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PUTTING LIFE INTO CREATIVE CONTENT

PETALING JAYA: The local creative industry in Malaysia which includes animation, games and visual effects (VFX) has gained a lot of interest in the international market, recording 60% growth in exports to RM817mil last year.

When talking about local animation industry, Upin & Ipin and BoBoiBoy cartoons would cross one's mind, but there are more than these.

The outsourcing of animation content and VFX to Asia Pacific has grown tremendously in the past years due to the availability of good talent at lower rates and powerful animation platform compared to developed countries.

Homegrown Creative Content Technologies studios have been bagging international projects including for famous games titles such as Uncharted 4: A Thief's End, Mortal Kombat X, Call of Duty and FIFA as well as from big vendors such as Microsoft, Disney, Sega Square Enix and Sony. Also, their own IP animation series aired in global channels like Disney, Netflix and ZooMoo.

Meanwhile, the value of domestic sales for the animation industry reached RM127mil last year.

Thanks to better accessibility of Internet, the global animation and gaming market is expected to grow from US\$122.2bil in 2010 to US\$242.93bil by 2016, according to a report by KPMG.

Realising the potential growth in the animation sector, the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) introduced an initiative called the Global Acceleration and Innovation Network (GAIN) last year

LEMON SKY ANIMATION

Malaysians have been playing a part in making some of the best games in the world.

Lemon Sky Animation has been working with global clients such as Microsoft Studios, Spin Master, Sega, EA Sports, and Disney.

Lemon Sky's works include the art design for Ghosts, FIFA 14 and NBA, Call of Duty and Sim City.

Like every entrepreneur, LemonSky director and chief creative officer Ken Foong Ka King says the firm's main goal is to generate its own intellectual property (IP) to carve out a distinctive position in the market.

"The social media boom gives our company opportunity to promote our IP more efficiently. Over the next three years, our goal is to make

to boost growth for high-potential Malaysian technology companies to become global tech icons.

The programme is targeted to boost annual revenue of GAIN companies to exceed RM100mil.

Under GAIN, MDEC's Creative Content and Technologies team (CCT) who work closely with these companies has identified some of the most globally-competitive creative companies which include Giggle Garage Sdn Bhd, Lemon Sky Animation Sdn Bhd, MFX Sdn Bhd and Passion Republic Sdn Bhd.

GIGGLE GARAGE

The creator of Origanimals, Giggle Garage, a 3D animation studio has already been playing the show to international audiences.

Bejuba! Entertainment, the Canada-based kids production and distribution company, has picked up Origanimals for its worldwide distribution.

Origanimals is broadcasting across Australia, New Zealand, Asia, the US, and Latin America on channels such as StarHub, Astro Malaysia, Virgin Media UK and TV3 Ireland and throughout the multiple territories on ZooMoo's channels in the US, Asia and Latin America.

Founded by two Sabahans Juhaidah Joemin and Zeno Gabing, Giggle Garage, the full computer-generated imagery (CGI) animation studio started in 2010 in Cyberjaya.

Zeno says: "We're focusing on creating our own content, and also we co-produce content with partners around the world."

our mark and strengthen the company's value with our IP," he says.

Ken Foong says the company already has a good reputation internationally and has a 200-strong workforce.

He founded LemonSky in 2010 with the vision of producing original animated series to be featured in the international market.

LemonSky is a Malaysia-based CGI studio for video games and animation. It generated about RM20mil in revenue last year.

"The GAIN program helps many local companies to have the right visibility to excel in the international market by promoting better services and IP creations. With CCT's targeted market access support, we are seeing traction and we believe we can achieve our target," he says.

LemonSky recently signed a mem-

He said with the success of the first season of Origanimals, the firm would be launching the second season on ZooMoo channels next week.

"We received lots of support from MDEC including assistance in starting us off after a series of pitching and close collaboration with their CCT team. We have also got assistance from MDV Bhd (IP financing scheme) for the production of Origanimals," he said.

On top of Origanimals, Giggle Garage said, it just completed a co-production TV series called Kazoops that is going to be part of Netflix Originals and is available in 18 languages.

Kazoops is a story about a boy embarking on a wild imaginary adventure with his loyal pet dog.

"Kazoops is co-produced between the original IP owner, Cheeky Little Media from Sydney, Australia and Giggle Garage as the main production company," says Juhaidah.

"Giggle Garage created the show from all assets, characters, environment, to animation, lighting, rendering and to final compositing. They are all done in our studio in Cyberjaya," she adds.

She says that under the GAIN initiative, Giggle Garage has launched its Youtube channel last week during the event attended by Youtube Asia Pacific, which is a very strategic positioning by GAIN, and this has pushed us forward in the digital space, monopolised by players like Youtube.

