

Beating the odds in Hollywood

Song Woong-ki
The Korea Herald
ANN

The joke goes something like this — in Hollywood, if you toss a pebble in the air on a crowded street, whoever gets hit in the head is either an actor or a screenwriter — or both.

Six years ago, Justin Chon was your typical struggling actor in Los Angeles trying to make it in Tinseltown. As if landing regular acting gigs wasn't hard enough, Chon had to fight against an industry that tends to typecast Asians.

But now he is on the cast of a movie that just hit pay-dirt at the box office in the United States. His recent film, *Twilight*, based on a series of young-adult novels about romance between a teenage mortal and a vampire, opened number one in North America with a US\$69 million opening weekend haul.

Chon plays Eric Yorkie, whose character is the school goof who constantly pines for Bella's heart throughout the novels.

Quite surprising, the character was meant for a Caucasian actor.

In a town notorious for perpetuating negative Asian stereotypes, Chon, like many of his fellow Asian actors, has fought to make it in an industry that created such offensive caricatures as *Breakfast at Tiffany's*'s Mr. Yunioshi and *Sixteen Candles*' Long Duk Dong.

"Typically, Asian actors get cast as liquor store owners, violent gangsters or immigrants that can't speak a lick of English. We've all been part of the fabric of this nation for such a long time and to be cast as immigrants with

thick accents is just offensive."

Chon, 27, has thus far managed to avoid playing stereotypes. Even when struggling to find work, he has never placed his integrity on the auction block.



Justin Chon

Born and raised in Southern California, Chon grew up in Irvine, Orange County. The son of a former Korean child-actor, Chon Sang-cheol, his parents immigrated to the United States to begin new lives as entrepreneurs.

Growing up, the *Twilight* star would sporadically watch his dad's old black and white movies. And like father like son, he is now following in his father's footsteps. "He was an ayeok baewoo (child actor) so I grew up watching his black and white films thinking maybe I could do the same," he said.

"Acting happened late into college when I was going to USC to get a business degree but halfway through I

realised I didn't want to work in an office my entire life, so I pretty much got into it because I didn't want to get a real job. No, but seriously, I've always had a passion to perform, so I went to acting school and once I finished college and got my degree I decided I was just going to give it a shot. I was fortunate that I started booking gigs right off the bat."

Like most Asian parents, his were no different in expressing their concern toward their son's choice to get involved in the fickle entertainment business.

"They were worried initially because they didn't think I could sustain a living off of it. But I think they let me pursue it because they were pretty sure I wasn't going to make it. They thought it was something I needed to get out of my system, but I thought I was going to keep doing it until I made it. It was a commitment I made to myself and for myself," he said.

"I worked at my dad's shoe store getting paid minimum wage because the deal was he'll let me act, but I had to work there 12 hours a day and could only leave if I had an audition or if I booked a gig."

After various gigs in commercials and television, Chon was cast as a regular on the Nickelodeon sitcom *Just Jordan*.

"They're a lot more supportive now that I've begun to get work consistently, but they're still wary. But as long as I'm happy, they're happy. Once in a while my dad gives me acting advice from time to time, like how acting should be more natural and how it should come from the heart. You know — things I already know. He just says it just because he can say it."

Francis Ochoa

Philippine Daily Inquirer
ANN

Oscar De La Hoya is not letting his edge in height and weight lull him into thinking that, when he climbs the ring against world boxing champion Manny Pacquiao on Saturday (Sunday in Manila, December 7), he'll be simply squashing a shrimp of a kid in a schoolyard.

"I prepared for King Kong," De La Hoya told reporters on Wednesday (December 4), adding his fight with the Filipino was the kind likely to end in a knockout.

Fight time is around 9pm Saturday Las Vegas time, or about 1 pm Sunday in Manila. (For pre-fight updates and coverage of the fight, please go to www.inquirer.net)

Pacquiao is hardly King Kong, though De La Hoya would be wise to beware of a fighter who has won titles in four weight divisions and is heralded by many as the best pound-for-pound fighter in the world.

Though he started his boxing career at 106 pounds (48 kg) and has never fought above 135 pounds (61 kg), Pacquiao is the kind of nonstop puncher who can make an aging fighter look bad.

And that pretty much is the selling point for a fight that seemed odd when it was first made but now looks like an increasingly intriguing match-up of two men who have been in their share of big fights.

"We can either box, we can either brawl or we can even counterpunch him,"



De La Hoya said.

"I would be disappointed if I don't stop him because this type of fight calls for a knockout," the 35-year-old, six-division champion and former Olympic gold medalist

"When you want to win an Oscar (award), you'll do anything you can to win an Oscar," De La Hoya said. "That's what they've done. They jumped up two weight classes and they're looking for that Oscar."

And it will be an Oscar ready to do everything he can to win a fight where he has everything to lose that will confront Pacquiao in the ring, De La Hoya vowed.

A place in history "This is going to be boxing history,"

Pacquiao countered. "Fifty years from now, people will still remember this fight."

