Living in the spotlight doesn’t always put you on the spot. SMU poster girl Elsie Lin (left) just graduated with top honours with no big problems, she says. Singapore’s best known female blogger Xiaxue (inset), however, is both read and rapped.

What makes them so different?

Continued on next page
YOU have seen her in newspapers and on billboards. But this is one poster girl who isn’t pestered by the paparazzi.

Being in the public eye hasn’t got people talking about her private life.

Elsie Lin has been lucky.

The 23-year-old appeared on Singapore Management University’s (SMU) 2002 advertising campaign which promoted its students as “different”.

She did a back arch for the shoot with celebrity lensman Russel Wong — a breeze for her as she has been doing ballet since she was 6 and still attends weekly dance sessions.

And the pose made all the difference. Even her friends didn’t recognise her at first because of the way the picture was shot.

She did the shoot for free and has not done any other advertisements since.

She did it only because the university administration asked her to, she said.

It seems she aimed to be a model student, not a model.

And last Wednesday, the Raffles Junior College alum graduated from SMU summa cum laude (“with highest honour” in Latin), grabbing eight out of 11 medals in accountancy.

She has also just started work as a management trainee with listed company Neptune Orient Lines, under a programme that will send her abroad for a one-year stint in her second year.

But the world wasn’t handed to her on a silver platter.

“I wasn’t born with a silver spoon in my mouth,” she said.

BISHAN GIRL

She lives with her technician father, housewife mother and younger sister, 21, in a “very messy” four-room Bishan flat, she said.

Her parents have only secondary school education, while her sister holds a diploma and started working a year ago as an administrative executive at PSB. At home, they chat mostly in Mandarin.

But she admits that she is “very fortunate and never had to go through big problems or difficulties”, and that her parents have “always provided for” her.

She is determined to make her own way now, though.

Elsie said her career — and not her engineer boyfriend of four years — will be her focus for the next few years.

“I’m ambitious, pragmatic and enthusiastic,” she said, adding that her boyfriend knows she’s career-focused and doesn’t mind.

She also believes in giving back to the community and became a Bishan grassroots leader after getting a scholarship from the community centre.

Elsie, who took Japanese as a third language during her Singapore Chinese Girls School days, emphasised that her parents have always stressed the importance of education yet never gave her undue stress.

She added: “People think I’m perfect because of my high grades... Maybe they think I’m high up there, but my friends know I’m not. I’m definitely not perfect.”

No, she’s just a good middle-class girl who made good. Very good.