

The First Grand Slam Best Actress in the Philippines



Figure 1: Best Actress from FAMAS, Gawad Urian, Film Academy of the Philippines, and CMMA

The oldest award giving body in the Philippines was the Filipino Academy of Movie Arts and Sciences simply called FAMAS. It was launch two years after the Maria Clara awards folded in 1951. FAMAS shared the same name with the American film academy; AMPAS until the later complained and the Filipino organization have to change theirs into the current acronym. FAMAS created a history of controversies throughout their more than sixty years in award-giving business mostly due to their questionable selection of winners. In 2006, FAMAS experienced another setback when two groups divided the organization due to a controversial election of its officers. As the legal battle settled, the battling groups decided to just hand out their own awards, one used the name FAMAS and the other the Maria Clara Awards. Like its infancy, the Maria Clara Awards did not reach its maturity and died the second time. This is not the first time FAMAS experience disgruntled “break-away” members forming their own award. Prior to 1976, FAMAS retained their status as the most prestigious recognition a Filipino actor could have. Charito Solis, who won best actress at the Asian Film Festival in 1967 used to proudly bring her FAMAS trophies on the film set to intimidate starlets and to instigate professionalism. The breakaway group of critics wish to distinguish themselves from FAMAS by successfully branded their award as not for actors who overtly act in films, they catered to the ones who are restrained and controlled. Hence, the term “Pang-FAMAS na acting” was born, which means over-acting.

The new group of practicing critics handed out their first award in 1976 and called themselves as the Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino (The Filipino Film Critics) and their awards as Gawad Urian. The critics created a name for its credible choices of winners throughout the years. This untainted reputation made the Gawad Urian, the most sought after award in the Philippines.

Two years after the critics handed out their Gawad Urian, the Catholic Church joined the derby by handing out their own version of movie awards. The Catholic Mass Media Awards came to fruition in 1978 with the late Cardinal Jaime Sin in charge of the ceremony. CMMA honour not only films but also television, print, radio, and recently advertisement.

Five years afterwards, came the establishment of the Philippines' counterpart of OSCAR. Consists of different guilds, the very first academy awards, now called Luna Awards, handed out in 1983. After 25 years, the Luna Awards cemented a reputation as "the popularity contest awards," which means each guild votes for their favourites and not necessarily about merits. They tried very hard to adopt a new set of voting rules including different nominating group that represented each guild to resolve this issues but like the OSCAR, the results are sometimes questionable. The common consensus was that the Luna Awards remained far behind Gawad Urian. Two years after the creation of Film Academy of the Philippines' Luna awards, another group joined the award giving business.

The Philippines Movie Press Club or the PMPC handed out their first Star awards in 1985. The Star awards were considered the Philippines' counterpart of the Golden Globes. And like the Golden Globes, the Star also honours television. The only difference is that the Star Awards hands out their film and televisions ceremonies separately. Consists of publicists and entertainment writers, who are member of PMPC (Philippine Movie Press Club) the Star Awards followed the footsteps of Gawad Urian with very credible choices of winners but just like FAMAS, the Star Awards experienced the same fate with a disgruntled members formed their own version of the same awards. The Entertainment Press Society was born with their Golden Screen Awards in 2004.

Today, in addition to the Gawad Urian, FAMAS, Luna, CMMA, Star Awards, and Golden Screen, we also have the PASADO awards from an organization of academics; the YCC, Young Critics Circle Awards from a group of film students; the Gawad Tanglaw from an organization of film and arts' instructors. Lately, the OMG Awards by the internet company, Yahoo Philippines, and the MTRC Awards by the board of censors joined the now, overcrowded award giving bodies.

Before 1982, the word grandslam were only used in sports. The term grandslam according to Wikipedia in terms of tennis is a singles player or doubles team that wins all four major tournaments (Australian, French, Wimbledon, US) in the same calendar year, is said to have achieved the "Grand Slam" or a "Calendar Year Grand Slam," just like what Steffi Graf, the retired German tennis superstar did in 1988. Meanwhile the American Heritage dictionary described the term "grand slam" as follows: first, the winning of all the tricks during the play of one hand in bridge and other whist-derived card games. Second, the winning of all the major or specified events, especially on a professional circuit. And third, in baseball, a home run hit when three runners are on base. From this set of definitions comes the term "grand slam best actress" which basically winning all the best actresses awards from all major award giving bodies. And in 1983, the four majors were FAMAS, Gawad Urian, CMMA, and the FAP (or Luna now).