"As part of the company's strategies, we will be creating Youtube-specific contents and releasing them on this platform. Our Youtube channel is Gigglejunior," she says.

orandum of understanding with global game and interactive content developer, Bandai Namco Studios Inc to set up a studio in Kuala Lumpur known as Bandai Namco Studios Malaysia Sdn Bhd with the help of MDEC.

The studio is involved with many AAA games development as well as animation projects from across the globe.

Ken Foong says the firm's ability to tailor solutions to its client's creative visions and understand its customers' needs has attracted many AAA gaming companies to get Lemon Sky to develop and design games.

"The company's strength is in its ability to work with different clients across different game genres and also working on game visuals rather than game development," he says.

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MFX SDN BHD

MFX Sdn Bhd is a boutique design studio. It was set up in 2001, the company specialises in design animation, special effects (2D and 3D) and motion graphics using state-of-the-art technology and equipment, creating waves wherever it goes.

The firm has been working with both local and international clients for notable advertisement such as MaxisOne Home, McDonald's "Syok Together", Toyota Hilux FMC "Beyond Dimension", F&N "Ranger" Brand Launch, Expedia H2 Campaign Come Together, Putra Awards 2016 Opening Video, TNB 2016 Energy Efficiency Film, DJARUM BCA Open 2016 "Batik World" and Energizer Transformation Bunny Version.

MFX was founded by Moon K. Chan, who has background in advertising, having worked with Ogilvy and Mather in Singapore and McCann's in Toronto.

The bulk of MFX's work centralises on TV commercials as well as various content spectrum such as design, animation, visual effects, editing, content development, and digital painting. MFX is a renowned design solutions company providing dedicated services in advertising and film design verticals. Their design solutions are purely customised, brilliantly communicative, aesthetically appealing and technically perfect.

"MFX strongly believes that its usage of the latest technology is a

very big differentiator among its competitors and also ensures that it produces good quality of work.

The majority of MFX's clients are of a global standing and it has gained a good reputation in the special effects industry," it says.

To date, MFX has won multiple accolades both international and local including from Cannes Lions Awards, New York Festivals, Times Asia-Pacific Advertising Awards, Effie Awards Malaysia and Kancil Awards.

"MFX has never had any partnership with any companies in the past. Nonetheless, MFX is open to any opportunities that would benefit both parties, something that we are working closely with MDEC's CCT team.

"We believe that a good partnership will further strengthen MFX's branding worldwide and potentially increase its pool of potential customers," it says.

PASSION REPUBLIC

Kuala Lumpur-based Passion Republic Sdn Bhd was started by Ng Aik Sern, a former lecturer together with six artists incorporated in 2006.

Today, the firm clientele are giants in the gaming industry such as Sony, Microsoft Studio, Sega, Bandai Namco, Square Enix and Warner Bros Games.

Passion Republic's portfolio of work includes games such as Mortal Kombat X, Batman: Arkham Night and Injustice.

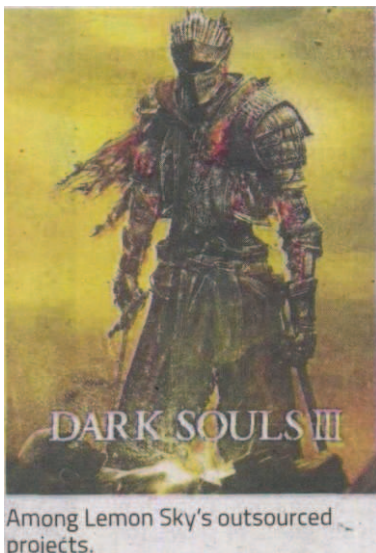
In more recent projects, Passion Republic was involved in character creation for Microsoft Studios' Gears of War, From Software's Dark Souls 3 and Naughty Dog's Uncharted 4: Thief's End.

"The company is highly passionate about developing the animation and gaming industry.

"Passion Republic's core strength comes from having a young talented team who shares the same vision to drive and grow the gaming industry," it says.

Passion Republic's main product and service is providing a one-stop solution for the animation and gaming sector. This includes design, modelling, and animating of game characters. In addition to character creation, Passion Republic also creates cinematics for gaming companies. The company says although it does not have any partner at this moment, being one of the preferred vendors for Microsoft and Sony, Passion Republic has established a good reputation and met the strict requirements set by both companies.

"Additionally, with the right visibility strategies and platforms created by GAIN and CCT's close support, we believe this creates a bigger hurdle for existing and future competitors of Passion Republic from entering the market," it says.



Among Lemon Sky's outsourced projects.

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