



# Save Point Unlocked

From left: DGDD and DigiPen (Singapore) graduates Chan Li En, Jeremiah Boon, Jasmin Tan and Gavin Yeo.

**Gamers may rule the world; but it's game developers that build them. Behind every crisp graphic and kill-me-baby action move are game design warriors setting our hearts aflutter. At SP, these budding keyboard warriors call the Diploma in Games Design and Development (DGDD) home. **SPRIT** caught up with some of our graduates since they've left the nest to see where their gamer destiny had taken them next. First stop: DigiPen (Singapore).**

## THE DIGITAL HEARTBEAT

When asked about his hobbies, DGDD graduate Gavin Yeo's answer is almost classic. "Apart from playing lots of games?" he asks. It's all the explanation you need to know why he'd joined DigiPen (Singapore) after graduating from SP in 2008, all the way to his current career as a junior level designer at one of the holy grails of gamer haven, Ubisoft Singapore.

Hands-down, Gavin is living his gamer dreams. "DGDD was my first official step in joining the game industry," he explains. "I had played around with making games before, but DGDD was a brave step as I had to commit three

years of tertiary education to chase my dream." It was a gamble that paid off handsomely. His outstanding performance earned him the Media Development Authority Education Scheme Scholarship upon graduation, which aims to nurture budding media industry leaders. It helped defray tuition fees when he enrolled under the Bachelor of Science in Computer Science and Game Design at DigiPen (Singapore). Personally, one of his greatest achievements at DigiPen (Singapore) was acting as the game designer in a student team for a gesture-based action game, *Descension Depths of De'mae*. The game scored a student finalist award at the Independent Games

Festival China in 2013, organised by the Game Developers Conference (GDC) China, the world's largest professionals-only game industry event.

## IT'S PAIN BUT WE LOVE IT

Widely-regarded as the Harvard of game design, the American-based institution established its first international campus in Singapore in 2008. Most recently, in a partnership with the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT), DigiPen (Singapore) moved into its new campus at SIT @ SP. *(Note: Check out the new SIT Building next to the SP Sports Arena)*

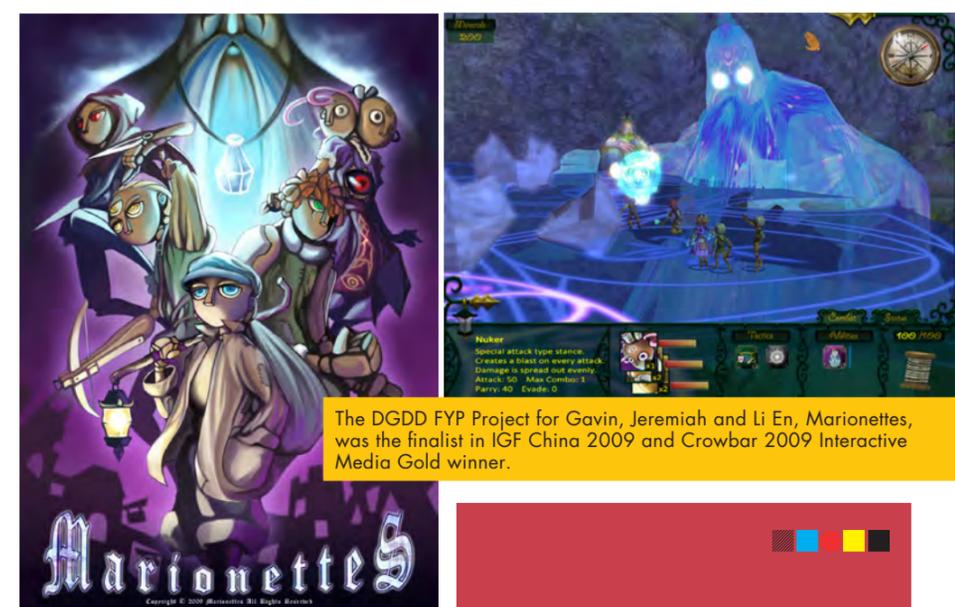
Like Gavin, Chan Li En and Jeremiah Boon also graduated from DGDD and enrolled at DigiPen (Singapore). Both have since graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Digital Art and Animation, and found career opportunities almost immediately, thanks to the foundation built in DigiPen (Singapore). Ask about their learning journeys, and the trio wax lyrical with mind-boggling gaming terminology. For Li En, the opportunity to study a course in his interest and within a shorter timeframe was too attractive to pass up. He finished his course within two and a half years, instead of the usual four. "It was the best choice for me after DGDD. The course at DigiPen (Singapore) was structured in a progressive manner which built our basics and fundamentals first before proceeding to advanced modules."

