

IMPERIAL FAMILY COMPANIES

ASIAN AMERICANS IN ENTERTAINMENT

CM
CHARACTERMEDIA

20

**UNFORGETTABLE
YEARS**

Celebrating the
20th
Unforgettable Gala

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IMPERIAL FAMILY COMPANIES

— CHARACTER MEDIA —

UNFORGETTABLE

20TH ANNIVERSARY

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2022

THE BEVERLY HILTON





KE HUY QUAN
ACTOR IN FILM



MINHA KIM
BREAKOUT IN TV



STEPHANIE HSU
BREAKOUT IN FILM



THE DANIELS
DIRECTOR



JULIA CHO & DOMEE SHI
WRITER



BRETMAN ROCK
DIGITAL INFLUENCER



STEVEN YEUN
LEXUS LEGACY



CHLOE KIM
PECHANGA ATHLETE
ON ANOTHER LEVEL



PACHINKO
VANGUARD



Aarohi Sheth

Author of “Living in Color,” pg. 28; “South Asian Stories,” pg. 113

HOMETOWN: Houston, Texas

ABOUT: Aarohi Sheth is a South Asian journalist and artist from Houston. Her work primarily focuses on arts and culture and the intersection between race and entertainment. She hopes to use storytelling as a tool to invest in the South Asian community and other underrepresented groups.



Ashley Insong

Author of “Unapologetically Her,” pg. 24; “Unsung Heroes,” pg. 122

HOMETOWN: Ewa Beach, Hawaii

ABOUT: Born and raised in Hawaii, Ashley Insong is now located in Memphis, Tennessee. She is a full-time ESL Teacher and a freelance writer who passionately writes about the Asian American identity as well as her heritage and experience as a queer Filipina woman. A creative writer at heart, she enjoys writing poetry and personal essays on healing, love, and relationships.



Caroline Yu

Staff Writer

HOMETOWN: Ann Arbor, Michigan

ABOUT: Caroline Yu is a midwestern, but L.A.-based, creative/journalistic/you-name-it writer who loves everything pop culture. Her favorite part of writing is being able to understand herself and others better after publishing a piece. When they're not dissecting their interview subject of the week, they spend copious amounts of time tweeting about their favorite TV shows, dancing out their troubles to their favorite songs and learning guitar.



Destiny Torres

Author of “Add to Cart,” pg. 116

HOMETOWN: El Monte, California

ABOUT: Destiny Torres is Los Angeles-based journalist. She covers local business, culture and education pieces for the LA Business Journal, Remezcla and other publications. When she isn't chasing a deadline, she is usually exploring the city with her closest friends.



Florence Lo

Author of “A Queen’s Gambit,” pg. 47; “Stream On!” pg. 94; “Now Streaming,” pg. 106; “Laugh Track,” pg. 118

HOMETOWN: Diamond Bar, California

ABOUT: A native of Southern California's 626 region, Florence Lo has been with Character Media since the beginning of 2020 (literally right before the pandemic) and has a passion for uplifting underrepresented voices in media. When she's not stuck in traffic, she enjoys boba, other people's pets and three-hour long YouTube videos.

Q&A: *unapologetically* *her*

Fiona Stiles Makeup
Jenny Cho Hair
Danielle Goldberg Styling

Actress Natasha Liu Bordizzo discusses breaking out of constructs and being her most authentic self.

TEXT BY ASHLEY INSONG

PHOTOS BY DARIA KOBAYASHI RITCH

Natasha Liu Bordizzo isn't afraid to show audiences her true self, as evidenced by the August premiere of Netflix's *Day Shift*. The Chinese Australian actress rocked the red carpet in a swanky, black velvet Chanel suit, a wardrobe choice she attributes to her shifting attachments to gender roles.

"My relationship with needing to be feminine is dissipating the older I get," Bordizzo explained during a recent interview with Character Media. "As time goes on, I just seek authenticity above everything."

Bordizzo's acting career began with her roles as Snow Vase in Netflix's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: Sword of Destiny* (2016) and Helena in the series *The Society* (2019). While Bordizzo's role in *Day Shift* is her most recently completed project, it isn't the only one up her sleeve. She will also play Sabine Wren, a Mandalorian accompanying the famous Ahsoka Tano, in the new Star Wars live-action series *Ahsoka*, which will stream on Disney+.

The release date of the series has yet to be determined, but production is well underway. On a Saturday afternoon, Bordizzo calls in during a day off from filming to discuss acting on the sets of *Day Shift* and *Ahsoka*, as well as her gradual breakthroughs in expressing her most authentic self.

What was it like to work on *Day Shift* with so many talented actors, including Dave Franco, Jamie Foxx and Snoop Dogg?

