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08 APRIL 2012

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GIVEAWAY**
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**WHAT'S YOUR
FASHION STYLE?**
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**Beautiful
mind**

Hollywood
actress
Serinda Swan
champions
humanitarian
causes

Beauty with a purpose

Acting may be in her blood but Hollywood actress Serinda Swan finds her calling lies in championing humanitarian causes.

Serinda Swan is dedicated to the cause of ending sexual trafficking and sexual slavery.



Posing at the world premiere of the film *TRON: Legacy*.



Serinda Swan in *Breakout Kings*.

By CHOW EE-TAN

SERINDA Swan looks amazing in a simple white dress as she introduces herself with a bright smile and a warm handshake. The 27-year-old comes across as someone who is genuine, amiable and extremely articulate.

The Canadian native, who has starred in a few movies and some television roles, the most recent being Erica Reed in Fox series *Breakout Kings*, was in Kuala Lumpur recently.

While acting is her first love, Swan has found her true passion in championing humanitarian causes.

Born in Vancouver, Canada to a family of artists, her exotic features can be attributed to her English, Irish, Scottish and Spanish roots. Her mother Michelle Goodger was an actress who had played roles in 80s television series such as *X-Files*, *MacGyver* and *21 Jump Street* and her father is a theatre director. So it was natural that she gravitated to the arts growing up and in Swan's own words, she has "always wanted to be an actress".

"I started when I was three – and did it for three years. Then I got involved in competitive gymnastics." Swan spent a tremendous amount of her time on the sport – no short of six hours of training every day in a week.

"Only about five years ago, I went back into acting again when an agent found me. Two years ago, I moved to Hollywood," she says. But interestingly, her very first movie was a Bollywood film *Neal 'N' Nikki* that was partly shot in Canada. She also appeared in the blockbuster movies *Tron: Legacy* and *Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief* and television shows like *Hawaii Five-0*, *Psych* and *Smallville*. Admitting that Hollywood is a dog-eat-dog world, Swan is happy to be surrounded with positive, like-minded friends. "I have been fortunate and haven't had a

tough time in Hollywood," she says.

Currently shooting the second season of *Breakout Kings*, she will soon be seen in two new films, *Jinn* and *The Baytown Disco* later this year. *Jinn* is a supernatural thriller dealing with humans, angels and jinns.

"*The Baytown Disco* is an action movie. I love the script so much and just wanted to be a part of it," she says admitting that she likes to take on action films.

"Due to my training in gymnastics, I can do almost all of the stunts myself. It makes the shots much more fluid and I love it, it keeps me active and in shape," she smiles.

During our interview, her face lights up whenever she speaks of her role as the ambassador of Friends to Mankind, an international non-profit foundation that works with individuals, corporations and humanitarian organisations.

Two years ago, she met fellow Canadian Dhyam Vimal, the founder and president of Friends to Mankind who told her the concept behind the foundation. Swan has since devoted her time to empower people to participate in this global responsibility of transforming humanity.

"In the past year, I had the chance

to visit Asia and have been to Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand and Bali," says Swan. She got involved with such organisations as Heifer International, The Sanctuary, Voices for Change and the Somaly Mam Foundation; the latter is dedicated to ending sex slavery around the world and is also a cause that she feels most strongly about.

Swan recently completed a 14-day, 500km bike ride across Cambodia to raise awareness and funds in the fight against sex trafficking. Working with Project Futures Global and with the help of 20 other riders, they raised over US\$115,000 (RM350,135) for the Somaly Mam Foundation, which has rescued over 7,000 women and children since 2007.

"Last year, I joined a charity drive to skydive at 18,000ft to raise money for The Sacred Childhoods, a foundation that works against child trafficking in Bali," enthuses Swan. "Some people joined me and we managed to achieve the goal of raising US\$38,000 (RM115,000) in 10 days.

This time, Swan was in Kuala Lumpur to launch Zazen Health

Solution's (ZHS) newest outlet recently. She also took the opportunity to share her insights and the vision of her work for humanity with Malaysia's royals, some officials of the health and wellness industry, wellness enthusiasts and members of the media.

"I recognise the work that Zazen is doing (ZHS is a Friends to Mankind company). They have a good business model that actively engages in promoting and educating the public on staying healthy," she says.

For this keen gymnast, it's natural that fitness has always been part of her life. "It has ties with what I care about, to give a voice to a cause by doing my part in Friends to Mankind, whether it is jumping out of a plane or cycling across Cambodia," she says.

She relates her first trip to Cambodia, recalling how touched she felt.

"I wanted to go on a journey to discover something for myself. I went to the Somaly Mam Foundation and spent a month with them and met many survivors of sex slavery trafficking. Somehow I felt I could identify with these women of different nationalities and backgrounds," she says.

Swan says children as young as four years old could be sold for as little as US\$100 (RM304) and forced to service up to 30 clients a day. According to UNICEF, as many as two million children are subjected to prostitution in the global commercial sex trade.

"I can't relax knowing these girls didn't have the same rights as I did. When I came back to the US, I decided I have to lend my voice against sexual slave trafficking," she says.

Swan says she would love to do a drama and take on a role of someone very real, such as a humanitar-

ian. She also has several plans in mind for the future.

"I hope some day, I can put together a movie on sex trafficking. Something like blood diamonds, where we can bring awareness to people," she says. "Millions of people may not watch documentaries but millions of people watch movies. So I believe we can bridge the gap and bring information and awareness through movies.

"I think sometimes celebrities have more voice than politicians these days, as they have a following. I think it is extremely important to use that voice to say something important, to bring awareness to what is going on in this world," she says.

From her recent cycling trip, Swan penned a journal that documented her physical, emotional and spiritual thoughts.

"I let some people read it and there was an overwhelming response to get me to publish it," she says. "So I will release a book which is a key project of Friends of Mankind and it will be a memoir of my time in Cambodia, sharing my thoughts to create awareness.

The book will be launched in Kuala Lumpur at its Friends of Mankind's office the next time Swan comes over. There will also be an online version, she says.

She is so busy with her acting career and also her work with Friends to Mankind that her personal life seems secondary. Having split up with her Canadian actor boyfriend, she is in no hurry to go into a relationship.

"My life is so full. Right now I'm just happy to focus on what I'm doing. Sure, romance and family will come one day, but now I have no time to chase after anyone except if he happens to be on a bike in front of me!" she jests.



Serinda Swan with the Voices for Change girls in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.