Pacquiao continues to train without the nuisance of trying to make the weight. With the fight pegged at the welterweight limit of 147 pounds (67 kg), Asia's only four-division champ hasn't found any need to cut down on food.

Two days before the weigh-in, the 29-year-old reportedly tipped the scales at 145 pounds, with De La Hoya at an even lighter 143.8.

I'm ready for King Kong' - De La Hoya

added. "(In) this type of fight, you get two fighters who are going to fight. If Manny Pacquiao hits me with a good shot, hey, let's fight. I'm going to bite into my mouthpiece and let's fight."

De La Hoya even made a play on his own name during an interview following their final pre-fight press conference, which lasted close to two hours.



THE COLOR PURPLE
Last year's best new artist nominee Taylor Swift dazzles as the host of the Grammy nomination concert at the Nokia Theatre L.A. Live. The country star also entertained the crowd, performing her hit "Love Story" on the telecast.



LIGHTEN UP
Beyoncé positively sparkles at the lighting of the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree in New York, performing a rousing rendition of "Ave Maria" during the event, which aired Wednesday night on NBC



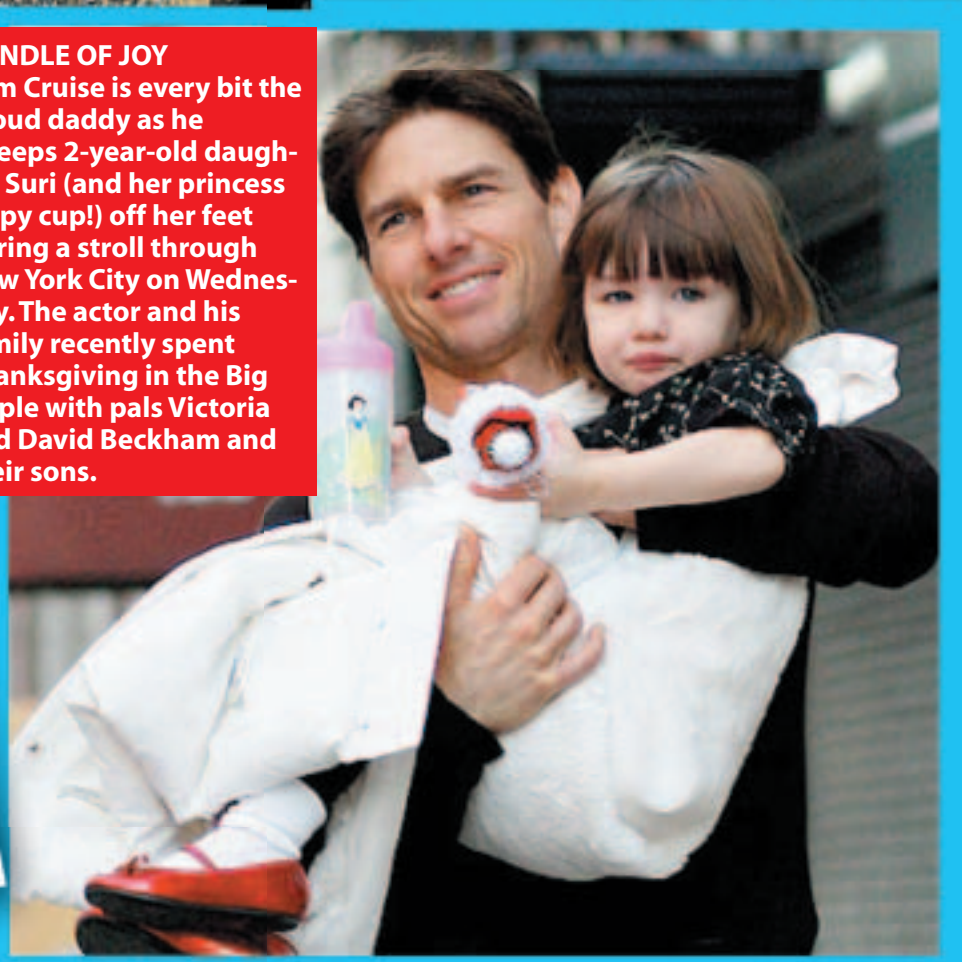
ALL DRESSED UP
What a fetching duo! Eva Mendes and Scarlett Johansson show off their signatures smiles — and a pair of party dresses — at a celebration for their new film, Frank Miller's comic-inspired *The Spirit*, at London's Old Sorting Office on Thursday. The film opens on Christmas Day.



STAR READS
Giving off a gorgeous golden glow, Kate Winslet makes her way down the red carpet for the New York premiere of her new movie, *The Reader*, on Wednesday night.



STAIR MASTER
With more drama unfolding this week, *The Hills* star Lauren "Lo" Bosworth keeps her cool, stepping down in safety as she leaves her Hollywood home on Wednesday.



BUNDLE OF JOY
Tom Cruise is every bit the proud daddy as he sweeps 2-year-old daughter Suri (and her princess sippy cup!) off her feet during a stroll through New York City on Wednesday. The actor and his family recently spent Thanksgiving in the Big Apple with pals Victoria and David Beckham and their sons.