

# VILMA & NORA

Rivalry no More!





# Tapos Na Ba Ang Labanan?



**N**ananahimik na ba kayo? Sawa na ba kayo sa mga awayan at bangayan? Alam ko. Tulad mo wala na akong panahon makipagtalo. Tapos na ba ang labanan? Puedeng sabihin. Sinong nanalo at sinong natalo. Kung ang pagbabasihan ay ang career at family life malinaw na si Vilma ay nakakaangat. Maging ang mga Noranians tulad nina Boy Abunda at German Moreno ay pawang nagsasabi na napag-iiwanan na ang kanilang minamahal na si Nora. Sa mga ordinaryong tagahanga ni Nora hindi nila matatanggap kalian man na napag-iiwanan na nga ang kanilang idolo. Pilit nilang ibinabalik ang dekada sitenta kung saan malinaw na nilampaso ng bikolanang manganganta ang original Tondo girl na si Ate Vi. Pilit nilang ibinabalik ang kasikatan natapos na. Sa mga malalawak ang isip ang labanang Nora at Vilma ay matagal nang natapos. Parehong nanahimik na ang dalawang magkaribal. Si Nora ay semi-retired na sa Amerika at si Vilma nama'y kontento na sa kanyang political career. Sa mga malalawak ang isip tapos na ang bangayan at sila'y nagmoved on na sa kanikanilang buhay. Merong mga e-groups ang dalawang kampo at dito makikita ang ilang mga tagahanga ng dalawa na nagpapalitan ng mga balita tungkol sa dalawa. Naging hobby na nang bawat kampo ang pagbisita at pagpapalitan ng mga messages sa kanilang kapwa Noranians at Vilmanians. Mayroong panahon na may naliligaw sa bawat e-group, nanggugulo at nagdudulot ng palitan ng mga salita. Pero ang mga palitan ng salita na ito'y hindi kasing tindi nang bangayan nuong dekada 70 na laging nagiging biyolente. Tapos na nga ang awayan. At naging high tech na ang mga Vilmanians at Noranians. Sa internet na sila ngayon nagtatalo. Sinong mas sikat? Sinong mas magaling umarte? Sinong nanatiling makinang ang bituin? Pare-pareho pa rin ang mga katanungan. Hindi pa rin ito nagbabago. Ang kaibigan ko na isang Noranian ay nagsabi sa akin na pinagaaksayahan ko raw ng oras ang pagsusulat

ang paggawa ng babasahin inyong binabasa ngayon. Hindi niya naisip na ang pagsusulat ko ay isang hobby. Isang outlet ng isang simpleng tagahanga. Bakit raw nagaaksaya ako ng panahon. Tulad ng ibang hobby kagaya ng panggagat-silyo o paghahardinero, ang pagsusulat ko'y nagdudulot ng ligaya katulad ng kapag nakakabasa ako ng magagandang bagay tungkol sa aking paboritong artista. Hindi niya marahil nakikita ito. Sa kabila nito nanatili ako sa pagsusulat at paggawa ng babasahin hawak niyo. Tulad ng iba't ibang mga tagahanga ni Ate Guy at Ate Vi tapos na ang mga pakikipagdebate ko. Pinagdaanan ko na ito at ang libreng oras ko ay ginugugol ko sa ibat ibang bagay tulad ng pagsusulat. Kung sino ang mas sikat at kung sino ang mas magaling ay mga katanungan hanggang sa ngayon marahil ay pilit na hindi masasagot ng bawat kampo kahit na ang katotohanan si Ate Vi ay mas nasa itaas ngayon kung ikukumpara sa kanyang kalaban na si Ate Guy. Sa mga tagahanga ni Ate Guy sinasabi nila na kahit na nanahimik na ito sa amerika ang mga na-accomplish niya ay hindi maaaring mapantayan kahit ninuman. Na sasagutin naman ng mga Vilmanians ng... "here we go again re-living the past." Which is true to some but not everyone. May mga Noranians na nagmove on na. Tapos na nga ang mga panahon ng kanilang pakikipagdebate. Kayod marino sila para kumita ng pera at wala na silang panahon para ipagtanggol pa si Nora. Sa mga Vilmanians maingat nilang sinasabi na nasa itaas na nga si Vilma pero hindi habang panahon na nasa itaas siya kaya maingat silang magbitiw ng mga salita. Bilog ang mundo ang sabi nila kung paano mo inalagaan ang sarili mo habang nasa itaas ka makikita mo kapag bumaba ka na.

Rendt Viray

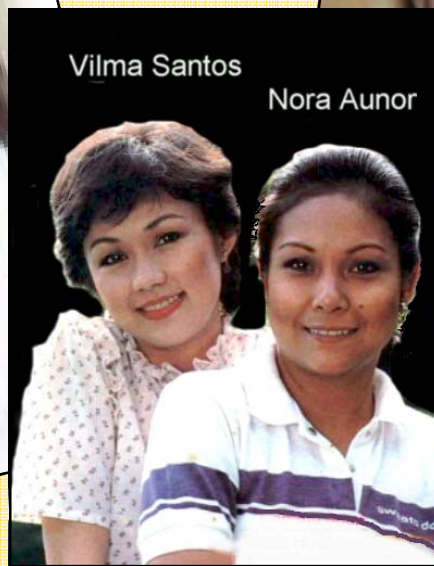




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# Sino ba talaga ang mas mahusay umarte, si Vilma o si Nora?



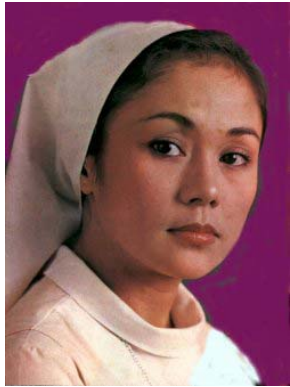
**S**a sandaling ito, kakalimutan ko munang isa akong fan ni ate guy. I will transform myself as a jury weighing how these two incomparable competitive Actresses span their acting career for more than four decades have fascinated us all! Minahal natin

**F**an mentality, paano mo aalisin ito kung ang tatanungin ay kung sino ang mas magaling umarte si Nora o si Vilma. Magmula pa lamang ng pagkabata'y namulat na ako sa kahusayan ng pagganap ni Ate Vi. Ganuon rin naman marahil ang mga

silang dalawa pati na rin ang mga taong minahal at minamahal pa nila. Malaki ang ginawa nang dalawang ito sa pagkilala at paghubog sa lalo pang ikagaganda nang takbo ng industriya nang pelikulang pilipino. Pinadama at pinakita nila ang anyo at mensahe nang bawat karakter na kanilang ginampanan (at gagampanan pa!). Maaring sa ibang paraan ay masasabi kong magpahanggang ngayon umiinog pa rin sa kanilang dalawa ang takbo ng showbiz, isang hudyat nang pagpapahalaga na hindi nalilingid at maitatanggi ng karamihan sa atin na sila lamang dalawa ang may mas higit na naiambag sa institusyon nang puting tabing at sa labanang propesyonal na ito lamang mulit muli silang pupukaw at hahaplos sa puso nating lahat. Sabi ko kanina, kakalimutan ko munang maging isang Noranian -- mahirap yata ito para sa akin. Heto nga't hindi pa tapos itong sinusulat ko eh balik Noranian uli ako! May history kasi ito eh, seven yrs. pa lang ako alam kong isa na akong Noranian and that has already been confirmed because I remember when I was somewhere between five or four, binutas ko ang isang speaker nang aming Stereo para lang silipin kung nanduon si Ate Guy kung talagang kumakanta siya ng "pearly shell"! Sound stupid but I guess that really showed how an innocent boy would go all the way just to see the glimpse of his Idol! (to the extent that I even wanted to be sounded like her, her voice and the whole enchelada!) Hanggang na-developed pa 'yun noong lagi pa akong kasama ni Nanay sa mga pagtitinda nang mga doormat, iskoba, bunot at mga iba't iba pang household cleaning stuff! Enjoy ako kasi after we did all the selling at the end of the day ang treat ni Nanay sa akin ay ang manood kami ng pelikula ni ate guy. Unang movie niya na napanood ko sa sine ay ang "The Impossible Dream"! sa Cinerama ko pa napanood 'yun (kanto ng Claro M. Recto at Roxas blvd.) Topbilling were Miss Nora Aunor and Cocoy Laurel! Hanggang nagkasunod-sunod na yung mga pelikula niyang pinanood ko, 'yung iba nakalimutan ko na ang title pero itong mga pelikulang ito ang kabisado ko, "Paru-parung itim" based ito sa isang english movie, na bulag at pipi siya. I like the scene 'yung pinapakain

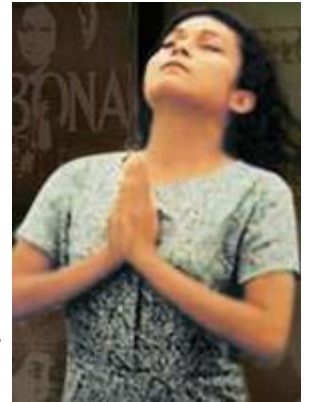


Tagahanga ng sa kabila. Mahirap alisin ang katwirang lalo pa't nakasalalay ang pangalan ng dalawang aktres. Pero kung tatanggalin lamang natin kahit pansamantala lamang makikita na ang katotohanang nalagpasan na ni Vilma ang sinasabi nilang numero unong superstar lalo na sa pag-arte. Hindi ang aktres ng mga darna o wonder vi kundi ang aktres na naglakas ng loob na itapon ang sweet image at yakapin ang naiibang imahen na nagpasubok ng kanyang galling simula sa pagtanggap niya ng mahamon na papel sa Burlesk Queen. Sinabi niya sa kanyang sarili, Oo wala akong gintong boses pero marunong naman akong sumayaw. At kasabay nito'y handa kong tanggapin ang mga matatayang na papel na hindi kayang sikmurain ng mala-berhen na imahen ni Nora. Kasabay nang pag-ungos ay ang sunod sunod na patok sa takilya kasabay rin nang mga mapaghamong pelikula katulad ng Relasyon, Broken Marriage at Sister Stella L. Sunod sunod na pelikulang pinarangalan ng Urian ng mga manunuri ng pelikulang tagalog. Hindi na nga siya ang sinasabing "poor second" sa sinasabi nilang superstar. Kung tutuusin siya na ang dapat tawaging superstar ngunit hindi ito ang ninais ni Vilma, patuloy pa rin niyang hinubog ang kanyang talento sa pagganap. Sabi nga ni Charito Solis, mas magaling si Vilma sa pagganap dahil sa mas versatile ito kaysa kay Nora. Totoo ka dahil hindi lamang mga martir na role ang puedeng gawin ni Vilma, puede rin siyang maging bida contrabida, puede rin siyang maging senyorita o atsay o kaya pamartir na asawa o kabit. Samantalay napako na si Nora sa mga pamartir na papel. Ito marahil ang dahilan kung bakit kalian lang sinabi ni Elizabeth Oropeza na mas magaling umarte si Vilma kaysa kay Nora dahil sa walang pinagbago ang pag-arte ni Nora. Totoo ito samantala'y sinabi rin ni Boots Anson Roa na si Vilma may iba't ibang klase ng pag-iyak. Mayroon tumutulo lamang ang luha parang patak lang, meroong umaagos sa pisngi at meron namang parang gripo sa pagpatak. Ganyan kahusay si Vilma kung umiyak. Samantala ang pag-iyak ni Nora'y hindi nabago. Sa mga ilang pelikula kailan lang masyadong nagasgas na ang pagpopokos sa kanyang overrated na mata para lang masabing



magaling siya sa pagganap. Ilang beses nilang pinopokus ang kamera sa kanyang mga mata para masabing super galing ni Nora. Kahit na ang maging sukli naman nito'y magsuffer ang buong pelikula. Kung hindi ang i-exploit ang mga mata'y ang pagbibitiw niya ng mga salita'y nakakadistract ng mga eksena. Bawa't kataga'y may-

roong diin sa dulo na ginagawang katatawanan ng mga komedyante dahil nga sa hindi napipigil ng mga director ang kanyang nakagawiang pag-arte. Samantala si Ate Vi ay nahasa na sa mga kilo-kilometrong linya sa mga pelikula niyang pawang kumita sa takilya. Matatandaan duon sa eksena na nagsasalita siya sa harap ng kanyang ama na patay na sa Burlesk Queen, sinabi ni director Celso Ad Castillo na pinipigil ni Leopoldo Salcedo na hindi maiyak. Hindi siyan dapat umiyak dahil patay na siya sa eksena pero mahirap itong gawin dahil nadala siya ng husto sa tuhog na dialouge ni Ate Vi. Mga tuhog na eksenang pagganap ito ang sikreto ni Ate Vi na nagpatumba kay Elsa. Marahil halos lahat ng mga tangahanga ng kabila ang nagsasabi na bakit napataob si Elsa ng Himala ni Marilou ni Ate Vi sa Relasyon. Isang eksena lang ang kasagutan. Ito ay ang death scene ni Christopher DeLeon na tuhog na tuhog meaning hindi nagkaroon ng cut ang ginawa ni Ishmael Bernal hinayaan niyang umarte si Ate Vi ng walang putol at ang naging resulta ay ang napakahusay na pagsasalarawan ng biglang pagkamatay ng mahal mo sa buhay. Walang pokus sa mga mata, at walang OA na pagi-emote ng lines. Walang "hayup" o "my brother is not a pig" na line kundi tuloy tuloy na pag-iyak. Dahil ito ang makatotohanang pagganap hango sa tunay na buhay. Kung sa tunay na buhay naganap ang Ina Ka Ng Anak Mo nang mahuli mo ang sarili mong ina'y inasawa ang sarili mong asawa wala na ang pamemote na oa na acting na "hayup, hayup" kungdi sa tunay na buhay sabunutan na ang mangyayari. Iyan ang dahilan kung bakit pinataob ng Relasyon ang Himala ng kabila. Hindi hango sa tunay na buhay ang pagganap ni Nora sa Himala. Samantalay si Marilou ay tutuong tao. Hango sa tunay na tao ang gina-



siya ni Boots Anson-Roa and Nora was out of control and being taught how to eat properly. From there, she was astounding and learning how her eyes project to the screen and at the same time show how to express the feeling of lost and helpless through her cinematic eyes were just impressive! "Ikaw ay akin" sa pelikulang 'yun nilamon niya nang buhay ang kanyang hiwalay na asawa na si Boyet at ang rival niyang si Vi and up to now (last scene of that movie!) kumpara sa may mga kung sinu-sinong title na may star sa unahan man o sa huli, too bad so sad and i know you all gone that far but not,,,,, beyond! Wala pa akong makitang may kakayahang pupuwedeng gumawa uli nang ganung eksena and that includes your" beloved"( ano ba yan, title pa ng isang movie ni negi) star of all season ! Only Nora can do that! And this is not only coming from me but from the director himself, Ismael Bernal! "Minsan may isang gamu-gamo" actually, this movie is much more on social relevance than acting ng mga artistang involved. The picture theme was so huge and you don't need big names like her but that doesn't stop Nora from stepping up on stage to receive her best Actress trophy and This was best picture that year! Among her best were "Tatlong taong walang diyos", "Ina ka ng Anak mo", "Atsay" this was the most controversial award because they gathered all the best actors and actresses in a leading role in just one title, the best performer award! Dito niya binanggit ang pamosong linyang "Mamay, mali ang hula nila!" The movie "BONA" was not bad. I guess, it wasn't as realistic and acting-challenged as "Atsay" people watched this movie only because of her and its director late Lino Brocka. "Himala and Banaue" were so huge because of its cast and budget. Again, you will watch these movies because of her screen presence and how she managed to manipulate the admiring fans to watch her over and over again without ever feeling sorry and regret,,,,, and that's how we love her. The movie "Merika", there was a scene from that movie na ang galing-galing niya talaga! Nakaupo lang siya sa isang bus at naka-

### Nora...

tanaw sa bintana, facial expression shot lang ito pero you don't need any lines to read and feel what she is really trying to emote. Yung panghihinayang at galit kay bembol rocco na minahal lang siya nito dahil sa "Green Card" and the fact na minahal na rin niya ito! Minsan, nabanggit ni Ms. Armida segion-reyna na kapag si Nora ang kaeksena mo humanda ka na dahil ang mata nang taong yan ay buburahin ang memorya ng linya mo!!! 'Yung latest movie niyang made in U.S. hindi ko pa napapanood and i'm not expecting much. Pero yung "Naglalayag" I did watched it and frankly, from what I heard and this is coming from Vilmanians (and what did you expect from them!) the, "Lamay scene", that was Nora's touch. the kind of acting that only her can truly aspire, touched and magnificently project what that particular scene requires her to do! And she did it touched-down! (as always!) Magkaroon man nang mga Star of all season, Megastar. diamond star at kung anu't ano pang mga klaseng star. lisa lang po ang orihinal na nagkaroon ng titulong may star at yan po ay ang aming natatangi, namumukod at nag-iisang Superstar na si Ate Guy, Miss Nora Aunor! - **MB Arcilla Jr.**

### Nora's Awards Tally:

- Manunuri's Urian Awards - 6
- PMPC's Star Awards - 4
- Film Academy of the Phils. - 5
- Metro Manila Film Festival & Manila Film Festival - 9
- Catholic Mass Media Awards - 2
- Young Critics Awards - 4
- FAMAS - 5
- International Awards - 3
- Pasado - 1
- Gawad Tanglaw - 1
- Davao City & Bacolod City Film Festival - 2

**Total Awards: 41**

**Please note:** Nomination or certificate of recognition were not counted here. Only those best actress, best child actress, best supporting actress or best performer awards were counted.

### Vilma...

wang pagganap ni Ate Vi. Mabalik tayo sa present time, makikita sa huling pagtutunggali ng dalawa sa mga awards ang Mano Po 3: My love versus Naglalayag. Kitang kita ang ebidensiya na hindi nagbago ang akting ni Nora. Hindi niya nabigyan ang justice ang role ng isang mayamang judge. Sa pagsasalita at pagkilos. At muli sa sinasabi nilang "buro!" scene hindi makatotohanan ang page-emote niya na parang nagkaroon siya ng epilepsy. Samantala si Ate Vi from the start to finish nakikita mo na sa pagsasalita't pagganap ay makikita mo si Lilian, isang Chinese na nalilito sa pag-ibig. Kung iisipin natin mahaba na rin ang nagdaan upang tignan natin ang "body of work" ng dalawang aktres. Surin mo man makikita mo ang lawak ng kaibahan ng mga pelikula ni Ate Vi kumpara sa mga pelikula ni Nora. Kungbaga, na-stock na si Nora sa mga apiapihan roles. Samantalay si Ate Vi hanggang ngayon highest paid aktres dahil sulit lagi sa takilya at laging may kakaibang pinapakita sa kanyang mga pelikula. Ilang dekada na ang lumilipas at ang kinang na kanyang bituin ay nanatiling makinang samantala sa kabila halos wala nang kinang, Sino kaya ang dapat sisihin? - **R Viray**

### Vilma's Awards Tally:

- Manunuri's Urian Awards - 8
- PMPC's Star Awards - 6
- Film Academy of the Phils. - 4
- Metro Manila Film Festival & Manila Film Festival - 5
- Catholic Mass Media Awards - 2
- Young Critics Awards - 2
- FAMAS - 6
- International Awards - 2
- Pasado - 3
- Gawad Tanglaw - 2
- Gawad Suri - 1
- Cebu City & Bacolod City Film Festival - 2
- San Beda College Awards - 1
- Let's Talk Movies Awards - 1

**Total Awards: 45**



### Nora's notable citations as an actor

- The Filipino actor with the most number of International awards (Cairo '95, East Asia '97, Brussels '04), and nominations (Berlin '83, Singapore '97, Cairo '99, Singapore '99).
- The first Filipino actor to win an International acting award in a Major Film Festival (Cairo '95 for the movie "The Flor Contemplacion Story").
- The first and only Filipino actor to receive an acting nomination from a Top-Tier International Film Festival (Berlin '83 for the movie "Himala").
- The first Filipino actress to sit as juror in an International Film Festival (Hawaii '96).
- The only Filipino and Asian actress (apart from China's Gong Li) to be featured by HBO, an American cable network, in a documentary film about the lives and achievements of the world's greatest actresses (1997).
- Himala was the first and only Filipino film ever to qualify in the Competition Section of the Berlin International Film Festival (1983).
- The Flor Contemplacion Story became the first Filipino movie to win the grand prize in a Major International Film Festival (Cairo '95).
- The Flor Contemplacion Story grossed US\$ 3.3 million in its domestic and international exhibitions, making it one of the highest-grossing films in Philippine history.[citation needed]
- Bona was cited as one of "The Best 100 Films in the World" by the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, USA (1997).
- The Filipino actor with the most "Best Performer" awards (5).
- The first Filipino actor ever to win the "Best Performer" award (1978).
- The only actress included in the prestigious "Centennial Honor for the Arts" given by the Cultural Center of the Philippines (1999).
- The first actress to be honored with the "Ten Outstanding Women in the Nation's Service" (TOWNS) award (1983).
- The youngest recipient of the "Lifetime Achievement Award" given by the Film Academy of the Philippines (1993).
- The only actor that won three successive best actress awards on Film Academy of the Philippines for years 1989,1990,1991.
- Chosen by Gawad Urian as Best Actress of the decade for 80's and 90's.
- The only actor that has won seven MMFF best actress awards, thus dubbed as Film Fest Queen.
- The first actresses to be crowned as the "Box Office Queen of Phil. Cinema".
- Considered by people masses and critics and contemporaries as Philippine cinema greatest thespian and major icon of century.
- Named the Philippine's Best Actress of All Time by S Magazine in 2006.



### Vilma's Socio-Civic/Public Service Awards

Under her administration, Lipa has gathered a respectable number of awards and citations acknowledging its achievements in education, health, and peace and order management, among other things. Santos-Recto, herself, has been recognized by four different award-giving bodies as an outstanding mayor, twice in 2000, once in 2002 and another one in 2006. Some of her awards for social/public service includes as follows:

- 1975 Most Outstanding Nueva Ecija
- 2000 Best Over-All Local Council Performance given by the Boy Scout of the Philippines
- 2000 Outstanding mayor in Region IV given by the Asosasyon ng Komentarista at Anaunser sa Pilipinas
- 2000 Outstanding City Mayor given by the Civil Service Commission
- 2001 Sandugo Outstanding Local Executive Award given by the Dept. of Health
- 2002 Presidential Award as the Cleanest & Greenest Local Government Unit in Region IV
- 2005 Gawad Plaridel Award for Outstanding Media Practitioner for Film
- 2005 Gawad Suri Award for Exemplary Film Practitioner and Public Servant
- 2005 Presented the Honorary Key to Jersey City, New Jersey, USA
- 2005 IAPD (International Association of Pediatric Dentistry) Bright Smiles Bright Futures Award, at the Sydney Convention Center in Sydney, Australia. The Philippines' Dental Health Program "Mga Munting Ngiti" in Lipa bested all finalists from Scotland, Australia, Rumania, China and Mexico.
- 2005 Conferred as Honorary Member of the UP College of Public Health Alumni Society and Keynote Speaker to their 26th Annual Convention in Manila.
- 2005 Huwarang Pilipino Award conferred by the 2005 Parangal sa Pamilyang Pilipino Organization Inc and by the Office of the President (May 21, 2005 at Ateneo de Manila University)
- 2005 Lifetime Centennial Feminist Award
- 2006 First Diwata Award by University of the Philippines
- 2006 Guest Speaker for The Anvil Business Club Forum (Jan. 26, 2006) focusing on 10-point Agenda for Lipa
- 2006 Unlad Pilipinas Award (for 'Mga Munting Ngiti')
- 2006 Topped survey among students as 'Positive Youth Role Model'
- 2006 Outstanding City Mayor Award from the Dept. of Social Welfare & Devt.
- 2006 Gawad Munting Ngiti Awardee & Keynote Speaker to the 7th Annual Conference of the National Association of Dental Trade Inc. at PhilTrade, Roxas Blvd, Pasay City Oct. 8, 2006.





# Vilma Santos may be the Philippines' best film actress of all time

(Or, why Vilma Santos is the better actress than contemporary and competitor Nora Aunor)

## Introduction/Goals

This position paper is dedicated to Ms. Vilma Santos and her Vilmanians. I am an avid Vilmanian myself who followed the actress' career ever since I could remember her in *Ging, Dama De Noche*, *Larawan ng Pag-ibig* and up to the present where she is running for Governor of Batangas. As for me, there is no other Actor and Politician like Vilma Santos. She is an Icon, a National Treasure, a Role Model and an Inspiration to all Filipinos for generations. Predicted to win the Batangas gubernatorial on May 14, 2007, talks are rife that she may run for President in 2010, with critic Nestor Torre concurring: "Not only will Vilma win in the gubernatorial elections, but -- if she does well in the post -- she could be a nominee for president in 2010! From the movies to Lipa to Batangas to Malacañang Palace -- what a stunning upward trajectory for Vilma! Call her "V" for endless Victory!"

Of course this paper may be biased but I have tried to be as fair and balanced as I could if only to prove, through published historical data, that Vilma is the better actress than Nora, and, may be the Philippines' best actress of all time. Notice the open ended declaration. Let me explain. As a cineaste and observer, I have no qualifications like Nicanor Tiongson, Nestor Torre, Behn Cervantes, Butch Francisco or Ricky Lo et al to make such a sweeping statement. My job as a Registered Nurse and an accountant on the side, watching, reading and writing about movies, especially about my fave Vilma is a hobby. I also went to various film retrospectives in Metro-Manila of American, French, German, Swedish (Bergman's my fave director of all time), Japanese and Chinese movies as a serious movie enthusiast would.

Prior to my migration to the U.S. in 1984, I have worked part-time with the late Palanca-winning writer Boy Noriega, Jr. (Soltero, Bayan-Bayanan) of the defunct Experimental Cinema of the Philippines as a movie analyst. Boy and I were schoolmates and neighbors. He had good words for Nora, Vilma and Hilda, his favorites. He knew I was a Vilmanian since way back. I did some research for Boy on such topics as Alternative Cinema, Philippine style and helped serve as usher and manned the box-office to sell tickets. In the 1983 Manila International Film Festival, I had a chance to rub elbows with the high and the mighty and watched unforgettable movies like *In the Realm of the Senses* and the premiere showing of *E.T.* and *Soltero* (Jay Ilagan) at the Manila Film Center. Mr. Ed Cabagnot was also a fellow ECP part-time employee.

