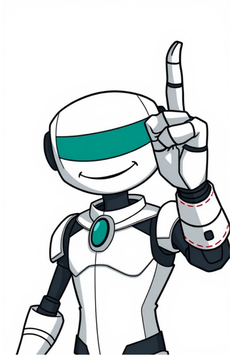
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Young actress Ashtine Olviga is still pinching herself after landing the lead role in the hit teen rom-com series Ang Mutya ng Section E. Since its airing early this year, the series has rapidly gained a fanbase across the country—and even abroad. The 23-year-old performer, who began her career as a P-pop singer, has emerged as the show's breakout star. In an intimate interview with the press, Ashley opened up about her disbelief and gratitude at being cast as the titular "mutya" (muse) of Section E, how she bonded with her 16 male co-stars, and what it was like filming her very first on-screen kiss. Stepping into her first-ever lead role, Ashtine portrays the role of Jasper Jean "Jay-jay" Mariano—a spunky new student who becomes the only girl in Section E, the most unruly class at the prestigious Higher Value International School. The rising star had appeared in films and supporting TV roles before, but headlining Ang Mutya ng Section E marks a turning point. Even Ashtine herself was stunned to snag the part. During the press conference, the rising actress admitted that she still couldn't believe that she was Viva's Boss Vic Del Rosario's first choice to play Jay-jay. It was a dream-come-true moment that left her both thrilled and humbled. Ashtine (center) sits alone in a classroom full of rowdy boys "Just like during our first interview about this, I still can't believe it. And I'm really thankful that Boss Vic allowed me to handle this project. I'm just really thankful," Ashtine told Manila Standard Entertainment. She then expressed her immense gratitude for the opportunity, aware that teen rom-com projects like this have launched some of the Philippines' biggest young stars like Nadine Lustre, Kathryn Bernardo, Liza Soberano, and Belle Mariano, all catapulted to fame by youthful rom-com hits. Following in those footsteps, Ashtine was determined to give her best to the role that could very well define her career. On-screen, Ashtine finds herself the sole rose among 16 thorns—the only girl in a classroom full of rowdy boys. Off-screen, the actress lived the same reality, working daily with sixteen male co-actors who play her mischievous classmates. One might expect an intimidating or awkward dynamic, but Ashtine quickly found a brotherhood with her Section E boys. She revealed that she was actually already used to hanging out with guy friends which helped her fit right in on the male-dominated set. In fact, the bubbly actress grew up a self-described "tomboyish" girl, comfortable being "one of the boys." That ease translated to an easy camaraderie with her co-stars. 'Ang Mutya ng Section E' lead stars Ashtine Olviga (left) and Andres Muhlach "They've got my back, and they always make me laugh," Ashtine said of her castmates, describing the atmosphere on set as akin to a fun school barkada. One of the series' most talked-about moments comes when Ashtine unexpectedly locks lips with campus heartthrob Keifer, played by Andres Muhlach. For her, this wasn't just a pivotal plot point—it was also her first on-screen kiss. The young actress confessed she was anxious approaching the scene. But professional that she is, Ashtine also focused on getting the details right. "The kiss was just a quick smack, but making it look natural and accidental was the challenge," she explained. "The scene needs to look like an accidental kiss. That's the difficult part," added Ashtine. To pull it off, the two actually rehearsed the scene beforehand, carefully working on their blocking and timing. For Ashtine, the series' success is deeply personal. In the span of a few months, fans now recognize her as the feisty Jay-jay, and the AshDres tandem with Andres has its own ardent following. Ashtine talked of the overwhelming support – it's both delightful and overwhelming. She's mindful of the pressure that comes with leading such a great project, but she's taking it in stride. "I'm so grateful. I used to only dream of things like this. Now it's here—a lead role, so many supporters. I never thought this would happen to me," said Ashtine. Related: 6 Things You Need To Know About Gen Z Artist And New Girl On Campus Ashtine OlvigaAshtine Olviga doesn't think of herself as creative. Not in the traditional sense, anyway. That was her main concern. Nervous but cheery, the young actress embraced her creativity as the NYLON Manila July 2025 cover star—pushing herself to explore a new way of expressing herself (but the Lord knows she kills it in all the many different ways she does). But creativity manifests in so many more forms than just visual art. It's about seeing the world in different ways, discovering solutions to different problems, turning imagination into reality, and embracing and championing the new.As evolving technologies such as artificial intelligence—the kind that creates something "new" by drawing from previous human work—cause even more turmoil in the realms of art, it's still important to acknowledge the imagination, the passion, and the heart that goes into being creative. It's not just about making new, beautiful