The Beginning – The Marcos administration created the Film Academy of the Philippines in 1981 under the guidance of first lady Imelda Marcos and Imee Marcos as Experimental Cinema of the Philippines' director-general. ECP started to ambitiously produced films to showcase local talents for its inaugural Manila International Film Festival. The organization produced two memorable films, Peque Gallaga's period film, "Oro, Plata, Mata" and Ishmael Bernal's French influenced film, "Himala." Come Gawad Urian night, both films received its stiff competitions from three other films, Mike Deleon's "Batch '81,"

Lino Brocka's "Cain at Abel" and Marilou Diaz Abaya's "Moral." For the Manunuri, the previous year produced only two stand out films, Mike De Leon's Kisap Mata and Laurice Guillen's Salome. A big contradiction this year, as not only they have the tasks of sorting out the best in each categories from these five films mentioned above but also other worthy films. Famous with their long heated debates, the local critics added the following films in their list of best films: Nora Aunor's "Mga Uod at Rosas," Vilma Santos' "Relasyon" and Hilda Koronel's "PX." The three were cited not only for the overall production but also for the performances of the film's lead actresses. Also cited were, ECP's delicate horror film, "Haplos" directed by Jose Perez and two Lino Brocka films, the comedy "Palipat-lipat, Papalit-palit" and the drama "In this Corner."

For Vilma Santos, The previous year, Pakawalan Mo Ako was a huge summer hit that earned Vilma a surprised best actress in FAMAS. That year also released Ex-Wife and Hiwalay, about marital problems. Art imitating life, as there were reports that Vilma and now, ex-husband, Edu Manzano were having some marital problems. But Vilma as trooper as she is, any personal troubles were not publicly noticeable as she goes on with her work, business as usual. Also, Vilma gave birth to her eldest son Luis "Lucky" Manzano.

By December of 1981, her film festival entry, Karma earned her another surprise best actress trophy after the FAMAS gave her the nod for Pakawalan Mo Ako. In an unrelated news, the entertainment industry were shocked to found that matinee idol, Alfie Anido died on Dec 31st. Like the death of Julie Vega and Rico Yan, it is still unknown the reason behind Anido's death.

She is determined to make 1982 another successful year. She released a total of six films, out of six; two were certified record breakers, "Sinasamba Kita (I Idolized You)" released in August and "Gaano Kadalas ang Minsan? (How Many Times is Once)," released in November, both produced by Viva Films. The other four films (Relasyon, T-Bird at Ako, Never Ever Say Goodbye, Haplos) were mild hits. All of her hard work paid off because as early as January of the 1983 she was already poised to reap major awards.

Meanwhile for Nora Aunor, 1982 were a mixed bag of mild hits and failed opportunities. "Mga Uod at Rosas," her collaboration with Lorna Tolentino and director Romy Zusara produced a mixed reviews from the critics. Her excellent performance did not help as the film were just mild hit with the audience. Her follow up films, "Annie Sabungera" and "Palenke Queen" both comedies also did not do well at the box office making the expectation from her next film higher, as she teamed-up with the hottest star of 1982, her closest rival, Vilma Santos in Danny Zialcita's fast paced film, "T-bird at Ako." T-bird's high expectation wasn't realized as the film earned just a modest income.

By December, all eyes were focused again on Nora and her most ambitious project to date, Ishmael Bernal's "Himala," produced by the Imee Marcos' Experimental Cinema of the Philippines. The film was an entry to the Metro Manila film festival. Nora Aunor was again proclaimed the "queen of local festival" as she won her third Metro Manila Film Festival best actress. Nora's momentum was rising and she was conditioned to make some serious dent in the following year's award giving seasons. Critics were all going "gaga" with Aunor's gigantic performance as Elsa. They said Himala was very effective in communicating its film's message; it has moving moments and raw power.

Communicated It Really Well – "...Nestor Torre...he finds Batch '81 the best movie made in 1982. "The movie had something very important to say and it communicated it very well...As for the best actress, it's Nora Aunor in Himala. "It was a good role, and she communicated it very well. At least, Nora

wasn't api here for a change, It was quite a complicated role, but she handled it very well....Other choices were Gina Alajar and Lorna Tolentino in Moral...Vilma Santos, Nestor notes, is admittedly a "very hard worker but her physical structure really makes it difficult for her to be really effective—hindi malalim—and her voice is not that expressive." Nestor adds, though, once in a while, Vilma "transcends her physical limitations, as in Rubia Servios..." – **Nestor Torre Jr.** (film critic), Parade Magazine, January 19, 1983

Moving Moments – "...Best Films: (in the order of preference) 1. Oro, Plata, Mata and Batch '81; 2. Relasyon and Himala; 3. Moral. Best Directors: (in no particular order) 1. Ishmael Bernal for Relasyon and Himala; 2. Peque Gallaga for Oro Plata Mata; 3. Mike de Leon for Batch '81. Actresses: 1. Vilma Santos for Relasyon; 2. Nora Aunor for Himala and Uod at Rosas; 3. Sandy Andolong for Moral and Oro Plata Mata; 4. Gina Alajar for Moral. Actors: 1. Mark Gil for Batch '81 and Palipat-lipat, Papalit-palit; 2. Joel Torre for Oro Plata Mata; 3. Christopher de Leon for Relasyon. Most movies are usually flawed, and those in my list are no exception. However, apart from the standard criteria I am applying to them (the classic form and content balance), I am giving much weight on impact and emotional power. So, my top two are Oro and Batch. Himala is an ambitious film and much flawed, but it has visual beauty and emotional wallop. Relasyon is more modest in scope, but I think is more successful on its own terms. Moral has many good things going for it, from direction and writing, to performances, but it does not match the four other films in impact (though it has some moving moments) and originality..." – **Mario Hernando** (film critic), Parade Magazine, January 19, 1983

