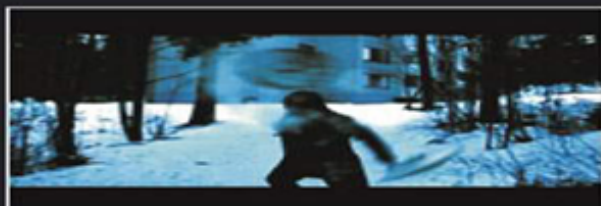
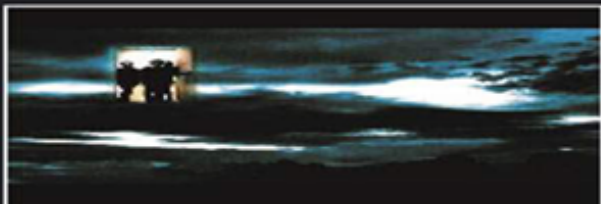




# Hive Story by Sharon Chua Film Festival

A question comes to mind then. Are Singaporeans only capable of expressing emotions and subject matters through slapstick? Well after you watch the Special Technical Achievement Award winner "Matrixulation", your answer would be a definite "NO".

Matrixulation



A film – this I have to emphasize– written, produced, acted, composed (soundtrack) and performed by ONE man. The name of this super multi-tasker? Rich Ho, founder of Richmanclub Studios. He had help from a cast of friends and collaborators but there is no doubt that he is the soul of the project. Even without watching the film, from its win alone, one could tell that it is one of technical brilliance. Certainly, its ambitious special effects of machines dominating our landscape a la Matrix or the Eiffel Tower collapsing under fire are convincing feats worthy of winning something, if anything at all in the contest.

Inspired by "The Matrix" (in case you haven't guessed), Matrixulation derives its central conflict from the all-important but elusive pursuit of being truly alive. Not just a Matrix replica, the film is guided by an emotional core of loneliness and love. Putting the pyrotechnics aside, it is a film of convictions through and through. It has got to do with being Singaporean. One cannot help but be impressed by such a potent combination of talent and tenacity that is so rare to come by. With the knowledge that Seth, the "Neo" of the film who has accomplished all that amazing work that went behind the camera, was unmistakably standing in front of it acting his heart out to you, his off-screen persona simply fuses with intensity of the on-screen one. Seth is Rich and Rich is Seth. Which to me is the ultimate achievement of the film. The audience knows (for a fact no less) that both will not take no for an answer. Each carries a conviction that no other can dissuade from nor deny.

There are small should-haves that the bone-picker in me would like to fuss over, like the below-par wardrobe and styling. Considering that the film emulates one of the most stylish film of all times, a not-so-suave "Neo and Trinity" leaves one feeling oddly dissatisfied. One other very obvious improvement that needs

be made is the sound quality. Seth's voiceover is quite muffled most of the time, rendering the story inexplicable when coupled with its fragmented structure. It is a blessing that most people are familiar with The Matrix. Then again, with an impossible budget of S\$50, I wouldn't complain much if I were you.

The other two winners of the Hive – Canon Digital Shorts Competition are the Open Category Winner "Joe" by Tan Chee Wee and Junior Category Winner "Freedom?" by Xu Ming Jie.

The fantasy world of film holds a special place in people's hearts for its ability to transport them to another realm. I measure that by its ability to suspend belief and to allow the viewer to freely indulge in possibilities otherwise unknown. While these short films have some way to go in achieving that, it remains very encouraging to see the emergence of serious and talented filmmakers who will chart the course of Singapore films in years to come.

It was revealed to me that the entries from the Junior and Tertiary categories were especially outstanding, with winners like Kenny Tan, a Visual Communications student from Temasek Polytechnic and Rich Ho, a Business student from Singapore Management University. Besides changing school cultures that encourage students to develop their talents, contests like the Hive-Canon Digital Shorts Competition will no doubt nurture more of them, and very importantly appeal to the recognition-addict in all of us and accelerate the learning curve across the board. Even better news is, this digital shorts contest is scheduled to be an annual affair. So there's no more reason not to shoot that short film that you've always wanted.

The exuberant potential and courage of these intrepid filmmakers bode well for all film lovers. It is only a matter of time that these budding filmmakers produce great pictures that will move the world over. I for one, await their coming of age with bated breath. ☺

For more details, visit [www.hivefilmfest.com](http://www.hivefilmfest.com)