My full time job in Manila was marketing research/brand management in a big firm that marketed cough/cold medicines and skin lotions. I had a chance to promote our products in such TV shows like *Eat Bulaga*, *VIP* and *Big Ike's Happening*.

I last saw Vilma win her second *Urian* for *Broken Marriage* at the Rizal Theater and when she promoted the movie at *Eat Bulaga*, where coincidentally, Sharon Cuneta was also present to promote *Bukas, Luluhod ang Mga Tala*. The two had a special bond off camera even then, as in *Mutual Admiration and Respect Society*. The other reason for the "may be" is that Nora has appeared live on stage such as *DH* and *Minsa'y Isang Gamu-gamu* with documented glowing reviews while Vilma has yet to appear in at least one, as offered by the CCP and the U.P. groups. Unfortunately, much as >>

Vilma wanted to succumb to the lure and challenge of the stage, she had to say no for the moment for obvious reasons. Among the respected film actresses, she seemed to be the only one who had yet to appear on the legitimate stage to complete her acting career resume and to put a closure and defend her enviable titular position as the Premier Actress of the Land (U.P. Film Institute).

Non-appearance at the stage does not decrease Vilma's stature as the finest actress of her generation. It is interesting to note that Vilma's foray to the stage was when she appeared as Veronica in a CCP Theater Lenten Play in the 70's directed by Ruben Tizon, Sr. (Batang West Side best supporting actor at an International film festival).

My film appreciation flourished at the State University where I was a business major and began at the elementary when I tagged along with my 11 siblings, from Kuya, Diko, Ate, Ditse, Sanse, Dete and my Father and Mother, to the movies. It was a disparate film noir/genre, depending on who treated me the happiest place on earth, the movie house.

From The Ten Commandments to Hitchcock's Psycho, Ingmar Bergman's The Seventh Seal and Wild Strawberries, Julie Andrews' The Sound of Music, Ian Fleming's James Bond, to FPJ's Daniel Barrion, to the tearjerker melodramas of Lolita Rodriguez, the Amalia Fuentes-Susan Roces fisticuff in Tulisan, and of course, the impressive, young Vilma Santos in Larawan ng Pag-ibig.

Let it be known though that I have the highest respect for Ms. Aunor as a singer and actress. I've also seen some of her finest films including Himala, Ina Ka ng Anak Mo, Bilangin ang Bituin, Bulaklak sa City Jail, 'Merika, Andrea and Flor Contemplacion. I've accompanied my Noranian sister to the superstar's concerts in Atlantic city in New Jersey, and I was impressed with her golden voice, and those magnetic eyes that sparkle and speak volumes when they look at you.

Data source for this paper are the fans' websites, the Wikipedia websites, the FAMAS, FAP (Luna), Urian websites, various Internet movie database, the U.P. Film Institute website, various movie journals and periodicals, where appropriate.

This paper will attempt to debunk the theory that Vilma Santos' approach to film acting as "hysterical, which is a myth, as opposed to Nora Aunor's natural and gut feel approach." The overall goal is to present, compare and analyze and make conclusions, based on judicious, fair and balanced review of data at hand as to who should be crowned the Philippines' greatest actress.

## **Validation of Acting Excellence**

In the Philippines, in the pre-Urian and U.P. Gawad Plaridel era, the FAMAS and the National Artist Award (NAA) were the major validators of the actor/artist's outstanding film achievements. The FAMAS was patterned after the U.S.' Oscar annual award-giving event while the NAA is patterned after the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA). Annually, it gives the National Medal of Arts award. It is an award and title bestowed on selected honorees by the NEA. Ceremoniously given by the President of the United States, it is the highest honor given to an individual artist by the national government on behalf of the people. The award is not restricted to a particular art. It looks like it is similar to the National Artist Award of the Philippines.

It could also be akin to the U.P. Gawad Plaridel Award, a National Award, which is the sole award in the University of the Philippines System given to outstanding media practitioners. The Gawad bestows honor on Filipino media practitioners who have excelled in any of the media (print, film, radio, television, and new media) and performed with the highest level of professional integrity in the interest of public service. The recognition, which comes with a Napoleon Abueva trophy, is given to one practitioner in one medium for each year. The awardee is expected to deliver the Plaridel Lecture which addresses important media issues.

In the U.S. there's also the American Film Institute Life Achievement Award. The highest honor given for a career in film, the AFI Life Achievement Award was established by the AFI Board of Trustees on February 26, 1973. It is presented to a single honoree each year based on the following criteria as mandated through a resolution passed by the AFI Board of Trustees:

"The recipient should be one whose talent has in a fundamental way advanced the film art; whose accomplishment has been acknowledged by scholars, critics, professional peers and the general public; and whose work has stood the test of time." I am adopting/ applying the criteria set forth by the U.P. Gawad Plaridel and the AFI Life Achievement Award as my guide in my proposed thesis as they are not only specific about Film Acting/Career but has the least if not nil shade of any politicking that seemed evident in such government-backed projects such as the MMFF, the CCP Centennial Award and the National Artist Award.

## **The Birth of the Manunuri and other groups**

In 1973, the FAMAS was rocked by a terrible scandal. It

awarded the first tie in the history of Philippine cinema. The tie was in the Best Actress category, with both Boots Anson-Roa and Vilma Santos sharing the honors. Because a tie was unheard of, the public dissented the vote. Therefore, for the next years, the FAMAS invited film critics to be members of its nominating and awarding committee. These critics left the FAMAS in 1976 to form MPP and subsequently, the Gawad URIAN. (Wikipedia)

Interestingly, history repeated itself in 1983 when both Eddie Garcia and Fernando Poe, Jr. (SLN) tied for best actor and a threepeat occurred in 1984 when both Nora Aunor and Sharon Cuneta tied for best actress.

In 1981, the FAMAS' moniker, "the Philippines' counterpart of the Oscars," was finally rescinded by the government when it established the Film Academy of the Philippines (FAP) under Executive Order No. 640-A. The FAP (now called the LUNA Awards) was patterned after the AMPAS of the United States. In addition, other award-giving bodies have sprung up over the years: among the most notable are the Star Awards for Movies of the Philippine Movie Press Club in 1985, the Catholic Mass Media Awards of the Catholic Church, the Gawad Pasado, Gawad Tanglaw, the U.P. Young Critics' Circle and recently, the Golden Screen Awards of the Entertainment Press. (Wikipedia)

During the 1980s, the term grand slam became popular. The Philippine grand slam is an unofficial moniker given to an actor or actress who had won the following awards: FAMAS Awards, Gawad Urian, Luna Award in one year. Before 1985, the grand slam awards also included the CMMA, but in the establishment of the Star Awards in 1985, it informally replaced the CMMA in the awards roll for grand slam. The moniker was first earned by Philippine movie queen Vilma Santos when she won the FAMAS, Gawad Urian, CMMA and Luna Awards for her performance in the Ishmael Bernal film *Relasyon*. (Wikipedia)

The proliferation of award-giving bodies in the Philippines, however, grew in the 1990s. Various university scholars and other groups have formed their own awards. In addition, breakaway groups from the existing award-giving bodies have made their own awards, too. Because of the sheer number of award-giving bodies in the Philippines, various film insiders have concluded that, indeed, the Philippines is an award-crazed country. (Wikipedia)

### **Acting Standards**

When FAMAS was the sole award-giving body, a win here

is like winning an Olympic gold medal: you are declared/baptized a bona fide actor/actress in the real sense of the word, thus the moniker "pang-FAMAS acting" was born.

Looking at the winners list, it seemed that Marlene Dauden, Charito Solis, Eddie Garcia, FPJ and Erap dominated the honor roll of winners. Charito Solis was the first actress Hall of Fame winner for winning best actress five times over, followed by Vilma Santos and Nora Aunor respectively. Had Marlene Dauden stayed behind and continued to make movies, she probably would have been a FAMAS Hall of Famer. Ditto with another great acting legend, Lolita Rodriguez who has two FAMAS best actress trophies under her belt.



The "pang-FAMAS" performances that clicked with the jurors as per this writer's observation were those exemplified by Ms. Solis and Ms. Dauden: hysterical, over the top, excessive use of body language, complete with flared nostrils, piercing eyes, kilometeric dialogues and an ample amount of tears to melt the mascara. Ditto with actors Eddie Garcia and company. Even in the slum scenes, the actors were made to look poor with a dash of charcoal chalk painted in their limbs and torso. The leading actresses looked more ridiculous – they had make-up on, long fingernails and a Susan Roces hairdo where you could build an egg's nest. The set background, the story line, dialogues, characterization/internalization/motivation were all incongruent with each other. It was pathetic, albeit hysterical. It was Lolita Rodriguez and occasionally Barbara Perez and Ms. Rita Gomez (SLN), to my recollection, which impressed me the most with their tempered, down to earth performances.

Then Lino Brocka (SLN) came, along with the classics *Tubog Sa Ginto*, *Tinimbang Ka Ngunit Kulang*, *Tatlo*, *Dalawa*, *Isa* and *Insiang*. Not far behind was Ishmael Bernal (*Pagdating sa Dulo*, *Lumapit*, *Lumayo ang Umaga*, *Nunal Sa Tubig*, *Dalawang Pugad*, *Isang Ibon*) and of course Eddie Romero (*Ganito Kami Noon*), Lupita Kashiwahara (*Minsa'y Isang Gamu-gamo*), Mario O'Hara (*Talong Taong Walang Diyos*) and Celso Ad. Castillo (*Pagputi ng Uwak*) Artists challenged artists and the 70's renaissance movie-making gave birth to the Filipino Golden Age of movies since the 50's. Under the tutelage of Lino Brocka and Mario O'Hara, Nora Aunor (*Bona*, *Talong Taong*), Hilda Koronel (*Insiang*) and Lolita Rodriguez (*Tinimbang Ka*, *Tatlo*, *Dalawa*, *Isa*), were the Critics'

Choices. Nora and Hilda's movies made waves at the Cannes Film festival where before the pre-Brocka era, Philippine movies were unheard of. Meanwhile, the box-office receipts were in favor of Vilma Santos (Lipad, Darna, Lipad et al) while the critics were raving over Nora and Hilda. How the tables were turned through the years is discussed in another section.

### **Vilma-Nora-Vilma-Nora-Vilma-Nora**

There were/are movie queen rivalries such as those of Glora Romero/Nida Blanca, Susan Roces/Amalia Fuentes, Rosemarie Sonora/Gina Pareno and today's Judy Ann Santos and Claudine Barretto. BUT none can compare to the legendary and never-ending (?) battle royale of La Santos and La Aunor, Ate Vi and Ate Guy to their fans. It is a very long rivalry that has divided the Philippines and cuts across all sectors, genders, sexual orientation, even the intelligentsia and the literati, the high and the mighty, including Presidents and public officials, and up to the grassroots level, even the fans' grandchildren and great grandchildren.

### **Who Is The Better Film Actress?**

Before *Relasyon* (1982) and even after *Burlesk Queen* (1977), the movie that liberated Vilma from Nora's shadow and that made the critics begin to look at her as a serious actress, Nora Aunor was the Critics' Darling. She was 'the standard where her contemporary actresses will be measured.' She earned this birth right via her quiet performances, where she made use of her soulful eyes that speak volume. She was the Queen of Restraint, in the league of Lolita Rodriguez, her senior counterpart. They were the quiet counterparts of the verbose and volcanic Vilma Santos and Charito Solis.

Ms. Aunor could hold you at the palm of her hands with her tour de force performances that wowed local and foreign jurors in such films as *Tatlong Taong Walang Diyos*, *Bona*, *Himala* and *Ina Ka Ng Anak Mo* (her best performance ever). She was ahead of her time. The critics won over, she would be at the top of the best actress surveys of all time, with Vilma Santos, Lolita Rodriguez, Hilda Koronel, Charito Solis and Gina Alajar trailing her. (DGPI, journal/tabloid data). The Bicolana superstar would send fellow superstar Vilma and others home as she collected trophies from the critics' groups the *Urian* and *PMPC Star*, as fish does water. Her films *Himala* and *Bona* were getting rave reviews internationally and she almost won her first international trophy for *Himala* at the Berlin Film Festival by a mere vote (fans' website).

She was at the top of her game. She could do no wrong.

Lupita Kashiwahara (*Inquirer*): "Nora Aunor will sit down in a chair and you can have 10 different emotions coming out of her. She's that good. I still honestly believe that she's one of our national treasures," she gushes.

Vilma Santos, her chief rival both at the box-office and acting supremacy contest, was also ran, playing second fiddle to the talented singer/actress.

It does not matter how slowly you go so long as you do not stop. - Confucius

Nestor Torre elucidates: "In those days, it looked like Nora could do no wrong. Even if she made quickie films, they would win awards over Vilma's better-executed starrers. After years of this unfair competition, Vilma decided to stop playing the also-ran, and opted to essay the roles that Nora preferred not to do---the other woman, rape victim, burlesque dancer, etc. (*Inquirer*)

Butch Francisco further clarifies: "It took long for Vilma Santos to be recognized as a serious actress. Although she won a major acting award – 1972 FAMAS Best Actress for *Dama de Noche* (she tied with Boots Anson-Roa) – ahead of Nora Aunor, it was the latter who first became the toast of the critics, the members of the *Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino* in particular. Unlike Nora Aunor who only has to use her eyes to convey emotions, Vilma's early performances were often hampered by her soft features and rather thin voice." (*Philippine Star*)

The turning point was the 1978 MMFF where Vilma (Rubia Servios) was predicted to win for her more "technically difficult role" says *Manunuri Isagani Cruz* in his review (*Urian* anthology, book 1), lost to Nora (*Atsay*) for the best performer award. Vilma took her biggest defeat to heart. After that fateful night, rumors had it that she was suicidal, inconsolable, depressed and vowed not attend awards ceremonies anymore.

The next thing we know, she was up against Nora again in the 1979 MMFF where it was a lopsided affair. Nora, in her best performance in years as a barren wife and daughter to Lolita Rodriguez in *Ina Ka ng Anak Mo* tied with the other queen of restraint for best actress. Vilma's tardiness on the set of *Modelong Tanso* with co-star Charito Solis (this was their ill-fated entry to the 1979 MMFF to square off with the Lolita/Nora tandem) irked her Tita Chato big time that on one occasion, as the paparazzi allegedly reported, La

Solis brought her best actress trophies on the set and told Vilma: "O, kaya mong tapatan yang mga trophies na iyan?". True or not, the gesture from a more professional, experienced actress Chato probably was to stir up the 1979 Box-office Queen to straighten her act if she wants to remain on top and beat the competition. The two divas however became close friends and would work together in Vilma's award-winning films *Ipagpatawad Mo* and *Dolzura Cortez*. Ms. Solis' highest regards for Vilma was revealed when she told the media point blank that "Vilma is a better actress than Nora." (Ricky Lo, Philippine Star). Meanwhile, Nora continued her winning streak via *Bona*. Directed by Lino Brocka, the movie was a big hit at the Cannes film festival and earned Nora her second Urian trophy. Vilma remained the box-office queen but the critics' stamp of approval eluded her.

Vilma pondered these things in her heart. She regrouped. She had a career/talent inventory and soul-searching.

"Study the past if you would define the future."- Confucius

Mr. Torre (Inquirer) continues: "Vilma's "sexy" movies were more suggestive than anything else, but they gave her a new screen persona that made her a distinct movie entity from Nora. Fact is, Nora could also have played sensual characters, but she felt awkward doing so, and Vilma benefited from her reticence. In time, Vilma was also winning acting awards and starring in big hits, so the competition between her and Nora peaked.

Then, in the '80s, Nora's personal problems affected her career, while the more professional Vilma became producers' actress of choice. Nobody doubted Nora's talent, but Vilma had talent "and" professionalism, so she soon streaked in front of her archival.

No longer did she compete in areas where she was "dehado," like singing. Instead, she stressed her dancing ability, sensuality and versatility, and truly came into her own."

Mr. Francisco (Philippine Star) concurs: "But through hard work and determination – plus her collaborative efforts with top directors like Ishmael Bernal, Celso Ad Castillo, Lino Brocka and later, Mike de Leon, Laurice Guillen, Marilou Diaz-Abaya and Chito Roño – she became one of the greatest actresses of Philippine cinema.

Vilma may have reached the level of superstardom on a stack of materials with the so-called "commercial appeal," but along the way, she also chose scripts that tackled social issues and oftentimes was experimental with her roles.

The other woman part she portrays in *Relasyon* may be sympathetic, but in our society the mistress is still the much-hated third party in the break up of most marriages. Vilma, however, risked playing that and in the process was rewarded with the first of her four sets of grand-slam win in the various local award-giving bodies. In *Sister Stella L.*, she plays an activist nun in a picture that doesn't allow her to have romantic scenes that are rudimentary in most movies. *Sister Stella L.* may have bombed at the box-office, but it is listed among the finest in the history of local films and gave Vilma the third of her eight Urian trophies.



But she was most commendable when she decided to accept the films *Pahiram ng Isang Umaga* and *Dahil Mahal Kita* (*The Dolzura Cortez Story*) because fans don't want their screen idols to die in the movies.

During the past six years (when she was already the mayor of Lipa City), she already had the full luxury of accepting only the film projects she fancies.

Actually, she only made four films during this period: *Bata, Bata... Paano Ka Ginawa?*, *Anak*, *Dekada '70* and *Mano Po 3: My Love*. Except in *Mano Po 3*, where she is always fashionably dressed, she allows herself to be de-glamorized in her more recent films – at an age when most movie queens would rather be photographed through gauze or any gadget today's modern technology could provide to erase those tell-tale wrinkles and lines.

Fortunately, she always seems to be making the right choices."

And the tables have turned.

Nick Joaquin reveals Vilma's secret weapon (Vilma, *The Glad Girl*): "What's Vilma's secret to remain on top? Ishmael Bernal, who claims to have directed Vilma's best pictures, believes she has endured because she has physical, emotion and mental endurance. She could work for 24 hours straight without getting tired, without flagging in her acting. There were times when we had to shoot for three or four successive days, getting very little sleep, but there

Vilma would be: fresh, enthusiastic, rarin' to go. Physical endurance is very important to a star. Another thing I noticed was her strong sense of competition. At that time, though of course, she didn't say so, it was Nora she wanted to beat. Vilma was out to be the bigger star, the better actress. And so she geared her career for a zoom to the top."

Lino Brocka who directed her in three of her most applauded vehicles: *Rubia Servios*, *Adultery* and *Hahamakin Lahat* tells Nick Joaquin (*Vilma, The Glad Girl*): "When you work with Vilma," says Brocka, "you get this feeling of having just emerged from a bath and of being drenched all over with Johnson's baby cologne. You feel so fresh, so youthful." He adds that when they first worked together she seemed scared of him.

Now he gushes: "Ang sarap niyang katrabaho."

The chief reason, of course, is: "She has matured and grown up as an actress. At this point of her career, she is very good, she is really big. Before, she had a hard time making herself cry, but now how fast she can do it. And she has become sensitive to direction: in that respect she has overtaken Nora."

Brocka says that the sensitivity he noticed at once in Nora Aunor was what he missed when he started directing Vilma. "So I assumed that, as an actress, she was really just second to Nora. But Vilma takes good care of herself not only physically - there's always this aura about her - but intellectually too: so she grows and develops tremendously. The second time I worked with her, in *Adultery*, I realized she had become as good as Nora, or better. And by the time of *Hahamakin Lahat* there was the complete sensibility already - a difference in the way she expressed pain and hurt. Talent was welling out like spring water, and flowing from her most naturally, no longer courtesy of Vicks or whatever."

Flash forward to the present: From all angles such as box-office clout, talent fee, producers' choice, net worth, longevity, public perception and respect, and successful dual careers, it seems that Vilma has the upperhand.

It is in the Battle for Acting Supremacy that the two are several notches superior vis-a-vis their senior and junior movie queen counterparts. Their very long rivalry as acting divas is characterized by almost hairline, marginal and/or split votes by film scholars and critics and the general public such as the Gore/Bush 2000 Presidential Election results. While occasional, inconclusive surveys would put Nora on the top over second placer Vilma (DGPI, tabloids),

National Awards groups such as the National Artist Award and the U.P. Film Institute's Gawad Plaridel have considered her nomination, with the latter (Gawad Plaridel) crowning her their winner as Outstanding Film Practitioner in 2005. (U.P. Film Institute, various websites)

Vilma versus Nora in the major leagues - Head to head stats  
The thesis is not complete without discussing the two great actresses' head on collisions in acting jousts

where tension almost always ran high during awards nights and with their respective fans standing by their idol win or lose. Sidebar: In women's tennis history, the most watched and publicized was that of Steffi Graf and Monica Seles. Overall, (10-5 head to head) Graf ruled over Seles but early on, Seles put Graf over the edge in their classic matches where Seles would dominate/ overpower Graf to rule women's tennis, until a deranged Graf fan stabbed Seles at the back during a tennis game break. The incident sidelined Seles and derailed her way to replacing Graf as the queen of tennis. Graf took advantage of her absence. In her comeback, Seles could only break Graf in the small leagues but in the grand slams, Graf showed her who's the boss and went on to win 22 grand slams and has the record of being the longest reigning women's tennis champion ever, 377 weeks. However, the only major tennis star that Graf did not overpower in single matches was the real queen of women's tennis (more than 100 tennis championship titles), Martina Navratilova, where, toe to toe, they are deadlocked at 9-9 in their 18 matches face to face. As we review Nora and Vilma's 'boxing' matches for film acting supremacy, will the pattern show a Graf/Seles or a Graf/Navratilova picture? Let's bring it on. (source: fans' websites)

1972 - Nora (*And God Smiled at Me*) beats Vilma (*Dama De Noche*) at the Quezon City Film Festival.  
Score: Nora, 1; Vilma, 0.

1973 - Vilma (*Dama de Noche*) tied with Boots Anson-Roa (*Tatay na si Erap*) to beat Nora (*A Gift of Love*) at the FAMAS. Score: Vilma, 1; Nora, 0.

1975 - Vilma (*Nakakahiya?*) clobbered Nora at the Bacolod Film Festival (Banaue) for best actress. It is still a puzzle why Nora's Best Actress list (NA website) includes the Gawad Buglas award/



best picture (Banaue) as a 'best actress win')? Score: Vilma, 1; Nora, 0.(See by the numbers section)

1978 - Nora (Atsay) was the Best Performer, beating Vilma (Rubia Servios) and company. Vilma and Nora (both nominated for Ikaw Ay Akin) lost to Beth Bautista at the Urian. Vilma (Pagputi ng Uwak) and Nora (Atsay) both lost to Susan Roces (Gumising Ka, Maruja!) at the FAMAS. Score: Nora, 1; Vilma, 0.

1979 - Nora and Lolita Rodriguez (Ina Ka ng Anak Mo) clobbered the Vilma/Charito Solis tandem at the MMFF for best actress. Score: Nora, 1; Vilma, 0.

1982 - Vilma single handedly won her first of four Grand slams for Relasyon over Nora (Himala) at the Urian, FAP and the CMMA, and over Nora again (Mga Uod at Rosas) at the FAMAS. Score: Vilma, 4; Nora, 0.

1984 - At the first PMPC Star Awards, Nora ('Merika , Condemned, Bulaklak sa City Jail) edged Vilma (Sister Stella L. and Aida Macaraeg) for actress of the year. They were the only nominees for best actress. Nora won the most votes for 'Merika over Vilma's Stella L. A case of split votes? At the Urian however, Vilma (Sister Stella L.) beats Nora ('Merika, Bulaklak sa City Jail). Another case of split votes? At the FAMAS, Nora (Bulaklak sa City Jail) and Sharon Cuneta (Dapat Ka Bang Mahalin?) tied to beat Vilma (Sister Stella L.). Score: Nora, 2; Vilma, 1.

1989 - Vilma (Pahiram ng Isang Umaga) bested Nora (Bilangin Ang Mga Bituin Sa Langit) at the PMPC Star Awards, her first of 6 best actress trophies. At the Urian, the rivals tied for best actress for the same movies. Score: Vilma, 2; Nora, 1.

1990 - Nora (Andrea) won over Vilma (Hahamakin Lahat) at the Star Awards and the FAP; over Vilma (Kapag Langit ang Humatol) at the Urian. Score: Nora, 3; Vilma, 0.

1991 - Nora almost had a grand slam for Pacita M. when she won at the FAMAS (Vilma is already a Hall of Famer), and over Vilma (Ipagpatawad Mo) at the FAP and the Star Awards. At the Urian, Vilma (Ipagpatawad Mo) halted Nora's trip (Pacita M.) to the Grand slams. Score: Nora, 2; Vilma, 1.

1999 - Nora Aunor was the only actress cited in the CCP Centennial Honors for the Arts. No documentation or any proof would show if Vilma Santos was also considered for the award. The CCP, the MMFF and the National Commission for the Arts (which selects the

NAA nominees, with the eventual winner to be selected by the President) are all government-run awards bodies.

Nora joined actors FPJ and Dolphy for the honors, in what many consider an Erap Circle of Friends who heavily campaigned for his bid for President. Published reports also showed that Erap gave Nora a house as a token of gesture for helping him win the presidency in 1998. He would later be deposed via the EDSA People's Power and replaced by then Vice President Gloria M. Arroyo for plundering the country's wealth and is currently under house arrest and awaiting trial. Score: not applicable.

2004 - Nora (Naglalayag) bested Vilma (Mano Po 3) at the PASADO awards, tied with Vilma at the Gawad Tanglaw awards and lost to Vilma at the Star Awards. At the Urian where they were both nominated for Naglalayag and Mano Po 3 respectively, neither one won. Judy Ann Santos (Sabel) went home with the trophy. Nora, 1; Vilma, 1.

2005 - Nora was eliminated during the initial deliberation for the coveted U.P. Gawad Plaridel Award wherein Vilma eventually won over National Artist nominee Mike De Leon and National Artist Awardee Eddie Romero. Score: Vilma, 1; Nora, 0. (See U.P. Gawad Plaridel's citation for 2005 winner Vilma Santos).