Raw Power – "...Ding Nolleddo...confesses to liking Himala "very much" but mentions that he hasn't seen Oro Plata Mata...because the film exudes "raw power," not to mention the excellent acting and the direction, which was like early Fellini, especially the middle part...Ding doesn't agree with Moral's rave reviews because "I've seen Moral in about 369 other films." It's not that original, he implies. As for best actress, it'll have to be Nora in Himala. "She reminds me of the young Anna Magnani. Besides, the script fitted her to a T. The role practically coincides with what she is in real life..." – **Wilfrido Nolleddo** (novelist, screenwriter, film critic), Parade Magazine, January 19, 1983

Himala won nine out of eleven local festival awards. A sort of repeat of what Vilma's "Burlesk Queen" achieved in 1977 but without the complaints or sour grapes.

Body of Work - The success of Himala in the December festival has been overshadowed by the commercial success of Vilma Santos' body of work. In fact, on Dec 14, 1982, Channel 9's talk show, Let's Talk Movies recognized Vilma Santos as their best actress for her body on work. Nora Aunor was nominated for her films excluding her epic movie Himala which was not qualified due to the show's fiscal year requirements which covers December 1981 to November 1982 (More about this below).

On January 20, 1983, Vilma was crowned the Box Office Queen by the Metro Manila Theaters Association in their very first The 1st Cinehan Awards. Reporter Meg Mendoza wrote in an article for Prime Magazine, "...Vilma gave Viva Films its first biggest hit in Sinasamba Kita earning over P7M in Metro Manila alone. Then came T-Bird at Ako (a mild hit), Never Ever Say Goodbye (a sorry miss), Gaano Kadalas ang Minsan? (her biggest hit for that year) and Haplos. As early as January 20, 1983, Vilma began to reap several victories when she was awarded by the Metro Manila Theaters Association on their first Cinehan Awards together with Fernando Poe, Jr. held at the Philippine Plaza.

National Artist Nick Joaquin, in an article that came out in the Bulletin Today on February 11, 1983 wrote: "By emerging as box-office queen, Vilma Santos proved herself to be the Philippine Cinema's

Superstar – a title, it's to be realized now, that can be bestowed only by the Cinehan." So, on Cinehan Awards Night, Vilma was the very picture of the conquering heroine, drawing all eyes as she glowed and glittered, a rapture of radiance in her strapless white gown with lilac sash – and in white gloves yet! In her triumph joined both cinema and cinehan. Her pictures were all well done – and they also did very well at the box-office. In the same awards night, Ambassador Jaime Zobel de Ayala, another recipient of the Cinehan, upon receiving his award from Dean Lucrecia Kasilag said: "I'm only a little bit sorry that Vilma didn't give me the award. But it's all right, I'll try again next year. You're my favorite star, you're my muse! I'll suffer in silence..."

Ironically, few weeks after her crowning as box office queen, Vilma released *Ayaw Kong Maging Kerida*, the result was average, proving the Romeo Vasquez and Vilma Santos screen charisma has subsided immensely.

Not to be outdone with Vilma's latest feat, Nora's "Himala" competed in the 1983 Berlin International Film Festival the following month. The film was the Philippines' sole entry. The rave reviews were solid, Aunor's performance was recognized by a nomination but unfortunately, according to Bernal, she lost the race by a mere vote. Would a similar fate awaits Aunor as the local award giving seasons begins?

First Major – By late February, the award-giving season in the country started. In their website, the Catholic Mass Media Awards recalled, "...The Archdiocese of Manila, through His Eminence Archbishop Jaime L. Cardinal Sin, organized the Catholic Mass Media Awards (CMMA) in 1978, in observance of the International Social Communication Day (established by the Universal Church to stress the importance of mass media and to instill a sense of responsibility in communicators). An outstanding way, in radio, print, advertising, television, and film. It was first given out in 1978; since then the CMMA was held every year onwards. In 1980, His Holiness Pope John Paul II graced the awarding ceremonies. Handing out personally the trophies to the winners, the Pontiff illustrated the significant place of mass media in today's society, and its pervasive influence in the lives of the people..."

Just the previous year, the CMMA praised Nora Aunor's acting in the late Mario O'harra film, "Bakit Bughaw ang Langit?" and she was adjudged their best actress. There is a great chance that Nora would repeat the feat, as many expected the church would favor a well-crafted film with religious theme.

On February 29, 1983, the fight between Nora Aunor's "goliath" type of performance in "Himala (Miracle)" versus the "davidian" type of performance in Vilma Santos' "Relasyon (the affair)" begins. The media were partly right, CMMA gave their best picture, screenplay, supporting actor/actress to Himala. But despite its, taboo story of a mistress, the Catholic Church's award giving body favoured Vilma's sympathetic performance.

