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me & my teen

# music of the heart

HE JUST TURNED 16, BUT NATHAN HARTONO HAS ALREADY CUT HIS FIRST JAZZ ALBUM. THE TEEN AND HIS MUM SHARE INSIGHTS ON BALANCING MUSIC AND STUDIES. INTERVIEW AZMIN ZAINAL PHOTO SIMON SIM

He looks like your neighbour's cute son and sings like a budding Michael Bublé. With that killer combination, it's no wonder that Nathan Hartono is a rising star in entertainment.

The industry came knocking on his door after he won the *Teenage Icon* contest in 2005. Last year, he launched his debut album, *Life, Love and All That Jazz*, an 11-track collection of jazz and jazz-infused pop standards.

The soft-spoken teenager with a distinct American twang was also one of the ambassadors for the *Speak Good English Movement 2006*.

Born to Indonesian parents Thomas Hartono, 54 and Jocelyn Tjioe, 49, Nathan is in Secondary 4 at Anglo-Chinese School (Barker Road). The Singapore Permanent Resident has an elder brother, Norman, 19, who is in National Service, and a sister, Nydia, 13, who studies at St Joseph's International.

Family chats with Nathan and his mum and finds out he balances school and singing.

## nathan:

### HOW'S LIFE AS A RECORDING ARTISTE?

I've been asked this question many times. But I realise that it gets more and more difficult to answer. That's 'cos things just get bigger each time; I'm taking the 'O' levels this year and there are always performances and bigger events to anticipate.

### WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU FACED?

I don't really think of them as challenges. Sometimes I have to go for tuition right after my performances, so it's kinda funny when I go for classes at Ghim Moh all dressed up in a suit!

### WHO INFLUENCED YOU TO PURSUE YOUR AMBITIONS?

It's definitely my family, 'cos they've always supported me. I started out by joining the *Icon* competition and they were the ones who encouraged me to sign up. If not for them, I wouldn't be doing all this.

### TELL US MORE ABOUT YOUR MUM.

She's not really strict but when I screw up, I do get it from her. My relationship with her is great; we can talk about anything, we go to the gym together and on Sundays we go to church. She's the one I go to for lessons in life.

### WHAT DO YOUR PARENTS THINK ABOUT YOUR ALBUM?

Both my mum and dad think it's cool. As for performances, they're really honest with me. If it's not up to par, they'll tell me to work on it. They also take videos and pictures, and then show me my weaknesses. It's like a report card, but on video. But they always give me constructive criticism.

### HAS YOUR MUM CHANGED HER PARENTING STYLE SINCE YOU JOINED THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY?

She's advised me to be more careful with the people I mix around with. Also to be mindful of how I act in public.

### WHICH OF YOUR PARENTS ARE YOU CLOSER TO?

Surprisingly, I'm equally close to both of them. Even though my dad is always overseas 'cos of his work commitments, I'm still pretty close to him as he's the one who introduced jazz to me. He's like my music mentor, so to speak.



## jocelyn:

### WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE MEMORY OF YOUR MUM?

I treasure vacations with her 'cos that's when we get to spend a lot of time together. In Singapore, my parents are busy working while I'm at school, so we don't get to see each other much. We usually go back to Jakarta or visit my aunt who lives in the States.

### WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS?

I've never been much of a 'study' person. But this year I've woken up 'cos the 'O' levels are coming. Naturally my parents want me to do the whole JC-Uni route. But right now, I haven't made up my mind yet. I'm just gonna do the best I can and see where I go. In terms of music, I'll probably stick to jazz, because that's my first love. But artistes evolve, so maybe I'll do some pop and R&B, so that it's more appealing to listeners my age. If I do get to record a second album, there will definitely be a lot more of 'me' in it.

### HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR SON?

Nathan is a nice boy; warm, patient and obedient. He's also more helpful compared to his siblings, and is always concerned about me.

### WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO TOGETHER?

It can be anything, as long as I get to spend more time with him. But my favourite would be travelling with him. He's a good helper, carries my bags and even helps with the cooking.

### WHAT IS HE LIKE AS A TEEN?

He's like any other kid; he has a tight schedule balancing school, tuition and CCAs. Since he joined the entertainment industry, he's become even busier. We help him out by taking or accompanying him to places where he has performances. I always tell him to plan his schedule and remind him to manage his time well.

### YOUR THOUGHTS ON HIM PURSUING A SINGING CAREER?

Actually I was surprised when I learnt that Nathan can sing well. But I always remind him that this is not an easy career option. You must be very good. As long as he can cope with his schoolwork, then it's okay with me and my husband.

### DO YOU HAVE TO FEND OFF HIS FEMALE ADMIRERS?

My friends' daughters and their friends do ask for his autograph and I oblige. As for girls, I'm not sure. He's always on the phone! My advice to Nathan is that he's still young so he shouldn't commit to anything yet. Just concentrate on his studies; relationships can come later.

### WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

I'm so impressed and proud whenever I see him so confident on stage. He can even compose songs now. I've always wanted my kids to learn musical instruments. He learnt piano for a year, gave up and then picked up violin for two years. When we realised he could sing, we encouraged him to join the Icon competition. I always knew he had talent. **fm**

*Nathan will perform in Bright Young Things, which is part of the Mosaic Music Festival at the Esplanade, on 10 March at 5.30pm. Admission is free. Visit [www.mosaicmusicfestival.com/lr-brightyoungthings1.html](http://www.mosaicmusicfestival.com/lr-brightyoungthings1.html) for details.*