2006 - Nora and Vilma were both nominated for the National Artist Award but were eliminated in the first round. FPJ was the eventual winner, who was chosen by sitting President Gloria M. Arroyo over finalists Mike De Leon and Manuel Conde.

Total head-to-head winner: Vilma, 10, over Nora, 7.

Very close indeed. Of course, Nora's fans will protest as I did not include minor award groups, especially the U.P. YCC where Nora is the favorite in whatever movie she appears in, such as Inay. Interestingly, Nora bested Vilma once while Vilma got more votes than Nora three times at the Urian. At the FAP, Nora shut out Vilma three times to Vilma's one; at local film festivals, Nora beats Vilma three times to Vilma's one; they are even at the FAMAS, 1:1; at the Star Awards Nora's ahead with, 3, Vilma, 1, although at the Star Awards, although overall, Vilma has six to Nora's four actress of the year awards; PASADO, Nora, 1, Vilma, 0, although Vilma won there three times (see By the Numbers section).

**Let Us Count the Ways - Notable citations as an actor**  
**Nora Aunor** - The Filipino actor with the most number of International awards (Cairo '95, East Asia '97, Brussels '04), and nomina-

tions (Berlin '83, Singapore '97, Cairo '99, Singapore '99). The first Filipino actor to win an International acting award in a Major Film Festival (Cairo '95 for the movie "The Flor Contemplacion Story"). The first and only Filipino actor to receive an acting nomination from a Top-Tier International Film Festival (Berlin '83 for the movie "Himala"). The first Filipino actress to sit as juror in an International Film Festival (Hawaii '96). The only Filipino and Asian actress (apart from China's Gong Li) to be featured by HBO, an American cable network, in a documentary film about the lives and achievements of the world's greatest actresses (1997). Himala was the first and only Filipino film ever to qualify in the Competition Section of the Berlin International Film Festival (1983). The Flor Contemplacion Story became the first Filipino movie to win the grand prize in a Major International Film Festival (Cairo '95). The Flor Contemplacion Story grossed US\$ 3.3 million in its domestic and international exhibitions, making it one of the highest-grossing films in Philippine history. Bona was cited as one of "The Best 100 Films in the World" by the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, USA (1997). The Filipino actor with the most "Best Performer" awards (5). The first Filipino actor ever to win the "Best Performer" award (1978). The only actress included in the prestigious "Centennial Honor for the Arts" given by the Cultural Center of the Philippines (1999). The first actress to be honored with the "Ten Outstanding Women in the Nation's Service" (TOWNS) award (1983). The youngest recipient of the "Lifetime Achievement Award" given by the Film Academy of the Philippines (1993). The only actor that won three successive best actress awards on Film Academy of the Philippines for years 1989,1990,1991. Chosen by Gawad Urian as Best Actress of the decade for 80's and 90's. The only actor that has won seven MMFF best actress awards, thus dubbed as Film Fest Queen. The first actress to be crowned as the "Box Office Queen of Phil. Cinema". Considered by people masses and critics and contemporaries as Philippine cinema's greatest thespian and major icon of century. Named the Philippine's Best Actress of All Time by S Magazine in 2006.

**Vilma Santos** - One of the two highest paid actresses in the Philippines The Longest-reigning Box-office Queen and Dramatic Actress The only Filipino actor who is both successful in movies and politics The most awarded Filipino actor and politician ever, with 70 plus acting awards and countless public service awards. The only Filipino actor who is awarded the Honoris Causa, PhD degree in Humanities for her contributions to film and public service. The only Filipino actor who has two best foreign language picture entries for Oscar consideration (Anak and Dekada '70). Child star Vilma co-starred in the 1967 Hollywood-produced war-action-drama

movie made for television 'The Longest Hundred Miles'. It also starred Americans Doug McClure, Katharine Ross, Ricardo Montalban, and Filipino veteran actors Vic Silayan, Ronald Remy and Berting Labra. The only Actor with the highest grossing film as of 2000 for the movie Anak, only to be eclipsed by Ang Tanging Ina. The only Filipino actor who has won a best child actress trophy, a best supporting trophy and the most best actress awards. The only Filipino actor with the most Lifetime Achievement for Film given by the FAMAS, FAP, and twice from the CineManila International film festival. The first Filipino film practitioner awardee by the prestigious U.P. Gawad Plaridel in 2005, beating Mike De Leon and Eddie Romero in the final deliberation, and eliminating her chief rival in the first deliberation. The sole actress to be awarded by the First U.P. Diwata Awards by the U.P. Film Insitute for an exemplary acting career. The youngest recipient of the FAMAS Hall of Fame for winning best actress five times. The only actress with the most Circle of Excellence awards from the FAMAS. The only Filipino actor who is a Grand slam winner four times, a record, and the first Grand slam winner for a single performance, a record. The only Filipino Actor recipient of Body of Work Award from the defunct Let's Talk Movies for her 1982 film output, including her grand slam movie Relasyon. Chosen by Gawad Urian as Best Actress of the decade for 80's and 90's. The first best actress winner as chosen by her peers (FAP) for the movie Relasyon in 1983. The only actor who has two Golden Grand slams, for winning locally and internationally for Bata-bata (Brussels), a total of 7 awards and Dekada '70 (CineManila), with a record 9 awards. The movie Bata-bata also won the Special Jury award and a best actress finalist nomination for Vilma at the 44th. Asia-Pacific Film Festival in 1999. The movie Dekada '70 also won the NETPAC special jury award at the 2003 CineManila Film Festival. The only Filipino actor who has a record nine acting awards for a single performance, 8 locally, including a grand slam, and one internationally, for Dekada '70. The only Filipino actor who has a record 9 Urian trophies, the most Urian best actress trophies (8) and producer for 1978 best picture Pagputi ng Uwak. The only Filipino actor who has a record six PMPC Star best actress awards. The only actor who has won at the Urian three years in a row. The only actor with the most best picture awards at the Urian, seven in all, including Pagputi ng Uwak which she produced; the film also won best picture at the FAMAS. The first Filipino actor to be featured in the Time Magazine, for Burlesk Queen in 1977. She is the only actress who has worked with the following award-winning Filipino directors. Aside from Lino Brocka and Ishmael Bernal, Vilma was directed by Celso Ad Castillo (Burlesk Queen, Pagputi ng Uwak, Pagitim ng Tagak), Gil M. Portes (Miss X, Never Ever Say Goodbye), Danny Zialcita (Langis at Tubig, Karma, Gaano Kadalang ang Minsan, T-bird at Ako), Mike de Leon (Sister



Stella L), Marilou Diaz Abaya (Alyas Baby Tsina, Minsan Pa Nating Hagkan ang Nakaraan), Laurice Guillen (Kapag Langit ang Humatol, Ipagpatawad Mo, Dolzura Cortez Story), Maryo J. de los Reyes (Tagos ng Dugo, Sinungaling Mong Puso), Chito Roño (Ikaw Lamang, Bata, Bata Paano Ka Ginawa?, Dekada 70), Jose Javier Reyes (Nagiisang Bituin), Rory Quintos (Anak), by Joel Lamangan in Mano Po 3 and Olivia Lamasan (Regalo). The only actress who played Darna four times – Lipad, Darna, Lipad and the Giants, Darna vs. the Planet woman, Darna at Ding. The only Filipino actress who won the first Pinoy Animation Awards for Darna. 2004 - PMPC Star Dekada Award (Body of Works). 2005 Lifetime Centennial Feminist Award. 2005 Gawad Suri Award for Exemplary Film Practitioner and Public Servant. Declared the Actress-Politician of the Year - PEN. Declared the All-Time Favorite Actress - Guillermo Memorial Foundation. The only actor who was called Filipino Cinematic Diva by Variety Magazine. Sole winner of the first U.P. Diwata Award for Film. The only actress cited by the U.P. Film Institute as the Premier Actress of the Philippines.

In Ricky Lo's documented article on 8/19/99, (Vilma Santos, Armida Siguion-Reyna, Jurors in Chicago Intl. Film Festival), the Chicago Filmfest bigwigs have described Vilma as "the Meryl Streep of the Philippines" in the invitation.

Respected journalist and Manunuri member Butch Francisco confirms the moniker in his 11/3/05 article My Favorite Vilma Santos Films: "With Dekada '70, I dare say that, yes, she has finally become the equivalent of Meryl Streep of Philippine cinema." (see Meryl Streep AFI citation for Meryl Streep).

Vilma Santos' movies competed at the Venice Film Festival in 1985 (Sister Stella L), Brussels (Bata-bata) in 1999, Asia-Pacific Film Festival, 1999 and Dekada '70, 2003 at the CineManila Film Festival.

Dekada 70 was exhibited in Cannes and Brussels International Film Festival (not the independent film festival where both Nora and Vilma won).

### **Meryl Streep and Vilma Santos – a comparison**

To be called the Meryl Streep of the Philippines is an honor and a responsibility for Vilma Santos, as Ms. Streep is the U.S.' most decorated and versatile actress, just like Ate Vi. For perspective, here are Ms. Streep's citation as honoree of the AFI Life Achievement Award and Ms. Santos' citation as the U.P. Gawad Plaridel and U.P. Diwata awardee for film. These citations alone prove that Meryl Streep is the America's Greatest Actress and Vilma Santos is the

Philippines Best Actress of All Time.

The Achievements of Ms. Meryl Streep ([merylstreep.com](http://merylstreep.com)) - The trustees of the American Film Institute have selected Meryl Streep to receive AFI's 32nd Life Achievement Award. Meryl Streep is like no other. She's authentic yet ethereal. Self-possessed yet vulnerable. Intellectual yet instinctive. And she deftly combines these disparate qualities onscreen in a way that has made her a cinematic icon. Meryl Streep has presence, resonating with both audiences and critics for the past 26 years. Beginning with THE DEER HUNTER in 1978-just her second film-Streep has been nominated for 13 Academy Awards, more than any other actor in history. She was named Best Supporting Actress for KRAMER VS. KRAMER in 1980 and Best Actress for SOPHIE'S CHOICE in 1983. No matter the character, Streep's work is suffused with dignity and decency. She makes us believe. Which is no small thing, considering most actors find it difficult to separate their public persona from their onscreen portrayals. But Meryl Streep is not like most other actors. Her sense of self and understanding of those she is portraying result in realistic characters, regardless of their nationalities, ethnicities or physicalities.

The breadth of her talent seems limitless. No matter what the challenge, Streep commits fully, serving as the anchor in each of her films. She sings (SILKWOOD, IRONWEED, POSTCARDS FROM THE EDGE), dances (DEATH BECOMES HER), even plays violin (MUSIC OF THE HEART). And these extraordinary abilities are matched by her astounding facility for dialects. From Polish (SOPHIE'S CHOICE) to Australian (A CRY IN THE DARK) to Danish (OUT OF AFRICA), Streep's flawless vocal transformations imbue each role with a wealth of knowledge and experience, an innate understanding of life's foibles, blessings and mysteries. While making it all look effortless. Yet she calls this gift the "auto mechanics" of her craft, preferring to focus on the complete person rather than on any one characteristic.

Streep's most challenging role-as wife and mother-informs her career choices, both geographically and emotionally. Early in her career, she insisted she'd never give up theater, her first love. But being home for dinner and schoolwork with her four children is a top priority. So the stage must wait.

That maternal instinct is apparent onscreen as well. While the mothers she plays may not always be perfect, she brings a humanity to even the most troubled relationships. We're both repelled by and understanding of her decision to leave her little boy in KRAMER VS. KRAMER. We see the fierce love lying just beneath the surface

as she battles with her rebellious teenage son in MARVIN'S ROOM. And, we respect her decision to live with a philandering husband and accept the scorn of her daughter-in order to keep her family together in ONE TRUE THING.

An outspoken advocate for women, Streep is active in Equality Now, working for women's human rights around the world. She also fights for equal pay, in her own profession as well as in public education-an arena she knows well, since her children have gone on location with her to Africa, England, Australia, Texas, California, New York and Connecticut.

And she continues to take on new artistic challenges. In 2002, she starred in both THE HOURS and ADAPTATION, earning an Oscar nomination for the latter. Earlier this year, she played four different characters in HBO's ANGELS IN AMERICA, including her first male role, an aged rabbi. American cinema has been graced by the presence of Meryl Streep. With a poise and eloquence all her own, Streep has continued to astonish audiences with her range of characters. Because of her unparalleled talent and integrity, the American Film Institute is honored to present Meryl Streep with AFI's 32nd Life Achievement Award.

#### **U.P. Gawad Plaridel Citation to Ms. Rosa Vilma Santos:**

For crafting and creating her varied cinematic roles with consummate artistry, making us empathize with whatever character she is portraying by delineating for us the character's history, problems and aspirations, in dynamic interaction with the film's ensemble of other characters;

For bravely using her popularity as an actor to choose roles which bring to the public attention an astounding range of female experiences as well as an array of problems confronting women of different classes and sectors in contemporary Filipino society, even if these experiences or problems would not only enhance but could detract from her mass appeal;

For bringing to life on screen characters whose stories have the effect of raising or transforming the consciousness of women, leading them a few steps closer to a deeper understanding of their situation vis-a-vis the patriarchy and to the ability to control their own lives and make choices of their own;

For courageously playing maverick characters which dared to speak the truth in a period of intense political repression and reprisal, thereby showing a concern not for her own self but for a Filipino

society fighting for basic human rights under a dictatorial regime;

For building a brilliant career which saw her grow from popular icon to professional actor through self-discipline and tireless honing of her craft, thereby challenging writers, directors and producers to come up with films that would be worthy of her artistic resources and repaying their efforts with some of the most unforgettable performances in Filipino cinema;

For showing that the movie star can place the stamp of her own individuality and talent on the films she chooses to make, thereby proving that the star can be regarded as an auteur in her own right;

For excellence, integrity and social responsibility which have distinguished her major performances, and for being a model of professionalism to other actors and technicians engaged in the creation of a Filipino national cinema;

The U.P. Gawad Plaridel 2005 is given to Rosa Vilma Santos on the 4th of July 2005 by the U.P. College of Mass Communication at the Cine Adarna, U.P. Film Institute, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City.

Emerlinda R Roman, Ph.D.  
President, University of the Philippines

Sergio S Cao, Ph. D,  
Chancellor, U.P. Diliman

Nicanor G. Tiongson, Ph.D.  
Dean, U.P. College of Mass Communication

U.P. Diwata Award Citation for ROSA VILMA SANTOS:

Vilma Santos has transformed her roles in her films into believable characters. Her outstanding professionalism and creativity in acting has elevated the women roles she performed into three-dimensional complex human beings. In narrative films the performer is a key



factor in story telling. Ms. Santos has elevated her discipline into a powerful film element in creating space for the consciousness of women in films. Her most celebrated films that showed empowered and strong women roles are: *Relasyon*, *Broken Marriage* and *Ikaw ay Akin* as characters caught in oppressive relationships; as a nun fighting for the workers in *Sister Stella L.*; as a town mayor in *Hamakin Lahat*; as the AIDS patient in *Dolzura Cortez Story*; and as a woman in search for her self in *Bata, Bata... Paano ka Ginawa?*; as an overseas Filipino worker in *Anak* and as a mother and wife in the midst of political turmoil in *Dekada '70*.

### **Vilma outgrew her hysterical acting through the years**

This article will prove that Vilma is a better actress than Nora in terms of range and versatility which the late Charito Solis explained in her choice of Vilma as the better actress than Nora. Whereas before Vilma was identified with hysterical acting and Nora the subdued one, the tables have turned to Vilma's favor, as she grew as an actress. This is also, I believe what actress Elizabeth Oropesa meant when she said that Vilma is a better actress than Nora because she felt that Nora seemed to get stuck somewhere, she did not grow with her acting style. Here's a reprint of my article.

### **Nestor Torre, Mario Bautista, Ricky Lo. Butch Francisco, What do these four journalists have in common?**

They are all household names in Philippine media. Educated, respected, credible and outstanding in what they do best: chroniclers/ historians of the Philippine entertainment industry. Except for Lo, Torre, Bautista and Francisco are once upon a time Manunuri members who sat through long hours of movie viewing, criticism, debating, and selection/votation of the creme de la creme in movies. The youngest in the above dream team of tabloid writers, and possibly still active as a Manunuri member, Butch Francisco, like Nestor Torre and Mario Bautista calls a spade a spade especially in their critique of a movies' strengths and weaknesses.

All three are generous with their praise of both Vilma Santos and Nora Aunor, still the actresses to beat in the annual awards derbies and still the topic of heated debates amongst the rabid of cineastes who are as partisan as the Republicans and the Democrats of America's political landscape. However, statistics show that the momentum of positive media mileage and attention is on Vilma Santos as the chasm between the two rivals is as far as the East is from the West, as Vilma triumphs in her dual careers as actress and politician.

When Nora Aunor was chosen as a CCP Centennial Awardee in 1999 during former President Erap's aborted term, especially after her back to back wins as international best actress for *Flor Contemplacion* and *Bakit May Kahapon Pa*, and her acclaimed performances on the legitimate stage, it seemed that the National Artist award was within Nora's reach.



At the prestigious academe-based U.P. Gawad Plaridel Award for Film, the precursor or litmus test of the National Artist Award, Vilma Santos was crowned the winner, and in less than a year was the lone actress winner for another U.P. System award for excellence in Film Acting, the Diwata Award. Talk of major twin bill triumphs for the two-time international best actress, at the height of her successful third term as a well-respected and admired Lipa city mayor. (see article at bottom).

Flash forward to 2006 and still the Philippines' "alleged" Highest Honor for an Artist eluded La Aunor, who was overlooked, along with fellow nominee Vilma Santos and others, in favor of the eventual winner, the late Fernando Poe, Jr.

In between the periods of reversals of fortune for the revered actresses, there is Mr. Butch Francisco who, like Yin and Yang, does a balancing act of extolling the virtues of her equally favorite actresses, zeroing in on their best performances, at least in his mind.

Butch's appraisal of his favorite "best performances" by the Philippines' elite group of fine actresses really narrows down, to, oh well who else, Vilma (where he listed 12 best performances) and Nora (where he chose the superstar's 11 best)?

One degree of separation. One movie more than Nora. One extra vote for Vilma to break the tie. Was this intentional or subconsciously unintentional?

Interestingly, if Butch is asked to pick the winner of the National Artist for Film, or the better actress of the two, all things considered, such as being focused, committed, insightful and versatile, will he be the deciding or dissenting vote, in favor of Vilma?

As a bonus, I attached Mr. Francisco's "My Favorite Vilma Santos Films" as his tribute to her personal friend's 52nd. birthday last year. >>>

Note the consistency of his pattern of choice of his Best Vilma Santos Performances List vis-a-vis My Favorite Vilma Santos Films List, which are really a set of twins. He includes Takbo, Vilma, Dali and Tag-ulan sa Tag-Araw in his Fave Films section, but not Ipag-patawad Mo, which is however mentioned among his Fave Best 12 Performances by Vilma Santos Section.

Favorite Vilma Santos movies versus favorite Vilma Santos best performances. He really was able to draw the line as can be gleaned in the succeeding paragraphs.

What makes Butch's paean to his favorite actresses Vilma and Nora through the years is interesting and engaging to read is his fair, objective and balanced treatment approach. Of course, we can read between the lines and make conclusions as to who Butch will really choose as the Best of the Two. In print, he acknowledges the following:

1. Vilma Santos deserves all of her FOUR Grand Slams and EIGHT Urian trophies. Vilma Santos richly deserves her first grand slam win in Relasyon.

Translation: Vilma deserves the Urian for Relasyon to Nora's Himala, Sister Stella L. over Merika and Bulaklak and Ipagpatwad Mo over Pacita M. Note however that Nora has beaten Vilma once at the Urian for Andrea, over Vilma's Kapag Langit ang Humatol.

2. Vilma Santos is also effective with her quiet/subdued/ understated performances such as seen in Pahiram ng Isang Umaga, Ipagpatawad Mo and Dekada '70, erasing the myth that Vilma is another Charito Solis.

3. Vilma Santos is the equivalent of U.S.' Meryl Streep.

4. Nora Aunor has tackled difficult roles without straining, especially with the use of her best weapon, her soulful eyes.

5. Both Vilma and Nora are committed artists, who have delivered powerful, sterling and well-deserved winning performances.

6. It took a while before Vilma was recognized as a serious actress but with her talent and dedication to her craft, she delivered some of the most sterling performances ever recorded in Philippine cinema.

7. I concur with the U.P. Gawad Plaridel committee (with a strong Manunuri vote) in choosing Vilma Santos as its first awardee for film

acting.

### **Nora Aunor**

**Fe, Esperanza, Caridad** – The Superstar was fortunate to have been directed by the master himself (Gerry de Leon) in an episode of this trilogy (Caridad). That early in her career, Aunor already gives an impressive performance, except that the public and the critics didn't take her that seriously yet as an actress.

**Minsa'y Isang Gamu-gamo** – Her "My brother is not a pig" dialogue (now a staple in many gay impersonators' acts) may have been overly cinematic, but Aunor gives a consistently good performance in this daring film that exposes the abuses committed against Filipinos by the American bases in the country in those days.

**Tatlong Taong Walang Diyos** – This is what I call a truly sterling performance. A very difficult role – as a war victim who suffers in the hands of fellow Filipinos at the end of the Japanese interlude – Aunor gives justice to this very memorable screen character. She won an Urian and a FAMAs for this film – and was she truly deserving of those acting trophies.

**Bona** – As the loyal fan of a bit player (Phillip Salvador), Aunor's performance here haunts the viewers even years after the exhibition of this film. She tied for Best Actress with Gina Alajar in the Gawad Urian the year (1980) Bona was released.

**Himala** – She could have won a grand-slam for playing the visionary Elsa in this Bernal masterpiece (she was voted Best Actress in the Metro Filmfest), but Vilma Santos edged her out as Best Actress of the Year for Relasyon.

**Bulaklak sa City Jail** – Although she is surrounded by other great talents in this film (Celia Rodriguez, Perla Bautista, Mitch Valdes, Maritess Gutierrez and the late Zeneida Amador), Aunor doesn't allow herself to get eclipsed even for a minute.

**Bilangin ang Bituin sa Langit** – One of the most difficult roles given to a local actress – she ages from teener to that of an old lady and even plays another character in the same movie – Aunor is consistently focused on her characterization in this film and is rewarded with a whole slew of acting trophies for it.

**Andrea, Paano Ba ang Maging Isang Ina?** – It was a tough competition among actresses that year (1990), but the Superstar showed them who was best by winning in the Metro Filmfest and in

the Gawad Urian.

**The Flor Contemplacion Story** – No matter how gay impersonators trivialize her "I did not kill anybody!" line, you cannot deny that Aunor is superb in this film that dramatizes the real-life story of a domestic helper accused of a crime and hanged in Singapore.

**Bakit May Kahapon Pa?** – A truly powerful performance that helps convey the strong socio-political statement of the film.

**Sidhi** – She doesn't speak a word here, but you feel her presence all over the film. It's a difficult role, but Aunor is excellent as always and utilizes her greatest acting weapon: her pair of soulful eyes.

### Vilma Santos

**Trudis Liit** – She is so convincing here as an abused child that when I see it now I tend to forget that this kid grew up to be one of the country's greatest actresses, respected politician and personal friend.

**Ging** – I think she delivers an even better performance in this film where she plays an exploited child performer.

**Burlesk Queen** – This will always be the turning point of her career.

**Pakawalan Mo Ako** – Her material here may be frowned on by the really serious film reviewers, but there's no denying that she rises above the material and gives an inspired performance.

**Relasyon** – She richly deserves her first grand-slam win for this film.

**Sister Stella L.** – You see here how her character develops from a nun who is content with convent life to that of a concerned street parliamentarian.

**Adultery** – An underrated performance that should have won for her another acting trophy. Sadly, it was released in the same year as Sister Stella L. and was totally eclipsed.

**Pahiram ng Isang Umaga** – The fact that she agreed to do this film where she dies already deserves a lot of commendation. But Vilma being Vilma she gives another worthy performance that brought her the fourth of her eight Urian trophies.

**Ipagpatawad Mo** – Another understated performance that only she can deliver.

**Dahil Mahal Kita (The Dolzura Cortez Story)** – Another daring role (that of an AIDS victim) that gave her another well-deserved grand-slam win (her second).

**Bata, Bata, Paano Ka Ginawa?** – A landmark performance in the history of Philippine Cinema. She earns her third grand-slam for this.

**Dekada '70** – She remains quiet in most of the film, but her silence is so overpowering that you feel her presence all over. She is rightfully rewarded with a fourth round of grand-slam win.

### MY FAVORITE VILMA SANTOS FILMS

MANILA, November 3, 2005 (STAR) STARBYTES By Butch Francisco

Lipa City Mayor Vilma Santos turns a year wiser today and as early as three weeks ago, her fans had been sending me text messages – asking me to write something about the Star For All Seasons on the occasion of her birthday. Since I've already written volumes about her, this is a rather difficult task for me to do. However, there will always be a way – especially if you're doing it for a person you love and admire. For her birthday today, therefore, I'm coming up with a list of my favorite Vilma Santos films – and so here it is:

**Trudis Liit (1963)** – This is, of course, Vilma's first film and it has all the elements of a melodrama – the good guys and one extremely bad woman (Bella Flores). This early, you can already tell that Vilma was to the acting profession born. (She won FAMAS Best Child Actress for this film). She doesn't allow herself to be eclipsed by her veteran co-stars: Luis Gonzales and the Lolita Rodriguez. But with due respect to Vilma, even if she is the one who plays the title role here and is undeniably good in this Sampaguita Pictures box-office hit, the one who leaves a really lasting impression in the minds of most viewers is the character played by Connie Angeles – Oreng. After all, wasn't it this girl who gets chewed up by a German Shepherd in the film?

**Ging (1964)** – Vilma Santos at her cutest. (She'd, of course, grow up into a lovely woman – one of the most beautiful in local cinema.) Actually, she is even better here than in Trudis Liit because her character requires more than to just cry and look forlorn. But true to form, Vilma delivers as always – especially in her scenes with villainess Carol Varga.

**Takbo, Vilma, Dali!** (1972) – A very effective suspense-thriller. There are images here that haunt you even long after the screening – like the sight of the old Mother Superior (Mary Walter) being tortured and pushed around before she is finally killed.

