

A sit-down with Sitthikorn

His initial plan was to simply compete with his friends in the band category, but the 21-year-old singer from Songkhla, Sitthikorn Prathumwan, also walked away with the win in the solo singer category at the Coke Music Awards 2010.

The 4th-year student in Thai music studies at the College of Music, Mahidol University, beat out the four other finalists with his unique, well-trained singing voice and his background in Thai music studies.

'LIFE' sat down with Sitthikorn to talk about his passion for music and his thoughts on the recent victory.

Share with us your experiences during the auditions process of the music contest.

First, I submitted an entry for my band, Oom Pooh. We planned to audition at the second leg of auditions, which were going to be held in Bang Khae. In the meantime, I went to Siam Square, where the first leg of auditions was being held, to support Somkiet. After watching a few performances, I took a chance and asked one of the staff organisers there whether I could enter the competition as both a solo singer and a band separately. He told me I could. So I signed up, went on stage, and sang *Cry Me Out* [by Pixie Lott]. In truth, it was a song I hadn't really practised that much.

When did your passion for music start?

My life has been full of surprises. I initially wanted to study international music at Mahidol University. But before I took the entrance exam, I had already taken another test for Thai music studies. Surprisingly, I had the top score for the Thai music test. So I decided to concentrate on Thai music studies instead and make international music my minor subject.

When I was a young boy, my mother tried to teach me how to play the classical guitar; she, too, was a music student in her college years. I didn't like it at all, perhaps because it was my mum who was teaching me. That is, till I was in secondary school. That's when I really developed an interest in playing guitar. Eventually, I asked my mother to teach me how to play the guitar again — and with her help, I made it into the school band.

And in my last year of secondary school, my teacher made me the singer for the school band instead.

Is there any difference between singing techniques used in Thai and international/Western music?

There are a few differences between the two. When singing traditional Thai music, we have been taught not to have facial expressions — we have to keep our facial expressions to a minimum.

Also, singing in the traditional Thai way, you have to sit, while in the West it's the total opposite — a singer should stand and let their emotions pour out. In my case, however, I have created my own singing style by incorporating what I've learned from both styles.

Why do you think you won the contest?

I think it has to be my unique voice quality and my personality. I always stayed true to myself throughout the entire competition. It could also be that I did pretty well each week in the contest. The judges always commented that in order to be a good artist, you must maintain a high standard and be consistent in your performances.

Why should young singers in Thailand compete in the Coke Music Awards?

This music contest is very different from the other competitions. From my own experience, the organisers treated every contestant with care. Besides competing for money and prizes, the contestants also have the chance to go on tour all over the country, and along the way they will make new friends.

I think the biggest difference between this competition and the other contests is the judges. CMA judges are professionals, and their comments are honest and direct. Sometimes you see in other



Sitthikorn Prathumwan

contests the singer obviously didn't do so well, but the comments from the judges are all positive. I think straightforward comments from the judges is so important, especially if the singer wants to improve on his or her performance.

If you are familiar with some of the popular talent shows on TV, then you've probably seen me once or twice. I have literally been on all of them, but never made it to the final round. I remember one judge told me: 'Your head is too big, and your body is a tad too thin'. Seriously, that was one comment I received from a famous commentator.

What was your first thought

when your name was announced as the winner?

My first thought was how I felt all those times I had lost in past competitions. Then I was thankful for never having won before because it made the win that much more meaningful.

What are your future plans now that you've won?

I'll be done with school in March. And, of course, I want to make my own album. If that time comes, it will be a kind of R&B/pop feel with a touch of traditional Thai music mixed in. I also want to push my band forward as well.

Yanapon Musiket