

THE WAVE OF THE NEW GENERATION

Krissada Sukosol Clapp (Noi) and Melanie Giles-Clapp might not be a perfect family, but they are seen as the archetypal dreamy couple that has grown up in a well-established family—the Sukosols. There's no need to talk about his love and passion for music, as people already know about this, but now he has finished filming a movie and has taken a break from music and is working full time on creating a new hotel business—The Siam and The Wave. The following is part of an interview with Krissada Sukosol Clapp (widely known as Noi Wong Phru) and his wife, which will provide ideas about love, family unity, a distinctive artistic sense, and bringing out the best in family members in creating a new hotel business to challenge the market.





IR: How do you feel about handling the hotel business full time and having the freedom to develop The Wave in Pattaya and The Siam, which is expected to become a new highlight in Bangkok in the second quarter this year?



Noi: My idea to do the new hotel, The Siam, became real about five years ago, before we had children. Actually, I should have had my new album come out this year, but I have not yet gone back to the studio to think about the songs. It's because my passion has been for the new hotel and my family business. As for the suggestion that I've passed my peak in music, I've never thought that it's about the peak. I think it's important to have different passions, whatever you like doing — film, music, family, and business. It's about the ability to do many things, not just one passion, just one thing. It's quite a different feeling between music and business. You have only one chance to create a hotel, as the investment is so high. Making an album, if it doesn't work, you can have another chance to rebound with another album. The hotel business is a kind of once-in-a-lifetime, multi-billion-baht investment, so you cannot afford to make any mistakes. That's why I have to put more into the hotel business to make it work, as it's part of my family business.

I'm so lucky and happy to have the chance to do different things — singing and doing business. Actually, I haven't made a new album for a while, but I still have a fan base and many people still hire me to sing at different events here and there. It's great for me. Life keeps going forward in a new direction, and even if I don't have a new album coming out, I still have the fan base that grew up with me. So, I'm very lucky.



Melanie: It's the same passion from his music and movies in the art of the hotel and the creative concept of The Siam. Noi likes to do a movie every year, and his new music is underway. He's a perfectionist; he likes to make everything perfect, so it might take a long time to finish the new studio album. But I've never told him to rush the new album; he can finish it in his own time. You know, the majority of friends on my Facebook page are fans of Noi.

IR: We heard that Siam City Hotel is going to be renamed the Sukosol Hotel. Is this true? If so, what is the idea behind the decision to give it a new name?



Actually I love the area and I love antiques, and I hope that it will be a good choice to enjoy a glimpse of the old days, back to the 1920s. I wish I could live both then and now. There is no luxurious and beautiful hotel in that area yet, even though tourists like to experience that part of Bangkok. I was thinking of building something simple, but now it has become a luxury hotel resort

Noi & Melanie: Malisa [Sukosol], the executive vice president, came up with the idea to rename Siam City Hotel as Sukosol Hotel. She is Noi's older sister and has worked for the Sukosol hotel business and grown alongside Khun Kamala Sukosol, her mother, from the very beginning. Malisa felt that it was a good time to re-brand the hotel and the Sukosol group of companies, covering properties, condos, electronics, industrial equipment, and trading. But the hotel business and music is what the Sukosol name is famous for. It's the dynamic side of the group, and Malisa thought it was the right time to change, as we have a new generation and the new hotels. Actually we have thought about this for a long time, and it's now the right time for me and my older brother, Sukie, to slow down in music to help the family business, to re-launch and re-brand. We've seen the hospitality and service industry dramatically change, and we have to compete. We came up with choices of new names, but we thought they might be hard to pronounce or remember, for both Thais and foreigners. But Thai people know the family name very well, so we thought it a good idea to use Sukosol as the new name of the Siam City Hotel. We are all Thai and we have an interesting list of Sanskrit names to choose from, but Sukosol is already beautiful and meaningful in itself.

IR: What is the inspiration behind the new hotel's design and the overall character of The Siam and The Wave?



Noi: We have land by the river at one of the coveted locations on Ratanakosin island, the old part of Bangkok. I spoke to my mum and she wanted me to help the family business and she really liked the idea of The Siam. Actually I love the area and I love antiques, and I hope that it will be a good choice to enjoy a glimpse of the old days, back to the 1920s. I wish I could live both then and now. There is no luxurious and beautiful hotel in that area yet, even though tourists like to experience that part of Bangkok. I was thinking of building something simple, but now it has become a luxury hotel resort. It's quite pretty and charming, like the Rachamankha Hotel in Chiang Mai, one of our favourite hotels.

The Wave is definitely different in style. It's being built now in downtown Pattaya, facing the sea. The city has been blooming recently, with nice hotels and big resorts, due to a massive marketing campaign. One of our first hotels in Pattaya was the Siam Bayshore, followed by Siam Bayview, and The Wave will be our new sister hotel. It's located in front of the Siam Bayview. It's modern and small with about 21 rooms, with a strong décor element — modern-contemporary but funky. The aim is to make it feel fun by the beach, as we're looking for a new clientele in Pattaya. Anyway, it was my mum's idea to build The Wave. My older brother, Sukie, has a firm hand on the construction work and I take care of the interior design. We might also have another property in Kanchanaburi province as well.

