



Hi!
Society

By **MONET LU**

La Greta: Irresistibly Complicated

Upon arriving at the restaurant, Gretchen was so welcoming and sweet to me. She even said *hindi nya matandaan na nag-away kami*. I still had the fragments of the argument stored in my head but to Gretchen, that chapter was bygone.

That's when I realized, Gretchen is the type of person *na hindi nagtatanim ng sama ng loob*.

She knows how to forgive and forget.

Instantly, I felt very relieved. In no time, we were catching up just like old times. As usual, she was still as *makuwento* and *kikay* as ever.

The Gretchen that you see on TV being hunted by controversies isn't necessarily the same Gretchen that you will see in a private setting, when she knows she's just surrounded by close friends.

We have to admit, whenever Gretchen talks, everybody drops what they're doing to take a listen.

With all her risque quotable quotes, she entertains, she sparks reactions and emotions from her public.

Hailed as one of the most beautiful faces in Philippine movies, Gretchen draws admiring stares wherever she goes.

She is an effortless fashionista. You can see it in her understated fashion and natural but elegant simplicity.

She started out as a movie actress, having starred in blockbuster movies with her contemporaries in late 80s and 90s.

Gretchen has since ventured into recording albums. Her first record titled *Unexpected* was certified Platinum.



Gretchen Barretto

Her latest album is aptly named *Complicated*. In her albums, she shares songs that tickle her heart and soul.

In them, she bears her passion, sentimentality and essence as a woman and an artist.

This is the Gretchen I know--passionate and expressive. I also know her to be resilient in the face of challenges.

To me, Gretchen possesses the stuff legends are made of.

To La Greta--enjoy life, enjoy love!

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.

In an interview with the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, Sharon chose the following movie theme songs as her personal, all time OPM favorites: *Ngayon at Kailanman*, *Maging Sino Ka Man*, *Sana'y Walang Wakas*, *Kahit Konting Pagtingin* and *Bituing Walang Ningning*.

With these songs, the Sharonians abroad are reminded not only of their idols' box-office hit movies and award-winning films, they are also allowed to reminisce about their beloved country in the songs' haunting lyrics and melody.

Whether in Chicago or Dubai, America or Europe, the Megastar continues to dazzle her loyal Sharonians -- "making them happy, bringing them a piece of the place they once called home even for a couple of hours."

Also introducing n the Sharon Cuneta concert series are fast rising pop stars, RJ dela Fuente and Dubhe Ferrer.

For tickets to the concert in Paris Las Vegas, please call KATZ (562) 219-7235; Jackie (562) 787-9030; Dina Maningas at (702) 873-6828; Goldilocks Bakeshop (702) 368-2253; Seafood City (702) 851-0021 and Paris Box Office (888) 746-7784.

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Sharon Cuneta and KC Concepcion



Filipinos start integrating into Las Vegas local tradition

LAS VEGAS- In a show of unity and integration into the local scene, nine Filipino organizations took part in the decades-old Las Vegas tradition Helldorado Days parade last Saturday, May 16.

The group comprised the biggest delegation of Filipinos to participate in this city's local festival, which celebrated its 75th year this month.

"This is the biggest delegation that we have had. It is different because there are more Filipino groups who were involved," Emma Williams, spokesperson of the delegation, told *Asian Journal*.

The National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA), Filipino American Heritage Foundation of Nevada, Filipino Village, Filipiniana Cultural & Arts Foundation, Las Vegas Filipino-American Lions Club, Oras ng Ligaya, Bikolnon Association of Las Vegas, Filipino-American Youth Foundation, and the Philippine-USA Motorcycling Club comprised the Philippine delegation during the parade.

The Helldorado Days parade is part the oldest local tradition in Las Vegas. Helldorado was originally created to bring tourists to Las Vegas in 1934 after the completion of Hoover Dam.

The end of the dam's construction resulted in a major drop in population after thousands of workers left the city. Local city officials then feared that Las Vegas would turn into a ghost town, thus the creation of Helldorado Days.

But nowadays Helldorado is the rare Las Vegas event that is definitely geared to locals. It aims to recapture the spirit of the "old west" at the same time integrating it with the various cultures that has been brought into Las Vegas over the past decades.

"This is what Las Vegas is all about, a sense of community. It is absolutely a locals' thing," Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman said in an earlier interview.

Williams, of the Filipino American Heritage Foundation of Nevada, noted that Filipinos integrating into the local Las Vegas scene is evident in this year's parade.

