

DANIEL PETERS, 27, AND TAN HWEEN EN, 29
Co-founders of Singapore Community Radio

Singapore Community Radio (SGCR) was launched as an online music platform in 2017 but is now morphing into a different beast.

Mr Daniel Peters and Ms Tan Hwee En, as well as third partner Daniel Tan, 39, are looking to feed culture vultures with content from fields ranging from literature to the visual arts.

This year saw the team increasing their collaborations with others on podcasts, live streams, video shows and texts. While giving emerging artists a platform to reach a wider audience, SGCR is also increasingly becoming a gateway for those short on time to discover fledgling names in the local arts scene.

Mr Peters, a musician, and Ms Tan, a film-maker, said they hope SGCR's multimedia work will facilitate contact between local artists, who tend to be siloed in their individual pursuits.



ST PHOTO: GIN TAY



ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

DEON PHUA, 28
Co-founder of creative studio Tell Your Children

Mr Deon Phua has a finger in every pie.

Apart from being a video communications adjunct lecturer at Temasek Polytechnic, he is also co-founder of creative design studio Tell Your Children, which has worked with international fashion brands including Prada and Uniqlo, and has upcoming projects with New Balance and Nike.

The studio also paints large-scale murals and produces the podcast Cosmic Children, which features long conversations with different people for "an honest introspection into the human experience".

This year, Mr Phua worked on a documentary about Singapore's creative heritage over the last two decades, as he found that many young creatives are not aware of those who have gone before them in the creative industry. He is also a deejay and the founder of vintage clothing and memorabilia store Death Threads, a household name among vintage lovers.

YOUNG SINGAPOREANS TO WATCH

CLASS ACT

BEVERLY WAN, 23, AND KOH JIA SHENG, 23
Founders of circus company
Circus of Altrades

Beverly Wan was looking for a circus partner and approached Koh Jia Sheng to train with her last year.

The duo, brought together by their love for peculiar stunts, went on to start the acrobatic troupe Circus of Altrades this year in the hope of taking Singapore's nascent circus scene further.

A dancer, Wan had had her sights set on becoming a circus performer since she was 15.

Koh, currently studying theatre studies at the National University of Singapore, is a trained gymnast and dancer.

The duo practise hand balancing, partner acrobatics, group acrobatics, chair stacking and tumbling, while Wan trains in contortion stunts as well.

They have flown to Australia several times to hone their stunts at a circus school, participating in circus conventions and a month-long intensive course.

Circus of Altrades now trains like-minded artists, and the duo are determined to prove that circus arts can be a viable professional career option.



ST PHOTO: ARIFFIN JAMAR

As a year of disruption and upheaval draws to a close, there are some who show that tough times can bring out the best in Singaporeans.

The Straits Times is celebrating young change-makers from diverse backgrounds and disparate fields who deserve recognition for their achievements and daring.

While some in these 30 profiles are already household names, many are relative unknowns who have dedicated themselves to a cause – be it charting new ground in the arts or civil society, or building something new as entrepreneurs.

Clara Chong and Clement Yong spotlight these rising stars who not only had big dreams but also took the leap to act on them, and hope they will inspire more readers to action.



ST PHOTO: TIMOTHY DAVID

LOU PEIXIN, 27
Songwriter

Musician Lou Peixin, also known as Miss Lou, had "got a good groove going" with big gigs booked when Covid-19 struck.

Her events company Loudanclear, which she founded with her husband, had just invested in a new sound system when all live shows were cancelled owing to the circuit breaker imposed in April.

Adapting quickly, her team used the equipment for live-streaming from her home studio instead, and her YouTube channel gained enough traction to be monetised. Firms such as Lazada also paid her company to host live-streaming events. She said the year has "stretched her creativity".

Following the release of her first EP, Glamour Vintage Songbird, to acclaim in 2017, she has gone on to write commercial tunes for companies while licensing her own music for use in films.



ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

MARYLYN TAN, 27
Writer

Marylyn Tan became the first female winner of the Singapore Literature Prize for English poetry this year with her collection *Gaze Back*, which looks at the hidden violence perpetuated by the state and society against women.

The 27-year-old said she usually takes accolades lightly, but her historic win, sweeter for the nature of her entry, gives her hope that things could change.

"It is important to have unpleasant conversations that we feel we are not yet ready for. Singapore may not be equipped as a whole to deal with some issues, but some among us will be," she said.

It helps her cause that her work is not profit-driven, and she says she is against the triumph of a "commercial mentality".

She has been exploring more mediums for her art, partnering the ArtScience Museum to interpret her poetry in videos that are available online.



ST PHOTO: ARIFFIN JAMAR

TAN SI EN, 27, AND KRIS ONG, 27
Founders of film company
Momo Film

At 17, Tan Si En (in black) and Kris Ong already had an inkling that their shared love for film and storytelling would see them starting something together some day.