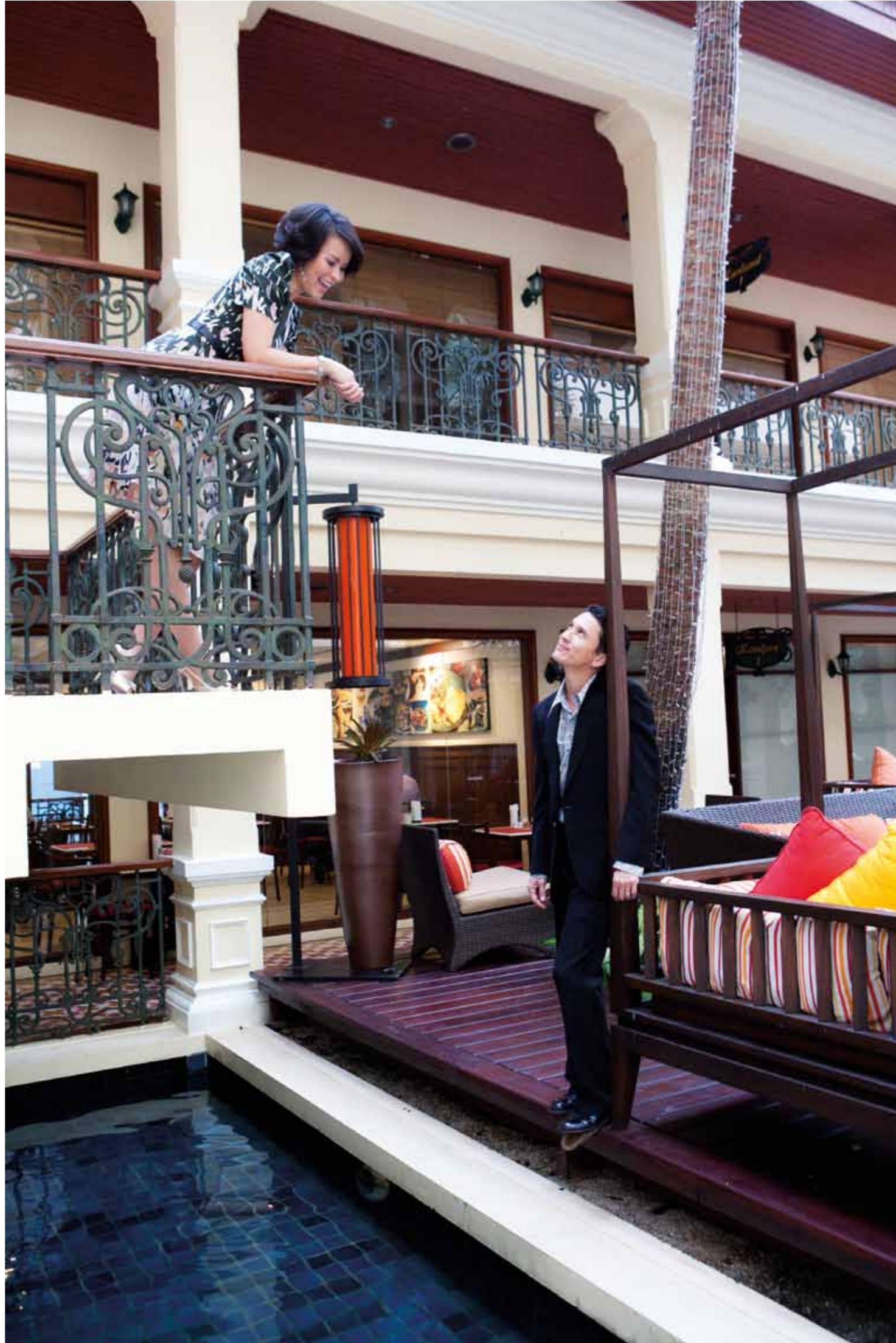
Melanie: I do the PR for The Siam. I feel I want to distance myself from using the word "boutique". I don't want to use "boutique" as the key word to describe The Siam. The word is over-used and sometimes wrongly conveys the sense of being very small. But The Siam is actually a luxury property situated on eight rai of land, and the rooms and the public areas are very big. Nearly every time I hand out the press releases, people say, "Oh my god, it's huge." We have a spa, dining area, swimming pool, library, gym, and other leisure facilities. There are many hotel resorts with more than 100 rooms, but they still like to use the word "boutique". As for The Wave, it's situated on a great piece of land. People can come to enjoy it as more than just a hotel, with restaurants for the family. I feel it's about bringing out the best from brother and sister, working together to come up with new creative ideas to ensure the success of The Siam and The Wave. Noi's older sisters are good in finance and construction, and Noi likes to do interior design, as he has a good eye. Building a hotel is like selling an experience, and we think it's a form of escapism to create another world to relax in with your family on holiday, and Noi is communicating his experience in the interior design.