creations. It's about people putting their very souls into what they do, driven by very human motivations and convictions. So it's a no-brainer that people like Ashtine, who gives her all into the work she does on screen or on stage, embody a sense of creativity. And to her, creativity is seeing, finding, and bringing out "the beauty in simple things." As an actor, singer, and performer, Ashtine has tried her hand at a variety of creative outlets. From channeling power into a song or performance or tapping into a wide range of emotions for a role, the young artist has cultivated her skills and passion for the arts well. She's spent years building her name and her platform, but Ashtine got her biggest break yet as the female lead of VivaOne's Wattpad adaptation of the teen rom-com Ang Mutya Ng Section E (2025). Ashtine played the spunky, fiery, loyal, and sarcastic Jay-jay Mariano opposite Andres Muhlach's Mark Kiefer Watson. She was praised for her acting, comedic chops, chemistry with Andres and the cast, and dedication to the role."My first love is acting," she divulges. "Iba yung fulfillment, iba yung saya kapag ginagawa ko 'tong bagay na to." Oddly enough, Ashtine got her start as a singer, competing in a reality singing show before training to be a P-pop idol. She debuted as a member of girl group LITZ, and was a member of other supergroups such as U Go Girls and PPop Generation. But acting—that's where she shines.When a person's passion, skill, and drive reach the perfect point, people can easily tell they're where they're meant to be. But don't knock her love for music just yet!"Pero kapag nag-perform naman ako," she adds. "Masaya akong nakikita kong masaya yung mga tao habang pinapanood ako." She's fortunate enough to be able to do all that she enjoys doing—she sings and performs even as she stars as Jayjay, in-universe and during mall shows and fanmeets. Not everyone is as lucky, and Ashtine knows not to take anything for granted. As an artist, she's able to put her own spin, her own touch, on everything she does, from every note change to every microexpression that endeared audiences to JayJay. Though often, songs are given, and scripts are read, Ashtine still has outlets to express her own personal creativity—particularly with her vlogging and with her style. "I enjoy exploring different things that bring out my creativity," she shares. Ashtine enjoys putting both vlogs and outfits together, putting a little bit of herself in every output. "Nae-excite ako makita kung paano ko siya magagawang simple yet cute at the same time." Creativity manifests in a multitude of ways, as we can see in the abundance of creative work that comes out on the daily, and that includes everything from hand-drawn art to couture fashion, inventions to performances, short films to even, yes, hilarious TikToks. All one needs to do to tap into their creativity is to see beyond the mundaneity, and be willing to explore the new. Stepping into big-girl shoes and setting off to explore the new doesn't come easy to anyone. "When things are out of my comfort zone," Ashtine says. "Sobrang nahihirapan ako. Kaya ngayon, pinapractice ko talaga yung sarili ko na mag-explore sa iba't-ibang mga bagay."It's a personal challenge she's learning to embrace. And while stepping out of comfort zones and dealing with massive shifts and changes in her creative career can feel overwhelming, she's not doing it alone. Some creatives prefer to work in isolation. They make their best art when they're alone with their thoughts. But like many others, Ashtine draws strength, positivity, and inspiration from the people around her. "I get it sa mga kasama ko sa work. I also try to give light, fun, and positive energy sa kanila rin para happy lang, and everyone's vibing and enjoying each other's company."It totally makes sense for someone whose creativity manifests in a very public and publicized way. "Marami rin akong natututunan sa kanila," she remarks of the people she works with. "Open ako lagi sa mga ideas nila and lumalawak pa yung mga kaalaman ko."The pressure of having a platform, of always being in the spotlight, of having the opportunity to influence, can be burdensome, especially in a world where one wrong move could mean game over, but Ashtine embraces the fact that she is not perfect, and exploring sometimes means missteps. "Your opinion matters the most, but always be humble enough to listen and be open to corrections. We're not perfect. Dapat laging open to corrections." It's a mindset that keeps her grounded, even when the pressure mounts. Clearly her big-girl shoes are always on.Putting yourself out there as a creative is one of the most soul-baring things you could do. It's nerve-wracking to put something so personal out there for the world to do as it pleases, whether you're someone who shares your work online or someone about to compete in a talent show."Normal naman kabahan," Ashtine assures. "Pero dapat at the same time, naniniwala sa sarili mo na kaya mo. Bago maniwala ng iba, kailangan ikaw muna mismo yung naniniwala sa sarili mo."Looking towards the future, she isn't just manifesting more work (but manifest she