The Ngee Ann Polytechnic schoolmates went on to found Momo Film in 2018, one of the few independent film companies in Singapore run by women.

Tan is producer and counts *Wet Season* directed by Anthony Chen among her productions.

Ong is writer/director. Together, they mentor and work with emerging film-makers in the region to promote the diverse stories which South-east Asia has to offer to an international audience.

The duo have been active this year in spite of Covid-19 constraints, collaborating with directors in Singapore and Vietnam to create four short films, with a longer feature film in the works.



ANNABELLE KWOK, 27
AI poster girl

By the age of 25, Ms Annabelle Kwok had two successful artificial intelligence (AI) companies under her belt.

In 2016, she co-founded SmartCow, which makes industrial grade hardware for AI processing. She had started the company to sell off excess components she had bought to build a processor board for herself while making robots.

In 2017, she went on to found NeuralBay. The start-up specialises in vision analytics, using AI to recognise humans, objects and text.

Ms Kwok, a mathematics graduate, believes that AI should be accessible and affordable to those who need it.

She sold NeuralBay in January this year, and is now heading the regional AI, data and analytics team at Prudential, looking after 13 Asian markets, including China and India.

Beyond AI, she has many interests: circus tricks, film-making, hardware hacking, mixed martial arts and windsurfing.



A PLATFORM FOR GOOD

JANELLE LEE, 27
Co-founder and chief product officer of bantu

Ms Janelle Lee is passionate about human behaviour, technology and social good. An avid volunteer, she started social tech start-up bantu in 2018, with the goal of designing easy-to-use technology to help non-profit groups in Singapore digitalise.

Till date, bantu's cloud software has served hundreds of organisations ranging from social services to arts groups to family service centres – including Samaritans of Singapore and Thye Hua Kwan Moral Charities.

Last year, bantu won \$50,000 as the Social Enterprise Start-Up of the Year under the President's Challenge for leveraging technology to collate and analyse volunteer data – an innovation that has improved the engagement and retention of volunteers.

Ms Lee's friends describe her as fearless, compassionate and dedicated.



EVAN HENG, 23
Founder of Zenith Education Studio

Mr Evan Heng rejected an offer to study geography – his dream course – in Britain last year and instead incorporated his tuition company, Zenith Education Studio, the next day.

The young tuition centre now reaps a six-figure yearly profit and has expanded from just 40 junior college students last year to over 350 this year.

Passionate about teaching since junior college, Mr Heng – who is a first-year undergraduate at NUS Business School – drew inspiration from the success stories of others. He had thought that setting up his own centre and running multiple programmes was unfathomable, but seeing others do it gave him the motivation to try it himself.

A student-oriented company, the centre goes beyond classroom lessons and includes 24/7 academic support, perks – food, excursion and prizes – and free extra lessons and consultations when required.



GRACE CHIA, 30
CEO and co-founder of BeeX Autonomous Systems

BeeX builds the world's most powerful underwater vehicles that pack superior "intellect" and physical propulsion into a compact size.

Its chief executive officer Grace Chia believes engineering can make underwater inspection work safer and more environmentally friendly.

BeeX uses marine robots to inspect port infrastructure, ship hulls, floating solar farms, and underwater foundations of offshore oil and gas jackets and wind turbines. Divers hence do not have to be put at risk for such work and carbon emissions from diesel vessels deployed for such missions are cut.

The underwater craft allow autonomous surface vessels to recharge without returning to port. Operators intervene from shore only when necessary.

Ms Chia's work involves building prototypes that are reliable and scalable.

BeeX was the first Singaporean team to ever compete in a global autonomous marine robotics competition held annually in the United States.



JERVIS ISAIAH NG, 24
Head of a "young and dynamic" team of real estate agents

At age 21 in 2017, Mr Jervis Ng started dabbling in the real estate line to pay off school loans while doing a double degree at Singapore Management University.

In less than four years, he has built up his 40-strong JNA Real Estate – one of the fastest-growing millennial real estate teams, and the youngest one under Propnex Realty. The team has sold over \$100 million of properties.

Mr Ng said he has found his passion – bringing value to clients and helping them build their property portfolio and accumulate inter-generational wealth.

He added that he finds fulfilment in seeing his young team grow to become adults who can provide for their families.



JONATHAN NG, 29
Founder of food tech firm SinFooTech

Believing he could create positive change, Mr Jonathan Ng founded food technology start-up SinFooTech in 2018.

Its newest technology creates beverages from unwanted soya whey, a by-product of tofu manufacturing that has little commercial use and can cause water pollution if improperly disposed of.

The firm will launch a new product, Sachi, locally at the end of the year. Touted as a low-calorie alcoholic drink crafted for health-conscious casual drinkers, it has notes of crisp apple cider, fruity Moscato and full-bodied sake.

