



**FILIPINA SUCCESS STORY.** Rose Fostanes sings during a rehearsal of "X-Factor Israel" in Tel Aviv. The 47-year-old Filipino caregiver has emerged as the newest star of Israeli reality television, putting a human face on the thousands of foreign workers who toil away in menial, back-breaking jobs in the country. (AP Photo/Ariel Schalit)

## Filipino diva is feel-good story of Israeli television

By Isaac Scharf  
The Associated Press

**J**ERUSALEM — A 47-year-old Filipina caregiver who emerged as the newest star of Israeli reality television, putting a human face on the thousands of foreign workers who toil away in menial, back-breaking jobs in the country, won the inaugural competition.

Israeli viewers of the country's myriad of reality shows had grown accustomed to successful candidates from various backgrounds, including black-clad ultra-Orthodox Jews, Ethiopian immigrants, and a German convert to Judaism who became a celebrity chef. But they had never seen someone like Rose Fostanes before.

The diminutive woman with a booming voice took "X-Factor Israel" by storm and emerged as a national phenomenon. Known simply as "Rose," she is mobbed by fans wherever she goes.

"It's a big change in my life because before nobody recognized me, nobody knew me. But now everybody, I think everybody in Israel, knows my name. And it is very funny," she said.

Fostanes arrived six years ago to work as a caregiver so, like millions of other Filipino workers around the world, she could send money back home to her family and her girlfriend.

She spends her days caring and cleaning for an ailing woman in her 50s. To save money, Fostanes lives in a crowded apartment in south Tel Aviv, a downtrodden area inhabited by foreign laborers, with seven others.

Until recently, Fostanes was among the thousands of Filipinos who work in similar positions in Israel. The site of Filipino workers wheeling elderly Israelis in public places is so common that the word "Filipini" has become synonymous with "caregiver."

Several months ago, a friend encouraged her to enter the "X-Factor" competition, a popular show hosted by Israeli supermodel Bar Refaeli. Standing just 4'11", Fostanes

captured her audiences' hearts with a surprisingly strong and soulful voice, belting out such hits as Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody" and Lady Gaga's "You and I."

Israeli singer Shiri Maimon, a judge on the show and a former reality TV contestant herself, has served as Fostanes' "mentor" throughout the season. After a recent rendition of Christina Aguilera's "Beautiful," Maimon could barely contain her excitement.

"It was so moving. I am so proud of you. We will have an amazing journey together," she said. "I'm speechless. It was more than perfect."

Fostanes said she has dreamed of singing since she was a child, but suffered discrimination because of her appearance. She said she still can't believe how far she has come.

"Sometimes I am telling myself, 'Is it true that it happened to me?'" she said. "At least I can express and show the people that I have also talents and it's not too late for me to shine."

Fostanes said she has been a caregiver since the age of 23, working in Egypt and Lebanon before coming to Israel. She is among the roughly 10 million Filipinos, or 10 percent of the overall population, who work abroad.

Israel's estimated 40,000 Filipinos enjoy relative freedom, as long as they have work permits. Most remain for an agreed-upon period of time before returning home.

Fostanes said Filipinos around the world have heard about her and frequently send her text messages of support. But her success was tempered by the distance from her loved ones. She last visited the Philippines two years ago.

"Really I miss them, my family especially, and of course my girlfriend because this is the time I really need them beside me," she said, with tears in her eyes, during the final rounds of competition.

Fostanes' winning performance was with "My Way," a song made famous by the late Frank Sinatra.

## 'Saturday Night Live' comes to China's internet

By Louise Watt  
The Associated Press

**B**EIJING — A popular online video site is bringing the irreverent, topical humor of "Saturday Night Live" to China.

The late-night U.S. comedy sketch show that regularly mocks politicians, popular culture, and celebrities is being shown exclusively on the website of Sohu Video, a unit of Chinese online media group and Nasdaq-listed Sohu.com Inc.

Ten episodes from the current 39th season of "SNL" are available now. Future episodes will be available online without subtitles the Monday after airing in the United States, and a version with Chinese subtitles and explanations of cultural references will be available at 10:00pm the following Saturday, Sohu said in its announcement.

The NBC network show has been a comedy proving ground since its inception with Eddie Murphy, Tina Fey, Amy Poehler, Jimmy Fallon, and Will Ferrell among its cast over the years. Many of its original sketches and musical performances have been made into movies — including the 1992 hit *Wayne's World* — or gone viral online.

Topics have featured China, including a sketch of a press conference with then-Chinese-President Hu Jintao berating President Barack Obama over the national debt.

But Sohu chairman and CEO Charles Zhang said he didn't expect the show's edgy themes to get them into trouble in China.

"Things that are controversial in America are probably not controversial in China," he said. "And this talk show is in the spirit of fun and humor. I don't think there will be any problem."

Chinese films and television shows are routinely censored to prevent criticism of leaders or socially sensitive content, including sexually suggestive humor, and "SNL" frequently tests those boundaries.

Zhang said the show, if popular in China, could inspire Chinese companies to produce shows with similar formats — although content was another matter. "It's a different political setting," he said at a news conference, also attended by American stand-up comedian Joe Wong and Beijing-born television host and musician Kelly Cha.

Sohu Video's site, like many other Chinese online video sites, licenses many hit American television shows alongside Japanese animation series, Chinese variety shows, and in-house programs.



**SLIGHTLY DELAYED FROM NEW YORK ...** Sohu chairman and CEO Charles Zhang strikes a pose next to a poster for the American irreverent comedy sketch show "Saturday Night Live" after a press conference at Sohu Media Plaza in Beijing. The late-night U.S. comedy sketch show that regularly mocks politicians, popular culture, and celebrities is being shown exclusively on the website of Sohu Video, a unit of Chinese online media group and Nasdaq-listed Sohu.com Inc. (AP Photo/Andy Wong)

Sohu's early U.S. programs were "Lost" and "The Big Bang Theory," and last year it obtained the exclusive online broadcast rights for the second season of hit reality show "The Voice of China," which generated nearly 2 billion video views, according to the company.

Zhang said U.S. television shows have been successful at generating advertising revenue online in China. Zhang didn't give a figure for how much they had paid for exclusive rights to "Saturday Night Live" within China, but said it was cheaper per episode than for a U.S. drama series.

China's government restricts foreign access to the country's television audience and bars most of its cable operators from carrying foreign channels. Online video provides more access for foreign productions.

Unlike a few years ago, most of the western television shows and movies found on Chinese websites today are licensed, although pirated content still exists. Zhang welcomed an announcement from a government agency labelling China's largest search engine, Baidu Inc., and software company QVOD, the top two copyright violators last year. The National Copyright Administration of China also fined both companies 250,000 yuan (\$40,000), the highest penalty at its disposal.

Complaints by Sohu and other online video providers had prompted its investigation, which found the two linked to websites hosting infringed content.

### Department of Consumer & Business Services



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