



Galing Pinoy showcases the triumph of the Filipino spirit—the Filipino's innate perseverance to rise above. A double entendre, Galing Pinoy literally translates to both coming from (or brought to you by) the Filipino and Filipino ingenuity.



Randy Bantog

Star Wars' Concept Designer

by CYNTHIA DE CASTRO / AJPress

A FEW weeks ago, the first weekly television series from Lucasfilm Animation was launched—*Star Wars: The Clone Wars*, inspired by the classic *Star Wars* movies. A great hit to TV viewers of all ages, *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* is as much fun to produce as it is to watch. So revealed Fil-Am Randy Bantog, a concept designer for the series. Bantog said in an earlier interview that the show's working environment is fantastic. "We work in what looks like a gigantic mansion, hidden in a valley, surrounded by lush green hills, trees, rocks and a lake. The people are very easy to work with and easy to communicate with. Working on this show is pretty incredible," said Randy who admitted that being in the series is the fulfillment of his childhood dream.



the TV series that I'm currently working on," said Randy.

The Fil-Am animator credits two of his instructors who inspired him the most—Kevin Chen and Ryan Meinerding. "I learned so much of what I know about art from Kevin, and Ryan always inspired me to be a better designer and thinker. I've never seen people that have worked so hard at their craft," said Randy. "But before all of this, I would have to say that it was my parents that motivated me the most. My mom was always encouraging me, constantly telling me that I was going to make it. And my dad was never really encouraging in the verbal or emotional sense, but was always inspiring in terms of how he approached his work ethic. After he served in the US military, he opened up an automobile repair shop with a few of his buddies. And for the first 10 years or so, I saw him go to work 10-12 hours a day, 7 days a week, and he hardly took any vacations. He still works at the same shop today, but fortunately, he doesn't have to work as many hours as he used to. He would always tell me that it didn't matter what job you had, you should always try to do the best job you could do. You could be a janitor or a garbage man, but you should be the best possible janitor or garbage man that you can be. The huge college loan is also an important factor! I need to keep doing

a good job, so I can pay it all off!" he added.

Unlike in the past when it was quite difficult for Asians to get into the industry, the art industry in Hollywood has opened its doors to many Filipinos. Randy affirmed this as he said, "In the art industry, it never really felt to me like there were any challenges being a Filipino, or of any other nationality, in terms of breaking into the industry. In the visual art field, it seems like the thing that matters the most is a person's skill and ability to do good work and meet their deadlines."

Randy's advice to other Filipino artists who want to get into the industry is, "Work hard and be friendly to people. If you want to work in a certain field, find out where that work is and go to that area. Get a solid education. And it takes a lot of sacrifice and patience."

The hardworking animator admits that his present job is a dream come true and hopes to stay in the business for a long time. "Right now, I'm having fun working on our animated series, *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*. From here, I hope to just keep working on projects that are fun and keep me interested and motivated. Hopefully, I'll get to do work on feature films and continue to improve on my skills," said Randy, another amazing talent who makes *Pinoys* proud. ■

Randy has been making waves in the Filipino community ever since the news came out that a Filipino animator is one of the creative talents working behind the scenes of the new TV hit. Confessing to not having visited the Philippines since he was five years old, Bantog said most of his time is spent behind his desk, with hardly any time left for vacations. In an interview with the *Asian Journal*, Randy shares some interesting snippets of his personal and professional life.

"I was born in San Diego, California on September 22, 1981. My father served in the US Navy for over 20 years, and my mother was an architect when I was a boy. I have an older brother who is a scientist of some sort. He tried to explain what he does, it involves shooting lasers into something or other, but

it was way over my head. I'm sure he's doing something that will save the world one day though! I also have an aunt (my mom's sister) that live with us and is like a second mom to me," said Randy.

Bantog confessed that he has been drawing since he was a kid, which motivated him to pursue a career in Art. "I moved up to Los Angeles when I was 20 and studied at a few small art schools before enrolling at the Art Center College of Design, where I received my Bachelor's degree in Illustration (August of 2007). It was at Art Center that I focused on doing entertainment design for the film and video game industries," he revealed.

Randy shared with the *Asian Journal* how he got started in the industry. He

recalls, "When I realized that I wanted to become an artist working in the animation industry, one of the main things that I knew I had to do was move to LA. From there I suspected that I could get a better education at one of famous art schools in the area, where I could possibly make contacts with people that would later be working in the same field that I wanted to work in."

"At Art Center, I made many friends and met many instructors who are all working professionals. I learned from them how to break into the business, and I still keep in touch with many of those amazing people. In fact, it was my friend Jason Sze, from Art Center, who told me I should apply for a job at Lucasfilm. If not for him, I would never have had this amazing opportunity to be a part of

Senate passes credit card overhaul bill

WASHINGTON—The Senate voted overwhelmingly on May 19 to rein in credit card rate increases and excessive fees, hoping to give voters some breathing room amid a recession that has left hundreds of thousands of Americans jobless or facing foreclosure.

The House was on track to pass the measure as early as May 20, paving the way for President Barack Obama to see the bill on his desk by week's

end. "This is a victory for every American consumer who has ever suffered at the hands of a credit card company," said Sen. Christopher Dodd, D-Conn., chairman of the Banking Committee. The bill passed the Senate 90-5.

If enacted into law as expected, the credit card industry would have nine months to change the way it does business: Lenders would have to post their credit card agreements on the In-

ternet and let customers pay their bills online or by phone without an added fee. They'd also have to give consumers a chance to spare themselves from over-the-limit fees and provide 45 days notice and an explanation before interest rates are increased.

Some of these changes are already on track to take effect in July 2010, under new rules being imposed by the Federal Reserve. But the Senate bill would put the changes into law and go

further in restricting the types of bank fees and who can get a card.

The legislation would not cap interest rates as some lawmakers had hoped. It also wouldn't prevent lenders from finding new ways to drain customers' bank accounts or keep consumers from spending money they don't have.

But it would give spenders more flexibility and outlaw many of the surprise costs associated with credit cards at a time when money is tight in most households. For example, under the bill, a cardholder would have to opt to be allowed to go over a credit

limit. If customers don't agree and the bank authorizes a charge that would push them over their limit, the lender couldn't levy an over-limit fee.

Another boon for consumers is limiting a practice known as "universal default," when a lender sharply increases a cardholder's interest rate on an existing balance because the customer is late paying that bill or other, unrelated bills. Under the new legislation, a customer would have to be more than 60 days behind on a payment before seeing a rate increase on an existing balance. (AP)



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