

Krissa Mae Arrieta

GoBingo Girl

by JOSEPH PIMENTEL / AJPress

SHE is one of the Philippines upcoming stars. Fil-Am Krissa Kleiner better known for her Filipino stage name Krissa Mae Arrieta has already co-hosted on the GMA-7 show *GoBingo* and has a supporting role in the GMA-7 show *Gagambino*.



Galing Pinoy showcases the triumph of the Filipino spirit—the Filipino's innate perseverance to rise above. A double entendre, **Galing Pinoy** literally translates to both coming from (or brought to you by) the Filipino and Filipino ingenuity.



The 19-year-old Fil-Am is trying to make it in the world of Philippine show business. And so far she is on the cusp of stardom.

As the *GoBingo* girl, she co-hosted with Filipino star Arnel Ignacio. In *Gagambino*, she plays a martial arts expert and co-stars with Filipino celebrities Katrina Halili and Dennis Trillo. She's also starred in a number of reality game shows like *Pacman's Challenge*.

She is also being considered to be in the Filipino version of *Shall We Dance*, a competitive dance show in the Philippines later this year.

Not a bad resume for a 19-year-old who has been in Philippine showbiz for only one year.

"I love my work so much," said Kleiner to the *Asian Journal*. "Things right now are really great."

Kleiner recently went back home to OC after a year in the Philippines.

Known for her height and mestiza look, Kleiner was born and raised in Orange County, California. Kleiner's mother is Filipino and her father is an American with German and British roots. Both are schoolteachers, according to Kleiner.

Kleiner said she was born to perform.

Talent scouts recognized Kleiner early as a possible child TV star but Kleiner's parents insisted that she should have a regular childhood.

"My parent's spoke to some psychologists and they didn't want me to be a child star and have a messed up childhood," said Kleiner. "They wanted me

to go to school and if I really wanted to do showbiz to wait until after I turned 18. It would be my decision."

By the time she was eighteen, she may not have done any professional work but she built up her experience.

Besides having straight A's, she did four years of runway modeling work, competed in Latin Ballroom dancing, sing and dance competitions, and also holds a black belt in Taekwondo.

A GMA-7 talent scout noticed Kleiner after she won the Miss Philippines-USA title in 2007. The scout was impressed with not only Kleiner's look but also her ability to speak fluent Tagalog.

"Even before I was born my mom felt like it was important to teach me how to speak Tagalog," said Kleiner. "She felt like learning the language would help me maintain the Filipino values of respecting the parents and family and friends."

At first she was reluctant to go. She had just graduated high school and had been accepted to UC San Diego. She wanted to pursue a Psychology degree.

But a GMA-7 executive gave her an offer she couldn't refuse.

GMA-7 signed her to an exclusive contract and would help her fulfill her dreams as a performer.

"It was tough at first," said

Kleiner about the move to the Philippines. "It was the first year living on my own and I was living across the world. I really grew and matured going through the hard times and missing my friends and family."

But the move allowed Kleiner to focus on her entertainment career.

She said she loves Filipino show business because of the flexibility it allows its stars.

"For me, I really like performing arts in general," said Kleiner. "I love singing, dancing and acting. I felt like out here in the states you kind of have to pick one and focus on that and if an actress tries to [pursue] singing, people say, 'oh just because she's an actress she thinks she can sing now.'"

"In the Philippines it's the opposite," she added. "They expect you to be able to do everything. The more you do, the more they like you; the more successful you are, the more commercials you get and so on. I could never pick out here [in the US]. I didn't just want to do one thing because I love it all so much. Out there in the Philippines, it's perfect for me. They let me do everything that I love to do."

Kleiner said that she still has a long way to go. Only 19-years-old, she admits she's not where she wants to be yet.

She said that breaking into

Philippine showbiz is not as easy as it looks. Many Fil-Ams think just because they have a certain look that they could make it in the Philippines but it's a lot tougher, said Kleiner.

"If you don't have talent or if you don't know the language, it's only a matter of time before people start to get sick of you," said Kleiner. "Yes, it may be easier to get in the business if you have a mestiza look but it won't last if you don't have any talent to keep the people entertained."

Kleiner added that if breaking into Philippine show business is truly that person's passion, then go for it.

"Life is too short to have a dream and not give yourself a shot," said Kleiner. "To live your life knowing that there is something that you really want to do but you didn't believe in yourself enough to try, you'll carry that [thought] with you the rest of your life... believe in yourself and put in the effort."

Kleiner went back to the Philippines last week. She said that she'd continue to work hard to make her dreams into a reality. ■

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