Jeremiah remembers this clearly. "Right on the first day, our art lecturer, Mr Dilip Chaubey, told us with a smile that coming to DigiPen (Singapore) will be the worst decision we ever made in our lives, because of how tough and tiring the course will be. It was true, the course took everything out of us. But in a sense, it was rewarding when you finally complete it."

It isn't all just hard work and no games – there's plenty of games, it's DigiPen (Singapore)! Amongst the highlights is a three-month Overseas Immersion Programme where students get to spend a semester at DigiPen (Singapore)'s Redmond campus in Washington, attending lectures and touring games studios.

## WHERE GAMES TAKE THEM

For all of them, life after DigiPen has been just as rewarding. Li En is currently at a Research and Development Artist at DigiPen, working on art assets and support for the DigiPen's proprietary game engine, Zero Engine. Enthusiasm peppers Jeremiah's words as he shares his career as a computer graphic artist with Japanese game company Koei Tecmo. A massive fan of their games for over a decade, he's ecstatic to be with the company that's produced some of his favourites, such as *Dead or Alive* and *Fatal Frame*.



The DGDD FYP Project for Gavin, Jeremiah and Li En, *Marionettes*, was the finalist in IGF China 2009 and Crowbar 2009 Interactive Media Gold winner.

When nudged to divulge some trade secrets, Gavin conspiratorially shares that he's currently working on an unannounced AAA game (a classification term for a high-budget, high-development and high-quality game), spearheaded by the Singapore branch. It's not part of the *Assassin's Creed* franchise, if you're wondering!

"I feel like I'm living out my dream of being a game designer in a AAA company. The amazing thing is how much they respect the ideas of individuals in the studio. I really appreciate that even as a junior designer, many of my ideas and work will be in the final game, for millions of people around the world to play."



From *Marionettes* to the *Depths*: a gritty crossover to the dark side for Gavin, this time at DigiPen (Singapore).



They see me slidin', they see me glidin'....all in a day's cool work in the *Adventures of Slingshot*, Jasmin's DGDD FYP project.

## CONFESSIONS OF A DIGIPEN STUDENT

Currently a freshman at DigiPen, Jasmin Tan is a fresh graduate from DGDD and the first of the four to experience life at the new SIT campus. Having been in DigiPen (Singapore) for three semesters, there's plenty of stories to share.

### She's practically rooted to campus

DigiPen's facilities are open most of the time. While this breeds a workaholic culture (we can spend up to 12 hours in school every day, even on weekends), it's time that we're willing to sacrifice to produce quality work. There are certain periods when I see my course mates more than my family. We have bonded quickly and now support each other, knowing that we are all going through the same trials and difficulties.

### Passionate lecturers makes a difference

The teachers are also very approachable and focus a lot on learning. I remember one teacher telling us not to get too stressed up with work. He once told us, "You need to have a life to learn," and that really resonated with me. I constantly have to remind myself to focus on what I'm learning, not on my grades. I'm also really excited to experience the visit to the DigiPen Redmond campus next year.

### Her plans for the future

After I graduate, I hope to become either a marketing artist or a concept artist at a game company. I'm currently interning at a game company. Hopefully, that will eventually lead to a full-time position, and allow me to continue learning and working with my colleagues. I also intend to continue working on game projects with my final-year project friends from DGDD.