

Happily Ever After

Recently married in Phuket

Tanida Silapa and Pol Sub Lt Patiwat Yodkwan celebrated their nuptials at the Royal Phuket City Hotel on March 24.



Khanittha Putkaew and Kiattisak Jenkarn were married at the Phuket Merlin Hotel on March 20.



When *Pop Idol* burst onto UK television screens in 2001, it ushered in a new era of reality TV that would go on to take many forms around the world, most notably *American Idol*, which is currently in its seventh season. Who could forget the faces of those stars who shot to fame on these programs, such as... Actually, can anyone remember any of the stars of that first season?

"It's obviously about entertainment and ratings. There isn't really any substance in it as such; it depends on who works on the shows and what they can give," said Joshua Alamu, who has appeared as a vocal coach on such UK television shows, including *Pop Idol*, *Dance X* and *X-factor*.

"Working on reality shows was a great experience. It was glamorous on one side, while on the other it was all politics. I enjoyed working with the contestants and developing them, getting them to believe in themselves. I love taking an artist and saying, 'How can we make you better? How can we make you more confident?'" said Joshua.

Joshua was in Phuket to hold singing and songwriting workshops for students at British International School (BIS). "I've been here for the best part of six



A man of many talents, Joshua showcases his musical abilities.

days. What I've been doing is working with the kids in the school with singing and performance. I also did one songwriting workshop," he added.

Born and raised in London, Joshua has family in the UK, as well as Ghana and Nigeria. "I spent three years in Africa. I absolutely adore African music. It's part of who I am, part of my roots. It's influenced the whole world, from jazz to rock," he said.

Playing a prominent role in all of Joshua's vocal coaching is speech-level singing (SLS), a technique that has helped shape the voices of many of the most successful vocalists of the past 50 years. "I work with the Speech-Level Singing organization, which is a worldwide organization, set up by [vocal coach] Seth Riggs, that's based in LA in the US. Mega-stars have trained in this technique, from Kelly Clarkson to Stevie Wonder," said Joshua.

Hoping to bring SLS to Thailand, Joshua was testing the water at BIS with the help of friend and colleague Claire Cornielje, head of visual and performing arts at BIS.

Claire and Joshua plan to build on their workshops and open this level of vocal coaching up to the whole community.

Joshua's first break in the music industry came at an audition also attended by revered vocal coach Carrie Grant and her husband David Grant, who had a string of UK hits in the 1980s and now also works as a vocal coach.

"Carrie heard me sing and gave me work straight away, so I started doing backing vocals for people like Take That, the Spice Girls and Robert Palmer. Then David and Carrie set up a band called United Colors of Sound and they asked me to join. We were signed to Sony, disbanded eight years later and that's when I fell into teaching," he said.

"It's come right back around and I'm now working on a sound-

track for a movie called *Dark Eden*, which will be a trilogy. I've been asked to do all the music for it: the songs, working with the artists. I'll also record some of the songs and write a lot of them myself," he added.

Some scenes from *Dark Eden* will be filmed in Thailand. The low-budget movie will be part martial-arts thriller, part love story and part tragedy. "It's about a soul who discovers who he is," said Joshua.

As a vocal coach who works with singers both signed and unsigned, Joshua has come across a range of talents during his career. "I think everyone can sing. Whether they can sing technically or not is another thing. I can take a bad singer and make them good, take a good singer and make them better or take a great singer and make them fantastic. As long as they're willing to put in hard work, I'm happy to work with them," he said.

Speaking about the current state of pop music, Joshua said, "Now we're looking at people who can really sing and write songs. There are a lot of pop bands developing management deals and record deals as we speak," he said.

While pop music is still alive and kicking, there will be massive marketing campaigns and mimed performances a-plenty to sit



Joshua gets involved and offers student Delphine Lobelle, 17, some advice on the fly.

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The man behind the voices

Joshua Alam knows a thing or two about music, but you may not even recognize his name. He has been in a band signed to Sony, worked on a string of reality-TV shows and vocal-coached stars such as Westlife, Will Young, All Saints and Joss Stone.

While in Phuket to hold a number of workshops at British International School, Joshua spoke to *Gazette* desk editor Matt Crook about life behind the scenes in the music industry.

about the same old things – love hate, peace, there’s nothing new you can cover – but you have to take those concepts and talk about them in a fresh, imaginative way,” said Joshua.

Joshua’s perspiration may have paid off. “At the moment, one of the songs I’ve done has been thrown at Pink and I’m about to see if that works out,” he said.

In terms of whom he respects, Joshua is all praise for the guys behind the scenes. “I admire the educators, the guys who you don’t hear about, who spend all their working days getting those other guys out there: the publishers, the teachers, the A&R guys, the technicians, all those guys. They’re the ones who really make it happen. If it wasn’t for them, nobody would sell any records,” he added.

Joshua’s career has been built around helping others find their voices.

“The one bit of advice I would give is to not be afraid to express who you are with your voice. Don’t be afraid to get up on stage and do it, even if it goes wrong, because you will learn from it and just get better,” he said.

“Stick your finger up at the world and just get up and do it.”

For more information about Joshua and his vocal training visit www.euphonicproductions.com or www.epcrew.co.uk

through. “I hate miming. You either sing or you don’t. It’s just a waste of talent. People should be able to make mistakes, but then mistakes don’t equal entertainment I guess,” said Joshua.

While singers miming is a *faux pas* for Joshua, writing songs is a different matter. “Writing is a craft. It’s something you need to work at. Sometimes artists work well with writers and then they decide to write on their own. Then the music isn’t as good,” he said.

“Good songwriting is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration. You have to work hard to write a song. It all starts with talking

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