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Living the dream as one Geng

It began with three Malaysian students and one big dream — to produce 3D animated films. Throw a driven entrepreneur, supportive mentors and a dedicated team into the mix and you get the whole gang for Malaysia's first full-length animated 3D film, aptly titled *Geng: The Adventure Begins*.

I have no doubt that the film will do well when it hits the cinema screens in February after watching the press preview of it last week. Walking out of the cinema, I couldn't help but feel a sense of national pride knowing that it was a 100% Malaysian production. With a budget of only RM4 million and a team of 40, it was quite a feat considering that the average Hollywood 3D animated film needs about US\$40 million (RM143 million), with an outfit of 250 people. Some cost more. For instance, *The Incredibles* cost US\$90 million.

But this is not a story about Les' Copaque, the production house. It is a story of how people came together in the information and communications technology (ICT) industry to realise a dream. The film was partly funded by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (Mosti) through an e-content grant. The Malaysian Institute of Microelectronic Systems (Mimos) allowed the use of its knowledge grid (which consists of 256 nodes of high performance super



From left: Safwan, Nizam, Burhanuddin, Hasnul Nadzrin (manager creative multimedia — MDeC), and Ng Kwang Ming (senior manager grid computing — Mimos). It was quite a feat for the small team to come up with the film on a shoestring budget.

it is a movie for the family, but also because it was made by one big family.

Nizam Razak, the director of the film, said, "We don't care about us. We care about the audience... If they say the movie is too long by a few minutes, I will cut it down." This is the spirit that should guide our ICT industry. At the end of the day, you need to ask yourself whether you are doing the right thing for your customers and have their needs in mind.

We need to build our nation, and it helps if we build it together. In the two months I have been on the job, I have not seen or heard of any collaborative efforts between the two ministries that govern this industry — Mosti and the Ministry of Energy, Water and Communications. I do wonder whether they are even aware of each other's activities and plans. Does this matter? I think it does. Why? Because Malaysia's ICT industry is governed by the two ministries and clearly,

there is a need for more interaction between them.

For the three makers of *Geng* — Nizam, Safwan Karim (production director) and Usamah Zaid (animation director) — any form of support, moral or monetary, will go a long way towards

promoting their film. More significantly, it will help boost the creative content sector of the ICT industry.

Les' Copaque is currently looking for international distributors for *Geng*. It is also hoping that with *Geng*, the quality of Malaysian digital animation will attract international attention; global studios may even consider outsourcing movie projects to Les' Copaque due to its competitive edge as a low-cost, high-quality production house. These boys at Les' Copaque are serious and they have even developed their own production process that cuts down the time it takes to produce a high quality 3D animation.

I hope *Geng* will do extremely well locally and internationally. For Les' Copaque, the adventure is only beginning. One thing's for sure: this film has managed to raise the bar a few notches for our creative content industry. The future is going to be exciting. **E**

COMMENTARY BY
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computers) to significantly reduce the film's rendering process from 12 to 4 months. The Multimedia Super Corridor custodian, Multimedia Development Corp (MDeC), supported the film throughout its three years of production.

During the press conference, I noticed that no one took full credit for this film. Instead, Les' Copaque, Mimos and MDeC were focused on promoting the film. Burhanuddin Radzi, founder and managing director of Les' Copaque, called it a "family movie", not only because