Vilma won the first bout. Nora left empty-handed. The first blood has been drawn and Noranians, Nora Aunor's fanatic fans were furious. The fight didn't stop at the Catholic Mass Media Awards. The next one was a big one.

Second Major – Noranians expected a third Urian best actress considering the magnitude of Aunor's performance in Himala and the positive reviews it received. Positive reviews that were written by the Manunuri critics themselves. Noranians dismissed Vilma's win at the CMMA and expected that metal sculpted trophy was in the bag already. By the way, who are these critics anyway?

Practicing Film Critics – Movie writer, Billy R. Balbastro described the Manunuris: “...The Manunuri ng Pelikulang Filipino...is an organization of practicing film critics established in 1976. Most came from the Academe then with Nestor U. Torre becoming its first president. The Manunuri had its Gawad Urian in simple one hour-long rites at the CCP then. Dr. Bienvenido Lumbera Jr. became its second president. Other presidents include: Mario Hernando, Butch Francisco, Agustin “Hammy” Sotto, Gigi Javier Alfonso of UP. Each critic-member is expected to write regularly film reviews or film criticism which must be published in national publications. Each year too they give out awards for achievements in the movie industry, thus joining the FAMAS, the Film academy of the Philippines and the Philippine Movie Press Club’s Star Awards in this aspect of endeavor. During their first decade (1976 to 1985), they also came up with their Stars of the Decade: Nora Aunor, Vilma Santos, Vic Silayan and Phillip Salvador. The members of the Manunuri are: Mario Hernando (editor of Sunday Malaya), Bienvenido Lumbera Jr.(1993 Ramon Magsaysay awardee for journalism, literature and creative communication), Nicanor Tiongson (former artistic director of the Cultural Center of the Philippines, and former MTRCB chair), Butch Francisco (TV personality), Agustin “Hammy” Sotto (founding president of the Society of Film Archivists), Paul Daza (columnist), Gigi Javier Alfonso (dean of the UP-Diliman Open University and professor at the UP College of Mass Communication –UP-CMC), Ellen Paglinauan (dean of UP-CMC), Bro. Miguel Rapatan (DLSU), and Lito Zulueta (Inquirer sub-editor and faculty member of the UST Faculty of Arts and Letters)...”

The 1973 Scandal - Speaking of co-winner or “tie,” writer Rolfie Velasco pointed out in his article, “...FAMAS was the sole award-giving body for film in the Philippines from 1952 until 1976, when the Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino (MPP) formed the Gawad URIAN (FAMAS was also contested by the Manila Film Festival, established in the 1960s, but a film festival cannot be considered as a major award-giving body). From 1952 to 1976, FAMAS alone has awarded the most foremost performers and craftsmen of Filipino films, from screen legend Rosa Rosal to master director Gerardo de Leon. Winning a FAMAS Award became the target obsession for many film craftsmen, for it was, after all, the Philippines’ counterpart of the Oscars. The awards itself, then held mostly in the Manila Hotel, was the biggest annual event in the Philippine movie industry...In 1973, the FAMAS was rocked by a terrible scandal. It awarded the first tie in the lead categories in the history of Philippine cinema. Before this, the only recorded tie was in 1968, when Tito Arevalo and Tony Maiquez shared the Best Musical Score honors. Because of the popular nominees with their loyal supporters, the tie in the 1973 best actress category became a hot topic with both Boots Anson-Roa (Tatay Na Si Erap) and Vilma Santos (Dama De Noche) sharing the honors. Because a tie in the lead categories was unheard of, the public dissented the vote. Therefore, for the next years, the FAMAS invited film critics to be members of its nominating and awarding committee. These critics left the FAMAS in 1976 to form MPP and subsequently, the Gawad Urian (Urian Award), named after the Tagalog word for gold standard...”

On April 15, 1983, the Gawad Urian was set to give out their hardware. It was known by many, that the critics or the Manunuris were pro-Nora Aunor. They gave Aunor their very first best actress award in 1976 for her excellent performance in “Tatlong Taong Walang Diyos (three years without God)”. They also gave Aunor a second nod in 1980 in her wonderful performance in “Bona” with Gina Alajar as co-winner.

When the winner was read, even Vilma was surprised. After so many years of snubs, she finally received the recognition she truly deserved. The critics finally came to their senses and recognized Vilma’s explosive and giant killer performance.

By winning the Gawad Urian, Vilma defeated not only Nora but also Lorna Tolentino and Gina Alajar both equally gave a felt performance in the feminist film, "Moral."

Adding cherry to an already sumptuous plate, at the same night, on April 15, 1983, Vilma have to rush to another ceremony, she was crowned by the Guillermo Mendoza Memorial Foundation as the 1982 – 83 Box Office Queen of Philippine Movies at the Celebrity Sports Plaza with Fernando Poe Jr as the Box Office King, her second crown/title after January's Cinehan Awards.

This was Vilma's second major best actress wins in the same calendar year. She was half way there. People are now starts talking about the possibility of Vilma winning all the best actress awards.