**Tag-ulan sa Tag-araw** (1975) – Her first team-up with Christopher de Leon. About kissing cousins, this movie is way ahead of its time.

**Burlesk Queen** (1977) – The turning point in Vilma's career. She gets the Metro Manila Film Festival Best Actress trophy for this one. Yes, that was the controversial year. But no matter what you say, all the awards won by this film were well-deserved.

**Pakawalan Mo Ako** (1981) – Vilma may have won her second FAMAS for this film, but this movie never really earned critical acclaim in general. However, you just have to appreciate this film for what it is – a melodrama, a well-made one that has all the elements that play with the emotions of the audience.

**Relasyon** (1982) – Vilma Santos was already a respected actress when she made this Ishmael Bernal film (with script by Ricky Lee). It was this movie, however, that put her on her way to greatness. She wins the first of her four rounds of grand-slam here.

**Adultery** (1984) – Although it was rated A by the old Film Ratings Board, this film is generally underrated. Vilma gives one of her finest performances in this movie, except that it went practically unnoticed because this was released in the same year as *Sister Stella L.* (and *Alyas, Baby Tsina*).

**Sister Stella L.** (1984) – It may have bombed at the box-office, but it will remain listed as one of the best Filipino films ever made.

**Pahiram ng Isang Umaga** (1989) – Vilma Santos at her most daring. No, she doesn't go sexy here or anything. I say daring because a star of her stature doesn't allow herself to die in any of her films (because the fans don't like the idea). But she dared accept this film about the business of dying and was rewarded with the fourth of her eight Urian trophies (not counting the two times she was named Actress of the Decade).

**Dahil Mahal Kita, The Dolzura Cortez Story** (1992) – Vilma is even more daring here because she doesn't only die in this Laurice Guillen movie, but even dies of AIDS. She gets her second round of grand-slam in this movie.

**Bata, Bata Paano Ka Ginawa?** (1998) – This Chito Roño movie is significant in Vilma's filmography because here she forgoes glamour completely for the first time and allows herself to look like the regular person she is supposed to be in the story. She earns the third of her grand-slam victories in this film.



**Dekada '70** (2002) – The first time I saw this, I have to admit I didn't like the film that much. It had to take me a second viewing for me to appreciate the movie, Chito Roño's direction, and the performances of Vilma, Christopher de Leon and Piolo Pascual. In the case of Vilma, it would seem like she doesn't do anything in this film. However, her quiet performance envelops the entire movie. Somehow there is magic in her performance, but you can't place it – you just feel it all over. With *Dekada '70*, I daresay that, yes, she has finally become the equivalent of Meryl Streep of Philippine cinema.

What their peers say about Vilma

"Naging idolo ko ho siya. Siya ang pinangarap ko noong bata pa ako." -Nora Aunor

"You really are great. I know you deserve more." -Fernando Poe, Jr.

"She's an actress of consummate artistry." -Eddie Garcia

"As an actress, she registers like water. How a director would feel about her at the moment is that he can do anything with her now. She has become so supple that his tendency would be to challenge her still further, make her come up still higher, open up more doors. She can give you so much more now." - Lino Brocka

"I'm willing to be paid installment sa talent fee ko, makasama ko lang ang isang Vilma Santos." – Sharon Cuneta

"Vilma is an actress who can compare with the top caliber actresses of Hollywood. She is an epitome of a real queen of Philippine cinema. I really look up to her." – Lea Salonga

"Vilma is a better actress than Nora. Vilma has a wider range as an actress while Nora is limited and typecast in certain roles. Si Vilma, puede kahit anong role, kahit bold. You can't imagine Nora doing a bold role, can you?. BUT Nora has more depth than Vilma, and it's

because of her expressive eyes. Nora is very effective in scenes where she doesn't say anything, just act with her eyes, at 'yan ang kulang ni Vilma. Vilma has to say something to be effective." – Charito Solis

"There must be something more to this Vilma Santos who everyone acclaims as the great actress... She will achieve all these dreams because she is a woman for all seasons. I love you, Vi." - Ms. Marichu Vera-Perez

"In *Ikaw ay Akin* Vilma was already conscious of her own particular style of acting, which can be described as minimal: less is more. The fewer and simpler the gestures, the greater the effect. The stripped style won her a grand slam when she did *Relasyon* with Bernie, which he rates as her most memorable film. It got her all the awards on the market.

"In *Relasyon* Vilma made the character of a mistress very human and sympathetic, not just a *contravida*. Her next film, *Broken Marriage*, set another trend for her; the role of a modern urban working girl, as sophisticated as her Makati office and her personal problems. Her fans are growing up and Vilma's image is becoming more and more complicated. But it was in the last film we did together, 1988's *Pahiram ng Isang Umaga*, that I noticed the big change in Vilma. She had become an artist. She was no longer just a movie star following the director's instructions. She was very hyper, very high, eager to experiment: a cooperative and mature actress. She had studied the script in advance and she had sensible suggestions about it. I felt I was no longer working with a movie star but that she and I were two artists collaborating on an objective statement about life and death and human relationships." -Ishmael Bernal

"Hindi pa ako artista, sa Tundo pa lamang kami, paborito ko na si Vilma. Beauty na, ang galing pang umarte."- Amy Austria

"A damn good actress!"- Gil M. Portes

"Mai-direct ko lang si Vilma Santos ay pwede na akong mag retire."- Jerry Lopez Sineneng

"Vilma is a better actress than Nora. Nora did not grow. Na-stuck lang siya." – Elizabeth Oropesa

### By The Numbers – Vilma Santos versus Nora Aunor

Here's the ranking of the top 15 Greatest Filipino Actresses Ever (S Mag, 2006 survey):

1. Nora Aunor - 85 votes
2. Vilma Santos - 82 votes
3. Lolita Rodriguez - 57 votes
4. Charito Solis - 52 votes
5. Hilda Koronel - 50 votes
6. Gloria Romero - 45 votes
7. Nida Blanca - 40 votes
8. Jaclyn Jose - 40 votes
9. Gina Alajar - 40 votes
10. Sharon Cuneta - 37 votes
11. Maricel Soriano - 32 votes
12. Lorna Tolentino - 30 votes
13. Amy Austria - 25 votes
14. Rita Gomez - 23 votes
15. Cherry Pie Picache - 20 votes

### Film Awards and Citations – Nora Aunor

Best Actress unless otherwise noted

#### International

1. Cairo International Film Festival - 1995 - *The Flor Contemplacion Story*
2. East Asia Film and Television Award - 1997 - *Bakit May Kahapon Pa?*
3. Brussels Festival of Independent Films - 2004 - *Naglalayag Philippines*

#### Gawad Urian

1. 1976 - *Tatlong Taong Walang Diyos*
2. 1980 - *Bona*
3. 1989 - *Bilangin ang Bituin sa Langit*
4. 1991 - Best Actress of the Decade (1980s)
5. 1990 - *Andrea, Paano ang Maging Isang Ina*
6. 1995 - *The Flor Contemplacion Story*
7. 1996 - *Bakit May Kahapon Pa*
8. 2001 - Best Actress of the Decade (1990s)

#### FAMAS

1. 1976 - *Tatlong Taong Walang Diyos*
2. 1979 - *Ina Ka ng Anak Mo*
3. 1984 - *Bulaklak sa City Jail*
4. 1989 - *Bilangin ang Bituin sa Langit*
5. 1990 - *Andrea, Paano ang Maging Isang Ina*
6. 1991 - *Hall of Fame Award*
7. 1996 - *Circle of Excellence Award*

#### Star Awards

1. 1984 - *'Merika*
2. 1990 - *Andrea, Paano ang Maging Isang Ina*
3. 1991 - *Ang Totoong Buhay ni Pacita M.*
4. 1994 - *Star of the Decade (1980s)*

- 1995 - The Flor Contemplacion Story
- 2004 - Best Actress of the Decade (1990s)

#### **Film Academy of the Philippines**

- 1989 - Bilangin ang Bituin sa Langit
- 1990 - Andrea, Paano ang Maging Isang Ina
- 1991 - Ang Totoong Buhay ni Pacita M.
- 1993 - Lifetime Achievement Award
- 1995 - The Flor Contemplacion Story

#### **Metro Manila Film Festival**

- 1978 - Atsay (Best Performer)
- 1979 - Ina Ka Ng Anak Mo
- 1982 - Himala
- 1984 - Bulaklak sa City Jail
- 1990 - Andrea, Paano ang Maging Isang Ina
- 1991 - Ang Totoong Buhay ni Pacita M.
- 1992 - Gawad ng Natatanging Pagkilala
- 1995 - Muling Umawit ang Puso

#### **Manila Film Festival**

- 2004 - Naglalayag

#### **Catholic Mass Media Awards**

- 1981 - Bakit Bughaw ang Langit
- 1984 - Bulaklak sa City Jail

#### **Young Critics Circle**

- 1990 - Andrea, Paano Ba Maging Isang Ina (Best Performer)
- 1991 - Ang Totoong Buhay ni Pacita M. (Best Performer)
- 1993 - Inay (Best Performer)
- 1995 - The Flor Contemplacion Story (Best Performer)

#### **Quezon City Film Festival**

- 1972 - And God Smiled at Me

#### **Bacolod Film Festival (?)**

- 1975 - Banaue (Grand Buglas Award)

#### **Pasado**

- 2004 - Naglalayag

#### **Davao City Film Festival**

- 1976 - Ibilanggo Si Neneng Magtanggol

#### **Gawad Tanglaw**

- 2004 - Naglalayag

#### **Kritika**

- 1991 - Ang Totoong Buhay Ni Pacita M.

#### **Balatca**

- 2004 - Naglalayag

#### **Ateneo Galian**

- 1991 - Ang Totoong Buhay Ni Pacita M.

#### **People's Choice, PPC Publications**

- 1995 - The Flor Contemplacion Story
- 1997 - Babae

## **Vilma Santos**

### **Best Actress unless otherwise noted**

#### **International**

- 1999 - Brussels International Film Festival - Bata, Bata...Paano ka Ginawa?
- The film "Bata, Bata...Paano ka Ginawa?" was also given a Special Jury Award for Women's Awareness at the Asia Pacific Film Festival held in Bangkok, Thailand from Nov. 22-26, 1999. Ms. Santos was a Best Actress nominee.
- 2002 - CineManila International Film Festival - Dekada '70
- 2002 - Cinemania Lifetime Achievement Award

#### **Centennial Feminist**

- 2005 Lifetime Award

#### **Diwata Award**

- 2006 UP Lifetime Achievement Award

#### **FAMAS**

- 1963 - Best Child Actress for Trudis Liit
- 1972 - Dama de Noche
- 1981 - Pakawalan Mo Ako
- 1982 - Relasyon
- 1987 - Tagos ng Dugo
- 1988 - Ibulong Mo sa Diyos
- 1989 - FAMAS Hall of Fame
- 1992 - Circle of Excellence Award - Sinungaling Mong Puso
- 1993 - Circle of Excellence - Dolzura Cortez Story
- 1998 - FAMAS Lifetime Achievement Award

#### **Metro Manila Film Festival**

- 1977 - Burlesk Queen
- 1981 - Karma
- 1989 - Imortal
- 2004 - Mano Po 3: My Love

#### **Cebu City Film Festival**

- 1981 - for Karma

#### **Gawad URIAN**

- 1982 - Relasyon
- 1983 - Broken Marriage
- 1984 - Sister Stella L.
- 1989 - Pahiram ng Isang Umaga
- 1990 - Gawad URIAN AKTRESS ng DEKADA (Body of Works in the 80s)
- 1991 - Ipagpatawad Mo
- 1993 - Dolzura Cortez Story
- 1998 - Bata, Bata...Paano ka Ginawa?
- 2000 - Gawad URIAN AKTRESS ng DEKADA (Body of Works in the 90s)
- 2002 - Dekada '70



**San Beda College Awards**

1. 1968 - Best Supporting Actress for Kasalanan Kaya?

**Bacolod City Film Festival**

1. 1975 - Best Actress for Nakakahiya?

**Film Academy of the Philippines**

1. 1982 - Relasyon
2. 1993 - Dolzura Cortez Story
3. 1997 - FAP Lifetime Achievement Award
4. 1998 - Bata, Bata...Paano ka Ginawa?
5. 2002 - Dekada '70

**Catholic Mass Media Awards**

1. 1982 - Relasyon
2. 1987 - Tagos ng Dugo

**Let's Talk Movies Awards**

1. 1982 - Relasyon

**Movie Magazine Awards**

1. 1987 - Tagos ng Dugo
2. 1989 - Pahiram ng Isang Umaga
3. 1991 - Ipagpatawad Mo
4. 1993 - Dolzura Cortez Story

**Cinemascoop Awards**

1. 1987 - Tagos ng Dugo

**Star Awards**

1. 1989 - Pahiram ng Isang Umaga
2. 1993 - Dolzura Cortez Story
3. 1998 - Bata, Bata...Paano ka Ginawa?
4. 1999 - Star Special Citation for winning at the Brussels Int'l Film Festival
5. 2000 - Anak
6. 2002 - Dekada '70
7. 2004 - Mano Po 3: My Love
8. 2004 - PMPC Star Dekada Award (Body of Works)

**Channel 2 Viewers Choice Award**

1. 1989 - Imortal

**Intrigue Magazine Reader's Choice Award**

1. 1991 - Ipagpatawad Mo
2. 1993 - Dolzura Cortez Story

**New Fame Magazine Reader's Choice Award**

1. 1992 - Sinungaling Mong Puso
2. 1993 - Dolzura Cortez Story

**Manila Film Festival**

1. 1993 - Dolzura Cortez Story

**Film Desk of the Young Critics Circle**

1. 1998 - Bata, Bata...Paano ka Ginawa?
2. 2002 - Dekada '70

**Gawad Sineng-Sine PASADO Awards**

1. 1998 - Bata, Bata...Paano ka Ginawa?

2. 2000 - Anak
3. 2002 - Dekada '70

**Siasi, Jolo Critics Awards**

1. 1998 - Bata, Bata...Paano ka Ginawa?

**Gawad TANGLAW**

1. 2002 - Dekada '70
2. 2004 - Mano Po 3: My Love

**Cinema One's RAVE Awards**

2002 - Dekada '70

**Critic's Choice**

2002 - Best Performer - Dekada '70

**People's Choice**

2002 - Best Performer for Dekada '70

**Gawad Suri Awards**

1. 2004 - Mano Po 3: My Love
2. 2005 - Exemplary Film Practitioner and Public Servant

**Gawad Plaridel Award**

1. 2005 for Outstanding Media Practitioner for Film

**Conclusion:**

Is there really anything that Vilma Santos cannot do, except sing (yet she has gold records and a hot-selling CD of her greatest hits), and to act on stage (too busy to say commit to oh so many tempting offers)?

Fifty-three year old Vilma Santos' outstanding record of achievements and awards in her dual career as actress and politician can easily land her in Guinness' Book of Records.

No other Philippine celebrity, male or female, dead or alive, can ever match this petite actress cum mayor's formidable stature as the Philippines' most awarded actress and politician.

A high school graduate, a non-singer and only five feet tall, and an inexperienced mayor in her first of three successful terms, she practically is a David among the Goliaths such as Nora Aunor, FPJ (SLN), President GMA, Regine Velasquez, Sharon Cuneta, among others.

As an actress, she played second fiddle to the CCP Centennial honoree and three-time International Best Actress Nora Aunor, an Urian favorite who would easily beat her in acting jousts via her signature soulful eye acting.

On TV, her then struggling VIP show would avoid competing with Nora's Superstar to avoid being murdered in the ratings war, the

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## Nora Aunor

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

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**N**ora Aunor (born Nora Cabaltera Villamayor on May 21, 1953 in Iriga, Camarines Sur) is a multi-awarded Filipino actress-singer-producer. Acknowledged as the one and only Superstar of Philippine entertainment, Aunor has also headlined several stage plays, television shows, and concerts.

Aunor has starred in more than 170 films, majority of them box-office hits, since the late 1960s. She has reaped three international best actress trophies, numerous local acting awards, and several industry citations.

Her films have been showcased in wide-ranging and diverse international film festivals like Cannes, Berlin,

Moscow, New York, Chicago, Hawaii, Toronto, Rotterdam, Fukuoka and Cairo. On screen, she has starred with the leading men of her time, including Joseph Estrada, who later became a Philippine president. She also co-starred with international movie stars like Don Johnson and Sajid Khan in the early 1970s.

Also known as the Lady with the Golden Voice, Nora has recorded more than two dozen albums and scores of hit singles. In addition, she has received countless gold and platinum record awards, and a handful of music industry recognition. Handog, her first major concert at the 17,000-plus capacity Araneta Coliseum in 1991, reportedly equalled the feats established by foreign acts such as The Beatles and Frank Sinatra in terms of concert attendance at the said venue.

Aunor, who used to sell cold water in the railroad tracks of Iriga City, rose to fame in 1967 when she won in a national amateur singing contest called Tawag ng Tanghalan.

Aunor carries the distinction of hosting the longest-running musical variety show in Philippine television. Her show Superstar ran for 22 years. In 2002, Aunor made her first soap opera, entitled, Bituin, that was aired on ABS-CBN Broadcasting Network. A mother of five, her marriage to another multi-awarded local actor, Christopher de Leon, was annulled in the late 1990s. Although she retains her Philippine citizenship, Aunor has spent much of her time in recent years in California, where she has a home. In 2004, the dynamic San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom, declared Nora's birthday, May 21, as Nora Aunor Day in the City and County of San Francisco. She was honored for her numerous achievements as a multi-media artist as proven by the awards she has received from Philippine and international award-giving bodies and also for her goodwill visit to her numerous fans in San Francisco through her series of concerts.

Aunor was arrested on March 30, 2005 when airport screeners at Los Angeles International Airport stopped her on her way to Oakland, California and allegedly found 7.7 grams of methamphetamine hydrochloride (known in the Philippines as shabu) in her carry-on bag, and a glass pipe wrapped in a T-shirt. The day following her arrest, Aunor was released after posting a \$10,000 bail. At the reading of the charge against her on April 21, she pleaded not guilty. The trial was set for December 16, 2005.

On March 29, 2006, Aunor changed her plea to guilty to the charge of possession of a controlled substance. She has entered a drug diversion program and subsequently the criminal proceedings against her have been suspended. The charges against her are expected to be dropped once she completes her rehabilitation. After a successful show in Las Vegas last August 31, 2006, Nora received a certificate of recognition from Nevada State Governor Kenny C. Guinn for her phenomenal talent and for being an extraordinary performer.

On September 23, 2006, Mayor Timothy Hancock of Killeen, Texas, proclaimed the date as Nora Aunor Day in the City of Killeen after she held a successful concert there.

On May 2007, Aunor was reported to have married her current manager Norie Sayo who is openly lesbian in Clark County Las Vegas on May 22, 2000(marriage certificate # D1906650, according to the Clark County, Nevada website).

Nora Aunor is close to her fans that she already invited some of them to her awardsnights and Superstar shows. Her fans made caps, t-shirts, posters and pins with her picture in them. Her undying crowd of fans are called "Noranians" and back in the '70s, "Vilmanians" (Vilma Santos fans) and "Noranians" fight for their idols since the two stars became popular at the same time. Even classmates fought during lunch breaks for their idols. The '70s was the height of their rivalry. In real life, the two stars are real bosom buddies. They say that Vilma was the best since she's prettier, whiter and better with drama. But Nora has more talents under her sleeve. If Vilma can dance, she can sing. Nora is also a comedienne. These talents makes the two at the same level.

# Vilma Santos

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia



**V**ilma Santos (born Maria Rosa Vilma Tuazon Santos November 3, 1953) is a popular multi-awarded actress and politician in the Philippines. She's known as the "Star for All Seasons". She will be inaugurated June 30 as the first woman governor of Batangas. She was previously mayor of Lipa City. She started acting at the age of nine, after winning the title role for the hit drama film *Trudis Liit* (*Little Trudis*). She immediately received her first acting trophy as Best Child Performer from FAMAS for the same film. Groomed as a lead actress in her teens, her popularity grew further, bolstered by her loveteam with actor Edgar Mortiz and rivalry with contemporary actress Nora Aunor. At the height of her showbiz career she was a consistent box-office drawer highlighted by comic-book adapted films like the *Darna* series and *Dyesebel*, and dramatic/daring films like *Burlesk Queen* and *Sinasamba Kita*, among others. Regarded as the longest reigning Box-Office Queen of Philippine Cinema, her films broke box-office records several times in her career and is hailed as the Star for All Seasons and Queenstar. She also hosted her own top-rating musical variety television shows ('*The Sensations*', '*VIP*' and the long-running multi-awarded '*Vilma*'). Though not really a singer but a natural dancer fond of doing 'acrobatic' dance performances in her TV show, she managed to earn gold record awards as a teenager. Known for her versatility and intense acting, she honed her craft as she worked with various top caliber directors, writers and actors, and now holds the record for having the most acting awards ever by a Philippine actress from prestigious award-giving bodies, local and international. Critically acclaimed for tackling roles on various women's issues, her other major films include "*Burlesk Queen*", "*Rubia Servious*", "*Relasyon*", "*Sister Stella L*", "*Dolzura Cortez*", "*Dekada '70*", "*Bata, Bata, Paano Ka Ginawa?*", and "*Anak*". To date, she has almost 200 films under her belt with numerous commercial endorsements and television works on the side.

## Political career

In 1998, she entered politics and ran for mayor of Lipa City, Batangas where she won by landslide victories in three consecutive elections. As the first woman mayor of Lipa City, she helped bring not just economic progress and infrastructure development to Lipa City, but more notably her various programs on public health, education and environment, which again earned various local and international awards and recognitions. In 2005, the University of the Philippines conferred her the Gawad Plaridel Award for her achievements and contributions both as an actress and a public servant. In the same year she was conferred with honorary doctorate degree (*honoris causa*) in humanities by the Lipa City College. She was again honored in 2006 by the University of the Philippines as one of the four awardees in UP's First Diwata Awards. Dr. Vilma Santos is married to Senator Ralph Recto, who belongs to a well-known political clan in the Philippines. Together they have a son, Ryan Christian. She is also a mother to actor/model/television host Luis 'Lucky' Manzano, from previous marriage to actor Edu Manzano.

## Running for Governor in Batangas

Mayor Vilma Santos-Recto is currently in her last term as the chief executive of Lipa City. Talks are circulating in Batangas that Mayor Santos-Recto may run for Governor in the coming 2007 elections challenging incumbent governor and jueteng lord Arman Sanchez and even her brother-in-law, Vice Governor Richard Recto (who is said to be not in good terms with his brother). People in Batangas are eagerly waiting for this match up. Mayor Santos-Recto's decision to run for governor of the province of Batangas resulted in a family feud as Ricky, his brother-in-law, also said that he will run for the same post. After spending some time thinking about the predicament she is in, Mayor Santos-Recto said that she opted to give way to Ricky but left people hanging as she said that she has until March 29 to decide and that is still a long time before that date and anything may still happen. Mayor Santos-Recto is now being said to be interested in running as Congresswoman representing the 4th District of Batangas. To add spice to the current situation, Vilma's husband re-electionist Senator Ralph Recto to media that they will not support the candidacy of Ricky. During the weekly flag-raising at the Lipa City Hall last March 5, 2007, political leaders from different parts of the province gathered at the Lipa City Hall grounds to announce their support and ask Mayor Vilma Santos to run as Governor. Mayor Santos-Recto was too emotional to make a decision at that point and asked for a week to make her mind. She made her promise good to announce her decision, and on March 12, she announced before a jampacked crowd at the Lipa City Cultural Center that she will accept the people's challenge and run for provincial governor. Banker Edwin Ermita, the son of incumbent Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, will be her runningmate. She will run under the banner of Lakas CMD after being endorsed by Speaker Jose de Venecia as the official candidate of the majority party. Kampi adopted her as their official bet for Batangas Governor instead of incumbent Governor Arman Sanchez.

## Governor-elect

Santos-Recto was proclaimed as the duly elected Governor-elect of the province of Batangas last May 21, 2007 after garnering 475,740 votes against Sanchez's 344,969 for a winning margin of more than 130,000. She will be the first female governor of Batangas.

barometer for popularity and advertisers' nods.

It is a different story though in the box-office arena where Vilma was crowned the champion many times over. In the late 70's, just when people thought she was down and out with her so-so acting and TV careers and losing to her rival in awards nights (remember the 1978 MMFF best performer award?), her messy love life, and her in the red movie company VS Films, Vilma Santos, by some divine intervention, regrouped, took a breather and a crash course in counseling 101 with the industry experts.

After soul-searching, making peace with God, listening to the advice of trusted friends, talent inventory, doing research/self-study, experimenting with movie roles and choosing her projects wisely (i.e. astute career management according to Nestor Torre), the New Vilma Santos was born.

The rest is now history.

Thanks to her Talent, Tenacity and Professionalism, and her many rivals' complacency and misjudgments in life, Vilma Santos 'streaked' past them, not easily though but through sheer True Grit. She earned her wings.

When the dust settles, Vilma Santos:

Is probably the Philippines' Best Film Actress. She is also the most awarded actress ever, 70 trophies in all and counting, the latest feat being her Best Single Performance Award from PMPC Star TV awards for her committed, focused, insightful and versatile performance (again, Nestor Torre's remarks, not mine) in MMK's Regalo. Her astounding range, equally at home in drama and comedy, earned her the most prestigious awards in the business: U.P. Gawad Plaridel, U.P. Diwata Award, a record 8 Urian best actress trophies, 6 from Star awards, two International Best Actress trophies, National Artist Award nominee, and the People's Choice Awards (a record 14 movie fan-based magazine best actress awards), proofs that Vilma is both the critics and the paying moviegoers' choice.

Is one of the two highest paid actresses and top commercial product endorsers in the Philippines, along with best friend and soon co-star in a Star Cinema project, MegaStar Sharon Cuneta, who, along with millions of Pinoys, including the Youth, look up to Ate Vi as a Positive and Inspiring Role Model.

Is the Movie, TV and Stage Producers' Choice based on published articles from various tabloids/journals. She has to turn down juicy

offers due to her commitments as Lipa city Mayor.

