He turns pet peeve into snappy film

By Christopher Choo

IN a moment of film-making magic, 22-year-old Jacen Tan unleashed a 15-minute comedy, Tak Giu (football in Hokkien), on the unsuspecting Internet community.

Its message is simple: There aren’t enough free-to-play football fields in Singapore.

Over a three-week period, the low-budget short film was downloaded 32,000 times. It gained special mentions on prominent blogs, was featured in The New Paper and made waves in the local football community.

Dedicated to Singapore football, Tak Giu centres on three friends and their quest to find a good, free, public soccer field in their neighbourhood.

So passionate was Jacen about the issue, he gathered three close friends and they took to the streets on bicycles, armed with a camcorder.

Having taken a media course at Nanyang Polytechnic, Jacen felt confident he had the skills to shoot the video which captured the imagination of many Singaporeans.

The film features a healthy dose of social commentary and plenty of jokes, such as the scenes where the threesome run into an overzealous caretaker, desperately attempt to break into a private compound, and get chased around a housing estate by a policeman.

Meryl Tan, a 23-year-old undergraduate, first watched the film just days after it was released.

“It brings out the Singaporean flavour with the use of Singlish,” she said. “It also pokes fun at the things which Singaporeans have always found ridiculous but have never voiced out so publicly. My peers even mentioned the film during a lecture break one day.”

The film took two months to produce, and was released around the same time that the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Education said they were going to open up 50 school fields starting from April 1 under the Du-al-Use Scheme.

But Jacen insists that the fees charged for these fields would prevent young children from using them.

For many children, he says, Housing Board void decks remain the main venues for playing football because of their abundance, convenience and the shelter they provide.

The sheer number of downloads for the 42MB film resulted in Jacen losing his Web-hosting account. Fortunately for him, 19-year-old Benedict Chan of ACNOVA.com stepped in to host the film’s website and brought together other like-minded hosts from the Internet community within hours of the closure of the original website.

The film is now mirrored on six hosts today, a testament to the local Internet community’s belief in the film’s message.

The writer is a second-year Information Systems Management student at the Singapore Management University.