did, because the actress has another project coming up alongside Andres Muhlach, a movie called Minamahal: 100 Bulaklak Para Kay Luna, coming soon). She's also hoping she remains grateful and content with all the good that's coming into her life. In the world of art and performance, competition and jealousy often come with the territory. But Ashtine hopes she never falls into the mindset to envy other people's wins. "Lagi kong nire-remind sarili ko na kung anong makukuhang blessings ng iba, para sa kanila yun. Ayoko makipag-compete with anyone. Kung meron akong competitor, sarili ko lang."These days, post-AMNSE success, the actress is navigating being thrust into the spotlight and expressing herself with a more careful hand—not because she's afraid people will turn on her easily (though we know in such an industry it could happen in the blink of an eye), but because she realizes the impact and reach of the platform she's been granted. The world at her feet is only growing, but she's turning it more vibrant with every step."I think ngayon, I need to be cautious with how I express myself," she muses. "Kasi with the support that I'm getting right now, I'm really trying my best to share only good and positive things. Gusto ko talagang mag-set ng good example."Getting inspired by the people around her, and in turn inspiring people, making their day—that's when Ashtine Olviga believes she's at her most creative. And as for advice she has to people struggling to tap into their creative side? She laughs at the clichèdness of it, but it's gotten her pretty far. "Be true to yourself," she shares—then we get to talking about how she tapped into a different side of herself as a cover star. "But don't be afraid to try and explore new things." Photography by BELG BELGICAAssisted by RON GODINEZ as Graphic Artist, JYLLAN BITALAC as Lighting/Digital Tech, and ROBYN JOSUE as Lighting AssistantCreative and Fashion Direction by ANDRE CHANGArt Direction by GELO QUIJENCIOStyling by ANDRE CHANG and PATTY YAPAssisted by LEN ABRILLO & LUIGI BRAVOMakeup by ARON GUEVARAHair by BIANCA VERGARAAssisted by PRINCESS QUISELShoot Coordination by BIANCA LAO, MEGAN LIM, & MIKA CRUZDeputy Editor RAFAEL BAUTISTASenior Brand Associate BIANCA LAOOfficial Venue Partner SUHA STUDIOSMeal Partner BOTEJYUBeverage Partner ZUS COFFEESpecial thanks to VIVA ARTISTS AGENCY & VIVA RECORDSGet your hands on the July 2025 Creativity print pack featuring Ashtine Olviga on the NYLON Manila Shop and SariSari.Shopping! Continue Reading: We're Seated Every Time Ashtine Olviga Brings Out Her Inner P-pop Idol Sa kauna-unahang pagkakataon ay nagkuwento si Ashtine Olviga tungkol sa struggling-star days niya noong baguhan pa lang siyang artista. Kabilang daw sa mga nilabasan niyang programa sa GMA-7 bilang extra ay ang Nita Negrita (2011), na pinagbidahan ni Barbie Forteza, at isang teleseryeng pinagbidahan ni Kris Bernal. "Nag-eekstra po ako sa GMA-7, sa Nita Negrita, saka sa isang show na kasama si Kris Bernal. "Tapos nag-acting workshop po ako sa ABS-CBN pero hindi po ako nakukuha," pagbabahagi ni Ashtine. Pero makalipas ang labing-apat na taon, nagbunga ang kanyang pagsisikap, pagtitiyaga, at matagal na paghihintay dahil isa na siya ngayon sa mga sikat na aktres sa bakuran ng Viva Films. Nakausap ng Cabinet Files si Ashtine nang ipakilala siya bilang celebrity endorser ng Donburi Rice Bowls para sa mASHarap campaign ng Botejyu Japanese restaurant. Read: Kara David at Karen Davila, may maanghang na komento tungkol sa korapsyon ASHTINE OLVIGA ON BEING COMPARED TO SARAH GERONIMO Ang concert at movie director na si Paul Basinillo ang direktor ng commercial ni Ashtine para sa Botejyu at sa nakaraang Vivarkada concert ng contract stars ng Viva Artists Agency. ADVERTISEMENT - CONTINUE READING BELOW ↓ Ikinumpara ni Paul si Ashtine sa popular singer-actress na si Sarah Geronimo dahil, sa kanyang opinyon, parehong mapagkumbaba ang dalawa sa kabila ng kanilang tinatamasag kasikatan. Saad ng direktor: "I've handled a lot of artists, mostly the big ones like Sarah Geronimo. "Closer to Sarah, I think, yung kanyang humility at pagkatao. "Ang observation ko, everytime she performs onstage, the last concert in Araneta Coliseum, everytime she goes onstage and performs, nasa kanya yung pinakamalakas na palakpak. "Based on our experience with Ashtine, while we were working together during the concert, alam ko naman na she can deliver more than a hundred percent, so marami kaming ginawa. "This is not just the first commercial for Ashtine, gagawa pa tayo ng iba pa para sa kanya. We're looking forward to that..." Read: Victor Consunji highlights "20 years" of knowing Rachel Carrasco Hindi naman malaman ni Ashtine ang sasabihin nang itanong ng Cabinet Files ang kanyang reaksiyon sa mga sinabi ng multi-awarded director. CONTINUE READING BELOW ↓ Aniya: "Hindi ko po alam kasi, personally, kapag may naririnig po akong ganyan na compliments, siyempre thankful po ako, pero hindi ko ipinapasok sa utak ko. "Kasi hindi naman po talaga natin alam kung ano yung puwedeng mangyari. "Kung nakikita po nila ako na ganoon, maraming-maraming salamat, kasi malaking bagay po yon." Read Next