Is the most awarded TV personality in the Musical-variety show genre, having won awards for Vilma!, from PMPC Star, CMMA, Dove Awards, among others. (Source: vilmasantos websites)

Is the Philippines' most successful and awarded Mayor ever, with such honors as Honoris Causa, PhD in Humanities, Outstanding Mayor, Unlad Pilipinas Award, Mga Munting Ngiti Award, among others, and even put Lipa city in the world map for winning Internationally for Mga Munting Ngiti project. (source: vilmasantos websites)

Is the Longest Reigning Movie and Box-office Queen based on published/website data.

Is a winner in the domestic front for helping her children Luis and Ryan excel in what they do, a real bonanza of priceless rewards for balancing parenthood and career, an almost impossible task which Vilma, Mother, accomplished, with aplomb, a Herculean task indeed, serving as Inspiration to all working mothers around the world.

A consummate actress, an impassioned and hardworking mayor, a devoted wife and a dutiful mother, and a loyal and sincere friend to her fan base, Vilma Santos is indeed the Woman for All Seasons and Reasons.

What's next for her?

It's all up to her. It is really between her and her Creator.

We, her fans can only wish her the best, and respect and support her decision all the way, whatever that might be, whether it is politics or showbiz.

As Mario Bautista sums up her many accomplishments: Incomparable.

After all, either way, Vilma Santos is a Winner.

The best is yet to come!

Mar Garces



**Vilma Santos**

# "VERY LONG RIVALRY"

By William Reyes



**Nora Aunor**

**V**ilma Santos' triumph as Best Actress – for *Mano Po 3 (My Love)* – at the Metro Manila Film Festival in December 2004 parallels her greatest rival Nora Aunor's similar feat at the Manila Film Festival last June, where Nora won for *Naglalayag*. So it goes without saying Nora and Vilma will once again be major contenders for the top acting honors in this year's awards season. Nora, for the Maryo J. delos Reyes opus in which she portrayed a lady judge who fell in love with a man half her age; while Vilma, for Joel Lamangan's romance-drama about a Chinese anti-crime crusader torn between her family and a past love. Nora versus Vilma. Their acting duel is never ending. All these years, their fight for the Best Actress plum in practically all the local award-giving bodies has been much anticipated since – (1972-1975)

1972

At the Quezon City Film Festival, then held every October, Nora's entry was Sampaguita Pictures' *And God Smiled At Me* (directed by Tony Cayado and Danny Holmsen); while Vilma's banner vehicle was Tagalog Ilang-Ilang Productions' *Dama de Noche* (directed by Emmanuel H. Borlaza). And the winner was Nora! May die-hard Vilmanian kaming kklase sa elementary, ang sabi: "Luto 'yun, dahil malapit si Nora kay QC Mayor Norberto Amoranto!" Such loose talks were never confirmed to be true. Or as *Tempo's* veteran movie columnist Ronald K. Constantino avers, "Nora never figured in any awards scam!"

1973

Sa annual Filipino Academy of Movie Arts and Sciences (FAMAS) Awards Night, it was the Vilmanians' turn to rejoice. Vi was ad-

judged Best Actress for *Dama de Noche*, ka-tie ni Boots Anson-Roa (for JE Productions' Augusto Buenaventura megger *Tatay Na Si Erap*). Nora wasn't nominated for her award-winning starrer at the QC filmfest, but for *The Gift of Love* kung saan siya gumanap ng dual role: bilang isang cancer-stricken patient at ang kakambal na eventually ay napunta kay Tirso Cruz III. *Dama de Noche*, which paired Vi with Edgar Mortiz, also had her doing two parts: a baliw and a sane sister.

1974-1975

In the succeeding years, nagkatunggali sina Nora at Vilma, mainly for box-office supremacy. May point na parehong box-office hit ang mga pelikula nina Nora (her own NV Productions' *Banaue*) at Vilma (Nakakahiya? for Virgo Films), at nagkalaban sila for Best Actress sa Bacolod City Film Festival in 1975. Si Vilma ang nanalo para sa dinirek ni Eddie Rodriguez (a.k.a. Luis Enriquez), but Nora's entry – helmed by Gerry de Leon – won as Best Picture. In 1974, Nora did a major dramatic trilogy for Premiere Productions: *Fe, Esperanza, Caridad*, which was handled by Cirio Santiago, Lamberto V. Avellana and Gerry de Leon. (Avellana and de Leon were to be honored as National Artists for Film in the years to come.) Nora won a FAMAS Best Actress nomination for *Fe, Esperanza, Caridad*; tulad sa ibang pelikula na nagpamalas siya ng potential bilang mahusay na aktres early on, such as George Rowe's *Paruparong Itim* in 1973. Nora, as a deaf-mute blind woman, was beaten by Gloria Sevilla (for *Gimingaw Ako*, a Visayan movie). Ang notable performances ni Vilma Santos that time were in TIIP films: *Biktima* and *Karugtong Ang Kahapon* (by Borlaza), na entries sa MFF in 1974 and the 1st Metro Manila Film Festival in September 1975.

Sa 1st MMFF, Nora's entry, NV Productions' Batu-Bato sa Langit (directed by Luciano B. Carlos), was a blockbuster and won as 3rd Best Picture. Kapwa na-hone ang acting potentials nina Guy at Vi (sa tulong din ng kanilang TV drama anthologies – Ang Makulay na Daigdig ni Norang RPN 9 at Dulambuhay ni Rosa Vilma ng BBC 2 – pero sige pa rin ang paggawa nila ng mga pelikulang komersyal dahil sila ang mga reyna ng takilya noon.

#### 1976-1977

Nagkakalaban pa rin sina Nora at Vilma sa FAMAS, pero kapwa sila talunan. Especially Vilma, who didn't win another FAMAS Best Actress trophy until 1982 (with Elwood Perez's 1981 megger Pakawalan Mo Ako). In 1976, Nora Aunor's "landmark performance" in Mario O'Hara's Tatlong Taong Walang Diyos won nods from the FAMAS voters as well as from the Gawad Urian critic-jurors bilang Best Actress. Hindi si Vilma ang naging mahigpit na kalaban ni Nora, kundi si Hilda Koronel (for Lino Brocka's Insiang). Sa MMFF in December 1976, si Hilda ang Best Actress, but Nora's performance in Lupita Kashiwahara's Minsa'y Isang Gamugamo was equally acclaimed by the critics. (Minsa'y... won as FAMAS Best Picture in 1977.) It was the first year of the Gawad Urian (organized by film critics collectively known as the Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino), at si Nora ang nag-buena-mano as Best Actress. Henceforth, hindi na lamang ang FAMAS ang kinilalang tagapagbigay-parangal sa industriya ng pelikulang lokal. Sa mga sumunod na taon, dumami ang award-giving body sa movie industry. Bukod dito, ang mga filmfest sa iba't ibang siyudad outside Metro Manila; like in Davao City, where Nora Aunor once won as Best Actress for Tito Sanchez's Ibi-langgo si Neneng Magtanggol.

In 1977, it was apparent that the actress in Vilma Santos fully emerged when she won the MMFF Best Actress award for the controversial Celso Ad Castillo period drama Burlesk Queen. Unfortunately, her winning was marred by nasty talks (na kesyo binawi ang mga napanalunan ng pelikula, including Vi's trophy or medallion.) It seems nakaapekto 'yun sa awarding na pambuong taon: at the FAMAS, Vilma lost to Susan Roces (for Maligno, also by Castillo); and, at the Gawad Urian, to Daria Ramirez (for Eddie Romero's Sino'ng Kapiling, Sino'ng Kasiping?). As for Nora Aunor, matapos ang grand entrance niya sa big league bilang major award-winning actress (with a double victory, unmatched at the time), isang action-romance-drama ang kanyang nagging panlaban: Augusto Buenaventura's Bakya Mo Neneng, which paired her off with Tirso Cruz III and Joseph Estrada. The film won as Best Picture sa FAMAS. Nora's and Vilma's starrers were big moneymakers at the 1977 MMFF.

#### 1978

Sa dinami-dami ng natamong karangalan nina Vilma Santos at Nora Aunor, interesting point of discussion pa rin among their followers ang nangyaring acting duel nila in the 1978 MMFF. Vilma was handled for the first time by Lino Brocka in Rubia Servios, produced by Sampagueta-VP Pictures. Vi enacted a rape victim na naghiganti sa kanyang rapist (Phillip Salvador) at napawalang-sala. On the other hand, Nora had Eddie Garcia for her director in Atsay, a serious look on housemaids, as written by the award-winning Edgardo M. Reyes and lensed by ace cinematographer Romeo Vitug. Sa MMFF that year, walang ibang acting category na mapapagwagian maliban sa Best Performer award, na si Nora ang nagwagi. "The triumph of restrained acting!" ayon sa sumunod na ulat matapos ang Gabi ng Parangal. All the while, perhaps almost everyone thought it would be Vilma Santos who'd get the award, dahil si Brocka na ang director niya. May talk show (the late Inday Badiday's Would You Believe?) na sadyang iniangat ang pag-asa at pag-asam ni Vi na siya ang mananalo. At the awards night, papasok pa lang daw si Vi sa CCP Main Theater (venue ng rites), nilapitan agad siya ni Marichu "Manay Ichu" Perez-Maceda (her producer, na kabilang sa MMFF committee) and whispered: "I'm sorry, Vi, it's not for you ..."

Nag-stay si Vi hanggang matapos ang ceremonies; nakipalakpak siya when her rival was declared winner. Katabi niya sa upuan si Christopher de Leon (Garrotte: Jai Alai King), who also lost. Ayon sa grapevine, naglasing si Vilma sa tindi ng siphayo. "Ang sakit, Manay!" Vi reportedly told Ichu, who also produced many of Nora's earlier movies which made millions of pesos. In the Gawad Urian and FAMAS, naparangalan naman si Vilma, bilang producer ng Pagputi ng Uwak, Pag-Itim ng Tagak which won as Best Picture. That year, mayroong pinagsamahang movie since Nora at Vilma, TIIP's Ikaw Ay Akin na dinirek ni Ishmael Bernal, for which they were both Best Actress nominees at the Urian, but lost to Beth Bautista (for Danny Zialcita's Hindi sa Iyo ang Mundo, Babyb Porcuna). Sa FAMAS, hindi rin para kina Vi (Pagputi) at Nora (Atsay) ang Best Actress statuette, kundi kay Susan Roces (for Brocka's gothic drama Gumising Ka ... Maruja!). Fair enough?

#### 1979-81

In 1979, 1980 and 1981, kapwa maningning ang mga pangalan nina Nora Aunor at Vilma Santos bilang box-office stars at award-winning actresses. Pero hindi kahigpitan ang labanan nila sa iba't ibang parangal. May panahong nananalo si Nora na ibang aktres ang mahigpit na kalaban; ganu'n din si Vilma. Nang ma-handle si Nora ni Brocka (in 1979's Ina Ka ng Anak Mo, produced by Premiere Productions and written by Jose Dalisay Jr.), she was pitted with the formidable Lolita Rodriguez and it was to Nora's credit na pumantay siya sa parangal – bilang MMFF Best Actress.



Sa 1979 FAMAS, Nora bested Lolita, who, with her performance in Brocka's *Tinimbang Ka Ngunit Kulang*, beat Aunor in 1974. Ang "katapat" ng Nora-Lolita duo ay ang acting tandem nina Vilma Santos at Charito Solis in Bancom Audiovision's *Modelong Tanso*, directed by Cirio Santiago. Sa 1979 Gawad Urian, it was neither Nora nor Lolita as Best Actress; the

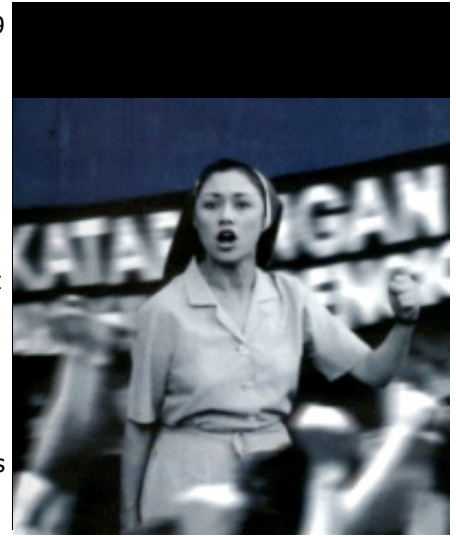
award instead went to Charito Solis for Brocka's *Ina, Kapatid, Anak*. In 1980, tatlong pelikula ni Nora Aunor ang maituturing na panlaban: two by Brocka (*Nakaw na Pag-ibig* and *Bona*) and the other by Laurice Guillen, Lea Productions' *Kung Ako'y Iiwan Mo*. She won the Gawad Urian for *Bona*. Ang panlaban ni Vilma was Zialcita's *Langis at Tubig*. Hindi taon ni Vilma ang 1980, which saw the emergence of other young and talented actresses like Gina Alajar (*Brutal*), naka-tie ni Nora sa Urian, and Amy Austria, na tumalo kay Aunor sa Metro Manila Film Festival. In the 1980 MMFF, Amy won with a lone entry – *Brutal* – while Nora got nominated for *Bona* and *Kung Ako'y Iiwan Mo*. (A case of split votes.)

Sa 1980 Gawad Urian, nominated sina Nora, Gina (eventual winners) at Amy, samantalang si Vilma was "snubbed by the critics." In 1981, nanalong MMFF Best Actress si Vilma for Zialcita's *Karma*, besting Nora's multi-character portrayal in Maryo J. delos Reyes' musical-drama *Rock 'N Roll, Vi*, however, failed to win any other nomination for that starrer, while Nora went on to win a trophy (Catholic Mass Media Awards) and Best Actress nomination (Gawad Urian) for Mario O'Hara's *Bakit Bughaw ang Langit?*

#### 1982

Nauso ang so-called Grand Slam Best Actress in 1983, nang manalo si Vilma Santos for Ishmael Bernal's *Relasyon*. That 1982 film was a small, low-budget drama of a husband and his mistress. Nag-hit ang tandem nina Vi at Christopher de Leon, starting in 1978, with Sampaguita Pictures' *Masarap ... Masakit* ang *Umibig* and *Nakawin Natin* ang *Bawat Sandali* (both by Elwood Perez), after their first pair-up in Celso Ad Castillo's 1975 romance-drama *Tag-Ulan sa Tag-Araw*. For *Relasyon*, Vilma won as Best Actress sa CMMA, Gawad Urian, FAMAS and the debuting Film Academy of the Philippines (FAP) Awards. Maging sa "minor" parangal, like the TV show

Let's Talk Movies ng RPN 9 (hosted by Armida Siguion Reyna, Behn Cervantes and Mario Bautista), si Vilma rin ang Best Actress for the Regal Films drama. With Nora Aunor as Vilma's main competitor, it was an interesting, but utterly disappointing, acting duel. Sa FAMAS, Nora got nominated for Romy Suzara's *Mga Uod at Rosas* – and lost. Sa ibang award-giving bodies, isang



malaking pelikula at pagganap ni Nora – sa *Himala*, as the visionary Elsa – ang natalo kay Vilma. The Ishmael Bernal opus was produced by the Marcos government-established Experimental Cinema of the Philippines (ECP). Some were of the opinion na may bahagi ng pulitika sa pagkatalo ni Nora; marami raw sa movie industry ang anti-administration, kabilang ang sympathizers ng Free the Artists Movement na anti-censors. May malaking rally noon na hindi dinaluhan ni Nora, samantalang nakiisa sa protesta si Vilma. Gayon man, may parangal na natamo si Nora para sa *Himala*: the 1982 MMFF Best Actress, where it won 9 out of 13 awards, including Best Direction and Best Picture. Naging opening Film ang *Himala* sa 1983 Manila International Film Festival – organized by then First Lady Imelda Romualdez-Marcos – at inilahok sa Berlin International Film Festival in February 1983. Ayon kay Bernal, Nora lost in Berlin to a Russian actress by a mere vote. Sa 7th Gawad Urian in 1983, nominated in almost all major and minor categories ang *Himala* but never won a single award. Ilang taon ang lumipas, sa tuwing titingnan ko ang Honor Roll ng Manunuri sa ipinamamahaging souvenir program, sadyang "walang *Himala*" na nagtamo ng parangal. But in 2002, sa 25th year ng Gawad Urian, kabilang ang *Himala* sa Pinakamahuhusay (Best Films of the past three decades) na napanangalan, with Nora Aunor personally receiving the overdue award para sa isang totoong klasikong pelikulang Pilipino. At bigla ngang naghimala ang *Himala*!

#### 1983

Noong 1983 at 1984, nagkalaban uli sina Vilma at Nora, with Vi getting an edge. Bernal's *Broken Marriage* won Vi her second Urian trophy, while Nora didn't get a nomination ("Nora Out," ayon sa introduction ng Highspeed column ni Ronald K. Constantino tungkol sa pagkaka-release ng Urian nominees for that year.) May drama starrer si Nora in 1983: Maryo J. delos Reyes' *Minsan, May Isang*

Ina, for which she got nominated sa FAMAS, where Charito Solis (Don't Cry for Me, Papa) won and got elevated sa Hall of Fame. Taong 1983 nang makamit ni Nora Aunor ang TOWNS (The Outstanding Women in the Nation's Service) award for her contributions in media arts. Hindi man siya naka-Grand Slam as Best Actress, ang parangal ay natatangi at ipinagkakaloob hanggang ngayon sa outstanding women achievers in different socio-civic fields.

Hindi dito natapos ang Nora-Vilma rivalry. Pero ang pagsasama ng dalawang aktres sa isang pelikula was not repeated after Danny Zialcita's T-Bird at Ako (released in 1982). Their initial appearance together was in 1970's Young Love; naulit in 1978, sa Ikaw Ay Akin ni Bernal; at mayroon silang tig-isang episode sa Dugo at Pag-Ibig sa Kapirasong Lupa in 1975 at Pinagbuklod ng Pag-Ibig, also released in early 1978.

At the height of the Nora-Vilma rivalry for acting supremacy, ang kanilang mga pelikula, magkahiwalay man sila o magkasama, ang may malaking kinikita for their producers. In 1982 and 1983, Vilma was Box-Office Queen and Urian Best Actress; while Nora did several blockbusters (like Beloved and Till We Meet Again). There was social unrest, following the Ninoy Aquino assassination on Aug. 21, 1983, pero masigla ang daigdig ng TV at pelikula. Sikat pa rin sina Nora at Vilma.

#### 1984-85

In 1984, Nora and Vilma each had three "pang-award" movies. Nora starred in 'Merika by Gil Portes, Condemned and Bulaklak ng City Jail by Mario O'Hara. The latter was entry in the MMFF, winning Best Picture and Direction at nanalo ring Best Actress si Guy. Si Vilma was in Brocka's Adultery: Aida Macaraeg, Mike de Leon's Sister Stella L. and Marilou Diaz-Abaya's Alyas Baby Tsina. Noong 1985 unang nagbigay ng Star Awards ang Philippine Movie Press Club (PMPC). Para sa taong 1984 ang mga parangal na ipapamahagi, at sina Nora at Vilma lang ang nominated for Best Actress: Guy for all her three starrers, Vilma for Aida Macaraeg and Sister Stella L. Mainitan umano ang nagging deliberation para sa kategoriyang Best Actress, which earlier that year was bagged by Vilma (for Sister Stella L. sa Gawad Urian; her third straight win!) and by Nora (for Bulaklak ng City Jail sa CMMA). Sa 1st Star Awards for Movies, it was Nora Aunor who won for 'Merika. The late movie scribe Frank Mallo, a self-confessed Noranian, fought hard for Aunor to clinch the Best Actress plum, especially for 'Merika. He even wrote a letter (published in Constantino's Highspeed column) disputing the Manunuri's earlier choice of Vilma Santos as Urian Best Actress. Sa taong ito rin ng Gawad Urian nagtamo ng double nomination si

Nora – for 'Merika and Bulaklak ng City Jail. Sa pagtatapos ng award-giving season, si Nora uli ang Best Actress sa FAMAS (her third win) for Bulaklak ng City Jail. Dito niya unang naka-tie si Sharon Cuneta (for Borlaza's Dapat Ka Bang Mahalin?). Pero hanggang ngayon, nakahihinayang na walang napanalunang award si Nora for Condemned, kung saan she was cited by Tempo entertainment editor Nestor Cuartero for that single scene in which she acted out a "cry of sorrow like no other" upon the death of actor Dan Alvaro who played her brother in that film which was rated "A" by the Film Ratings Board.

#### 1986-88

Sa mga taong 1986, 1987 and 1988, walang mainitang tunggalian sa acting sina Nora at Vilma. It was the period following the EDSA Revolution in February 1986. Nanamlay ang movie career ni Nora, na noon ay regular na naghu-host ng long-running Superstar show sa RPN 9. Manaka-naka'y she had hit movie – I Love You, Mama/Papa and Sana Mahalin Mo Ako in 1986 and 1988, respectively – and produced Halimaw (dinirek nina Mario O'Hara at Christopher de Leon), na Best Picture sa 1986 Metro Manila Film Festival. Papisikat noon ang mga anak niyang sina Lotlot, Ian Kristoffer, at ang child wonder na si Matet de Leon.

Si Vilma ay mas pinalad kesa kay Nora sa awards in 1987 (Best Actress, for Maryo J. delos Reyes' Tagos Ng Dugo, sa Catholic Mass Media Awards at sa FAMAS). Twenty-fifth anniversary sa showbiz ni Vi that year, at may grand celebration siya sa Vilma! With Nora Aunor as one of her special guests.

In 1987, Vilma starred in Viva Films' Saan Nagtatago ang Pag-ibig? (penned by Armando Lao, megged by Eddie Garcia). The komiks melodrama won a string of Best Picture awards (Star, FAMAS, FAP) sa taon na hindi nagbigay-parangal ang mga Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino (Gawad Urian) sa alinmang kategorya "for lack of deserving winners".

In contrast, hindi markado ang performance ni Nora in the 1987 Mario O'Hara megger Tatlong Ina, Isang Anak, another vehicle for Matet, which pitted Guy against Gina Alajar and Celeste Legaspi. In 1988, Nora did a guest role in Takot Ako, Eh! (topbilling her popular kids) and produced under her NCV Films outfit the ill-fated Greatest Performance (co-starring her were Tirso Cruz III and Julio Diaz), which was rejected by the executive committee of the 1988 MMFF. Nora then would have debuted as movie director, but unfortunately her Greatest Performance never got shown.



1989

A series of unfortunate events seemed to hound Nora's career up to this point. October 1, 1989 was to be the last airing date of the 22-year-old musical-variety show Superstar on RPN 9. A month later, it was revived on IBC 13 with a new title, The Legend ... Superstar, but this was short-lived lasting only up to early 1990. Naging mas masuwerte si Vilma Santos sa hinu-host na Vilma! on GMA 7, which started in 1981 as VIP (Vilma in Person) ng lumang BBC 2 (naibalik sa Lopez owners ang ABS-CBN after the EDSA Revolution). Nag-bida si Vilma sa isa sa mga pinakaimportanteng pelikula ng Dekada '80: Regal Films' Pahiram Ng Isang Umaga (by Ishmael Bernal), na sinimulan in 1988 at ipinalabas in early 1989.

In December 1989, Vilma headlined a period romance-drama (Viva Films' Imortal, megged by Eddie Garcia) at nanalo sila ng kaparehang si Christopher de Leon ng acting plums sa MMFF. Sa awardings for that year, si Vilma ang nanalong Best Actress sa Star Awards (for Pahiram), her first form the Philippine Movie Press Club. "Kumpletung-kumpleto na ang career ko!" nasabi ni Vilma as she accepted her trophy. Later, it was Nora's turn to get a Best Actress trophy for the first time from the Film Academy of the Philippines, for Elwood Perez's three-year-in-the-making Bilangin Ang Bituin Sa Langit. "Kumpletung-kumpleto na ang career ko!" sabi rin niya in her acceptance speech.

Na-elevate si Vilma sa FAMAS Hall of Fame, for having bagged five Best Actress statuettes: Dama de Noche, Pakawalan Mo Ako, Relasyon, Tagos ng Dugo, and Elwood Perez's Ibulong Mo Sa Diyos. Nora won her fourth Best Actress plum sa FAMAS, also for Bilangin. Walang itulak-kabigin sa dalawa, kaya marapat lang na mag-tie sila for Best Actress, as in the 1990 Gawad Urian, na "pantay na parangal" ang ipinagkaloob ng Manunuri kina Nora (for Bilangin Ang Bituin Sa Langit) at Vilma (for Pahiram Ng Isang Umaga).

1990

Dalawang malalaking pelikula ang tinampukan ni Vilma: Lino Brocka's Hahamakin Lahat and Laurice Guillen's Kapag Langit ang Humatol. Si Nora ay nakahabol sa MMFF with the low-budget social-realist drama Andrea, Paano Ba Ang Maging Isang Ina?, which she co-produced with an independent outfit, MRN Films, and was directed by Gil Portes based on a Ricardo Lee screenplay. Sa mga parangal para sa taong ito, si Nora Aunor ang nagwaging Best Actress sa "Movie Magazine" awards (ng GMA 7), Star Awards, FAMAS, FAP at Gawad Urian, making her a Grand Slam honoree. On May 22, 1991, Brocka's sudden death in a vehicular accident shocked the movie industry. Nora dedicated her FAP Best Actress award kay Brocka, na siyang dahilan upang maitanghal ang Bona sa Directors

Fortnight ng Cannes Film Festival in 1981.

May nagsasabing "hindi Grand Slam" ang pananalo ni Guy for Andrea dahil, sa CMMA, her costar Gina Alajar was declared Best Actress (with Nora as runner-up). But the CMMA was considered a minor award-giving body, at 'yung apat na major ang ginagawang batayan for a Grand Slam win. Kaugnay rito, nagsimulang magbigay ng parangal ang UP-Young Critics Circle (YCC-Film Desk) at si Nora ang lone winner for Best Performance, also for Andrea. Hindi na nagbigay ng acting awards ang CMMA the following year, habang aktibo hanggang ngayon ang five major award-giving bodies, na nadagdagan ng iba't ibang grupo.

