

# Celebrities Laid Bare

Lensman Dominic Khoo's new book exposes the nakedness of human emotion and charity. By Kim Reyes

In the pages of his charity book project, *Pure*, photographer and prolific watch connoisseur Dominic Khoo exposes top local celebrities in all their raw glory. The black-and-white untouched portraits in the coffee-table tome show the stars in the nude, either laughing or crying.

But this is much more than a 'celebrity striptease' photo book. The project's most exposed subject is never photographed at all — the exposure of charities and their financial practices is the book's main aim.

Charities interested in acquiring the funds raised from the book's sales will have to submit financial documents for consideration. One efficiently-managed charity will then be chosen by a committee headed by Khoo and including model-host Nadya Hutagalung and Nominated Member of Parliament Eunice Olsen.

This idea of photographing celebrities — including Charmaine Ham, Michelle Chia, Mark Zee and Amber Chia — naked while baring their feelings, arose from the photographer's experience of losing his mother.

Khoo chose to shoot celebrities in moments of intense sorrow and joy — all unscripted — to show the nakedness of human emotion. "Famous people, despite the glamorous outfits and lifestyles, also have very human sides," said Khoo.

Most of the local stars who agreed to be physically and emotionally exposed did so because of the project's philanthropic purpose, despite the sensitive nature of the project and limited benefits to their careers. This coming together for a common cause, Khoo adds, will hopefully give the public "newfound faith in charities again, in light of recent events". The chosen charity will receive all the proceeds

raised from sales of the limited-edition tome. Only around 30 copies will be printed and each page will also be personally autographed before being auctioned off or sold through Khoo's website, [www.whatisthisight.com](http://www.whatisthisight.com), for a projected four-figure sum.

All the photographs will remain digitally unenhanced, a stark contrast to the manipulated celebrity glamour shots the public is used to seeing. Here, their imperfections show — pimples, pores and all — sans heavy make-up or a stylist's wardrobe.

Ultimately, it is this raw, emotional and human side of the stars Khoo would rather champion. "The celebs I chose are people who have good hearts," he says, "and have a lot more to show than just their bodies." ■

"Famous people, despite the glamorous outfits and lifestyles, also have very human sides." — photographer Dominic Khoo



## UTT PANICHKUL Television actor and MTV VJ

**Why I took part in this project** After meeting with Dominic, I felt comfortable with the direction of the project.

**What "naked" means to me** It's usually related to being sexual, but really it's about being human — we were all born naked.

**On being photographed naked** I wasn't nervous about it because the context of the shoot was on human emotions.

**On the photos being released untouched** It reflected the rawness of the photos — expressing sorrow and laughter.

**My celebrity image vs true self** How much of anyone's true self is in their persona when they go to work? What's real when they're out of the home and what's hidden when they're not? The whole world's a stage and we're merely actors in it.

**What I felt most 'naked' or 'exposed'** Walking in on my mum when she was showering! I felt like I was the one naked and exposed.

**What I would never want exposed to the public** My address.

## MAY WAN

Model and former MTV VJ

**Why I took part in this project** It's for a good cause, and for the chance to work with Dominic. What "naked" means to me Being vulnerable and completely helpless.

**On being photographed naked** Dominic made me very comfortable and I was confident being in my own skin. He was very considerate by keeping it a closed set.

**How it felt to be physically and emotionally 'exposed'** It was extremely intense. The emotions come on pretty strong because you are exposed and have nowhere to run. It was an incredible experience to let all my emotions go, especially in front of someone I've never met before.

**On the photos being released untouched** The less untouched, the better. This gives the public a chance to see the real us, with pimples, loose bits and all.

**When I feel most 'naked' or 'exposed'** When I'm shoved into the limelight. Believe it or not, I can be extremely shy during public events.

## CHOY WAN

Model and former MTV VJ

**Why I took part in this project** It is for charity after all. It is always good to give back to society.

**What "naked" means to me** It's a vulnerability we hide from the world because of shyness, we're afraid to let our guard down and show it to people for fear of rejection or opinions we don't want to hear.

**On being photographed naked** I've done artistic semi-nude shots before, so I had some experience. I've always been comfortable in my own skin so there was nothing to be shy about.

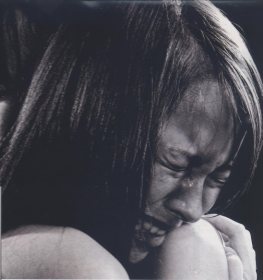
**How it felt to be physically and emotionally 'exposed'** Very raw. Especially when I had to cry naked. It made me feel like a helpless baby. After the shoot, I felt so emotionally drained, but the shot came out great so it was worth all the tears.

**On the photos being released untouched** You will see the real Choy! Crow's feet, freckles and one big eye, one little eye! I love my imperfections.

**My celebrity image vs true self** The majority of what you see in public is really me. When it comes to my TV personality, it's tweaked by a few editors just for entertainment value. Other than that, it's all me.

**When I feel most 'naked' or 'exposed'** In the beginnings of falling in love, I feel afraid to say my feelings at first.

PHOTOGRAPHY: JAMES MCKAY



## JAYMEE ONG

Model and actress

**Why I took part in this project** I felt it was an original and beautiful concept at raising awareness of important issues.

**What "naked" means to me** The exposure of your authentic self that is rarely seen by others. A part of yourself that is covered by insecurities or fears.

**On being photographed naked** I was more apprehensive about being raw emotions than the fact that I had no clothes on. Exposing your inner emotions for all to see is scarier than being naked.

**On the photos being released untouched** I know that that was going to happen and I was fine with it.

**My celebrity image vs true self** All these "sexy" pics you see of me in bikinis are pretty much just image. I'm much more comfortable in my sweats while hanging out at home.

**When I feel most 'naked' or 'exposed'** Whenever I have the courage to acknowledge my weaknesses.

**What I would never want exposed to the public** I like to keep my family and relationships personal. Ultimately, what I do is just a job and there's no need for certain things to be analysed or criticised.

"I was more apprehensive about baring raw emotions than the fact that I had no clothes on. Exposing your inner emotions for all to see is scarier than being naked." — model Jaymee Ong

