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EXCLUSIVE



# SONGSTRESS, ENTREPRENEUR, VISIONARY

BY GRACE LAI

Dato Siti Nurhaliza Tarudin was the sweet, young singer many first dubbed a "village songstress". Seventeen years into the industry, the queen of songs is flying high and moving full speed ahead.

Having charmed the hearts of many over the world, Dato Siti Nurhaliza Tarudin is not your average songstress. One of Malaysia's best singers, the spirited lady's resume boasts of highlights such as the *Best Vocal Performance in an Album/Single* from the Anugerah Industri Muzik, Malaysia's equivalent of Grammy Awards (which she won an astounding eleven times) and *Best Performance* and *Best Ballad*, among others. This is the woman who, after all, rose to unprecedented fame as a multiple-platinum selling artist since her emergence on to the scene in 1995 when she was only sixteen.

Recording in Bahasa Malaysia, English, Mandarin, Arabic, Hindustan and Japanese, Dato Siti has proven her mettle as a singer who can hold her own, many times over. An admirably far-sighted outlook together with a desire to be brave in her song choices has contributed to her becoming a leading light in the pop scene. In fact, reviewers had this to say of her live renditions, "There is a Japanese-flavoured song which requires her to switch from her natural voice to falsetto in a hair-raising cadenza, somewhere in the absurdly high range most women vocalists would cringe from. Dato Siti Nurhaliza pulled it off effortlessly, sending shivers down my spine."

## Songstress

Born in 1979 in Pahang where Dato Siti is the fourth child of a family of eight siblings, the precocious songbird grew up in a musically-inclined family. Her brother and sisters are also singers, her grandfather a famous violinist and her mother, a well known local traditional singer. "I've never really wanted to be a singer. While I was surrounded by music and family members who sing, I've always wanted to be a police woman!" a shocking revelation from the sensible Dato Siti. However, the ambition, an influence from her late father who was a policeman, never came to fruition.

On whether she chose singing or the other way around, Dato Siti mused, "I got into performing by chance. I used to follow my family around to sing at events, local celebrations and the odd invitations here and there out of fun. In fact, I entered the 1995 competition without much thought and never expected the many offers that followed my winning. I was only sixteen! I wasn't sure whether to sign the contracts offered or pursue my studies - which I wanted to very much."

Record deals signed and sealed, the young star's rise in the pop arena was nothing less than meteoric. "It is not enough to produce an award-winning single or album. To be a great singer, you need to know how to pace yourself. What happens after the first best-selling album? What do you do to maintain that star status?" wise words from the woman who knows exactly what she wants.

At the early age of 19, Dato Siti launched her own (and first) company, Siti Nurhaliza Productions (M) Sdn. Bhd. which acts as the official management production of her schedules. Her first and biggest appearance on the international stage at the 1998 Commonwealth Games held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia where she shared the stage with the celebrated Céline Dion and Rod Stewart cemented her status as the country's most sought-after songstress.

## Entrepreneur

Listed as one of Malaysia's richest, most-influential, most award-winning, most single-produced artists, Dato Siti has more than singing on her mind. "I love singing! It is a gift from God but how long can I sing? I don't want to just be a singer forever," the visionary lady asserted.

With unparalleled success in her singing career, Dato Siti immersed herself in business, another passion of hers.

Uncommon among the majority of her peers where glamour and success are the be all and end all, this young woman wanted more and set out to do so. Having started her own company, Siti Nurhaliza Productions (M) Sdn. Bhd., the young entrepreneur launched another four subsidiary companies, Siti Nurhaliza Collections Sdn. Bhd., Siti Nurhaliza Marketing Sdn. Bhd., Siti Sound Sdn. Bhd. and SN Mobile Digital Sdn. Bhd. She is also the president of her own cosmetic range company, her true baby, Simply Siti Sdn. Bhd.

"I want my products to be simple but not 'simply'," the enchanting Dato Siti laughed. Launched in March 2010, the products under Simply Siti were created from stringent research and development in Korea where the brave industrialist insisted on incorporating Nanotechnology advances. "I oversaw every aspect of the business. I thought of what products I wanted, I designed them, I went to Korea to source for professionals who can deliver them and I basically did everything in bringing my products to reality." Dato Siti cheerfully revealed. Her ventures proved to be true when Dato Siti received two awards from The Brand Laureate – Small and Medium Enterprises Chapter Awards, one for her Simply Siti range, for *Most Promising Brand* and another one for herself.

Wholly in keeping with her prudent qualities, Dato Siti had this to say on why she chose the cosmetic industry. "I was always an ambassador for a beauty product - Maybelline, Olay and Pantene, besides others and I decided that instead of being the face of someone else's brand, I should be

the face of my own brand. I should be promoting my own products!" Dato Siti enthused.

With her range of products under Simply Siti sold all over the country, this entrepreneur has plans of expanding to the horizon and beyond. "Simply Siti is now sold in Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore and Indonesia. I plan to have the range launched as far as the Middle East," the lady smiled. Dreaming up products and making them a reality, Dato Siti is an enchanting business persona with a voice to match. If nothing else, her numerous accolades in the music arena will serve to remind her fans that she can indeed deliver and has the staying power to prove it.

#### Visionary

As far as her singing is concerned, Dato Siti recently collaborated with the famed Bruno Mars and has no plans of neglecting her God-given gift. "I will never stop challenging myself. If I get the opportunity to sing internationally, I will do so. But I will also prove that we can be more than just 'one person'. I don't have to just be a singer. I love business and I want to also be known as a great entrepreneur," Dato Siti affirmed.

One can easily see the passion in the songstress's eyes. The clear focus, the indomitable strength to succeed, Dato Siti has plans beyond her plans and no intention to rest. One hundred and seventy products and twenty two skincare items under her belt to date, this pop princess turned visionary entrepreneur is set to scale greater heights. ▲

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