Not to be outdone, Noranians regained from their disappointments as Nora Aunor received an award from a socio-political group, the TOWNS on April 23, 1983. Nora Aunor received (The Outstanding Women in the Nation's Service) or simply TOWNS award from the former first lady, Madame Imelda Romualdez Marcos, at the Plenary Hall of the Philippine Convention Center. With the first lady handing out the TOWNS to Nora, people are started to insinuate that Nora Aunor's defeat in two previous majors are politically motivated.

Third Major – The next race was the very first Luna Awards, back then, simply called the Film Academy Awards, Philippines' counterpart of OSCAR.

On April 27, 1983 the First Film Academy of the Philippines Awards were held at the Manila Film Center. The FAP official web site provided some basic information about The Luna Awards, "...Established in 1981 as mandated by Executive Order No. 640-A, the Academy has been able to forge an alliance among the various guilds of the movie industry. Serving as the umbrella organization, the Film Academy oversees the welfare of the guilds thru an assortment of subsidies, projects and opportunities that would bring about the upgrading of the knowledge and expertise of the guild members. The principal function of the Academy is to give awards in recognition of the artistic and technical excellence of the performances and to accentuate the value of quality works of the people behind the outstanding films shown during the year. The Annual Luna Awards is intended to provide the necessary motivation in enhancing the craftsmanship of movie industry workers that will eventually uplift the quality of local films. The Academy also assists in the staging and managing of the annual Metro Manila Film Festival from which proceeds the Film Academy gets a share. Delegates to foreign film festivals are primarily sent thru the intercession of the Academy. The Academy also spearheads the collaboration of the movie industry with government agencies in order to gain opportunities for the guilds and its members..."

Academy insider, Jose N. Carreon wrote: "...At seven o'clock on a Wednesday evening on April 27, 1983, the Film Academy of the Philippines held its first ever awards night for distinguished works and performances in films exhibited in 1982. The venue was the Manila Film Center, one of the cultural edifices that were constructed under the auspices of former First Lady, Madame Imelda Romualdez-Marcos...The first ever Academy award winner was the late Rodolfo 'Boy' Garcia who was adjudged the best supporting actor for his role in Ito Ba ang Ating mga Anak?...Liza Lorena was best supporting actress for her role in Oro, Plata, Mata...The late Vic Macamay won the best sound award for Gaano Kadalang ang Minsan?...The best cinematography award was won by Romy Vitug for Sinasamba Kita...Sinasamba Kita by the late George Canseco was voted the best original song...The late Orlando Nadres won the best screenplay adaptation for Sinasamba Kita...Romy Suzara won as best director for Uod at Rosas...Manay Ichu's MVP Pictures' Batch '81 was voted the first best picture of the academy awards...With the stage

overflowing with showbiz people, the best actor and best actress awards were announced. Philip Salvador (for Cain at Abel) was declared best actor over Robert Arevalo (Santa Claus is Coming to Town), Mark Gil (Batch '81), Christopher de Leon (Relasyon) and Joel Torre (Oro, Plata, Mata). The last winner of the night turned out to be Vilma Santos who was best actress for her performance in Relasyon. The other aspirants were Gina Alajar (Moral), Nora Aunor (Himala), Coney Reyes-Mumar (Pedring Taruc) and Lorna Tolentino (Moral). Then everything was history. After 25 years, we remember and we celebrate and we recommit ourselves for another quarter of a century. The Film Academy of the Philippines and its Luna Awards live on..."

Vilma Santos faces again a stiff resistance from Nora Aunor. In the end, Vilma received her fourth best actress award. And like when Nora received her TOWNS award, the former first lady, Imelda Marcos handed out the very first Academy award best actress to Vilma.

Vilma won her third major best actress in the same calendar year. One short of a complete overhaul.

Fourth Major – The award season of 1983 ended with the handing out of the FAMAS. The Manila Film Center was jam packed with not only celebrities but also a boisterous group of Noranians and Vilmanians. Unfortunately, Nora Aunor wasn't nominated for her gigantic role of Elsa in "Himala" instead, she was nominated for her portrayal of an underdog lover of the late Johnny Delgado in Romy Zuzara's "Mga Uod at Rosas (The Worms and Roses)". The competition didn't stop with Vilma's "Relasyon," Noranians were worried about the other nominees too. Hilda Koronel was cited for her solo starrer, "PX" and Alma Moreno was nominated for her daring role as Cristina Gaston in the "Diary of Cristina Gaston." The list of Nominees were completed with the inclusion of two veterans: Mona Lisa for her supposed to be supporting role in "Cain at Abel" and Liza Lorena for her surprising role in "Santa Claus is Coming to Town." With this list comes a lesser expectation from Noranians, as Nora wasn't nominated for her more intense role as Elsa. But this didn't bother them as they raided the Manila Film Centre with so much fanfare.

