

Championing confidence

Three DJs speak candidly to **Aneeta Sundararaj** about life's lessons and making a difference

LAST April, Proton Persona launched a campaign called Better, Undoubtedly, with the aim to show people the importance of self-confidence and the significance of making the right choices in life.

Three DJs from local radio stations were invited to take part in the campaign to inspire and mentor people from various backgrounds to meet their challenges.



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DJ Jack

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DJ Aanantha



EMPOWERING THROUGH EXPERIENCE

The sole female mentor, Roslinda Abdul Majid, better known as DJ Lin from Suria FM, has had a passion for deejaying since her schooling days.

"When we had to do a presentation in school, I was always the first to volunteer," says the demure 35-year-old single mother.

"Since I love talking, my friends told me I should work in the media industry. So I studied mass communications."

Upon completing her studies, she got married and started a family. Unfortunately, the marriage did not last.

"After my divorce, I had two children to think of. Now, all the work I do is for them. I learnt that just because you're a single mother, life doesn't end."

Today, her life is busier than ever as she is a publicist, a public relations officer and a DJ.

"I'm also very 'kaypo' and always want to help people. I cannot just leave people feeling sad. If I can help them, I will."

Such qualities have made her an obvious choice for Proton Persona's campaign. She leads an empowerment programme to help other single mothers meet their challenges. From this group, three stand out.

"The first is a young divorcee in her early 30s. She's a secretary at an NGO and has always wanted to be a DJ. I arranged for her to undergo three months of intensive training," says Lin.

"Then there's one woman whose husband is in jail. She has to work to feed their five children. She's a good cook but didn't have any idea on how to run a business.

I arranged for her to get lessons on managing a business. We showed her how to package her food for sale.

"The third is a Muslim convert whose husband abandoned her and their children. She's had two simple wishes: To learn more about her new religion and to experience Hari Raya as other Muslims do. So I arranged for her to visit Perkim to understand Islam better. Then, during Hari Raya, we deco-

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rated her house and prepared food such as lemgang and ketupat. She was so touched she cried."



TUNE OF CONFIDENCE

DJ Aanantha from THR Raaga was born and bred in Kuala Lumpur. "My father is an avid musician and we always had something on such as religious music or Hindi music."

When he was part of a band called Synergy, he travelled throughout the country.

"We didn't just stand on stage and sing. We liked to incorporate all sorts of things in our shows. Once, I even dressed as a woman," he says sheepishly.

"In 2002, we were performing at the Miss Malaysian Indian beauty pageant when I was spotted by the head of THR Raaga. He invited me to join the station as a deejay."

Aanantha wants to use his popularity for a good cause and to reach out to kids.

"I would tell them my story. I don't have any formal training in music. When I was 21, I wanted to learn to play the piano, but the teacher said, 'Are you serious?' I couldn't believe it. I wanted to learn but the teacher didn't even want to teach me. That got my fire going and I taught myself music and joined the arts scene," he recalls.

About his role in *Better, Undoubtedly*, Aanantha says: "I wanted to show the kids that acting and music should be fun. The arts should build their confidence and interpersonal skills and help them find like-minded friends."

With that in mind, he led a talent workshop where, eventually, three children — Narresh Meganathan, Suriya Prakash and Vishnupriya Tiyagaraja — were singled out to be featured in a specially developed music video. "I composed the song Thannambikkai, which means self-confidence," he says with pride.

The children had lots of fun. They also learnt that making good music involved hard work. The music video raised RM30,000, which was donated to the three schools the children came from — SJK (T) Vivekananda, Petaling Jaya, SJK (T) Nilai, Negri Sembilan, and SJK (T) Melaka Kubu, Malacca — to be invested in musical instruments.



JACK OF ALL TRADES

Jack Lim, better known as DJ Jack from MyFM, comes from a poor family. He says: "I have five brothers. When I was in Standard Six, my parents divorced. I wanted to commit suicide. I was in the bathroom holding the razor in one hand."

Laughing, he adds: "But I was too scared of pain."

The 36-year-old is no stranger to the lime-light as he was an actor before he became a DJ.

"In Malaysia, DJs are more popular because people spend so much time on the road, stuck in the jam. It's not like in Hong Kong, where people spend more time watching TV."

That he sees his involvement in *Better, Undoubtedly* as something to do for his countrymen, is no surprise. He tells how he once almost came to blows with a relative in China. "He kept telling me I was Chinese because my grandfather was born in China. I told him, 'No, I'm Malaysian. I was born in Malaysia.'"

The first person Jack chose to mentor was an aspiring actress, Apple Cheng Jia.

"I told her that to be successful, she must be 'thick-skinned'. One day, I made her stand in front of three lots in a car park and to not allow anyone to park there. I left her alone. I knew people were going to scold her. When I came back half an hour later, the three lots were still empty. She had passed the first test. Only then I shared some acting tips and tricks with her."

Today, Apple has secured a part in a movie and is well on her way to success.

Then there was one 150kg man (who turned out to be Jack's former neighbour, Yong Kah Leong) who wanted to reduce his weight and run in a marathon.

"When he first told me, I asked him if he was crazy," recalls Jack. "Still, I agreed to help him. Can you believe that he finished a 10km run three months later?"

The third person Jack mentored was Joanne De Silva, who was too scared to drive because of an accident years ago. She has a licence, but she doesn't drive to work.

To boost her confidence, Jack sat with her in a car while someone else drove. What she didn't know was that the driver was a stuntman.

"He drove so fast and made the car spin 360°. When the car stopped, she got out, vomited and cried. But we told her she had been through the worst. There was nothing to be afraid of now. At first, she was driving at only 20km per hour. Now, she drives to work."

All three DJs hope to continue to be involved in the programme. For Jack, he drove the length of the peninsula in 15 hours last year and along the way, collected RM25,000 worth of groceries and donations for two charity homes. He'd like to do the drive again this year, but to extend it to 24 hours. "I want to travel from Kedah to Johor and back to Kedah."

Better, Undoubtedly

The campaign catapults three ambassadors into mentors where they share their life lessons to guide people from various backgrounds to face their own challenges. Each of the ambassadors will champion their own programmes that have been developed based on their life experiences.

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