

“Meet The Next Girl To Flood Your Screens; Leila Alcasid”

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Unlike most kids who are born into the Philippine showbiz industry, Leila Alcasid didn't grow up in the public eye. She went to school with kids who had no idea who her parents were, she had full control of her life, and there was absolutely no pressure for her to be a certain way. “We lived in a nice house in a small town and we had two dogs. It was very quaint,” she explains of her quiet life in the Southern Highlands of Sydney.

She grew up without the label of being a showbiz daughter; growing up in a rural town kept her and her sister Sarah grounded, even without having to hide it. She retells a story from childhood, “In primary school, I would tell my friends, but they wouldn't believe me. Back then, there was no social media so there was no way for me to prove it.”

When she grew older and got a bit more mature, she lived like any other Sydney teenager would. Her friends in high school and the people who she got close with after never really thought it was a big deal. It was only when she started getting thousands and thousands of followers on Instagram that her peers became curious. “It was always a thing for people to Google me, and that irritated me,” she shares. “That followed until I got to college as well. If they didn't know me, that was how they knew me; by my dad being famous. That's what other people saw.”

Being in showbiz was something she had always dismissed. “It never even crossed my mind. I even told myself, ‘I'm never going to do this.’ I didn't really care about the industry.” She proceeded to pursuing a Political Science degree at the University of Sydney, something that her family placed a lot of importance on. She loved reading, specifically about history. She got heavily into World War II. Her passion is English Literature, thus a

penchant for writing essays. She was the type of student who got her work read out loud in class.

But like many people her age, her idea of what she wanted to do in the future got muddled along the way. “I enjoyed what I was studying, but I wasn’t sure if I wanted to make it a career. I didn’t know what I wanted to do anymore,” she shares. While that was on her mind, she didn’t expect that a trip back home would be such a turning point.

She had been in the country to visit her dad many times before, but after this specific trip, she didn’t want to leave. For the first time, tears were shed as she prepared to bid goodbye to Manila once again.

Maybe it was the perfect timing. Even if she had said before that her mind was closed to anything related to showbiz, she shares that “My state of mind that time was ‘I don’t know what I’m doing,’ so obviously, my mind was open to anything.”

It was a seed mainly planted by her mother, Michelle Van Eimeren. She told Leila, “People are intrigued by you being our daughter. That’s already a platform that you could use.” For her, it wasn’t even that complex; she just really wanted to stay in Manila. But then again, there wasn’t any reason for her to not test the waters.

It might be shocking for her friends back in Sydney to see her doing the rounds on local television and getting her photo taken in tons of events. One would normally expect her to become a completely different person especially with a bit of fame – but that could not be more false. Who she is in Sydney isn’t so different from how she is here after all. She shares, “They’re super surprised and really intrigued about what I’m doing, but at the same time, they’re very proud of me. They know that everything I’m doing has been out of my comfort zone, but they can see how happy and at ease I am.”

“Leila in Sydney,” she explains, in comparison, “is a student focused on trying to carve out a career in international relations, loves being a social butterfly, and would never be caught dead singing in public or trying her

hand in the show business industry. Leila in Manila is extremely busy, has no time to go out, is growing in confidence, game to try pretty much anything, approximately 0.5% fluent in another language, and struggling to curb a love affair with Jollibee Chickenjoy.”

While her day-to-day has become drastically different, she’s not one to compromise. She stays competitive and driven, and she has a genuine desire to be good at whatever she is tasked to do. She attends workshops at her own will, she takes Filipino language lessons—and she’s very much aware that nothing will be handed to her, despite a last name recognizable to every Filipino.

What’s most admirable about Leila, even if we haven’t seen much of her in the past decade or so, is that she is keenly aware of how Philippine showbiz works. She explains, “It has very much become a commodity-driven thing. That’s how it is, but it’s important to still remember that it started from art and intellect as well. A lot of people forget that.

“I just want people to always know that I really respect this,” she explains. “My parents—both my mum and my dad—have something in the industry that takes effort to earn: respect,” Leila expounds. “So I think the ultimate way to introduce myself is of course as a product of my parents’ qualities, but more so, as someone who can do justice to their reputation while creating my own reputation, where people can get to know what I love, the kind of person I am. If people can know me separately to my parents, but come to recognize the qualities we share, then I’ve done my job well.”

And true enough, she’s already thinking outside the box—beginning something she had already loved even before. “Writing has and always will be a passion of mine, and I definitely view it as something that helps define who I am and what I love,” she shares of her blog, LEILAALCASID.COM. It allows me to express myself and the blog is a platform that gives me creative freedom. “I like the whole process of designing the blog itself, choosing the photographs, playing around with the way I write— it’s all fun to me, and the ultimate expression of who I am. I’d love if that could develop into some sort of brand.

“I initially gave myself a year, but with the way things are going, we’re working on something that could take more time. My goal has changed.” From a simple plan of just doing a little bit of this and a little bit of that that, she’s ready to dive a little bit deeper. Maybe this is what she’s meant to do, maybe it’s not; she’s not entirely sure. But while she’s here, Leila will be following her mother’s advice: “Stay humble, stay kind, stay gracious.”