

## First Person

Legendary singer **Paula Tsui Siu-fung**, 62, rose to fame in the 1970s with her unique vocals and jaw-dropping gowns. She will make a rare appearance at the Venetian Macao this weekend, where she will perform three shows. She talks to Winnie Yeung about never wanting to retire, and why she wishes people would stop talking about her dresses.



I sympathize with kids these days when they're criticized for dropping out and living aimlessly. I've been there.

**I was born** in Hubei but my family moved here when I was a baby. My first memories are of Hong Kong.

**I wasn't a good kid**—I was rebellious, and the only lesson I enjoyed was music. Singing always came very naturally to me. But when teachers wanted us to sing school hymns, I ended up singing pop songs.

**I was rebellious** because I didn't know what I wanted. That's why my memories of youth are so vague—I just wandered about and disappeared from jobs after three, four days.

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**I entered a singing contest** because a couple of friends wanted me to go with them. They wouldn't participate if I didn't. So it was a favor for them. But instead, I won.

**My parents did not approve** of my being a singer. They were traditional and they thought that performing was a shameful career. That's why I used to refuse to let my family see me sing.

**However, I pledged** to them that I wouldn't change my principles and eventually they were comfortable with my choice. This pledge helped me because there is a lot of temptation in showbiz. I also blocked out everything around me that was unrelated to singing. I am still the same person I was before I became a singer. And I am very grateful for that.

**I began my career** in 1969 as a supporting act in a nightclub. I was the one who sang in between the big-name Mandarin singers to occupy the time. I was really jealous of them.

**During that time,** I performed over 400 songs. I didn't set out to learn them all—it just happened, as I'm such a fan of music.

**Being a singer** was much easier back in the day—all you needed to do was to sing your songs well.

**I never considered** myself popular, even though people tell me I am. I've noticed applause getting louder of the years, and I'm grateful that people haven't forgotten me. If I think about how popular I am, I just put too much pressure on myself.

**Success is another word** I can't define. I need to take a deep breath, just thinking about it.

**No one is** perfect—I always aim for 120 percent in anything I do but sometimes I only get to 70.

**I don't think** I have high standards. Asking a lot of myself is a basic requirement.

**I was friends** with a lot of the singers of my generation. Of course, we fought all the time but the fights were petty—we competed to wear the prettiest dress and the highest heels.

**I've always taken care of** what I wear on stage. I put a lot of thought into my outfits and there are many failed dresses I would never, ever show anyone.

**Comfort is key.** Some of my dresses are quite big and heavy so I have to practice to walk in them first.

**My big dresses** on stage are just for effect. If you were to see me up-close you'd see that these dresses are overwhelmingly huge.

**But I don't** know why people talk about my dresses. Why not focus on my music instead?

**I love food.** A little too much actually—I wish I were a picky eater; I could've been slimmer and prettier.

**My only way** to release stress is to eat chocolates and sweets.

**People think that** that I have retired. I will never retire—I am just lazier.

**"Paula Tsui Live in Macao" will be held on Feb 19-21 at Cotai Arena at Venetian Macao. Read Gigs Listings, p.26.**

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