

➡ *Tiny Island Productions on **Channel News Asia** by Hoe Yeen Nie*
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3D Animation puts Singapore on world map

Singapore - A small production company from Singapore is making ripples around the world with its animation project "Dream Defenders"



The show, which is targeted at six to nine year olds, is also Singapore's first animation series in stereoscopic 3D. In "Dream Defenders", the heroes Zoey and Zane move between dreams and reality, fighting off, literally, your worst nightmares. It features cool gadgets, scary villains, and above all, a lesson in conquering your fears.

Tiny Island Productions managing director David Kwok said: "The monsters here in Dreamworld are made from the fears and worries you bring with you. No worries, no monsters"! "Dream Defenders" is made in both stereoscopic 3D, which requires special viewing glasses, and flat animation, which is what is seen on screens. With few such titles on the market, creators Tiny Island Productions says going 3D helped them stand out.

The show had been in the works for a year, and it was at the MIPTV trade show in Cannes in April that Tiny Island realised many buyers were looking for content in stereoscopic 3D. Production of the 26-episode series started in June, and they have completed their first episode, with four more on the way.

"Though we are very strong in creating content, the 3D opportunities (and) 3D market really give us a much higher advantage, because of the strong demand in the West: in US, in Europe as well as in Asia," Mr Kwok said.

Their work impressed a major US network so much that it commissioned Tiny Island to work on one of its projects.

Creating a good product with a strong cast and storyline is important of course, but as with most animation shows, merchandising is where the money is, with expected returns of about two to three times the initial investment.

So from the look of the characters to the gadgets they carry, it's all designed to be as marketable as possible to toy companies. Beyond creating content, Mr Kwok has also set up a school, CG Protege, to train budding animation artists across the range of specialisations - from 3D animation, and visual effects, to modelling and texturing.

CG Protege was established four years ago to fill the talent shortage needed to kickstart the animation industry, Mr Kwok said. Since then, graduates have moved on to work for Tiny Island as well as other animation studios in Singapore. Courses are supported by both the Media Development Authority (MDA) and the Workforce Development Agency.

"Dream Defenders" costs an estimated US\$5.2 million and is co-financed by MDA. Beyond television, MDA is setting its sights on feature films next. Media Development Authority chief operating officer Kenneth Tan said: "Animation is a high strategic priority for our media industry. "We want our content to travel, we want to leverage on the best technology and people and creativity that we have, and modern-day animation thrives on that.

"Beyond any doubt, I think modern-day 3D is here to stay, and we expect also more and more animation properties coming out of Singapore, to have second, third, fourth, fifth to nth life across multiple platforms, into games, publications, both hard copy as well as electronic, television, long form as well as feature films".

MDA has created a S\$10 million fund for stereoscopic 3D productions, with S\$2 million set aside for feature films. In its 2009/2010 annual report, MDA reported that the media sector contributed S\$5.5 billion of value-added and S\$22.4 billion in revenue to the Singapore economy in 2008, employing some 63,000 workers.

In the period between 1997 and 2009, the compounded annual growth rate was 6.8 per cent, higher than the 5.9 per cent growth for the overall economy.

-CNA/wk

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