The unofficial FAMAS website declared the winners, "...The 31st FAMAS Awards was held at the Manila Film Center on May 28, 1983. The Best Picture went to Cine Suerte's Cain at Abel defeating Gaano Kadalas Ang Minsan [Viva Films], Himala [Experimental Cinema of the Philippines], Ang Panday: Ikatlong Yugto [FPJ Productions] and Sinasamba Kita [Viva Films]. The Best Actor went to Anthony Alonzo for Bambang defeating Christopher de Leon for Relasyon, Dolphy for My Heart Belongs to Daddy, George Estregan for Lalaki Ako, Dindo Fernando for Gaano Kadalas Ang Minsan, Fernando Poe, Jr. for Ang Panday: Ikatlong Yugto, and Philip Salvador for Cain at Abel. The best supporting Actor went to Tommy Abuel for Gaano Kadalas Ang Minsan while the best supporting Actress went to Sandy Andolong for Moral. Eddie Garcia won the best director Sinasamba Kita defeating Marilou Diaz-Abaya for Moral, Ishmael Bernal for Himala, Lino Brocka for Cain at Abel, Fernando Poe, Jr. for Ang Panday: Ikatlong Yugto and Danny Zialcita for Gaano Kadalas Ang Minsan. Gaano Kadalas Ang Minsan also won the best story for Tom Adrales; best screenplay for Tom Adrales and Danny Zialcita; best editing for Ike Jarlego, Jr.; best musical score and theme song for George Canseco and best sound for Vic Macamay. Joseph Estrada received the Hall of Famer Award for winning five times as producer. The most anticipated award was for best actress which went to Vilma Santos for Relasyon defeating Nora Aunor for Mga Uod at Rosas, Hilda Koronel for PX, Mona Lisa for Cain at Abel, Liza Lorena for Santa Claus is Coming to Town, Alma Moreno for The Diary of Cristina Gaston .."

Unfortunately, for Noranians, their idol went empty handed again for the last time. Vilma claimed her fourth major best actress in one calendar year. The night for Vilmanians didn't stop from Vilma's win. Eddie Garcia won the best director award for a Vilma Santos' blockbuster film, "Sinasamba Kita."

Noranians were all mad as hell. Writer Bum D. Tenorio Jr., in his article for Philippine Star, described how the feisty Noranians reacted on Vilma's win on their home turf, the Gawad Urian, "...Talk about Himala, it was because of this movie that two ladies in my neighborhood got into a nasty hair-pulling fight. Nora could have won the grand slam for Best Actress in all the award-giving bodies for this movie in 1982 except that her archrival and now Batangas Gov. Vilma Santos won for the movie "Relasyon" in the Gawad Urian. The feisty Noranians in the neighborhood could not accept this, while the Vilmanians gloated. This irreconcilable difference unfortunately turned ugly. In those days, fans were fiercely loyal. When Vilmanians talked about "Wonder V," expect Noranians to come up with "Super G." When Vilmanians mentioned how they got scared in "Phantom Lady," expect a multitude of Noranians to thwart their claim by discussing "Fe, Esperanza, Caridad," Nora's suspense thriller. Even when Nora and Vilma starred together in a movie, say "Pinagbuklod ng Pag-Ibig" or the legendary "T-Bird at Ako," competition between fans of both camps still raged. But in my community, the Noranians always prevailed!..."

Paranoia seeped in their brain as they hypothesized the reasons why Nora failed to win any awards. Sabotage according to them was the only reason. The political repercussion of the film being made under the Marcos administration resulted Nora Aunor being ignored by all award-giving bodies! Never mind that Vilma Santos deserved all the wins. Vilma Santos swept the entire best actress in four major award-giving bodies in one calendar year. The tag line "grand slam" was born.

In addition to the above majors, talk show, "Let's talk movies" came up with their own film awards on its anniversary presentation at the end of 1982. The hosts, Behn Cervantes (filmmaker, film critic), Armida Siguion Reyna (film actress, producer) and Mario Bautista (movie reporter, critic, columnist) were quoted as who they think deserve the year's accolade.

Behn Cervantes: "...Behn's choice for best movie of 1982 comes easy, with one qualification (he has not seen Oro, Plata, Mata). "It's Batch '81 because it was innovative and more daring...As for the choice of best actress, "mahirap iyan," Behn admits spontaneously. "It's a difficult choice between Gina Alajar in Moral and Nora Aunor in Himala. Gina was beautifully flamboyant and effective as the funky character in Moral, while Nora was very cinematic in Himala. Nora is one actress who knows how to use her medium...Vilma is also good. She knows her craft, but somehow, at the moment of truth, physically she doesn't quite hit me. There's something very cutesified about it..."

Armida Siguion Reyna: "...Armida has said it in her TV show Let's Talk Movies and she's saying it again: her choice for best movie not only for the film fest but for the entire 1982 is Moral. "It's very 'today,' NOW. You really get to identify with the characters in the movie...After Moral, Armida chooses Oro, Plata, Mata and Cain at Abel, respectively, as among 1982's best...Armida chooses Vilma Santos as best actress for her performance in Relasyon. "I can't explain my choice in the beautiful language of the Manunuri but I go by gut and alam kong maganda." She is also more inclined toward Vilma because the actress made a number of good movies last year..."

