pops, Regine, and Zsa Zsa--are coming out in full force to entertain us. For tickets, you can call Monet Salon at 323-664-5085. Hurry before they're gone!

The author is a Marikina-born, award-winning celebrity beauty stylist with his own chain of salons across Southern California and Las Vegas, Nevada. Ultimately, Monet is known as an all-around artiste who produces sold-out fashion and awards shows, as well as unforgettable marketing campaigns. Monet is also the founder of the revolutionary all-natural beauty products available at www.skinbymonet.com. He supports many humanitarian efforts to include projects in his native Marikina, The Bantay Bata Foundation, and many more. To contact Monet, please visit www.monetsalon.com for more information.



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Get ready for the David's Salon experience

DAVID'S SALON, the hairstyle authority in the Philippines, has found another home in Los Angeles. It opened its doors last July 16, 2008. Its US licensed hairstylists are all set to give the Filipino American community the David's Salon experience.



Rodante with Antonette Taus

What exactly is the David's Salon experience?

It all started with the story of a man named David Charlton, who at the age of 16, had already started hairdressing in the UK.

He went to the Philippines in 1978 and started managing the Rever Salon in the prestigious Mandarin Oriental Hotel. David initially worked on expanding the Rever Salon, which targeted the A market, but decided to put up a chain of "David's Salon" instead and reserved the Rever brand for his more affluent clients.

In 1989, David opened the first David's Salon in the New Farmer's Plaza in Cubao, Quezon City. Following its success, he opened more local branches and has expanded to 186 salons to date. Visualizing the potential of further expanding the market, he ventured into the international scene—in Xiamen, China

Continued on PAGE B7

Sharon...

From PAGE B3 played unlagging sweetness during the entire shoot and this interview, which lasted all of six hours.

"I'm sweet and nice but I'm not an idiot," she qualifies. "I can be very bitchy if the situation calls for it!"

It's in this vein that she shares her "secret" chain-smoking, which she only reined in four years ago. But you can see what a struggle it was for her from the pained expression on her face, as if even thinking about smoking brought that specter of a habit back. "That's why when a script was given to me and I saw that my character was a smoker, and would have to smoke onscreen, I couldn't help but ask the director if it was necessary. I told her it was so difficult for me to give it up, and I didn't want to risk anything by smoking again, even for a movie."

The director (apparently not a smoker) asked her, "Really? Hindi ba pwedeng manigarilyo ka, tapos pag-uwi mo kalimutan mo na?" "I said, 'No. It doesn't work that way,'" says Sharon.

She hid that habit from the public, for fear of setting a bad example. "But you know, I got into the business at a young age. I was 12 years old, and smoking and all those cups of coffee were my way of coping with the stress, the tension, the times when I was working for days without sleeping. It's only now that I've become open because attitudes have changed, and people now know how bad it is for your health."

Sharon also talked about her failed marriage to actor Gabby Concepcion, keeping things off the record. I was struck by the lack of bitterness. Still, one could sense that the end of that marriage forever changed her, and made her into what she is today. That marriage meant the world to her, and when it ended, that world was reduced to rubble, and Sharon had to rise from its ruins, eventually becoming one of the most iconic figures in Philippine cinema and show business.

"Few people know how hard I worked to get to where I am now," says Sharon, who believes any impression that everything was handed to her on a silver platter. She talks about her experiences as a single mother, having to work long hours, sacrificing sleep and comfort to raise a daughter, and one realizes that in her heart of hearts, she really went through the same difficulties that many single parents do. In other words,

her celebrity status didn't protect her. "I worked so hard because after my marriage failed, I didn't want to fail again as a mother. I also didn't want to have to depend on my father (the late Pasay City mayor Pablo Cuneta). So I had no choice."

As a child, Sharon recalls how she liked to lock herself in her room and read. Her appetite for learning new things, interrupted only by her early marriage (she was only 18 years old when she married Gabby), has been given new strength and expression after she was accepted in the University of the Philippines' (UP) Open University Program.

Sharon, who is now taking up a two year Associate in Arts Degree (and plans to eventually earn a full Bachelor's Degree), is on an academic high. "You know what, for the longest time I dreaded taking a University entrance exam. And when I took the exam for this school, I placed second! Thank God there wasn't a lot of Math!"

A lot of people have expressed admiration for Sharon's decision to go back to school. Her commercial for Havittall highlights how Sharon now "has it all" with her goal to get a college education. Others also say it is remarkable that Sharon has lasted in the business for three decades, with no signs of losing her luster. Is it reinvention? Or simply savvy career strategy? Somehow, one suspects that reinvention is not possible if the original material lacks quality and endurance.

Sharon shows us that reinvention is no mere career move, but part of the self's constant need for growth and expression, and its participation in the fullness of life.

The Sharon Cuneta Megathirty concert is executive produced by KATZ Entertainment in association with Brad's Entertainment & FLB Corporation. It is also presented by Seafood City Supermarket, LBC Cargo, Western Union. Sponsors include Asian Journal Publications, Tribune USA, The Filipino Channel, Weekend Balita, Mabuhay Inc. Companion Home Care & Fine Clothing Accessories, and Jimmy de Guzman (General Contractor).

Tickets are priced at \$100, 78, 68, 58, 38 and are available at KATZ Entertainment (562) 219-7235; Jackie Regala (562) 787-9030; Kaye Morales (562) 881-9712; Brad Dizon (310) 972-1178; FLB Corp (310)816-9371. Tickets are also available at Ticketmaster.com.

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