Nagkaloob ng Gawad Pandekada ang Manunuri – for achievements in acting – at sina Nora, Vilma, Vic Silayan, Phillip Salvador at Gina Alajar ang mga nagging karapat-dapat sa parangal (Nora having won Urian Best Actress trophies for Tatlong Taong Walang Diyos, Bona, Bilangin Ang Bituin Sa Langit and Andrea; Vilma for Relasyon, Broken Marriage, Sister Stella L. and Pahiram ng Isang Umaga).

1991-92

Exciting uli ang labanang Vilma at Nora, para sa masusugid nilang tagahanga, noong 1991. Viva Films' Ipagpatawad Mo starring Vilma Santos and Christopher de Leon was chosen as 1991 Gawad Urian Best Picture, with Vilma winning as Best Actress. Muli, nag-produce si Nora ng low-budget drama for MRN Films, Elwood Perez's Ang Totoong Buhay ni Pacita M., na entry sa 1991 Metro Manila Film Festival. Its awards included Best Picture, Best Direction, and Best Actress for Nora Aunor.

In the award-giving season in early 1992, Nora won the Best Actress honors sa Star Awards and FAP, as well as the Best Performance award from the YCC-Film Desk's 2nd Annual Circle Citations (with co-winner, Aga Muhlach, for Maryo J. delos Reyes' Joeyboy Munti). Ang Pacita M. ay nanalo rin ng Best Picture and Best Direction among other awards as 1991 FAMAS. Nora scored three consecutive Best Actress triumphs sa FAP Awards: 1989 (Bilangin), 1990 (Andrea) and 1991 (Pacita M.). Ito bale ang katapat ng three straight victories ni Vilma sa Gawad Urian. Nora was elevated sa FAMAS Hall of Fame in 1991 for having copped five Best Actress statuettes: Tatlong Taong Walang Diyos, Ina Ka Ng Anak Mo, Bulaklak Ng City Jail, Bilangin Ang Bituin Sa Langit and Andrea, Paano Ba Ang Maging Isang Ina? Later, nagtamo siya ng Circle of Excellence awards sa FAMAS apra sa mahusay niyang pagganap sa Pacita M. in 1991 at sa The Flor Contemplacion Story in 1995. To mark her 25th anniversary in show business, Nora starred in PETA's Minsa'y Isang Gamugamo sa una niyang pagganap sa

entablado. The play, an adaptation of Lupita Kashiwahara's film based on a screenplay by Marina Feleo-Gonzales, was directed by Soxy Topacio mula sa script nina Ricky Lee at Boni Ilagan. It had a successful run at the Tanghalang Raja Sulayman in Fort Santiago in February-March 1991. Nora further acquitted herself in theater in December 1992 (DH by Topacio-Lee) and in the mid-1990s (Trojan Women, na dinirek ng isang Griyego and was staged at the Ninoy Aquino Parks and Wildlife). At tulad ng mga stage play na tinampukan, nagging malaking tagumpay ang unang major concert ni Nora (Handog ni Guy) sa Araneta Coliseum noong May 18, 1991.



Mahal Kita). For the whole year, Nora didn't topbill any movie. She hosted Modern Romance sa Telebisyon on GMA 7 and the monthly special Superstar Beyond Time on RPN 9, and appeared on several telesines and a successful two-night concert at the Mandarin Hotel Ballroom. Naulit ang pangyayari noong 1992 na walang pelikula si Nora (she only appeared in her second stage play, DH, na nag-world-tour in 1993) and this will be repeated 10 years later, when she did the ABS-CBN 2 drama series Bituin that aired from September 2002 to May 2003 and several concerts. Vilma notched two films: Regal's Nag-iisang Bituin (by Joey Reyes) and Golden Lions' Lipa Massacre (by Carlo J. Caparas), which won as Best Picture sa FAMAS.

1993

Hindi nagtapos ang labanang Nora-Vilma for Best Actress sa pagkaka-elevate nila sa FAMAS Hall of Fame. Dahil sa dumaming award-giving body since the mid-1980s, hindi nakuntento ang respective groups of fans nina Nora at Vilma sa pag-asam na patuloy silang gumawa ng magagandang pelikula na pagtatamuhan nila ng trophies. Sadly, dumating din sila sa punto ng kasalatan, career-wise. In 1992, wala ni isang pelikulang tinampukan si Nora, samantalang si Vilma starred in only one: Maryo J. delos Reyes' Sinungaling Mong Puso, na hindi niya pinagtamuhan ng anumang major Best Actress award.

In 1993, gumawa si Vilma ng pelikula na ang kuwento'y base sa unang Pilipinang nag-reveal ng pagkakaroon niya ng AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), si Dolzura Cortez. Directed by Laurice Guillen for Octoarts Films, Dahil Mahal Kita (The Dolzura Cortez Story) won Vilma the Best Actress honors at the 1993 Manila Film Festival, Star, Gawad Urian and FAP. Si Nora ay gumawa ng Inay for Melanie Marquez's MM Productions, by veteran megman Artemio Marquez (may-likha ng maraming box-office hit ni Guy sa Tower Productions in the early 1970s). Natalo si Nora sa MMFF at ibang major awardings ng taon, but she won the Best Performance award, again from the UP-Young Critics Circle (YCC-Film Desk's 4th Annual Circle Citations), with Aga Muhlach (for Jose Javier Reyes' Hindi Kita Malilimutan) as co-winner.

1994

Mula 1994 hanggang 2003 ay hindi na nagkatunggali sa Best Actress award sina Nora at Vilma. Early 1994 nang huling magkasabay as contenders for the acting plum sina Nora (Inay) at Vilma (Dahil

1995-97

Sa mga sumunod an taon, parehong nag-achieve sina Nora at Vilma in local award-giving groups and international film festivals. Nauna si Nora, in 1995, for The Flor Contemplacion Story, kuwento ng Pilipina na nasentensiyahang mamatay by hanging sa Singapore. Late 1995 nang maiulat na si Nora ang nagwaging Best Actress sa Cairo International Film Festival sa Egypt for her performance in the Joel Lamangan megger, which also won as Best Picture. Nanalo si Nora sa YCC-Film Desk's 6th Annual Circle Citations (Best Performer) at sa Star Awards, FAP at Gawad Urian (Pinakamahusay na Pagganap – Pangunahing Aktres; with co-winner Helen Gamboa for Tikoy Aguiluz's Bagong Bayani, another Flor Contemplacion filmbio). Top box-office hit ang The Flor Contemplacion Story, for which the Guillermo Mendoza Memorial Scholarship Foundation, Inc. (GMMSFI) chose Nora as Box-Office Queen, the same honor she received in the early 1970s and 1980s.

Si Nora ang Best Actress sa 1995 MMFF for Viva Films' Muling Umawit ang Puso. Sa international filmfests, Nora again won as Best Actress in 1997. She got the Golden Pearl Award in Penang, Malaysia, for Viva's Bakit May Kahapon Pa? Para sa naturang Lamangan megger, Best Actress din sa Gawad Urian si Nora (with co-winner Sharon Cuneta, for Olive Lamasan's Madrasta).

1998-2001

Ang international fame, bilang Best Actress, ay nakamit ni Vilma in 1999, when her Star Cinema headliner Bata ... Bata ... Paano Ka Ginawa? – directed by Chito Rono – was entered as competition

entry sa Brussels Film Festival. Released in 1998, Bata won for Vilma the Best Actress honors at the Star Awards, FAP and Gawad Urian, as well as the Best Performance award from the YCC-Film Desk.



with Richard Gomez) at the Urian rites in March 2001. Silang dalawa pa rin ang mga aktres na napagkaloo-ban ng natatanging pagkilala ng Manunuri, para sa tig-tatlong parangal na natamo nila – in the 1990s – sa kate-goryang Pinakamahusay na Pagganap. Aunor won for Andrea, Paano Ba Ang Mag-ing Isang Ina?, The Flor Con-templacion Story, and Bakit

Dahil nahalal na alkalde ng Lipa City sa Batangas si Vilma Santos-Recto

(she married then Batangas Congressman, now Senator Rafael "Ralph" Recto in December 1992), naging mas madalang ang pag-gawa niya ng pelikula. Pero hindi pa rin magmimintis si Vilma na manalo ng acting trophy, kapag din lang may panlabang pelikula, as in 2000 when she did Star Cineman's Anak by Rory Quintos. Nanalo siyang Best Actress sa Star Awards.

#### 2002

Vilma failed to win as Best Actress sa 2002 MMFF para sa major film na Dekada '70, megged by Chito Rono and produced by Star Cin-ema. Hindi naman nabigo ang Vilmanians sa mga sumunod na awarding, in early 2003, dahil kay Vilma napunta ang Best Actress trophies na kaloob ng Star Awards, FAP at Gawad Urian. Pati ng minor award-giving body na binubuo ng mga academician, ang PASADO (Pampelikulang Samahan ng mga Dalubguro). At ang kan-yang ikalawang Best Performance award mula sa YCC-Film Desk in its annual Circle Citations.

Panlaban ng bansa ang The Seventies (Dekada '70) sa 4th Makati CineManila International Film Festival (organized by Direk Tikoy Aguiluz). The film won a special jury prize at Best Actress award for Vilma (her second claim to international fame). In contrast, malaon nang walang pelikulang panlaban si Nora at this point. After Bakit My Kahapon Pa? In 1996, Nora did minor starrers: MAQ Produc-tions' Mama, Dito sa Aking Puso, screenwriter Frank Rivera's direc-torial debut; and Lupita Kashiwahara's megger under Premiere Pro-ductions, Babae, an entry to the 1997 MMFF, for which Aunor got several acting nominations.

Her last major performance was in Seven Stars Productions' Sidhi, released in February 1999. Walang napanalunang trophy si Nora for her fourth Lamangan starrer, which was also panned by Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino member Lito B. Zulueta. Both Nora and Vilma, however, were recipients of the Gawad Pan-Dekada (along

May Kahapon Pa?. Santos won for Ipagpatawad Mo, Dahil Mahal Kita and Bata ... Bata ... Paano Ka Ginawa?

#### 2004

Kung susumahin, mahirap nang dagliang mabilang ang mga award nina Nora at Vilma, through the years, para sa mga pelikulang ti-nampukan nila. Ito rin ang puntong hindi ang pag-quantify sa mga natamong parangal ang mahalaga, kundi ang pagpapatunay na walang mintis sa kanya-kanyang laban, sa kahusayan, ang dala-wang pinakamahigpit na magkaribal sa larangan ng pagganap pam-pelikula. The End



Si Nora at si Vilma sa pelikulang T-Bird at Ako.

# ALL ABOUT NORA AUNOR



**N**ORA CABALTERA VILLAMAYOR of Iriga, Camarines Sur, was a frail 12-year-old when fate brought her to the gates of superstardom. Her parents needed money for an older sister's tuition. Nora, who loved to sing and listen to pop music, volunteered to join "Darigold Jamboree," a popular radio program that was bringing its amateur singing contest to the nearby town of Naga. The prize money of 20 pesos was the exact amount her parents needed. Picking a second-hand dress that her mother, Antonia, had altered for her, Nora left with a family friend for the two-hour trip to Naga. It was to be her first stop on the long and winding road to fame. In Naga, she won the "Darigold Jamboree" singing contest with her rendition of "You and the Night and the Music." And it was again in Naga, not long afterward, that she won another contest sponsored by a rival radio program, "The Liberty Big Show." Darigold and Liberty were the leading milk brand then. Her dual victory gave her the courage to audition for a national amateur singing contest on TV. Nora and her mother set out for Manila. They stayed with Antonia's sister, Belen Aunor, who volunteered to take Nora to the studios for the auditions. They agreed that Belen would pose as Nora's mother or guardian. To avoid any further questions from being asked, Nora borrowed her aunt's surname. Thus was born Nora Aunor.

On "Darigold Jamboree's Bullit" contest on Channel 11, Nora Aunor reigned as undefeated champion for 14 weeks. Then she set out to conquer "Tawag ng Tanghalan", at the time the most prestigious amateur singing contest. She won against the night's competition, but in the ensuing bout with the reigning champion, Jose Yap, Nora's anxiety surfaced. She stuttered and missed a line and tasted defeat. The diminutive Nora resolved to return with a vengeance. She practiced at home and accepted all invitations to public function, where she sang for free. When she felt that she was ready, she auditioned again for "Tawag." She went on to win for 14 straight weeks. Nora Aunor then turned professional. For Citation Records, she waxed "Moonlight Becomes You" with which she bagged the "Tawag" grand prize. Channel 13 hired her to join the evening program "Oras ng Ligaya." DZXL gave her a spot on "Operetang Putol-Putol," and "Fiesta Extravaganza" hosts Ike Lozada and German Moreno frequently invited her to guest on their radio program.

As singer and recording star, Aunor literally broke records with her hit albums like Nora Aunor Sings: Mga Awiting Pilipino (Nora Aunor Sings Filipino Songs), Awitin ng Puso (Songs of the Heart), Mga Awiting Pamasko (Christmas Songs), and Ang Tindera (The Vendor). The new singing sensation attracted the attention of Sampaguita Picture's top man, Dr. Jose Perez. She had previously been turned down by four other movie outfits, but was later offered an eight-picture non-exclusive contract with Sampaguita on October 2, 1967, with the assurance that she would initially be given singing parts. True enough, in *All Over World* and *Way Out of the Country*, her first two movie appearances, she sang with her former "Tawag ng Tanghalan"

opponent, Jose Yap. She also guested in youth-oriented flicks produced by Vera-Perez Pictures and United Brothers Production. In her 12th movie, *Young Girl*, she was given her first feature role opposite the young mestizo actor Tirso Cruz III. But it was Tower productions that trusted Nora Aunor with a title role, in "D' Musical Teenage Idols", opposite Tirso Cruz III. The movie's director, Artemio Marquez, was advised by colleagues not to take on the project lest Nora Aunor's diminutive and negra looks bring him a flop. Marquez was undaunted. The movie became a smash hit.

Three days after *D' Musical Teenage Idols* premiered, Sampaguita Pictures released its 34th-anniversary presentation, another Nora-Tirso starrer, *Fiesta Extravaganza*, which also grossed big time at the tills. Nora, the little brown girl from Bicol, had become Philippine film's Golden Girl. She had shattered the viewing public's preference for fair-skinned and statuesque leading ladies, and was now a certified box-office princess. She also starred in her own TV musical variety show that ran for over two decades, starting as the *Nora-Eddie Show* with Eddie Peregrina in 1967, becoming *The Nora Aunor Show* in 1968, and *Superstar* from 1971 to 1989. By this time, the public had come to love her Cinderella story, and many young actors lined up to serve as her Prince Charming. Nora and Tirso, or Guy & Pip, as the fans endearingly called them made teeny-bopper movies like *Orang; Nasaan Ka Inay?*; *I Dream of Nora*; *Young at Heart*; *Guy & Pip*; *Always In My Heart*; *My Blue Hawaii*; *A Gift of Love*; *Nora, Mahal Kita*, and *Winter Holiday*. Manny de Leon was Nora's screen partner in *Nora, the Single Girl*; *Teenage Jamboree*; *Tell Nora I Love Her*; *Darling*; *Nora in Wonderland*; *The Golden Voice of Nora*; and *Around Asia with Nora*. She also paired with Edgar Mortiz in *My Beloved*, with Ricky Belmonte in *My Prayer*, and with singer Sajid Kahn in *The Singing Filipina*. Cocoy Laurel, another mestizo matinee idol, was her leading man in *Lollipops & Roses*, the movie that featured then Hollywood unknown Don Johnson. It was at this time that Nora earned the monicker Superstar.

Nora Aunor eventually graduated from teen icon to dramatic actress. Her acting received official recognition for the first time in 1972, with her 53rd film, *And God Smiled at Me*. She was nominated for best actress by the Filipino Academy of Movie Arts and Sciences (FAMAS), and was awarded the best actress trophy by the Quezon City Film Festival board of jurors. Eager to explore her options in the entertainment industry, Nora established a movie production company, NV Productions, and produced *Carmela*, which she also starred in. Nora made a movie with Joseph Estrada, *Erap Is My Guy*, before making another film under NV Productions, *Paru-Parong Itim*. By then, she was no longer just an actress but a major player in the industry.

Her 1973 film, *Dalawang Mukha ng Tagumpay*, earned Nora her second FAMAS nomination. 1974 saw her paired with different leading men, Walter Navarro in *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*; Dindo Fernando, Jay Ilagan, and Ronaldo Valdez in the trilogy *Fe, Esperanza, Caridad*; Victor Wood in *As Long As There's Music*; and Dolphy and Fernando Poe Jr in *Happy Days Are Here Again*. In 1974, Nora produced and starred in another movie, *Banaue*, this time with fast rising actor Christopher de Leon. She married her co-star secretly months before their movie premiered in April 1975. The movie brought Nora not only a husband but a nomination from FAMAS as well. That same year, Nora got pregnant, but she made one more film, *Lollipops*

& Roses at Burong Talangka, before she gave birth to son Kristoffer Ian.

After starring in two critically acclaimed movies in 1976, Nora came to be regarded as an acting heavyweight. The period piece TATLONG TAONG WALANG DIYOS bagged for Nora her first best-actress trophies - from the Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino, which gives out the Gawad Urian, and from FAMAS – the first grand slam win by any actor so to speak since these two were the only award-giving bodies then. Although she only received an acting nomination for Minsa'y Isang Gamu-Gamo, the film itself garnered five FAMAS awards, including one for best picture. In Bakya Mo Neneng with Joseph Estrada in 1977 Nora was not nominated by any award-giving body, but the film was the FAMAS best picture for that year. Despite the new-found prestige that the awards had given her, Nora continued to make movies that were produced solely for entertainment. Her 100th film was based on a Carlo J. Caparas komiks character, Bakekang.

In between making comedies, melodramas, and musicals, Nora took on challenging assignments that won her more awards and recognition. Her second Urian nomination came with her second film with the late Ishmael Bernal, Ikaw Ay Akin, which put her in a love triangle with Vilma Santos and then estranged husband Christopher de Leon.

In the 1978 Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF), Nora had two films, Atsay, directed by Eddie Garcia won for her the festival judges' nod for the Best Performer, while Jack En Jill of the Third Kind, with comedy king Dolphy, was a festival box-office hit. In between her musical blockbusters Annie Batungbakal and Bongga Ka 'Day!, Nora made a film opposite Lolita Rodriguez under the direction of the late Lino Brocka. Ina Ka Ng Anak Mo was praised by critics and won for her the best actress awards from MMFF and FAMAS. The troika of Brocka, Nora, and actor Phillip Salvador made two movies in 1980, Nakaw Na Pag-Ibig and Bona. For the latter, Nora got her second Urian award. Mario O' Hara directed Nora in the 1981 drama Bakit Bughaw ang Langit? which won for Nora her first Catholic Mass Media Award (CMMA) best actress trophy.

Early in 1982, the newly formed Experimental Cinema of the Philippines (ECP) hosted a scriptwriting contest. One of the only two projects that were eventually filmed was Ricardo Lee's Himala. Ishmael Bernal megged the film in which Nora played one of her most famous characters, Elsa, a faith healer who unknowingly turns her sleepy town into a tourist attraction, then gets raped, made pregnant, and finally assassinated by a religious fanatic. Although critically acclaimed, the movie only gave Nora the best-actress award from the 1982 MMFF and a nomination from the Film Academy of the Philippines (FAP).

By this time, the 30-year old actress was slowing down. In 1983 she made only one major film, Minsan May Isang Ina, with Maryo J. delos Reyes, and guested in Bad Bananas sa Puting Tabing. Early 1984, Nora went to the United States to shoot 'Merika with director Gil Portes. For her role as a migrant nurse, she received the first best-actress Star Award from the Philippine Movie Press Club (PMPC). Bulaklak sa City Jail, a 1984 MMFF entry saw Nora being nominated by five award giving bodies and winning in four - MMFF, CMMA, Star Awards, and FAMAS. For the glossy 1985 Viva flick, Tinik

sa Dibdib, Nora was a three time nominee but not a winner.

The next three years saw Nora starring in weepy melodramas like Tatlong Ina, Isang Anak, surefire box-office comedies like My Bugoy Goes to Congress, and pulp romances like Sana Mahalin Mo Ako. From 1989 to 1991 she made only one movie a year. Elwood Perez's Bilangin Ang Mga Bituin Sa Langit in 1989 got her three acting awards (Urian, FAMAS, and FAP), but it was Gil Portes's Andrea, Paano Ba Ang Maging Isang Ina? in 1990 that brought her second grand slam, winning as best actress in all five award-giving bodies - Urian, Star, FAMAS, FAP, and MMFF. Another Elwood Perez movie, Ang Totoong Buhay ni Pacita M, earned Nora the FAP and Star Awards. It also led to her sixth best-actress trophy from the MMFF, as a result of which the jurors gave her special citation, the Gawad ng Natatanging Pagkilala.

In 1992 Nora did not star in any film but was elevated to the FAMAS Hall of Fame. She received the FAP Lifetime Achievement Award the following year, during which time the public saw her in only two movie – Ligaw-ligawan, Kasal-kasalan, Bahay-bahayan with Joey Gosiengfiao, and Inay, her 19th film with director Artemio Marquez.

She also conquered the legitimate stage when she performed in two major Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA) productions, Minsa'y Isang Gamu-Gamo (Once There Was a Moth), 1992, and DH (Domestic Helper), 1992. She also appeared in Trojan Women with Cecile Guidote-Alvarez staged at the amphitheater of the Parks and Wildlife.

Nora made six films before the end of the millenium – The Flor Contemplacion Story; Muling Umawit ang Puso; Bakit May Kahapon Pa?; Mama, Dito Sa Aking Puso; Babae; and Sidhi. Nora's performance in the true-to-life drama The Flor Contemplacion Story, megged by Joel Lamangan, was critically acclaimed locally (Urian, Star, FAP) and internationally (Cairo International Filmfest). The Penang International Film Festival named her best actress for Bakit May Kahapon Pa?, another Lamangan film. She was last seen on the silver screen via the movie Naglalayag in 2004 which won for her a best actress trophy from the Manila Film Festival and her third international acting recognition from the Brussels International Film Festival. In 1999, her contribution to Philippine cinema was acknowledged by the Cultural Center of the Philippines when it included her among the recipients of the Centennial Honors for the Arts, given to 100 Filipinos who made significant contributions to culture and the arts in the 20th century. Nora was earlier recognized as one of the Ten Outstanding Women in the Nation's Service (TOWNS) in the Field of the Arts in 1983.

Thanks to Mike G. Rivera, Ms. Lynn Pareja, Armando L. Diaz and YES Magazine. Text are taken from Icon web-site.



# The Making of the Queen...

**A**t the age of 9, Vilma was tapped to star opposite Gloria Romero & Rita Gomez in the movie "Anak, ang Iyong Ina." She was discovered by her uncle Mr. Amaury Agra, who was a cameraman at the Sampaguita Studios. When she, together with her mother went to the Sampaguita compound to report, an audition was going on. Seeing the more than a hundred kids auditioning, Vi went and watched. Dr. Jose Perez, producer of Sampaguita, saw the little Vi and asked her to join the audition. Vi was hesitant because she knew that she's there for a different movie, but she was prodded to join. When her turn came, she acted with veteran Bella Flores. All the people were impressed, much more Dr. Perez! Vilma got the title role for the movie "Trudis Liit." So, that at age 9, she was making two movies at the same time!

She continued doing movies as daughter of big stars Gloria Romero, Lolita Rodriguez, Rita Gomez, Marlene Dauden, Eddie Rodriguez and a lot more. In 1968, at the age of 15, she got the Best Supporting Actress award from the San Beda College awards for the movie "Kasalanan Kaya?" She was also nominated for a FAMAS award.

She had her first leading role in 1969, in the movie "My Darling, Eddie." She also starred in various TV programs, one of which is "The Sensations" at ABS-CBN, together with the young stars of the era.

In 1973, she starred as Filipino superwoman, Darna in "Lipad, Darna, Lipad." It was a huge hit, grossing even bigger than the movie tandem of Joseph Estrada & Nora Aunor in "Erap is my Guy" and Fernando Poe, Jr. in "Esteban." From then on, Vilma was the undisputed Box Office Queen of Phil. Cinema. Aside from commercial success, she also gained critical acclaim. She won the FAMAS Best Actress in 1972 for her dual role in "Dama de Noche." She was the youngest winner at 19.

Critical acclaim continues. She is the only actress to have won the URIAN Best Actress award, three years in a row (1982, 1983, 1984). Aside from winning the most number of URIAN Awards- a total of 8 Best Actress. She is the only actress to have scored a quadruple Grand Slam in Best Actress for the movies "Relasyon" (1982), "Dolzura Cortez Story" (1993), "Bata, Bata...Paano ka Ginawa?" (1998) and "Dekada '70" (2002). She is also the only actress to be given two Circle of Excellence award by the FAMAS. She has also conquered the international scene, winning the Best Actress awards in Brussels (1998) and CineManila (2003).

Text are taken from Eric Nadurata's Vilma! web-site



# "SUPERSTAR"

Gina Abuyuan-Llanes, Daily Tribune, 2001

Each society and age has produced its own object of mass hysteria --- the baby boomers had the Fab Four from the UK, and earlier, Elvis Presley taught straitlaced 1950s teenyboppers how it felt to shake their pelvises. The children of 1980s, meanwhile, had Michael Jackson. In this era, kids can claim to have cutie talents like Ronan Keating, but the number of their followers pale in comparison with The Beatles' Elvis. These two paved the ways and sounds of modern pop and rock --- and the whole rock `n roll lifestyle, for that matter. Only passions that are as raw, yet disciplined and sincere, yet bright, can equal their legends. With all the distractions of today's pop scene, the flash-in-the-pan ambitions and quality of today's art, and the loss of attunement to the spirit of the artist in each of us, it is unlikely that newer generations shall produce performers worthy of recognition of such magnitude.

When we talk Nora Aunor, however, we not only talk of musical talents, but the whole gamut: Nora made over 150 films from 1966 to 1997, and reaped more than 50 citations from various awards bodies for her work in film and TV. The awards she received for her musical albums and stage are too numerous to count. Her variety show, "Superstar," ran as long as Marcos stayed in office. She has also figured in some pretty hefty scandals, including tax evasion and drugs and a line up of significantly younger lovers.

