



Bang for the right sound effects



By JOANNE ROTZEVA

THE rustle of paper, the ring of a telephone and the strains of music make up the sounds of success for National Arts Council (NAC) Arts Professional Scholar Mohamed Rafi Bin Kamarudin.

The 26-year-old sound designer and aspiring sound artist graduated in December 2005 with a Graduate Diploma in Production (Sound Design) from the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) in Melbourne, Australia, and is now working on a TV programme that will be aired on the Arts Centre's channel.

Prior to applying for the scholarship in April 2005, he had already gained experience by working in theatres and television technical courses for five years.

"When I began working as a sound operator and technical assistant in theatre, I got a glimpse into the creative process. But though I was technically proficient in all kinds of equipment and operation, I needed training when it came to creating new work," he says.

"Having turned down an offer to go to the New York University Tisch School of Arts in 2000 due to National Service commitments and the lack of financial support, I decided to further my education. I was extremely fortunate to receive the NAC Arts Professional Scholarship, because I would not have been able to afford the post-graduate course at VCA otherwise."

After receiving the scholarship, he attended classes at VCA for a year. He chose the school because it was

one of a handful that focuses solely on sound design for performance art.

"The scholarship has prepared me to be a leader in the arts in various ways. The intensive school syllabus included major components of sound design skills that were directly related to my objective in the arts. It has helped to strengthen my skills in electronic music composition, as well as introducing me to new angles of approaching and executing specific design ideas," he says.

While studying, he worked with noted theatre director Bruce Mylne, who directed a political play called *The Blind Giant is Dancing*, by playwright Stephen Sewell.

He also composed the music for *Landscapes Within*, an original work by celebrated master puppeteer and visual artists, Philippe Genty and Mary Underwood, from Paris, France. He considers this to be one of his greatest accomplishments.

"The director, Philippe Genty, gave me free rein to create the music. This resulted in a fusion of my own electro-acoustic style and the sounds of ordinary objects such as paper, cabbage and plastic. These materials were also used by the performers as a source of inspiration."

Now, Mr Mohamed Rafi is looking forward to other artistic endeavours, and is hoping to work on sound installations soon. He would like to continuously "explore and push the boundaries of the arts scene" here.

As part of a select few on the cutting edge of sound technology, he is also supporting the fledgling local electronic music scene, which he hopes will grow beyond its

infancy stage. For the past four years, he has been a DJ with local dance music collective Frontal (www.frontalabs.com) and is still actively spinning records under the pseudonym "SoloBough".

He says his education at VCA will help him take his passion for music and sound design a step further by bringing sound technology to the forefront of the local arts scene.

He intends to be more involved in live performances, sound installations and contribute actively to theatre and dance performances here.

"I believe that musical knowledge is just one half of the equation, and it is the technical application and skills behind creative technology that truly creates wonders. Technology has changed entertainment and it has also raised the expectations of the audience."

"With the abundance of technology today, there is no reason for sound designers to merely maintain basic expectations of traditional music and sound effects for performances. There is plenty of room to expand on songwriting and sound effects."