

Sarah embarks on local concert tour

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performances from Billy Crawford and Jed Madela, among others. While many were clamoring for a follow-up to the successful team-up with John Lloyd (*A Very Special Love* and *You Changed My Life*), Sarah said this would not happen until next year. "We're still looking for the perfect material." Sarah was asked to comment on on-line messages from fans pitting her against equally talented singer Charice Pempengco. **Different singing styles** Sarah's fans were reportedly angered when Charice allegedly said Sarah may be a popular performer in Manila, but she (Charice) is the more sought-after abroad. "She probably didn't mean anything bad. Charice is an inspiration to all Filipinos who dream of making it big internationally. *Totoo naman po na sikat na si Charice* [It's true that Charice is popular]," said Sarah. She also pointed out that she and Charice have different singing styles: "*Di ko po kaya ang puro birit* [I can't belt all the time]. At 20, I already know my preference in music. I enjoy singing songs I can also dance too." ■

Peque Gallaga back with digital movie

by BAYANI SAN DIEGO JR. *Inquirer.net*

WHAT could possibly take filmmaker Peque Gallaga away from his beloved Bacolod, where he has conducted workshops for budding artists for almost two decades? Although he would invariably jest that it's "cold hard cash," admirers certainly know that it would take a truly exceptional project for him to stage a big-screen comeback. That compelling reason could well be the teen romance *Agaton and Mindy*, one of six digital movies in the Sine Direk series, produced by APT Entertainment in cooperation with the Directors' Guild of the Philippines, Inc. (DGPI). *Agaton and Mindy* is graded "A" by the Cinema Evaluation Board. "I never really left," Gallaga explains. "I just won't accept certain things in a standard production. At the same time, if you ask the producers, there are also things they won't accept about me. It goes both ways." He notes that today's movies are often churned out by a committee. That's what spelled the difference in the Sine Direk set-up, Gallaga says. "(APT producer) Tony Tuviera respects the creative process. I respond to that respect." And he reciprocates accordingly. "We stay within the budget and I make sure we finish on time. You have to work with the rules. I hate the attitude, 'I'm an artist; I need to fly! Don't tie me down with rules!'" Gallaga didn't see the modest budget as a restriction. The bigger challenge was time. "I had only seven shooting days," he recounts. "I wanted to rehearse a lot with the actors (led by Cherie Gil, Dina Bonnevie and newcomers Chase Vega and Louise de los Reyes)." ■



Peque Gallaga

Line producer Reyes says Gallaga had to cut short his shooting schedule because rent for the posh homes he needed were quite high. Gallaga tapped into his background as production designer in formulating creative solutions. "We had one house and just found ways to make it look different," he says. He worked as production designer on GMA 7's *Sugo* series in 2005. "I teach TV in Bacolod, but I had been away from the medium for 15 years," he says. Some of the things I taught [were outdated]. I had to see what was happening now." ■

Thanks for the memories

by BUTCH FRANCISCO *Philstar.com*

A month ago, Tita Muñoz, who must be the first multi-media artist in local entertainment (she did theater, radio, television and the movies), left us at the peak of summer. I promptly did an obituary on her for this paper, but I have to admit that I had difficulty looking for more materials on her. I just based everything on our first and only meeting—in 2000—when I interviewed her for Startalk.



Tina Muñoz

Two weeks ago, however, I bumped into Mary Ann Muñoz (a friend introduced to me by Ali Sotito) at the Gold's Gym and she thanked me for writing that piece on Tita. It was only then that I found out that her husband was the nephew of Ms. Muñoz. From Mary Ann I confirmed the fact that Tita Muñoz had always opted for independence—and that she didn't want to be a burden to anyone. And that she left this world comfortable. In an apartment in San Juan, she stayed by herself and was only assisted by a helper who would only visit a couple of days a week to help clean and maintain the house. But Tita wouldn't have it any other way. That was how she wanted it because she wanted her independence. "But she was a very nice person," swears Mary Ann. "And we all

miss her." Still on Tita Muñoz, I got via mail a letter from Luning Bonifacio-Ira and I'm publishing her letter in full because it is very interesting and quite informative: Hi Butch, I'm very glad to have read your piece on the late Tita Muñoz and her eventual forays into TV, film and the theater. I often wondered where she was, but then one hardly gets to hear about people who don't work in the same field of endeavor. It came to me as no surprise that your research into Tita Muñoz's bio data did not, or could not have allowed you to stumble on The Magic Barrel, which preceded all of her later interests. (That was when I was walking on air working in my first job as PR assistant when another PR staff, Lydia Vicente, also joined the large oil company Standard-Vacuum Oil Co. and we were happy to welcome Tita Muñoz who had been contracted to do the presentations. She was something of a celebrity then, although we were clueless as to what connection.) The early '50s was when The Magic Barrel was introduced in Manila as well as other big cities as a public education service to familiarize people with the many things derived from petroleum. It included first of all fuel that makes our cars run, LPG gas for stoves, kerosene for light, candles for formal dinners and tiny ones for kiddie parties and asphalt for our streets, a plus barrel-ful of other things. In brief, the story of oil as a boon to mankind. Keep in mind that this period was eons before OPEC (Organization of

Petroleum Exporting Companies). And ages before the violent student demonstrations that erupted worldwide in 1973. But the early '50s? It was a paradise that we thought would never alter when gasoline was 35 centavos per liter, 55 centavos to see a movie at Avenue Theater and to hear Belafonte, Mathis or Nat Cole at the Big Dome at popular prices. And just how was Tita Muñoz on her mission to go about persuading traditionally cynical audiences? One guess might be: Through sheer force of personality. She came across strong with her perfect diction and enunciation. She had unflappable poise, an earnest *dating*. Furthermore, she was young and movie-star beautiful. If it came to that, she might have sold washing machines to the laundymen of Mandaluyong if those could have been had at the time. We didn't get to know Tita Muñoz until her "unwinding hours" in between presentations when she would relax and exchange pleasantries with PR and other company people. We shared light moments, eating and laughing the hours away. Once, we wound up in my tiny P. Noval apartment for pizza and how I wish somebody had taken our picture. It would have been something to bring back a piece of that fabulous time now in everyone's senior age. Although Tita Muñoz strictly was not a personal friend, her relaxed friendliness melted elements away, leaving only the warmth. She was what you would call a regular fella. Small wonder that having known her but briefly—some months? A year?—it was such a vivid episode. Rest well, Tita Muñoz. To some mortals here, you are unforgettable. ■

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