Let us take you to a time and place before the legal charges and nasty rumors, though: Somewhere in the late 1960s in Cebu. Pop idol and mammoth icon Nora Aunor, later called "the greatest Filipino actor, of either gender, whether living in the Philippines or abroad - -- barring no one --- either on film, on video, on radio, or on stage," by writer/critic Alberto Florentino, was slated to appear in a parade to promote her movie with "Maria Leonora Teresa." (You know, the one with Pip and the child-sized doll, later to be revived and remembered via spoofed posters of "The Matrix"). Since she couldn't make it, her retinue sent --- get this: The doll itself.

"Ay, saan ka nakakita ng mga taong nahihimatay, nagsisigawan dahil sa manyika?" challenges Inday Badiday, otherwise known as Ate Luds, some 30 years later. The immortal Queen of Intrigues --- yet to be dubbed so --- remembers it all. She describes how the crowds wailed and screamed when the doll raised her arm, as if in salutation. An inanimate figure drawing such a reaction from thou

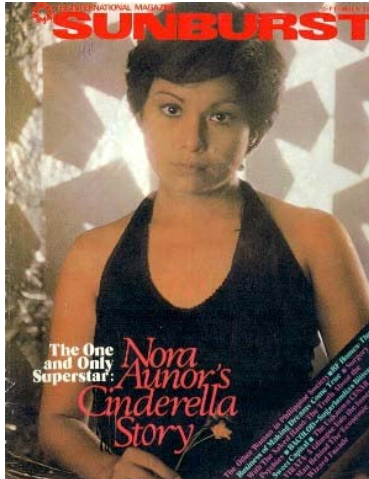


sands? True, asserts Ate Luds. If the crowd couldn't have Nora, their idol; then Maria Leonora Teresa was good enough for them. In a prior interview, Ate Luds shares that Nora was one of her earliest interview assignments. She, Ate Luds, had just gotten the break of her life, hosting a showbiz-oriented show on radio, and there was a "Tawag ng Tanghalan" winner up for interview. Back then, Nora Aunor was a nobody. A virtual unknown --- a crooner from Bicol who did not possess the height and skin of more comely mestizas" (as Ate Luds herself even thought), but the appearance and demeanor of your everyday average country lass: She stood barely five feet, had dusky skin, chinky eyes and facial mole. While others scoffed at her looks, however, the masses took notice And this is what probably further propelled her to fame. "Yan mga "meztiza" na `yan, wala `yan. Di na sila papansinin `pag nandiyan na si Nora," recalls Ate Luds.

The masses identified with Nora Aunor. Aside from her golden voice and award-winning acting talents, (Lamberto Avellana, National Artist for Film, in the Filipino Hall of Fame web site calls her "a perfect film actress. Perfect because in a film, since cameras can do extreme close-ups, the littlest of nuances count a lot. And Nora can do just that. She can show pain, sorrow, ecstasy, fun with just the eyes.") the great "hoi polloi" could see themselves in her. She championed their dreams, their innermost desires. And during the beginnings of one of the most tumultuous eras of Philippine history, perhaps the people needed someone they could focus on, escape with and channel their faith unto.

The uncanny combination of Nora's down-to-earth, unintimidating looks and powerful talents, plus the increasing tensions of the time were the elements in the brew that made Nora Aunor an unpara-

lled phenomenon in Philippine showbiz history. Ate Luds, later to risk being accused a "Norianian" when Vilma Santos entered the picture and gained her own "Vilmanians," because of her early friendship with Nora, shares with us some fantastical -- even eerie --- instances of Nora's hysterical effect on her hordes of fans: She recalls them being herded into a man-sized safe (as large as the ones used in banks), in order to keep being trampled by the crowds during movie premieres. A crane would carry the safe and deposit them safely at the back entrance.



She recalls the times a Nora film shooting would have to be put on hold because of the throng pushing, rabble-rousing, just to get a glimpse and autograph of "Guy." The solution? "Nagkunwaring tulog siya. Ayun, para siyang santo," likens Ate Luds at the sight of kilometeric lines the fans made, just to look at their slumbering salvation, and touch her. She recalls, with a shudder, the fan who wished to be covered with Nora Aunor photos when he died. Ate Luds laid eye on the corpse herself, peaceful in his coffin, plastered with Nora's image from head to foot. She remembers when the COD Department Store had to be closed just to accommodate Nora and let her shop --- sans the jostling fans. Yes folks, Imelda wasn't the original department store-lone shopper. She reminisces the time they were mobbed at Honolulu Airport --- not in anger or rage, but in pure, charismatic adulation.

Ate Luds hasn't heard from her old friend in a long time, but maybe it is just as well. Times change, people have to move on. And what of Nora now, I ask. Ate Luds shrugs. "Basta. She was it. She was the only Superstar. We have yet to see one like her." We still see her image sometimes, on the shirts by funky fashion designer who has no qualms about proclaiming herself a Noranian. The latest word on La Aunor is she'll be running in the next congressional elections. With her name, that unforgettable face and voice (which other "politicos" have used, too, to gain votes) and with the lingering loyalty of her old fans, she just might make it. If and when that comes, let's hope Nora Aunor will use her unparalleled charisma to inspire calm and order and focus in the people. After an almost lifetime of spawning mass hysteria, it may yet be her greatest challenge.



Usapang Sine

Rico E. Alegre

Tanong : **sinong mas magaling ang arte sa "T-Bird at Ako"- si Nora o si Vilma?**

Sagot : lumalabas na mas magaling si Vilma-dahil mas madali at bagay sa kanya ang role niya. Kung ikukumpara ang acting ni Nora bilang abugada sa acting ni Tommy bilang abugado, kapos ang projection ni Nora lalung-lalo na dun sa nag-iisang court scene nila ni Tommy. Hindi nga namin maintindihan kung bakit nagi-ingles sa korte si Tommy at nagta-tagalog naman si Nora samantalang sa isa pang court scene na ang kalaban niyang abugado ay si Johnny Wilson, pa ingles-ingles pa si Nora. Hindi naman ipinakita sa anumang bahagi ng pelikula na sa husay nga ni Nora sa pagdidebate sa Tagalog nakapundar ang reputasyon nya bilang magaling na abugada. Maraming eksena sina Nora at Tommy rito. Hindi naman masasabing inilampaso ni Tommy si Nora, pero mahirap sabihing napantayan nya ang porma, kilos, at pananalita ni Tommy sa papel na abugado. Of course, sa tunay na buhay ay isang abugado si Tommy. Pero, sapat ba ang hindi pagiging abugada ni Nora sa tunay na buhay para gawing excuse kung bakit mas magaling sa kanya si Tommy at maging si Vilma?



# Vilma, the Glad Girl

Unlike Nora la Dolorosa, the durable Vi Santos has made happiness her career.

by Quijano De Manila  
Phil. Graphic Magazine

Publisher's Note:  
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Our cover story is about the indestructible and unfading screen beauty, Vilma Santos, who has become even more accomplished and seductive as the years pass. Quijano de Manila (Nick Joaquin in journalistic disguise) captures the secrets and the charms of this enduring beauty, a triumph of art over time. - Juan P. Dayang

**D**urable is a word that shifts nuance when applied to Vilma Santos. Yes, you can say that, for instance, Gloria Romero, Nida Blanca and Charito Solis are durable because they are still on view as performers, if no longer at center stage. But when you say that Vilma Santos is durable you mean she is still at center, in front, on top. Now that's phenomenal because in Philippine cinema 10 years seems to be the limit for female stardom. After 10 years you slip to character and supporting roles. But Vilma is on her 28th year in showbiz and the spotlight is hers yet as leading lady, the only one to match the record of Dolphy and Ronnie Poe.

When she started out, Amalia Fuentes and Susan Roces were the glamour queens. Then she and Nora outshone them. Today, after several changings of the guard, the prima donnas are Sharon Cuneta and Gretchen Barretto. Nora Aunor is no longer in the running, at least not at the moment. But Vilma is. Very much so. And she can romance a whole new generation of leading men like Gabby Concepcion and Richard Gomez with no sense of strain or disparity.

What's Vilma's secret?

Ishmael Bernal, who claims to have directed Vilma's best pictures, believes she has endured because she has physical, emotion and mental endurance. "She could work for 24 hours straight without getting tired, without flagging in her acting. There were times when we had to shoot for three or four successive days, getting very little sleep, but there Vilma would be: fresh, enthusiastic, rarin' to go. Physical endurance is very important to a star. Another thing I noticed was her strong sense of competition. At that time, though of course, she didn't say so, it was Nora she wanted to beat. Vilma was out to be the bigger star, the better actress. And

so she geared her career for a zoom to the top."

Bernal first directed her in *Inspiration* (1971), produced by Tagalog *Ilang-Ilang* from a script by Nestor Torre.

"This was at the height of the Nora-Vilma rivalry and the competing love teams were Nora-Tirso[Cruz] and Vilma-Edgar[Mortiz]. But in *Inspiration*, Atty. Laxa decided to pair Vilma with a rising new star: Jay Ilagan. That early, I noted that Vilma had the potential to become a great dramatic star. At that time she was not yet doing actress roles, only juvenile fan movies. Her assets were the expressiveness of her eyes, very important for the camera; the creaminess of her complexion, very important on the screen; and the ability to make her audience sympathize if not identify with her. Another thing I noticed was that she's perfectly relaxed in front of the camera: no sense of compulsion. She just stands there and with a flick of the eye, a movement of the hand, she communicates whatever emotion has to be communicated to the audience. Unlike theater actors who feel they have to use the entire body to communicate, she achieves her effects with the simplest gestures. She already had perfect timing."



so she geared her career for a zoom to the top."

*Inspiration* was a comedy and Vilma, to Bernal's delight, needed very little rehearsal. "She didn't enjoy too much rehearsing, preferring to give all on take one, confident in her spontaneity. Which was what her director wanted. Another thing I remember about the early Vilma: she was a travelling department store. She had a van that looked like the fourth floor of Rustan's filled with clothes, clothes, clothes, and hundreds of shoes, hats, bras, panties, and costume jewels, all of them nursed by loving alays who followed her everywhere she went. If the director required an evening gown, a negligee, a pajama top, she had it in her van."

Bernal next worked with Vilma in 1972, on *Now and Forever*, scripted by Rolando Tinio and co-starring her with Edgar Mortiz and Tommy Abuel. It was a dismal flop, says Ishmael Bernal: "So let's not talk about it." It wasn't until six years later that he and Vilma worked together again, on *Dalawang Pugad, Isang Ibon*. "It was written by Jose Nadal Carreon, the former police reporter and UP literary apprentice, and currently one of our best directors. It was an adult film and it

started a new trend for Vilma: playing the other woman. The film was very hot copy because it was the comeback vehicle of Romeo Vasquez, with whom she was then having an affair. I found Vilma different: she had already matured. She must have been around 23 or 24. She was up in the clouds, being very much in love with Romeo Vasquez, and having already beaten Nora in the game of Who's No. 1? This was in 1978. Nora was doing action movies like Super Gee that were flopping miserably. But Vilma's career had taken a new path: heavy drama."

The change in Vilma was not all to be good. "I noticed that she was often tired, often had difficulty keeping up her energy or concentration. The message projected was that the business of acting and the pressures of showbiz in general were beginning to tell on her."

The prime reason was the exhausting affair with Romeo Vasquez. "That affair was blown up by the press to scandalous proportions and I could feel that she was under pressure. Still, she tried to keep up a brave front, to be always polite: the smiling professional, and to hide from the public her inner turmoil. She was getting a bad press because of this affair with an older man, a notorious playboy, but the affair was a big factor in the maturing of Vilma Santos. When she made Dalawang Pugad, Isang Ibon she was saying goodbye to adolescence. She was saying: 'I am a woman, I am entitled to happiness, I am entitled to the love of the man I want to love!' It was during this period she uttered the most famous of Vilma quotes when she said of those who were bad-mouthing her: 'To hell with all of them!' this was her declaration of independence, of adulthood, of resistance. the film proved to be a very big success, nominated for various awards, though she didn't gain an acting award." Vilma's next Bernal film was 1978's Ikaw ay Akin, again scripted by Joe Carreon, and starring Vilma and Nora together, with Christopher de Leon as their leading man. In this film, says Bernal, was set the persona Vilma would portray in a series of sex melodramas.

"She played a liberated woman who had grown up in the States: very witty, very nervous, very aggressive, a chain smoker and fast talker, who's trying to steal Christopher de Leon from Nora Aunor. Her character was neurotic, a free spirit, unpredictable; and I noticed again that Vilma herself was on edge from too much hard work. I could understand her arriving late on the set because I knew she was doing four or five movies at the same time. She would just sleep in the car while rushing from one location to another and she would arrive looking groggy and exhausted. Sometimes she would just give up and beg that the shooting be postponed because her body just couldn't take it any more."

She was then the top box-office queen and the top dramatic

actress and it's always a strain to keep on top. But the "glad girl" that's the basic Vilma Santos continued to shine through the murk of those harrowing days, as Bernie Bernal recalls.

"However tired or sleepy, she remained carinosa, always polite, and all smiles to the crew. She would buy them merienda and at the end of shooting would throw a feast for them: lechon and pancit. She was always considerate with the crew.

Some movie stars get carried away by a sense of their importance: they know they are carrying the movie, are responsible for its success, are making big money for their producers. And so they become temperamental. Vilma is quite aware of her importance and make no mistake about it: she has the qualities needed for survival in a cruel ungrateful world. She is a fighter, she has a killer instinct. All movie stars, especially the superstars, necessarily have this instinct. But in Vilma it goes with a real concern for others. And she wants her public image to be positive."

So, even in a time of crisis, Vilma preserved her image as a glad girl - while Nora was busy setting herself up, or down, as la Dolorosa. If Vilma works at happiness, Nora has made a career of masochism.

Bernal says that in Ikaw ay Akin Vilma was already conscious of her own particular style of acting, which can be described as minimal: less is more. The fewer and simpler the gestures, the greater the effect. The stripped style won her a grand slam when she did Relasyon with Bernie, which he rates as her most memorable film. It got her all the awards on the market. "In Relasyon Vilma made the character of a mistress very human and sympathetic, not just a contravida. The film was her comeback after her pregnancy. She and Edu Manzano had just had their baby boy, Lucky. Her next film, Broken Marriage, set another trend for her; the role of a modern urban working girl, as sophisticated as her Makati office and her personal problems. Her fans are growing up and Vilma's image is becoming more and more complicated. But it was in the last film we did together, 1988's Pahiram ng Isang Umaga, that I noticed the big change in Vilma. She had become an artist. She was no longer just a movie star following the director's instructions. She was very hyper, very high, eager to experiment: a cooperative and mature actress. She had studied the script in advance and she had sensible suggestions about it. I felt I was no longer working with a movie star but that she and I were two artists collabo



rating on an objective statement about life and death and human relationships." How did a girl who began as purely "pang-masa" develop into so fine an artist? Vilma herself gives the credit to her willingness to learn. The process was sometimes painful but, says Vilma, she knew it was all part of her education. I am now 28 years in this business and everything I have learned has made me a stronger woman. Even the troubles, the intrigues - they have made me a stronger woman. I'm always learning. For example, there was a part of my career that was for me a very expensive education." She had set up a production company of her own that, it turned out, was mostly producing debts. "That was about 15 years ago. I tried producing and I made about five movies for VS Films, my own outfit. It was managed by my mother, not by me personally, and Mama is so good people take advantage of her. Before I knew it I was drowning in debt. I was pregnant at the time, 1980, when I learned I had a debt of six million pesos! And I didn't even know if, after giving birth, audiences would still accept me. How was I to survive? I prayed; I told God I was willing to work, sarado ang mata, just to pay off all those debts. And with his blessings I was given a second chance. After giving birth to my son, my career got a second chance and became even more successful: not only did I continue to be box-office but I was winning awards right and left."

Before Lucky's birth she had no contract with any studio but after his birth the two leading studios, Regal and Viva, asked to place her under contract and she signed up with both! "It was arranged that everything they paid me went straight to the banks, to pay off my debts. Not a centavo of my movie earnings passed through my hands. We lived on my television earnings. I had been offered this TV show, VIP-Vilma in Person. It was a Sunday show and Sunday was the only day I could spend with my family but I had to sacrifice my day with them because that weekly show provided us with maintenance money. Unfortunately, my marriage suffered because of that. At that time, Edu wasn't active in the movies yet; he was working in an office and, of course, his schedules and my schedules were in conflict. I think he suffered some kind of culture shock. Oh, he tried to be understanding but imagine him coming home at seven o'clock in the evening and me coming home at four o'clock in the morning. That won't work - but I had to work." She says she didn't feel guilty about the marriage breaking up. "Definitely not. If that was bound to happen to our life, what could I do? Even if I had just stayed at home, our marriage would have suffered, because of all my debts. And what would have happened to us without any money?" She knows the importance of money because she grew up in security and has learned that insecurity is being without money. "I wasn't born poor but I wasn't born rich either. I had a comfortable childhood. I went to a private school, St.

Mary's Academy, and I had a new pair of shoes whenever the school year opened. We could buy what we liked and though our house wasn't very big it was a cozy home." Her father was in the government service and she had an uncle, Maurie Agra, who was a cameraman for Sampaguita Pictures. It was this uncle who got her to audition for Sampaguita when she was only nine years old.

"Whenever he came to the house I'd sing and dance for him. I loved to watch TV and listen to radio dramas and at school I was always on the programs. Once, my uncle watched me imitating Pilita Corrales, a white sheet all over me for evening gown, and he asked would I be interested in going into showbiz and I said I'd just love to become an artista."

The role she was called to Sampaguita to test for was as Rita Gomez's daughter in Anak, ang Iyong Ina, but on the same day Sampaguita was testing about a hundred other children for the role of Trudis Liit, a komiks character. The little Vilma kept wandering into that larger group where, as her mother kept telling her, she didn't belong. But here was Doc Perez himself, head of Sampaguita, beckoning to the child. "Mama says I don't belong there," said the little Vilma. "But I want you," said Doc Perez. Ang Mama consenting, Vilma took the test for Trudis Liit: speaking a line or two of dialogue, crying out when hit by Bella Flores, even ad-libbing already. "And I was chosen to play Trudis Liit! So, my first time in movies, I was into two movies right away: Trudis Liit and Anak, ang Iyong Ina. And I got the Tessie Agana treatment: chicken and apples every lunch. Sampaguita was very nice to me. I was its baby."

And she was its No. 1 fan, gaping to see Gloria Romero passing by and chasing after Amalia Fuentes for her autograph. "Ate Nena snubbed me. She just said: 'Later!' But I loved her and we're very close now." Vilma the child star was in a string of movies playing the daughter of Lolita Rodriguez or Luis Gonzales or Dophy. And she was also in the TV soap opera Larawan ng Pag-ibig with Rosita Noble, Willie Sotelo and Eva Darren. That six o'clock p.m. tearjerker rose to No. 1 in the ratings.

Meanwhile, what was happening to Vilma the growing girl? "What was happening was a lot of school absences and a lot of special exams. The Sisters at St. Mary's were very understanding: if I had too many absences, they gave me special exams. But when I was in fourth year high school I was practically not attending classes any more because that was the height of the Nora-Vilma competition. What was done, with the permission of the Bureau of Education, was that I had a tutor during shootings and then I was given the test for the last grading period. Thanks to God, I passed it and I got my high school diploma. But there could be no thought

of going on to college." She had by then graduated from child star to teenage superstar.

"Despite showbiz, I was able to enjoy my childhood. It was my teens that suffered. Those were the days of jam sessions (no discos yet) and I missed them. I was dying to attend but I couldn't. I was too busy promoting my love team with Bobot Mortiz. So I didn't have the chance to be a teenager. But when I reached my 20s that was when I experienced iyong being a woman: going out on dates, candlelight dinners, enjoying life. I enjoyed my 20s."

During her teens she was mostly a song-and-dance girl on the screen, but after seeing *The Miracle Worker* she dreamed of tackling roles like the one done by Patty Duke in that film. However, she felt her true line was dancing: "Definitely not singing; I sing just for the sake of my fans." Doing pop teen movies by the score, would she ever have a chance to act like Patty Duke in *The Miracle Worker*?

Loveteams were then the wheels of teenage superstardom. Vilma and Edgar Mortiz were a prize pair of wheels. The Nora-Tirso tandem formed the rival pair of wheels. It was an endless frenzied race. Vilma says that during her Bobot Mortiz phase she was doing multiple movies at the same time. "Actually Edgar didn't start with me. He started with Nora and Tirso: they were a triangle. My loveteam then was with Jay Ilagan: we were doing *Operetang Putol-Putol* on the radio and going out on personal appearances for the fans. Jay was still slim then, very good-looking. Bobot was already chubby but not as fat as he would become later: he was guapo and moreno. Tirso was truly the mestizo type. Nora was even shorter than me though I think she's older by a year; she was very thin then, with long hair. It's our complexion that's usually compared: she is kayumanggi and they say I am fair. Edgar dropped out from their triangle when it was noted that the public preferred Nora to be paired with Tirso. And Jay Ilagan dropped out when I was paired with Edgar. So when we all went on TV, on rival programs, it was the loveteam of Bobot and me versus the loveteam of Guy and Pip. That was in 1967."

Inevitably, Bobot Mortiz came to share more than the spotlight with Vilma. "He was my first boyfriend, though ours was no more than puppy love. He's a nice guy, very intelligent. In fact, I suspect that the ideas in *Going Bananas* are mostly his. No, we never talked marriage. We were a team for about five years. Then I did movies solo." More serious was her next love affair, with Ronnie Henares, son of the famed news columnist. "I met Ronnie on TV, when he was guesting on shows with Jojit Paredes. He started courting me - this was in the early '70s - and our relationship had the blessings of our families. His family and mine became very

close. We planned to marry but I felt I was not ready yet: I was still too concentrated on my career - though at the time the movies I was doing were merely pang-masa, nonsense musical like *Lets' Do the Salsa*. I was not yet very conscious of artistic cinema: I wanted my movies to be for the box-office, Ronnie was the kind of boyfriend who gifts you not with rings or flowers but with books. I never went to college but Ronnie was a good equivalent: I learned a lot from him. He corrected my English, improved my pronunciation, and introduced me to new words, all through the use of cue cards that he made for me and made me read aloud to him. He gave me books to read and helped me understand them by explaining their meaning. Our relationship lasted a year and a half. We had our lover's quarrels and the sweet thing is that even during our breaks our families stayed close. And Ronnie and I are still friends today. He composed a song for me."

Tantamount to the Erap episode in Nora's life is Vilma's moment of appasionata with Romeo Vasquez, an older man with a past. "Romeo Vasquez was a turning point in my personal life. I really gambled with my life when I fell in love with him. He had come back to the country after being away for years. He was already separated from Amalia. Then I met him and we were offered a movie to do together: *Nag-aapoy na Damdamin*, for the Santiagos. The time we were together he was okay. We also did *Dalawang Pugad*, *Isang Ibon*, and *Pulot-gata*. And the movie that had him and me together with Nora nad Tirso: *Pinagbuklod ng Pag-ibig*. Our relationship lasted two years. Even after we parted, we still did a movie together."

Vilma dismisses as mere chismis the rumor that Ronnie Poe became wildly enamored of her after they did *Batya't Palupalo* and *Bato sa Buhangin*. But local cinema legend has the King coming to blows with Romeo Vasquez because of this jealous rivalry. Even the scene of the duel is specified: the lawns of a Joseph Estrada abode, during an Erap birthday party. An amused Vilma, however, shakes her head in denial. "Fernando Poe and I became close but we did not have any relationship. I'll admit I was very impressed by him when we made our movies together. Totoong humanga ako sa kanya. He knows how to 'carry' people, how to deal with them in such a way as to command their respect. He is really the King. We became very very close: he'd send me food, like a dish of fish, during shootings. But that was all."

While recovering from Romeo Vasquez, Vilma became a disco habitue, and in these excursions to the haunts of night people she often bumped into a young man who thus became a nodding acquaintance: someone she knew by face long before she knew him by name. One movie she did during this period was *Yakapin Mo Ako*, *Lalaking Matapang*, with Lito Lapid, which was shot in Cebu City. And as usual at

night she went disco-hopping. And one night, at one disco, there he was again, this young man who had become a nodding acquaintance: Edu Manzano. "That was the first time we had a chance to talk. He's really a charming guy and very handsome. We danced, we chatted, we danced - gano'n. Then I went back to my hotel." She was getting ready for bed when the phone rang: Mr. Edu Manzano calling.

"But how did you get my number?" "You know me, I'm resourceful. When do you go back to Manila?" "Tomorrow," said Vilma. "What time is your flight?" "Two o'clock. What time is your flight?" "Three o'clock," said Edu. "Bon voyage. And good night." Next day, loaded with the mandatory hojaldres and rosquillos, she boarded the afternoon plane for Manila. And who should be sitting across the aisle from her but Mr. Manzano. Well! He really was resourceful. But they couldn't converse. She was sitting beside Lito Lapid; Edu was sitting beside an Iranian. Only upon landing could they snatch a moment of exchange. Of course he wanted to know if he could date her.

"Can I invite you out or do you have a boyfriend?"

"No."

"No, I can't take you out?"

"No, I don't have a boyfriend."

But a week passed; two weeks; a whole month - and no word from Edu. He's not taking me seriously, shrugged Vilma.

"Ako naman, at that time," she says now, "I wasn't taking him seriously either."

Then one night, at the Alibi Bar, she saw him again. But she was with a date with whom she went nightclub-hopping until four in the morning. When she came back to her hotel, there was a note from Edu: he was waiting in the lobby. She went down to see him, and he invited her to breakfast. What a terrific topping for the night before and her morning after. "So we stepped out again and had breakfast at the Manila Hotel. We talked and talked until daylight. Then he brought me back to my hotel. And that was how it started. After that, we were seeing each other every day."

During the Grand Passion that was Romeo Vasquez, her critics had hooted that she was Vilma the mad girl. But La Belle, La Perfectly swell, Romance with Edu Manzano was the real coming-out party for Vilma the Glad Girl. Miss twinkletoes had met the boy next door. Of the men in her life, Vilma Santos says it was Edu Manzano who had the most stunning style of courtship. He didn't treat her like the superstar, the love goddess, the sex symbol, the glamour queen that she was; he treated her as if she was an ordinary kanto girl.

