

The Show Will Go On!

How the Gurfinkels Saved the Day

by LOUIE JON SANCHEZ
AJPress Manila

THEIR myriad success stories are already for the books. But this one other big story, tells Millie Gurfinkel, the admirable better half of immigration lawyer to the stars and TFC's Citizen Pinoy program host Atty. Micheal Gurfinkel, is definitely a make or break.

"Michael and I actually asked each other, do we really need this?" she relates, in Asian Journal's recent breakfast with her at the Bayview Hotel in Manila. "It was call of duty that prompted us to take on the job. Somebody had to do it. And we were there."

Millie is talking about the visa disapproval en masse at the US Embassy in Manila of ABS-CBN's *Star Magic World Tour* entourage, composed of more than 50 stars and other skeletal staff and TV talent executives. The world tour, slated at Citizens Bank Arena in Ontario, California, LA on June 27 at 7pm, could have been a major disappointment, if not for the intervention of the Law Offices of Michael Gurfinkel.

But Millie humbly relates her own fear when, with so little time and so much to work on, they took

on the challenge. "I was very scared, this group is big group we are talking about," she says. "But everything fell into place, perhaps. Our staff worked round the clock, only catching naps every once in a while. We made sure the stars and the staff had it right in all their papers."

The husband and wife team of the Gurfinkels had made miracles in the past. Asia's Songbird Regine Velasquez made it to a major US concert in the last minute. And so did Wowowee sensation Willie Revillame, perhaps one of the richest men in Philippine entertainment.

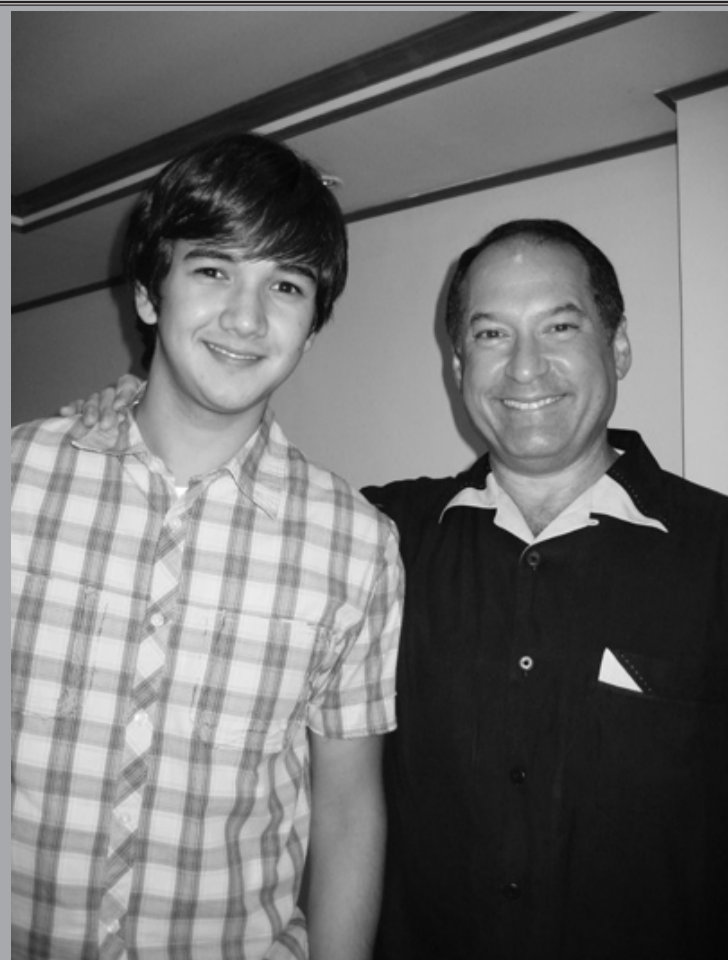
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Cover Boys Rafael Rosell and Jon Avila with Atty. Gurfinkel



Young star Matt Evans with Atty. Gurfinkel



Acclaimed actress Kristine Hermosa with Atty. Gurfinkel



Diether Ocampo with Atty. Gurfinkel

CBN Star Magic talents, brought work of the law offices to an all-new level. "It really looked like we were on *L.A. Law*. We in America would call the Makati offices constantly, even in the wee hours of the morning. We were on our toes. I personally called not only to follow up things but to motivate the staff."

Joining the breakfast is ABS-CBN Talent Development and Management Center's Joy Lomibao, who worked with the law offices at zero hour. As Star Magic's mother hen, she oversees all things logistic, even the change of flights of the stars going to the world tour, led by prime talents like Piolo Pascual, John Lloyd Cruz, Claudine Barretto, Bea Alonzo, Kim Chiu and Gerald Anderson. She knew from the beginning that any wrong move could spell further disaster.

"I sort of panicked too the morning I was informed that the visa applications were denied. The show in itself took two years to put up. We had not much of a choice since we can't cancel it or move it to another date," she says. "It's just impossible because we'll have to work on the stars' schedules all over again." She took it to herself to make sure things will really fly.

Early on, Millie was aware of the situation, and immediately called colleagues at the TFC in America. As constant legal partner to the ABS-CBN network in the US, all she could do that time was advise the organizers. "I was informed that there was no good option that time," she says,

agreeing with Joy. "No cancellations are possible, and no moving of dates. So everyone just had to go with the flow."

And this, she says, made the whole Law Offices of Michael Gurfinkel feel a bit uneasy, at least at first. "We didn't build our integrity overnight. We worked on it bit by bit. Whatever failure happens here could be the end of it all. But we still took the risk. And it was worth it, I think," says Millie. Aside from this, the Filipino community anticipating the event could not be disappointed. "We will certainly lose momentum if things didn't push through, as scheduled," quips Joy.

ABS-CBN in Manila took action in the long run and did some fast ironing of things. And it all turned out to be like the multiplication of fish and bread. With Atty. Michael and Millie directing the strategies and overseeing the operations,

the efforts started to pay off.

Working on proper documentation and managing the US Embassy appearances of the stars, Joy meanwhile made sure that the stars' efforts and excitement would not be in vain. Soon enough, after sleepless nights and marathon work hours, the visas were finally reconsidered.

The show will go on as scheduled and the stars will start to fly in the coming week. "We were all excited every time we finished on one task," says Millie, who remembers how their Makati offices toiled. "What was scary at first became fun. But at the same time, we had to be very meticulous this time. We checked and re-checked, just to make sure."

But all's well that ends all. The show that is the *Star Magic World Tour* will go on. And the Gurfinkels, once again, saved the day. ■

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Atty. Gurfinkel with a bevy of lovely beauties (L-R): Angelica Panganiban, Shaina Magdayao and Nikki Gil



(L-R) AJ Perez, Thou Reyes, Bea Alonza and Enchong



Rayver Cruz and Aaron Villaflor with Atty. Gurfinkel