



Hi!
Society
SAN FRANCISCO
By **MONET LU**

All About Alfie...

agaan niya since she was very young because he saw such a potential in her. Today, Juday is among the busiest and most in-demand dramatic actresses in Philippine movies. If you look at Juday's longevity in showbiz, it's like seeing the essence of Alfie Lorenzo. When he believes in your talent, he will bend over backwards to make it happen. He is just that kind of person.

I met Alfie over 20 years ago, and it was actually a very unusual meeting. He was visiting Los Angeles and a common friend first introduced us over the phone. We made plans to hang out at the annual Halloween Parade in West Hollywood.

For the occasion, my then boyfriend and I were wearing costumes with masks. Dressed like so, we picked up our new friend Alfie, who had no idea what I looked like but trusted me anyway to take him to the Halloween festivities. I would like to think of that moment as a significant start of our friendship because he was willing to accept me, mask and all. And I felt the same way about him.

From then on, we became close friends. So everytime he would come to LA where I'm based, he would stay with me at my humble apartment back then. When I went home to Manila, I was welcome to stay at his place as well. Being around Alfie is the same as hanging out with celebrities because that is the world that he exists in. Through him, I became fascinated with the goings-on in the movie industry.

Through Alfie, I met another remarkable woman, Annabelle Rama and the rest of the Gutierrez clan, as well as the cute Liberty boys in those days.

I also met the who's who in the Philippine entertainment press like Cristy Fermin, among others.

I feel honored to be part of Alfie's circle of friends. To me, he is like a very dear Tita. He is a little *matampuhin* when he is not the first one I call when I go home to Manila. These days, Alfie and I barely have time to get together and talk like the



Alfie Lorenzo

old times.

Kahit hindi kami magkasama madalas, I know that our friendship endures because when we do spend some time together, it is quality time. I dedicate this column to you Alfie. You may think that I have forgotten our times of laughter and tears, with our beloved friend, the late Billy Balbastro (may God bless his soul), but I continue to think of you fondly as a friend I can always count on our times together have been the happiest for me.

May you continue to nurture the strongest talents in this generation. God bless you and your loved ones!!!

LA-based celebrity stylist Monet Lu was born in Marikina, Philippines. In the 80s, Monet left a thriving salon chain business in his hometown to migrate to the US. He had the vision to recreate his success in the US by building a beauty business that served the needs of Filipino Americans. Currently, Monet is the proud owner of four salons with branches in Van Nuys CA, Panorama City CA, Los Angeles CA and Las Vegas NV. He has since branched out to event productions through his events and marketing company, Events Specialists International, producer of the longest-running (20 years!) and most prestigious Filipino-American awards/fashion show in SoCal. In 2006, Monet kicked off another passion to develop his own line of all-natural, beauty care products, Skin By Monet.

Monet is also a humanitarian and has supported many charitable organizations such as the Marikina Revitalization Project, AIDS Center in Pasadena, Alab Ng Puso, Every Nation Ministries, Gawad Kalinga, Bantay Bata 163, and many more. To contact Monet, please visit his site: www.monetsalon.com.

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By **RICKY LO**
Philstar.com

'The Most Beautiful Woman in Cannes'



Mercedes Cabral at the 2009 Cannes Film Festival

HOW come Mercedes Cabral felt like a winner even if she didn't get any award in the two Cannes Film-fests where her films had competed, last year with the indie film *Serbis* directed by Brillante "Dante" Mendoza and this year with *Kinatay*, another indie film, which won for Mendoza the Best Director plum and the South Korean entry *Thirst*, directed by Park Chan-wook, which shared the Jury Prize with New Zealand's *Fish Tank* directed by Andrea Fisher? (Park Chan-wook won the Grand Jury Prize for *Oldboy* in the 2003 Cannes Filmfest.)

The petite (5'3") UP Fine Arts junior (major in Sculpture) has a good reason to feel "triumphant." The Cannes paparazzi organized an online voting on who the most beautiful girl at last year's filmfest was and Mercedes emerged the winner, getting 54 percent of the votes against 20 percent for Aishwarya Rai and 10 or five percent for the rest, including Penelope Cruz and Salma Hayek.

"I was surprised," said Mercedes who is a deadringer for Miriam Quiambao (a Bicolana from Albay like Mercedes' mom Petty Cabral, a Bicol University graduate who owns and manages a flower shop in White Plains, Quezon City). "I didn't even know that there was such a voting in the Internet. I found out later that there was a list of names to choose from. Maybe the paparazzi got curious with me *dahil bagong mukha ako sa Cannes*. When I went back last May, *aba*, the paparazzi were calling me *na* by my first name! The reporters were also calling me, 'Mercedes! Mercedes!' during our photo call. *Nakakatuwa!*"

Mercedes Cabral, 22 (Leo, Aug. 10, 1986), is not your typical actress. She's more known—and, may I add with a little sadness, appreciated—abroad than at home. She can stroll in

any local mall without turning a single head, not even eliciting a "Who's she?" Not yet anyway. But in Cannes, her name does ring a bell, no wonder an LA-based producer got interested enough to arrange a meeting with her.

She likes it that way—being able to blend into a crowd without anybody noticing her. That may not last long, though.

Before doing *Serbis* (as the wife of Coco Martin who belongs to a family which lives in a rundown porno moviehouse) and *Kinatay* (again as Coco's wife), Mercedes starred in six short films (one of them *Baliw* with Ryan Eigenmann) made by film students. That was two years ago.

How did you start in the business?
"I started as a ramp model, mostly in naked-art shows by Alfred Galvez in music and arts festival in Megamall or in art galleries. *Kaming mga models* served as Alfred's canvas. Our nipples were covered with tape and may undies *naman kami*. Very artistic *ang* body paintings. Our bodies were covered with paint *kaya wala talagang makikita*. Remember the painted lady in the Bond movie *Goldfinger? Parang ganoon.*"

And how did you get into film?
"I did school plays directed by Francis Villacorta who recommended me to other directors. He also knew Tito Ferdy (Lapuz, *The STAR's* Toronto-based international correspondent and co-producer of *Kinatay* with Frenchman Didier Costet) who introduced me to direkt Dante Mendoza. It was also Tito Ferdy who got me into *Thirst*. He met direkt Park Chan-wook's producer who asked him to e-mail photos of Filipino actresses."

Did you really shoot Thirst simultaneously with Serbis?

"Yes. *Thirst* took one year to shoot *kasi* very meticulous *si direkt* Park. I play the Filipina wife

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