She added that efforts made by NaFFAA made Filipino participation in the Helldorado Days parade very extensive for the first time.

NaFFAA is a non-partisan, non-profit national affiliation of more than five hundred Filipino-American institutions and umbrella organizations. Its core mission is to empower Filipinos in the United States.

It has been one of its aims to unify the various Filipino groups in each city in the United States and help integrate it with American society.

NaFFAA Nevada Chapter state chair Jing Espiritu was earlier interviewed saying, "We need to coalesce Filipino-Am groups with Asians, and with other mainstream groups in the community."

Last May 16, the Nevada Chapter of NaFFAA was recognized by the Office of the Mayor for empowering the Filipino-American community in Las Vegas. NaFFAA's national vice chair Rozita Lee, who is also a Las Vegas resident, was honored for her involvement in the organization and in the city.

Filipinos are one of the largest cultural groups in Las Vegas, numbering close to 100,000 residents. (AJ Press)



Myrna Alforque (right) spearheaded the Filipino delegation who gave local Las Vegans a glimpse of Philippine culture during the Helldorado Days parade. Also in the picture are Nina Alberto of the Filipiniana Cultural & Arts Foundation (left) and NaFFAA NV chair Jing Espiritu.



Mutya ng Pilipinas Las Vegas Rowena Richard graced the Philippine float during the 2009 celebration of the 75th Helldorado Days in the city last May 16.



Showcasing Muslim culture in the Philippines, Miss Minadanao Las Vegas Tina Robles-Lee (right) with Annyi Fuller during the decades-old Las Vegas tradition Helldorado Days parade last May 16.

Showing integration in the local Las Vegas scene, this year's Philippine contingent was the biggest-ever delegation to participate in the event. Myrna Alforque's Filipiniana Cultural & Arts Foundation (shown in the picture) spearheaded the nine Filipino organizations that joined the parade.

Sharon Cuneta: The Concert Megastar

SHE first drew raves and made waves in the recording scene at the tender age of 12, with her chartbusting ditty *Mr. DJ*. That sweet love song started a brilliant recording career, studded with myriad awards and accolades. **The DJ's Pet has surely has gone places.**

Locally, Sharon Cuneta has earned a slew of Gold, Platinum, Double Platinum, and Triple Platinum Record awards — over 15 as of last count.

Internationally, she has conquered the concert stage in cities near and far.

From 1996 to 1998, the Megastar took the mega Band on a World Tour that easily broke house records in such cities as Atlantic City, Reno, Las Vegas, Los Angeles and San Francisco in the United States, Vancouver and Winnipeg in Canada, and London in Great Britain.

Sharon, in fact, achieved such an impressive, precedent-setting record in Los Angeles' Shrine Auditorium, so much so that her poster was displayed in the theater's Hall of Fame, along with Michael Jackson. Her poster was also on display at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, side by side with that of Barbra Streisand's.

On May 23, during the Memorial Weekend, Sharon kicks off her *MegaThirty, the USA Concert Tour 2009* in Paris Las Vegas in the casino's main showroom called Le Theatre des Arts at Paris Las Vegas. Special guest is KC Concepcion. Come June 12, Friday, 8 pm, she goes back on stage in her favorite home, the prestigious and 6,000-seat Shrine Auditorium for the third time.

The concerts in Las Vegas and Los Angeles are executive produced by KATZ Entertainment, the southland's leading concert professionals led by Jackie Regala and Gerry Katigbak. Co-producing in LA and Las Vegas is Ellen Sarmiento.

Associate producers in Los Angeles are Kaye Morales, Fernando Bernabe of FLB Corporation and Brad Dizon of Brad's Entertainment. The concert series is also presented by Seafood City Supermarket and LBC Cargo, ang Hari ng Padala.

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Asked why she constantly goes on tour, Sharon responds with simple eloquence: "I want to visit places where I haven't performed yet. My soul craves doing concerts in the same way as making movies. I just want to know if they still love me, and if they still appreciate my music. If I can still make them happy for a couple of hours."

For the most part, her movie theme songs have always been the most applauded during her concerts. Sharon is the certified Queen of Movie Theme Songs, after all.

From *Dear Heart* to the *Tala* trilogy (*Pangarap na Bituin*, from *Bukas Luluhod ang mga Tala*, *Bituing Walang Ningning*, and *Sana'y Walang Wakas*), from *Kahit Kongting Pagtingin* to *Maging Sino Ka Man*. These songs spell movie magic for Sharonians the word over.

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