"He didn't take me to dine at five-star hotels; we ate at small pizza houses. We didn't go dancing at elegant ballrooms; he took me to little discos. It was completely the opposite of how I had been treated by other suitors: kabaligtaran ng

lahat. And how I loved it! Once, early in our relationship, he invited me to lunch. I assumed we would be going to a luxury bistro and so I dressed to the teeth. But he arrived on a motorcycle, wearing Levi's and rubber shoes. When he saw me in all my finery, he flipped. He told me to go back up and change. So I change to jeans and rubbers. And off we sped on his motorcycle, me behind clinging to him."

Naturally, all those who spotted her - bus passengers, street vendors, pedestrians on the sidewalks - could hardly believe their eyes. "Si Vilma! Si Vilma!" they cried in amazement. And there indeed was the superstar, the love goddess, the sex symbol, the glamour queen, in jeans and rubber shoes, riding bumper on a motorcycle.

Vilma says it was as if she had moved into another world. "I really enjoyed it: riding on his motorcycle, walking in the rain. And then, after three months, he asked me to marry him. This was in 1980." She was about to leave for the United States, to shoot a movie. She said to him: "Let's give ourselves time, let's test each other. This movie will take two months to do over there. If after two months we still feel this way, then we are really meant for each other. And we'll get married. But not now, not right now when I'm going away." The decision was to make no decision yet. And Vilma left for California. She really was testing herself, for the stateside movie she was doing was with Romeo Vasquez. Had she really and truly got over him? Was she really and truly in love with Edu?

The answer hit her like a bolt from the blue when Edu Manzano suddenly showed up on location and she felt, not annoyed, but enraptured, though he had broken their agreement to stay apart for two months. That he had so impulsively followed her bespoke ardor on his part. She did wonder if her producer, Atty. Espiridion Laxa, had anything to do with the surprise. But: "Definitely, it pleased me!"

The news that lover boy Edu had leapt across the Pacific to join his lady love had Philippine moviedom ga-ga with the thought of how bigger a blockbuster than a Vilma-Romeo movie would be a Vilma-Edu picture. The Vilmanians, as her fans are tagged when arrayed against la Aunor's Noranians, were clamoring for a view of their glamour queen's consort. Vilma, ever astute as businesswoman, was only too glad to deliver. "But before making that movie, we got married in the States."

Actually, it was an elopement.

"My Mama didn't know about it. Edu and I simply ran away. We got wedded in Las Vegas and we honeymooned in Disneyland and at Knott's Berry Farm. Two weeks we were in hiding. Then we went back to Los Angeles. And that was when we broke the news to Mama. She cried. Oh, my Mama

is good: *sobrang bait nga*. She was never a stage mother - except in the matter of singing, which she was always pushing me into. 'Go ahead, sing,' she would tell me, even if I didn't want to. Maybe I used to be too dependent on her, as in the time of VS Films, when her goodness was being abused and when I learned about that it was too late. One thing about my marriage; there were never any differences between Mama and Edu."

In Los Angeles Vilma really worked at housekeeping. "Edu and I made a home for ourselves, just for the two of us. And I was a real housewife. I made the beds, I swept the floor, I did the cooking, or tried to. But in the States you can buy everything ready to cook. I had to be housewife because Edu is conservative and I had to be the kind of wife he wants for a wife. He called me Babes, I called him Doods." She says that as a husband Edu was 'mabait'.

"He had already done a movie, *Alaga*, but was not yet well known. I promised him that on returning home I would lie low as movie star and just attend to being housewife. Unfortunately, on arriving in Manila, I found I was pregnant: Lucky is a honeymoon baby. At the same time I learned I had a six-million -peso debt. I told Edu about it and he said he would find some way we could work it out. But there was really not much he could do about so huge a debt. So, after giving birth to my son, I returned to work. Of course, that meant I had little time for my husband and my baby. There was a *yaya* to take care of the baby and as much as possible I tried to mother him but of course I couldn't give him one hundred percent attention. Edu wanted me to be home at least by ten o'clock in the evening but it was oftener four o'clock in the morning before I could rush home."

With her feeling so exhausted and him feeling so neglected, impatience could not but become their ambiance during their four years of marriage.

"In fairness to Edu, he did try to understand the situation. And he did care for me. But I simply couldn't give up my career until I had paid off my debts. I only finished paying in 1987. And by that time Edu had left." Possibly, for Edu Manzano, the real cruz of the marriage was having to suffer being Mr. Vilma Santos. But she says that theirs was a very loving parting. "We had a beautiful talk, the two of us. We agreed that our love was still there but, because we kept clashing, we shouldn't wait until we started hating each other. We should give ourselves time to breathe and to think, apart from each other. That was already our fifth separation; the first, second, third and fourth had all ended within two months. I was expecting the fifth to end just as quickly but when it had lasted eight months already I wondered if we had not indeed gone our separate ways. *Kanya-kanyang buhay na*. Then I learned he had a girlfriend. He

was first." If she had hoped for a happy ending to their fifth separation it was for the sake of their son. "Before Edu and I parted, we stepped out, the three of us: Lucky was then four years old. And we explained to him what was happening. We felt it was better to be honest with the child: when he grew up he would understand. He himself would not be affected: Edu and I assured him that both of us would take care that he was not affected. He is nine years old now and his name is Louis Philippe Manzano. He weighed 7.7 pounds when he was born on April 21 - and 21 is a multiple of 7. That's why we call him Lucky."

Vilma says she felt bad when she heard that Edu was running around with another girl. "I said to myself: 'My God, why should I go on suffering like this: I'll only grow old.' I decided I'd like to run around too, enjoy myself. So I went out but I chose a safe place: King Kong, a club frequented by movie people, owned by Marilou Diaz-Abaya. That was the first time I had stepped out since the separation and that was the first time I met Ralph Recto. He's a nice young man, very intelligent, very down to earth. He has a degree in economics and is taking his masters now, at the UP. I learn a lot from him, my substitute for college, like Ronnie Henares. He is very interested in politics but I don't meddle in his politics. Our relationship is now on its sixth year. When we met, Lucky was only four and now he is nine. Lucky and Ralph are very close. No, we don't talk marriage." The decade since her marriage has seen Vilma developing, as Ishmael Bernal says, into an artist. Vilma smiles to recall that she started out just wanting to dance. What's singular about Vilma's career is that, as a child star, she went through no awkward age, and now, as superstar, she seems to have been set no deadline.

The nine-year-old who starred in *Trudis Liit* had a steady four years of playing little daughter of Lolita Rodriguez and Marlene Dauden but never suffered an ugly-duckling phase of no-longer-a-child and not-yet-a-teenager. The difficult 13-14-15 period was smoothly bridged by roles like that of Imee Marcos in *Iginuhit ng Tadhana* and *Pinagbuklod ng Langit*. And right afterwards she became the teen queen in the pop entertainments she did with *Bobot Mortiz*. Then at 19 she began to veer towards heavy drama. "I was 19 when I made a film with Eddie Rodriguez, playing a girl falling in love with an older married man. The wife was Barbara Perez. If I remember right, that was the first time I wore a bikini." Nary a hitch in the Vilma career; no pauses in the action as she grows up from child to girl, or from sweet young thing to red-hot mama. Or from innocuous movies to daring films. "Compared to my teenage partners, Eddie Rodriguez was far and away the leading man, the actor, the gentleman. Very different in manner, in the way he moved, the way he carried his clothes. He helped me refine my acting and little

by little I learned poise." The decisive divergence is *Burlesk Queen*. "I took a risk playing *Burlesk Queen*, Celso Ad. Castillo directing. I was 24. My American manager, William Leary, had persuaded me to accept the role. He had been my manager since he convinced me to do a record, *Sixteen*, that made good. I was no longer with *Sampaguita* but I went back there from time to time to make sweet sweet movies or musicals. That was my style. Then I did *Burlesk Queen*. It turned out to be a turning point. I won an acting award. Suddenly I was the drama queen. Celso Ad. Castillo is really good. In a way it was that film that made me a real actress. It changed my sweet image. And it made good at the box-office."

However, later relations with Castillo proved to be painful. "I already had my production company, VS Films, and I got him as director for *Pagputi ng Uwak*. He really gave me a hard time on that film: it was two years in the making! And it sank VS Films into debt. Celso and I had a fight. As a director he's very good but as an artist he has his quirks: merong sumpong. I hear he now works in Malaysia: sayang, he was good for Philippine movies. *Pagputi ng Uwak* nearly ruined me, financially and mentally, but it turned out to be a first-rate film and it won a lot of awards, it won VS Films a lot of prestige. But I still prefer *Burlesk Queen*." The five productions of VS Films, which included *Rosas sa Putikan*, directed by Maning Borlaza, and *Halik sa Paa*, *Halik sa Kamay*, co-starring Vilma with Eddie Rodriguez, all made money, including *Pagputi ng Uwak*. Nevertheless, by the time she had to shut it down, VS Films had her drowning in six million pesos' worth of red ink. It took her some seven years to pay off that monstrous debt. And it meant having to go back to making movies that were "pambata at pangmasa": movies like *Darna* and *Dyesebel* and *Wonder Vi*.

Still, this 'comeback' period (after the birth of *Lucky*) was also the start of a series of vintage pictures, beginning with *Relasyon*, where she played a free soul living in with her lover. The lover was played by her most compatible co-star, Christopher de Leon. "Christopher, of all my leading men, is the one I'm most comfortable with. We really make a team. And yet we never had any relationship, except on the screen. Just how comfortable I am with him can be seen in the fact that it's with him I have made the biggest number of movies: around 18 or 20. There was a year when we made four movies together! So often did we play opposite each other that we felt we had to vary the situations, to avoid becoming monotonous. We'd say: Let's sit down and think of a new situation in which to find ourselves. But there came a time when we simply could no longer think of anything new for us to play. We seemed to have exhausted all the possible love angles. And that's when we decided to stop teaming up for a while. I went on to trying other leading men. Actually it's not

I who choose my leading men but the producers. I just accept whoever they pick for me." A kind of homage is paid her when she's paired with younger stars like Eric Quizon and Aga Muhlach.

"Definitely, I feel flattered. But then I feel very very secure in my age and with myself. It's a matter of self-confidence, of knowing that when they look at you they see a woman, period. Age doesn't matter: I have no insecurities about it." She knows she can look as young as, or younger than, her new leading men - as long as she herself feels young inside. Her effect on the folk around her has been most graphically expressed by, of all people, director Lino Brocka, who directed her in three of her most applauded vehicles: *Rubia Servios*, *Adultery* and *Hahamakin Lahat*.

"When you work with Vilma," says Brocka, "you get this feeling of having just emerged from a bath and of being drenched all over with Johnson's baby cologne. You feel so fresh, so youthful." He adds that when they first worked together she seemed scared of him. Now he gushes: "Ang sarap niyang katrabaho." The chief reason, of course, is: "She has matured and grown up as an actress. At this point of her career, she is very good, she is really big. Before, she had a hard time making herself cry, but now how fast she can do it. And she has become sensitive to direction: in that respect she has overtaken Nora."

Brocka says that the sensitivity he noticed at once in Nora Aunor was what he missed when he started directing Vilma. "So I assumed that, as an actress, she was really just second to Nora. But Vilma takes good care of herself not only physically - there's always this aura about her - but intellectually too: so she grows and develops tremendously. The second time I worked with her, in *Adultery*, I realized she had become as good as Nora, or better. And by the time of *Hahamakin Lahat* there was the complete sensibility already - a difference in the way she expressed pain and hurt. Talent was welling out like spring water, and flowing from her most naturally, no longer courtesy of Vicks or whatever."

What would explain this outburst of talent?

"Possibly her coming of age as a woman. She had become more sure of herself. And this self-confidence grew as her private life became calmer, as she found herself with fewer problems, both financially and emotionally. How a director would feel about her at the moment is that he can do anything with her now. She has become so supple that his tendency would be to challenge her still further, make her come up still higher, open up more doors. She can give you so much more now." Brocka snorts at the complaint Vilma is currently making: that so utterly has she done all the roles

she can do there's no new role left for her to do. "She can do the same role over and over again as long as, with the right direction, she does it always a bit more profoundly than the last time and makes it a bit more complex than the last time. She should have no problem at all with roles. In fact, I would advise her now to play roles that are not glamorous. Yes, she's too associated with glamour to do that. But maybe in another year or two she can afford to take off her make up and act her age. Then she'll really be on par with Nora, whose chief concern is seldom her looks. With Nora, it's not her face that's on sale. The problem with Vilma is that she feels she has to live up to her image as The Glamour Girl. I'm waiting for the day when glamour will have no truck - walang pakialam! - with the acting.

Bemusing how up to now Vilma continues to be bracketed together with Nora, so that to speak of Vilma is to speak of Nora. They have been rivals, opponents, antagonists for so long that it's impossible to tell their careers apart. Spur to each other from the start, they have realized they need each other as goad and goal, the achievement of one goading the other to an equal, or greater, achievement.

Vilma-Nora is the back-to-back monster of Pinoy showbiz. Vilma sees it as sibling rivalry.

"If Vilma is there, Nora is there. There was a point in our career [note that Vilma uses the collective singular] when we were both so affected that the rivalry became a personal feud between us. There was even a point in our career when we were fighting each other - for honors, for awards, for acting prizes. But there also came a point in our career when we realized we were not getting any younger and we started becoming very close. I think that was the time her father died and I went to the wake. We hadn't been together since we did a movie together when we were feuding hotly: no talking to each other during the shooting; she stayed on one side with her fans, and I stayed on the other side with my fans: no communication. But when I attended her father's wake, that was when we realized we could be friends. And we started helping each other: she'd invite me to guest on her TV show, and vice-versa. Then her mother died and again I went to the wake. And that was the time when Nora and I became so close we were telling each other the most intimate details of our life."

And the details range from ledger to boudoir. "Today Nora and I are still competing but it's a friendly competition now; in fact, I'm the godmother of her adopted child. We want that there should still be a competing between us, but with nothing personal to it. So it has become a healthy competition. Nora is a very sensitive person. Me, I'm not very sensitive. But make no mistake about Nora: she is

also a strong woman. What I know of Nora: though there may be many advising her, ultimately it's her own feelings she follows. She does what she wants to do; it's herself she obeys: that's her attitude. I guess what she needs at present is the right person. Nora is 37 years old now. I am 36 - a true friend who loves her. A friend who will love her whether she's down, whether she's up, or whatever." What puzzles is the difference in image between Nora la Dolorosa and Vilma the Glad Girl despite the fact that actually both of them underwent very similar experiences: rash infatuations, career ups-and-downs, a failed marriage, business fiascos, the heavy cross of huge debts. Why did such ordeals produce the sad look in one but a glad look in the other?

To be sure, there are those who say that Vilma's image as the Glad Girl is just that: an image; and that the reality behind it may not be quite as pleasant. The real Vilma, aver these know-it-all's, is cold-blooded: sweet na sweet pero deadly; nothing matters to her but her career. She was playing herself ruthless in films like Hahamakin Lahat. When she found she couldn't displace Nora as the nation's sweetheart, she did violence to her own persona by enacting Burlesk Queen, the kind of role Nora cannot do: she risked her career because that was the only way to beat Nora. Vilma herself shrugs off such misreadings of her history with the remark that the intrigues of others only help her become "a stronger woman." Even the world's malice can't be made useful in building up character.

"I am Rosa Vilma Santos, who grew up in Bambang, Trozo, and then in La Loma, and my life is an open book. What people say about me - that's a problem I must live with. I guess it's the price I pay for my career: the price of no privacy. I can't do anything about that anymore. However I may want to keep my personal life private, it's impossible: lalabas at lalabas talaga. However discreet I may try to be, I'm sure to be found out."

So she chooses to let it all hang out.

"Of course, I hate having no privacy: I'm really suffering from that. Sometimes I wish I were an ordinary person so I can go where I like, go shopping for groceries with my son, go for a walk and enjoy it. But how can you enjoy it when you're always getting mobbed? But, as I said, that's the price you pay." And certainly she has no intention of retiring just to gain that precious privacy. "Nor no plans either of getting married. Not yet. maybe someday, yes. As of now, I'm very comfortable and happy with my personal life. But another marriage? I'm not prepared for that."

What she's prepared for right now is more career.

"I have reached a position when I'm not contented with just



acting: I'd like to experience all the other works of movie-making. But most of all I want to be a director. I want to be given a chance to direct a movie. So that this time I myself will be the captain. I have ideas I want to try out." She confounds the Cassandras by expressing hope and confidence in the Philippine cinema.

"There has been progress, there has been improvement. We started in black-and-white: now we're in color. Yes, there are frustrations. It's frustrating to come up with a film of relevance, to upgrade the cinema in general, and see it fail at the box-office. A painful experience - like my movie Sister Stella L. I felt bad when it didn't make good because I like that movie very much. It wasn't my first time to do a quality movie that had to be yanked out in seven days. You can't blame the producers: it's their money at stake. If I were in their place, would I risk my money on something that won't sell? And yet how I wish there were some producers willing to risk their money on movies with significance... I hear even the scriptwriters are feeling frustrated because, when they do a quality script, they only see it changed into something with lots of shrieking and slapping. But those are the movies that sell."

Nevertheless, she looks forward to a classier tomorrow for Philippine cinema. "And what's tomorrow for Vilma Santos? I'm trying to be more stable because I know that show business is not stable. I'm planning to produce a movie next year. This time I'll manage production myself. I've already started with telemovies. The first was *Lamat sa Kristal*, with Richard Gomez. Next was *Katuparan*, directed by Marilou Diaz-Abaya. And the third is this one I'm doing right now with Aga Muhlach, *Once There Was a Love*, directed by Maryo J. delos Reyes." Her own TV show just celebrated its 10th anniversary - and with a scandal yet. It got kicked out of its usual venue, the Metropolitan Theater, because, complained the Met honchos, Vilma's live audiences wrought havoc with the Met's upholstery. Which, to take the Pollyanna, or Glad girl, approach, proves that Vilma's audiences today are not matrons and seniors but still the young, the wild, the reb. She says she has no hang ups about age. But how does she keep herself looking young? "I don't know. I don't do anything special. I used to swim but I don't have the time now. I don't cut down on anything. I drink occasionally but I'm not really a drinker. My true enemy is tobacco: I smoke. Aside from that, I know no other vices. On facing the camera, whether movie or TV, I put on make up. But Vilma Santos the person, when in her house, puts nothing on her face." She is positive it's not make-up that makes her go over on the little or big screen as young-looking. "But like the old beauties of Sampaguita Studios. I know that someday I will be the ex-superstar. When that time arrives, I hope I'll be stable - financially stable enough to ensure a

future for my son, present comfort for my family, and for myself a personal life that's tranquil because I have a stable business and a comfortable income. Those are my dreams now that I am 36." Not that she has any complaints about the present tense. "More than half of my life has been spent in show business," says the Glad Girl. "For all the blessings I am enjoying, I should be thankful!" Happiness, Inc.

Quijano de Manila (Nick Joaquin) is a National Artist for Literature while both Ishmael Bernal and Lino Brocka are National Artist for Film

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# The Marriage of Commerce and Art

Mario E. Bautista - Phil. Daily Express - 1978

**I**kaw ay Akin" is the latest addition to Ishmael Bernal's continuing attempt to portray how people and relationships are at once simple and complex. It is also the most engaging local movie shown this year, once again proving that the marriage of commerce and art can be remarkably fruitful. Those who expect the film to be one of those triangles of the "Sapagkat Kami'y Tao Lamang" variety will be disappointed. Made with taste and finesse uncommon in Pilipino movies. "Ikaw" surveys the interactions of three people caught in the unexplainable intricacies of need and love. Rex, the young executive of a jeepney-producing firm, has been going steady with Tere, a demure orchid expert, for five years. Theirs is the kind of self-satisfied relationship that results from along, unruffled engagement. That is until he meets Sandra. An artist-designer, Sandra is kooky, talkative, aggressive career girl who is also neurotic, chain-smoking, tranquilizer-gulping, phobia-laden product of a broken family. Rex is immediately attracted to Sandra's seemingly boundless energy. Compared to her, Tere is a calm, reserved, efficient, level-headed woman who looks totally in control of herself. The "menage-a-trois" is then sensitively laid out for viewers to look into the hurts and joys, hesitations and decisions, delights and agonies of each character.

At film's end nothing is really resolved. Most loyal viewers will be revolted by this ambiguity. To get their money's worth, they feel they must be sure "kung kanino talaga napunta si Christopher, kay Nora ba o Vilma?" But Bernal is not so much concerned with fulfilling audience expectations than with putting across his message: that no one can totally, absolutely, fully own another human being. The best thing is to understand the needs of a person and love him according to his limitations. This is evident in the lines of Rex, whose character we completely grasp only as the film nears its conclusion.

Rex tells Tere: "Kailangan ako ni Sandra hindi lamang sa pisikal kundi sa emosyonal din. Tulad ng pangangailangan ko sa iyo. Sa kanya, parang nagkaroon ako ng gamit. Kailangan ko kayong dalawa para mabuo ako." To Sandra, he says later: "Si Tere, tinaggap nang hindi niya ako maaangkin nang buong-buo. Kung sasabihin mong nakuha mo nang buong-buo ang isang bagay, kulang pa rin." Unlike other superstar team-ups that fail to exploit the golden opportunity of pulling in sure audiences to watch a serious work, Bernal's greatest achievement lies not so much in putting his three big stars together but in making use of them to lure their fans and followers into seeing a mature, sensible film.

An his cast serves Bernal very well.

In the hands of a capable director, Christopher de Leon proves that his forgettable appearance in such odious films as "Topo-Topo Barega" and "Disco

Fever" are mere lapses in judgment that do not entirely discredit his craft. He also shows enough gallantry by not getting into the way of his leading ladies, whose roles are undoubtedly more demanding than his. As the uptight Sandra, Vilma Santos has the script's choicest, wittiest lines. She makes the most of them and succeeds in giving a fairly accurate portrait of an emotionally insecure young woman. And when she tells Rex: "sabi nila liberated ako, front lang. Kalog daw, front din. Alam mo namang kulang-kulang ako. Pag wala ka, magkakat ako. Para akong manok, takbo ng takbo wala namang ulo." She likewise handles her final breakdown exceedingly well.

Nora has less lines but she nevertheless manages to convey her emotions very effectively. In that family reunion-party which is so engrossed in gossip and banter, she remains so detached, speaking nary a word --- a triumph for both Bernal and her. The hurt in her eyes continues to build up until that disrupted dinner scene where she rushes to her room and, unable to contain herself, finally cries. The most stable of the three, you could really believe her when she tells Rex: "Galit ako sa 'king sarili, dahil sinasaktan mo na ako nang todo-todo pero lalo ka namang napapamahal sa akin."

The film is greatly enhanced by Jose Carreon's vibrant script, Mel Chionglo's superb production design, the Vanishing Tribe's fine musical score, and Augusto Salvador's brisk editing (few scenes last longer than a couple of minutes). But the lion's share of credit goes to Bernal. I particularly like his splendid use of meaningful pauses and oppressive silences, as in Sandra and Tere's accidental first meeting at Rex's house, Sandra's soundless dinner with her father that leads to her breakdown, and the long, quiet ending scene where Sandra and Tere never say a word and yet succeed in finally communicating with each other. Our viewers are discomfited by this exhausting process, what with the underdeveloped tastes of our mass audience perpetuated by irresponsible directors. But one fervently hopes for Bernal, who apparently believes he owes the audience his best even if they are more likely to love his third best more, that they would get the film's message and, perhaps, even accept and like it.



## NORA AND VILMA, APART AND TOGETHER

Nestor U. Torre, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2002

**I**n the '70s and '80s, the big stellar rivalry in local show biz was between Nora Aunor and Vilma Santos. The two female superstars have had quite a history together, and their instructive relationship remains interesting to this day.

\*Child Star - In the '70s, Vilma had a head start because she first entered show biz as a child star. By the time she became a teen star and was competing head-on with Nora, Vilma was already an established name and crowd drawer. And yet, the phenomenal Aunor quickly upstaged her. After Nora became the darling of the masses, Vilma had to cope with the harsh reality of playing second fiddle to the brash upstart who had captivated the nation with her golden voice, expressive eyes and volatile temperament. In those days, it looked like Nora could do no wrong. Even if she made quickie films, they would win awards over Vilma's better-executed starrers. After years of this unfair competition, Vilma decided to stop playing the also-ran, and opted to essay the roles that Nora preferred not to do---the other woman, rape victim, burlesque dancer, etc.

Vilma's "sexy" movies were more suggestive than anything else, but they gave her a new screen persona that made her a distinct movie entity from Nora. Fact is, Nora could also have played sensual characters, but she felt awkward doing so, and Vilma benefited from her reticence. In time, Vilma was also winning acting awards and starring in big hits, so the competition between her and Nora peaked. Then, in the '80s, Nora's personal problems affected her career, while the more professional Vilma became producers' actress of choice. Nobody doubted Nora's talent, but Vilma had talent "and" professionalism, so she soon streaked in front of her archrival. No longer did she compete in areas where she was "dehado," like singing. Instead, she stressed her dancing ability, sensuality and versatility, and truly came into her own.

\*Political phase - Then came the two rivals' "political" phase, with Nora successfully boosting Joseph Estrada to the presidency while losing her own bid as governor. On the other hand, Vilma supported her husband's bid for the senate "and" won as mayor of Lipa City. Even in politics, she showed she had the edge. That's where the two rival superstars are today---Vilma flying high, while Nora is still trying to get her act together for the nth time. We wager, however, that if Nora regains her focus and determination, she can still give Vilma and other female stars a run for their popularity and

awards.

\*First salvo - Nora's new public service show on TV could be the first salvo in her current bid for recognition and respect in show biz. For her part, Vilma needs to give more importance to her acting career, which she's tended to neglect in favor of her political obligations. The interesting thing is, all these years, the two archrivals have actually gone beyond competitiveness, and have forged a solid friendship, even if it is one between opposites. The competition has just given added excitement to their "joint" careers and motivated their respective fans to support them with greater zeal. And both Nora and Vilma have become excellent actresses who still have a number of great performances left in them. May we see some of those memorable new portrayals on the big screen this year. Even better, Nora and Vilma should make another one of their infrequent films together. Now, that would be a great viewing experience that no local film buff would want to miss.





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