IR: Opening or launching a new hotel at this time is quite challenging. There are already many renowned hotel chains in Thailand. What is your main concern about launching the new hotels in Pattaya and Bangkok?

Melanie: Personally I don't think that we have to worry about the big chain hotels, as the majority of them, including large business hotels, tend not to have 5-star service and facilities, which is what we have now at The Siam. We have personalized service and luxury facilities to ensure a pleasurable hotel-resort experience in Bangkok. We have a new slogan for the Sukosol hotel group – "Hotel's HeArt" – as we have art in the heart and a true passion for the hotel business. When I go on holiday or travel to different countries, I really want to experience the authentic art and culture of that country. So I want other discerning travellers to come to Thailand and experience a true sense of being in Thailand at our hotels.

Noi: The Wave will be a beautiful property, professionally run by an enthusiastic group of people to compete with the international chains. We should take pride in it. For The Siam, to me it will be like coming into a mansion home, with a lot of antiques collected by my mum and me. Now, when travelling abroad, we prefer not to stay at big hotels anymore; instead we stay at small places with individual character, even in farmhouses. We and the whole family, including mum, children, and older brothers and sisters, go on holiday every year. We take two vans and we drive ourselves, planning our trip and doing research online by ourselves. We opt to stay at small houses in Europe, only occasionally at large hotels. We really like to be comfortable, but down to earth.



IR: People know that your music is creative and emotionally distinctive. What about creating a hotel? How do you get or form ideas? Do you look to musical inspiration? Is there any music angle in your ideas for business?

Noi: I don't play any musical instrument, but I know exactly the sound and melody I want in a song. When I made previous albums, I asked the guitarist to play notes and then I sang a note, and he played according to the melody I would hum. In building a hotel, I am not the architect, so I can't draw the building, but I know what the central concept is and how to create an interesting experience for guests. And we have been very lucky to collaborate with Bill Bensley's design company in developing my ideas for The Siam. As for music at The Siam, I don't think we want any new-age kind of music; we want something compatible with the ambience, like old-school Thai classical music. This is an important ingredient in creating a hotel. Sometimes I like to have a glass of wine while listening to nice music, and when I'm at home I like to walk around sipping wine and thinking about music, and then ideas about design and decoration pop into my head.

IR: What do you want to achieve this year in business and music?

Noi: A lot is going to happen this year. The Siam is slated to open in June and The Wave is expected to open in November. I've just finished filming a gangster movie, and the premiere is expected to be in May. And my new album should be finished within this year. So, for me, there are lots of things to work on. But the hotel business is the most important, even though music and movies are still what I truly love.

Melanie: We will also be organizing the annual charity concert in March, which was postponed from November last year due to the floods. It will be a time when the whole family, friends, and the hotel staff get together on stage, have fun, and sing. But this year, I will not be on stage. I sang about 12 years ago but I've never been on stage since then. It may be that I don't have good voice, but I can sing in key and can play the piano and harp.








IR: Is family unity important to both of you, as it's brought amazing success for the Sukosol businesses?

Melanie: I think it's definitely part of the success of the family business. We have never said we have to be a perfect family, as that brings pressure. But family unity should come from the heart. Anyway, no family is perfect, and nobody is perfect. If you have a bad time and can get over it and keep moving on, you will have a good life.

Noi: My mum comes from a well-established family and my father is from a middle-class family in America. I have been so lucky to live with great parents who brought me up to be who I am today.

IR: People have different perceptions about the saying, "Living a quality life". What does it mean to you?

Noi: To me, quality of life is doing what you love and finding out who you are. We are lucky being able to do what we love. Other people might have a luxury home or big business, but they might not enjoy what they are doing. One of the most important things is to have a good and strong family as the foundation. And you have to have good health. Luckily we have two healthy kids. And lastly, always speak the truth about what and who you are. 

IR: What do you do to impress each other?

Noi: Melanie is actually my reality check, and sometimes I cannot do without her. She helps me complete my sentences and my thoughts.

Melanie: Noi is quiet, patient and has a sense of romance. We have enough in common and enough differences. We love antiques and simplicity and music. We did PR and marketing for international artists about 14 years ago. That was when I met Noi and we started our relationship. Now we have two kids, a boy and a girl.

IR: What is your guiding principle in maintaining your love life and family unity?

Noi & Melanie: Always respect for one another. Other couples might have individual careers and little time for each other, leading to the end of love. Celebrities might not have normal lives, and sometime they can't even go shopping in the supermarket due to the public recognition. We try to enjoy a normal life, and Noi has always been himself, easy-going whenever he goes out. Sometimes people might view us as a dream couple, but we aren't so perfect.



Make-Up Artist & Hair Stylish: Panipa Hair Nails
Beauty Wellness
Location: Siam City Hotel, Bangkok.