It was amazing. Every time I work with people I know I'm going to learn a lot from, it's a big experience of being a sponge every day at work and absorbing everything they're putting down. And for this film, Jamie and Dave do so much improvisation, which is something I haven't had a lot of experience in. How well they command the scene and how well they're able to banter and experiment was really fun to watch. And then Snoop, of course, he just comes in and he's Snoop Dogg—enough said. [Laughs]

I never expect to work with anyone I end up working with. It's always a big surprise. Especially with a film like this, it's just about looking for fun. Coming out of a pandemic, after a period of not having work—like the rest of us—it seemed like the perfect action-packed film to get out of my rut at the time.

What was it like being Heather in *Day Shift*? Did you ever think you'd play a vampire?

It was really fun to portray Heather. What was interesting about [the character] was that it was generally written as an ambiguous person. For example, it wasn't written as Asian or anything. It's cool to be able to mold myself into roles that were written on paper, because she's a girl who turned [into a vampire] and there's not much context that she had to be white or Asian. So, it was cool to join the project, despite the role being written differently.

Whatever I get to read in my inbox, I'm always excited to do something I've never done. It felt like a fun way to be weird and express myself because there are no rules to how a vampire should or would be in physicality and facial expressions, so I was excited to play with that.

You just landed the role of Sabine Wren in the new Star Wars series *Ahsoka*. Can you share a bit more about landing the role, and what playing Sabine will entail?

It was just my birthday, and [the Star Wars team] gave me this stunning poster I have on my wall. The whole crew signed it, and Dave Filoni, who is one of our creative writers, producers and directors, drew me as Sabine for the first time on the poster. It was such a moment. But yeah, it's a character that already existed in [the animated series] *Star Wars: Rebels*, and I'm so excited that I get to play the live-action version. I am so in love with the Star Wars universe and galaxy and everything that the franchise means. It's that warm feeling you get. It's so much about family, hope and love, and it's just different in that sense.

Were you a *Star Wars* fan growing up?

Yeah, I was. Although I wasn't obsessed, I loved the films. Some of them came out before I was born. I watched the others that came out when I was a kid, and I would watch them with my parents, mostly my dad. It's exciting when more content comes out because families can generationally watch them all and meet fresh content with the next generation. This world has existed for so long, but we can still find new ways to explore stories within it and new characters. I was especially reinvigorated by *The Mandalorian* when it first came out. It began this slate of shows that are now the fresh chapters of the new galaxies.

What about Sabine resonates with you most?

Everyone jokes that I'm like Sabine in real life for many reasons. I do feel like this student to the world, in a way. In the same way she's learning things, I feel like I'm learning a lot from the lessons in this show. There are so many parallels it's almost creepy. I relate most to her journey to overcome internal conflict and achieve a state of reaching her highest potential.

You've played quite a few roles in the action genre, like in *Crouching Tiger* and *Day Shift*. Looking ahead, are you hoping to continue on this route? Would you like to explore more genres?

When I started my career, I thought that constantly having action as a part of my roles was related to my heritage and the fact that there were a lot of Asian roles in film and television connected to martial arts. There is some truth there, obviously. But I don't think it pigeonholes me; it is part of my toolkit. There are different forms of martial arts in terms of physicality, and it's a good tool to have. Each time, the discipline of martial arts has been slightly different. I am happy to do more action roles if the action is not the *only* interesting part of the project.

What advice would you give to other Asian women looking toward making a career in acting?

Thankfully, there is more opportunity now than ever. I don't mean that things are like, "Tick, it's done, we've made it." Culturally, speaking for myself and my friends who are mostly Asian women back in Sydney, most of us were not necessarily encouraged to take on creative lines of work, and creative work or industries were not taken as seriously. So, I would encourage Asian women to just follow their calling, whatever it is. If it's calling to you, then it's legitimate. We need more Asian women in creative careers. I'm super inspired by the Asian women I work with. Every project, there's more and more. It's amazing to see.

Also, don't just follow the path that has made room for you, but make room for yourself, too. I'm mixed-race, and I'm very aware of where being mixed does not give me the right to play an Asian role. I've done a lot of roles that weren't necessarily Asian, and that's what I mean by making room that may not necessarily be there. We're creating this whole new landscape that hasn't existed in terms of representation. Think not about the opportunities that have been given to you, but the ones that don't exist yet. We can't always rely on the people at the top, who aren't usually people who look like us, to dictate what opportunities there are. It's about creating our own, being innovative and having initiative and a bit of faith. Representation is on a hopeful path.

I have nothing but pride and love for being Asian, more than ever. We're all finding our voice and identity, and each one of us has a different journey. Just keep being proud of being Asian. **CM**

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