

Master Animator Alexis Que From 'Ang Panday' to 'The Simpsons'

by CYNTHIA DE CASTRO / AJPress

IN THE 1990s, a yellow animated family called *The Simpsons* took America and the world by storm. With its subversive humor and delightful wit, *The Simpsons* has made an indelible imprint on American pop culture and has become one of television's most iconic families, led by Homer and Bart Simpson.

It would interest Filipinos to know that one of animators working behind the scenes of this longest running comedy in television history is a *kababayan*, Alexis Que. In an interview with *Asian Journal*, Alex described the outstanding work he does.

"At present, I am working as a character layout artist and animator at Film Roman, Inc. for *The Simpsons*. I also worked for *The Simpsons*' 1st movie which was shown in 2007. As an animator, I systematically draw each drawing of the action or acting of a character or any object that moves in a scene. As a character layout artist, I am responsible for the right composition and staging of the scene, based on the board like the first and last pose of the character's position to where he comes from and to where he is going and roughing out the background's horizons and perspectives for background artists. As a storyboard artist, I also draw and visualize panel to panel—like what you see in comics—the written story of the script," said Alex.

Born in Manila, Philippines on June 1, 1969, Alex shared that he learned how to draw at the age of 3. "In school, in a couple of on-the-spot painting contests I joined, I bagged almost all of the 1st prizes. These competitions helped me earn money at an early age—around eleven or twelve yrs old. I also sold paintings and worked on silk-screened shirts, school banners etc. In our school graduation, I was tasked to do all the letterings of the diplomas of the whole graduating class. Each time there were projects in school, from elementary to college, my classmates and teachers chipped in money just for the materials I needed to provide

artworks for bulletin boards, class newsletters, stage presentations and programs. I also painted murals, artworks for special occasions like Valentines and Christmas. These are just a few of the highlights of my learning experiences that help me in the challenges that I still encounter at work everyday," the Fine Arts graduate said.

After college, Que worked as an animator for the first all-Filipino animation, *Ang Panday*. He also worked on Captain Barbell, Darna and Lastikman, and worked as a freelance comic illustrator for G.A.S.I. and Atlas Publications. His great work enabled Que to be hired by Fil-Cartoons, a Hanna-Barbera subsidiary in the Philippines. He illustrated characters for such popular movies like Tom and Jerry, Droopy, The Flintstones, Yogi Bear, The Jetsons, Scooby Doo. Alex later became an animator for the Philippine Animation Studios for shows that include *X-Men* and *Fantastic Four*.

Que immigrated to the US and began to work as an animator and illustrator for the biggest names in the industry in 1996. He worked for *Barney*, the first interactive game, and *Monthy Python*, the *Meaning of Life* game while he was with a CD Rom Company, 7th Level Inc. He was an animator/storyboardist for Zoom Cartoons, for straight-to-video films like *Tom Sawyer* and *Anastasia's Bartok*. Alex was also the animator for the *Star Wars* CD Rom game, for a KFC TV commercial and *Willy Wonka*, while with Wild Brain Animation.

Alex was the storyboardist for Cartoon Network's *Life & Times of Juniper Lee* and *The Grim Adventures of Billy & Mandy*, for Mike Young Productions' *Casper & The Brats*; for Pamela Anderson's *Stripperella* and Bill Cosby's *Fatherhood*; and for Nickelodeon's *Dora the Explorer*.

"One of the storyboards that I made for *Dora the Explorer*, the *Lost City*, was chosen to become a live show onstage that played at the Kodak theatre in Hollywood and all across America and Asian, including the Philippines," said Alex.

Asked how he landed in his present job with *The Simpsons*, Alex recalled, "About three years ago, a friend of mine called me



to join their team in a new show, then called *Wow Wow Wubbzy*, a pre-school show like *Dora the Explorer*, as a storyboard revisionist at Film Roman Inc. where they do *The Simpsons* series. My stint at *Wow Wow Wubbzy* made me land my present job."

"I like my job because I get to express my cre-

ativity artistically through my drawings. This is what I do for a living and this is where my passion lies," admitted Alex. "Fortunately, there are no racial discriminations whatsoever. There are quite a number of Filipinos in our company and in this industry. Unfortunately, we have also been affected by the recession. Lay-offs have happened."

Of the many characters that he has illustrated, Alex cited his top three favorites and explains why. "One favorite is Homer because I just love his character and his humor. I also like *Tom & Jerry* because I got to fulfill my knowledge in animation in a traditional classic way. Another favorite is *X-Men*. I love comics that's why I enjoyed doing this."

When not busy working in the studios, Alex spends his free time at home—still drawing. "I spend my free time working on my own projects and artworks which is very personal to me since it focuses on my roots. I have been drawing about the Philippines, my childhood and the *alamats* of our culture and heritage," said Alex.

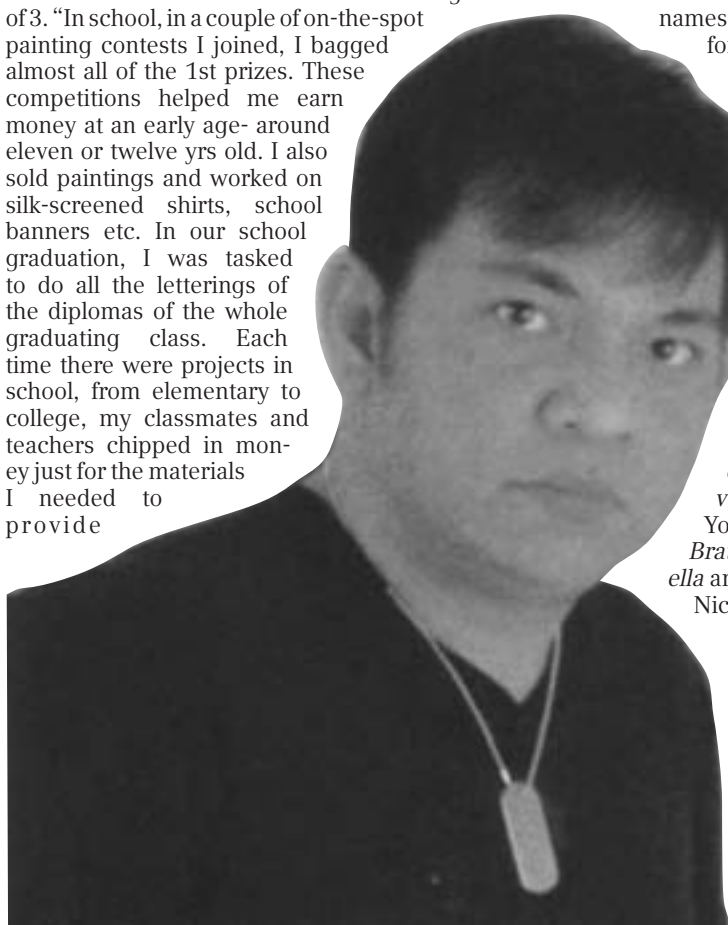
His advice to aspiring *Pinoy* artists—"Keep on learning. It's a never-ending process. Keep on practicing. Let your pencils smoke and give GLO-RY TO GOD," he said. Truly, this master animator has given glory to God by his great creativity and outstanding works. ■



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