

# The Pupil *graduates*

**Actress Rebecca Lim makes her mark in showbiz**

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**C**OULD actress Rebecca Lim be local TV's next big thing? On Dec 9, she unexpectedly nabbed Best Drama Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role at the regional Asian Television Awards (ATA) for playing the titular role in Channel 5's legal drama *The Pupil*.

The 24-year-old ingenue beat co-star Janice Koh and more established actresses Jeanette Aw, Quan Yifeng and Michelle Chia.

It turns out that was just icing on the cake. She had already won Elle Awards 2010's Actress of the Year the night before, for her role as a prostitute in the Channel 5 drama series *Fighting Spiders 2*, edging out fellow cast member Ezann Lee and MediaCorp Ah Jie Zoe Tay for her role in the local movie *Love Cuts*.

Lim laughed when we proposed that she may have finally arrived on the showbiz scene.

The bubbly starlet told *The New Paper*: "I don't think I've arrived. The awards are definitely an encouragement. At least there's someone who appreciates what I'm doing."

Lim is aware that some may think her undeserving of her ATA win because she's "the youngest and least established among my fellow nominees".

## Tough start

Such brickbats are a walk in the park for someone who has endured a lesser career for the past 4½ years before the accolades started pouring in.

The former Miss Singapore Universe 2005 finalist joined MediaCorp that year, after being talent-scouted at the beauty pageant. But her early roles did not leave a deep impression.

Hands up, those who remember her in Channel 8 drama series like 2006's *Family Matters*, 2007's *Passion And Honour* and 2007's *Mars Vs Venus*.

Lim cringed as she recalled her acting debut in *Family Matters*, saying: "I was a secretary who spoke only about two lines every five episodes."

"I did so badly in it. I had a lot of pauses between lines and my incompetent Mandarin showed, even though I'd thought otherwise then."

While peers from her batch like Elvin Ng and Dawn Yeoh were nominated Most Popular Newcomer at the 2006 Star Awards, Lim languished in her quiet corner.

She also recalled having to play supporting roles to those who joined MediaCorp later than her but were getting meatier parts.

She declined to name these artistes, only to say that some have left.

"It was demoralising. I felt very discouraged. I questioned myself, 'Did I do something wrong? Or am I what's wrong?'"

"I kept wondering, when will it be my turn?"

Being a beauty queen and the 2005 pageant's Miss Photogenic didn't give her much mileage either.

"I think the only advantage was getting noticed by MediaCorp. It's not an acting competition. It's based on looks and that's not much for people to judge one's talents and capabilities."

Until she graduated last year, Lim studied for her



PICTURES: MOHD ISHAK, LIANHE ZAOBAO  
**HER TURN:** (Above) MediaCorp Raintree Pictures managing director Man Shu Sum presenting Rebecca Lim (also right) with an award at the Asian Television Awards.

accountancy degree at the Singapore Management University while acting part-time.

But the now-full-time actress said she wouldn't give herself that as an excuse.

Fellow MediaCorp actress and Miss Singapore Universe 2002 finalist Joanne Peh, who was also an undergraduate when she started acting, "excelled in both areas".

"My acting and Mandarin weren't good. I was given opportunities, but I didn't perform well. I don't blame anyone for not giving me bigger roles," said Lim.

For the record, Lim scored a B3 and an A2 for Chinese in her O and A levels respectively.

She said she is better at reading and writing and is working on her conversational Mandarin, which has become "a lot better".

"There were times when I wanted to give up acting. But my parents, who are my sounding board, were very encouraging," she said.

"My mum said she has never seen me so happy to wake up for a 6am call time, whereas I'd grumble to get up for school at 7am."

Lim seems to be finally reaping some reward for her labour, with some fruit in the Mandarin scene as well.

She will be seen next in Channel 8's Chinese New Year family drama *Prosperity*, in which she plays a materialistic girl.

Then, there are local movies *The Ultimate Winner* (directed by and starring Li Nanxing) and Jack Neo's comeback *Homecoming* - Lim has supporting roles in both.

She will also reprise her award-winning role in the second season of *The Pupil*, which begins production next year.

On her wish list? An overseas production.

"I waited five years before I got my first lead role. I want to use whatever opportunity I have now. I don't want to face the 'what ifs' and 'should haves' in future."



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- Rebecca Lim (above)