Mario E. Bautista: "...For us, sinuman ang manalo kina Vilma Santos o Lorna Tolentino ay okey lang. Both Gina and Nora have won the Urian best actress awards twice. Gina for Brutal and Salome, Nora for Tatlong Taong Walang Diyos and Bona. Napakagaling ni Gina in portraying the role of the trying

hard Kathy in Moral. Hindi biru-biro ang ganoong character na gagawin mong sympathetic dahil mas malamang na lumabas itong ridiculous lang kaysa nakakakuha ng simpatiya. But Gina succeeded in making her Kathy both ridiculous and sympathetic. As Elsa, Nora's case is that of star and role merging into one, fitting into each other perfectly dahil alam nating ang karisma ni Guy sa kanyang fans ay siya ring karisma ni Elsa sa kanyang naging followers. Pero palagay namin, kung hindi magta-tie sina Lorna at Vilma, mananalo ng solo si Vilma Santos. Vi has never won the Urian. She should have gotten it in 1977 for Burlesk Queen but the trophy went to Daria Ramirez in Sinong Kasiping. Maraming acting highlights ang paper ni Vi bilang Marilou sa Relasyon. Sa confrontation scenes nila ni Boyet, superb siya roon sa tagpong sinusumbatan niya ito dahil ginagawa na lamang siyang tau-tauhan. Ang acting niya sa death scene ni Boyet na hindi malaman ang gagawin sa katarantahan is also awesome to behold..."

Unfortunately, despite their highly praises of Nora Aunor, the talk show hosts gave their nod to Vilma Santos due to their technical rules. An article from Movie Flash explained: "...In celebration of its first anniversary, Channel 9's Let's Talk Movies will have a special presentation on December 14 from 9:30 to 11:30 pm. The talk show hosted by Armida Siguion-Reyna, Behn Cervantes and Mario E. Bautista will distribute seven major awards to deserving artists who excelled in local pictures shown from Dec, 1981 to November, 1982. The Let's Talk Movies awards differ from those of other award-giving bodies in that they honor a director or performer not for just a single work or performance in one movie but for a body of outstanding works or performances shown during the said fiscal year. This is in line with the show's aim to help uplift local movies. To qualify, a nominee should have at least two significant contributions. Nominees for...best actress...are Gina Alajar (Init o Lamig, Pusong Uhaw), Nora Aunor (Uod at Rosa, T-bird, Rock 'n Roll, Palengke Queen), Amy Austria (Katas ng Langis, Waywaya, Pusong Uhaw), Vilma Santos (Karma, Relasyon, T-bird, Sinasamba Kita, Never Ever Say Goodbye) and Maricel Soriano (Galawgaw, Mother Dear, Schoolgirls)...An award for best producer will be given to the company which has produced the most number of outstanding films during the year. Special citations will be given to movie personnel who made worthy contributions to the industry during the year..."

While Vilmanians celebrated their idol's historical win, Nora Aunor redeemed their broken ego by lining up to the 1983 Manila International Film Festival on June 24th, Himala was chosen as the opening gala film together with Hollywood film, Gandhi as the closing.

After the awards season of 1983, Vilma Santos released three more films after the disappointment, Ayaw Kong Maging Kerida.

On June 9th, Viva Films released Paano Ba ang Mangarap? that turned out to be another box office hit. Few months afterwards, Regal films released Bernal's Broken Marriage, the follow-up film after the successful grand slam film, Relasyon.

Finally, four days after Vi's birthday, Viva Films released Marilou Diaz-Abaya's drama, Minsan pa Natin Hagkan Ang Nakaraan, another box office hit. This film plus the two films mentioned above confirmed her bankable status. Not to be outshined again, "Himala" continued its relentless fight for recognition, winning the bronze prize at the 1983 Chicago International Film Festival on November of 1983 (Nov 4-18 1983).

Vilma Santos made history. The first grand slam win of Vilma Santos was repeatedly analyzed over and over again. Mostly to give accolade to Nora Aunor.

Joel David, in his article titled "Performances of the Age" wrote: "...the outstanding performance of the period belongs to that of Nora Aunor in *Himala*, which was honoured only by the MMFF....In *Himala* the director and writer seemed to have agreed to a mutual stand-off, thus amplifying the theatrical potential of an expansive locale with a protracted takes; stage-trained talents ensured the competent execution of histrionic stylizations, with the climax set on an open-air platform before a hysterical audience. It was a truly great actress' opportunity of a lifetime, and Nora Aunor seized it and made it not just her role, but her film as well. Not since Anita Linda in Gerardo de Leon's *Sisa* (circa the first Golden Age) had there been such a felicitous exploitation by a performer of ideal filmmaking conditions – and in this instance, *Himala* has the decided advantage of being major-league and universal...."

Arnel Resma Ramos' article titled "Himala Revisited" praised Nora's complex role: "...we believe that Nora Aunor should have swept all the best actress awards for that particular year...Aunor had the more complex role and only an actress of her calibre can pull off the part with much persuasion. It calls for a restrained, self-effacing acting style. And Aunor, the consummate actress that she was...strikes not a false note in her performance. It is, in one word, mesmerizing. And *Himala* is without a scintilla of a doubt the pinnacle of her cinematic achievements."

In recent years, *Himala* was recognized in many film exhibitions around the world. Even international television network fell on the prey and held an international internet poll, raising *Himala* to its highest glory, proclaiming the film as one of Asia's best film. They hail, finally, Aunor were given the citations its truly deserved!

Again, never mind that Vilma Santos gave the most effective performance in the history of local movie screen. The fact is, no matter what they do or say they can't change history. Vilma Santos was the very first "grand slam" best actress winner.

The history continues – Three years after Vilma Santos registered the very first grand slam win, Philip Salvador replicated the honours by winning all the best actor in 1985 via Lino Brocka's political drama, 'Bayan Ko kapit sa Patalim.' Salvador won five majors as Star Awards were added to the four. The next year, 1986, Nida Blanca followed suit with a best supporting actress grand slam for her outstanding performance in the film, "Magdusa Ka." Then four years after Blanca's came the most awaited turn for Vilma's rival.

Noraniens were ecstatic as their idol claimed all the best actress hardwares of 1990 for "Andrea Paano Ba Ang Maging Isang Ina." A deserving consolation as the film bombed at the box office. Nora's stiffest competition came from Vilma's two films, Lino Brocka's "Hahamakin Lahat," and Laurice Guillen's "Kapag Langit ang Humatol." But the table was turned and Nora claimed almost all of the major awards except from CMMA where she was declared runner up to Gina Alajar.

By 1990, CMMA was relegated into the minor league of award giving bodies replaced by much more popular Star Awards. Two years after Nora Aunor claimed the honour as grand slam winner, Lorna Tolentino took the crown for her effective performance in 1992's "Narito Ang Puso Ko."

Then back to Vilma again. – In 1993, Vilma Santos successfully relived the life of the first PWA in Laurence Guillen's "Dahil Mahal Kita: Dolzura Cortez Story." Not only the film recorded the second grand slam win for Vilma as best actress of 1993, the film was also a smashed hit. The two years intervals prove to be a normal pattern as Vilma's closest rival took all the trophies again in 1995.

Nora Aunor hit the jackpot via true to life film, the “Flor Contemplacion Story.” And not only did she won the grand slams, she added an international recognition winning the best actress at Cairo International Film Festival. In addition to the majors, Aunor also received the best performer from YCC and the box office queen title from the Guillermo Mendoza Memorial Scholarship Foundation, Inc. (GMMSFI).

The next years, two actresses claimed the grand slam honours. Sharon Cuneta as best actress for her effective performance in “Madrasta (the Stepmother)” and the best supporting actress awards for Gina Alajar in “Mulanay, Sa Pusod Ng Paraiso.”

Then back to Vilma Santos again after two years for the third time. Vilma Santos won all the best actress awards for 1998’s “Bata Bata Paano Ka Ginawa (Lea’s Story)”. Then like Aunor in 1995, she added an international recognition with her grand slam win. Vilma was cited as the best actress at the Brussels International Film Festival. And also received the YCC-Film Desk’s best performer award.

By 1999, the grand slams wins were alive and kicking. Elizabeth Oropieza won all the best actress hardwares for her very intense performance as a prostitute in 1998’s “Bulaklak Ng Maynila.” The same year, an unknown actress Glydel Mercado, surprised everyone as she won all the best supporting actress awards coincidentally from a Nora Aunor comeback vehicle, “Sidhi.”

Then in 2002, Vilma Santos for the fourth time claimed the grand slam title by winning all the best actress awards for her superb performance in the film, “Dekada 70 (the seventies).” At the same time, Vilma’s co-star, Piolo Pascual declared his arrival to the big league of fine acting by winning all the best supporting actor awards. The film also gave Vilma her second international recognition winning the best actress from Cinemanila International Film Festival. In addition, she also received hardwares from PASADO (Pampelikulang Samahan ng mga Dalubguro) and YCC-Film Desk in its annual Circle Citations.

In Conclusion – For Noranians, Nora Aunor should be given the honour as the very first grand slam win in 1976 as they argued Aunor won the best actress from FAMAS and Gawad Urian, the only major award giving bodies back then. Unfortunately, this wins didn’t create the tag line, grand slam. Also, Vilma Santos, as film producer won all the best picture award in 1978 for Pagputi ng Uwak Pagitim ng Tagak from FAMAS and Gawad Urian, still the only major award giving bodies. Unfortunately, no one said this is a grand slam win.

It was only when Vilma Santos won four majors in 1983 did the tag line “grand slam” came to its birth at least in Philippine award giving film history. And so, history will record Vilma’s achievements as the very first actress who claimed all four major best actresses in one calendar year based on the true meaning of the word “grand slam.” She is also the current record holder of the most grand slam wins, four [Relasyon (1982); Dahil Mahal Kita – The Dulzora Cortez Story (1993); Bata, Bata, Paano Ka Ginawa? (1998); and “Dekada 70” (2002)]. - Florencio “Rendt” Viray, V Magazine 2007, ([READ MORE](#))