The drinks which SinFooTech creates can vary in flavour, are gluten-free, contain antioxidants and have less calories than other wine alternatives.

The firm is aiming to expand its technology overseas.



KUAH CHEW SHIAN (left), 27 AND LISA TANG, 25
Founders of restaurant Kausmo

A mission to save food rejects – oddly shaped or irregular-sized fruit and vegetables – led to the birth of 16-seater restaurant Kausmo last year.

Its two millennial co-founders – Ms Kuah Chew Shian and Ms Lisa Tang – were concerned enough about the food waste problem in Singapore to repurpose “aesthetically filtered” ingredients into tasty and delicious meals.

The two are graduates of Temasek Polytechnic’s culinary and catering management programme.

Overstocked ingredients, over-ripe produce and underrated cuts of meat, along with locally grown greens, also find their way into Kausmo’s dishes.



KULDEEP SINGH RAJPUT, 29
Founder of health tech start-up Biofourmis

Wearable tech coupled with an artificial intelligence (AI) platform by home-grown digital therapeutics start-up Biofourmis have helped monitor and manage the conditions of close to 100,000 Covid-19 patients across four countries, including Singapore.

For instance, through the use of armbands, over 20 physiological signals of patients in community care facilities in Singapore are monitored round the clock, and processed with AI to predict complications. This data helps doctors and nurses detect any sign of deterioration in a patient's condition and intervene quickly.

Biofourmis was founded by Mr Kuldeep Singh Rajput, who quit his PhD studies in 2015 to start the firm. The AI platform also enables personalised care and disease prediction for patients with complex conditions like heart failure and cancer.

In September, SoftBank Vision Fund led a US\$100 million (S\$133 million) investment in the start-up.



NG TECK HWE, 29
Founder of Web development firm Purpleflakez

Mr Ng Teck Hwee was 19 when he lost his father in 2010. Despite falling into depression, he started a Web development business, Purpleflakez, to generate side income to support his family and pay off their debts.

It took a whole year before he found his first client, and until then he had often contemplated throwing in the towel. But the Ngee Ann Polytechnic graduate, who developed a passion for Web development in secondary school, persevered, and now heads a team of five.

The company, which has served around 60 clients to date, has expanded to provide small and medium-sized enterprises with numerous IT customised services to simplify their business processes, such as content creation, server hosting support and Web solution services.

Purpleflakez has also co-sponsored a charity event, Silver Screening 2-For-1, annually from 2017 to last year. The movie screenings, which brought together volunteers and more than 2,300 seniors, were graced by film-maker Jack Neo.



ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG

THE RIGHT FIT

(From far left) **TAN JUN KIAT, 30, JOSHUA CHAN, 29, AND LYE YI HAO, 29**
Founders of ergonomic office furniture firm Ergo Edge

The Covid-19 pandemic turned the tables on many booming businesses, but gave new meaning to "the hot seat" for former schoolmates Lye Yi Hao, Joshua Chan and Tan Jun Kiat.

The trio founded Ergo Edge in 2017 after noticing a dearth of affordable quality ergonomic furniture on the market.

The company is on track to rake in revenue of \$5 million this year, with its growth reaching record highs as many work from home amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

The team is now doubling down on creating more of its core products – ergonomic chairs and standing desks. Their immediate focus is to create innovative products to tackle the challenges of working from home – such as a noisy environment and the lack of space – and cater to the needs of those who split their work hours between home and office.



LAU JIA CAI, 28
Co-founder of social enterprise TreeDots

A student exchange trip to Germany in 2016 awakened Mr Lau Jia Cai's environmental conscience. He was surprised to see that supermarkets marked down unsold inventory and products nearer their expiry date – a practice not as common in Singapore.

A year later, back here, he and two friends set up TreeDots, a social enterprise which aims to reduce food wastage by getting wholesalers and suppliers to sell unsold products to F&B businesses at discounted prices of up to 30 per cent. With its app, consumers can also buy food at good discounts.

The three founders – who were previously in the finance field – could finally pay themselves a salary last year, and TreeDots this year turned profitable enough for the team to grow from three to 60 people.

Mr Lau said he is looking forward to expanding operations into Malaysia next year, as well as the rest of South-east Asia, where cost savings could mean more to people and where a bigger impact could be had.



DARYL YANG, 27
Civil activist

A corporate lawyer by day, Mr Daryl Yang is among the most outspoken of his generation on human rights and political education.

When he was still a student at the National University of Singapore, he co-founded the student-run Community for Advocacy and Political Education, which this year produced online resources to help people make sense of their vote during the general election.

He also champions lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) rights, this year working with LGBT groups to co-author a report on the state of human rights in Singapore, which was submitted to the United Nations Human Rights Council in October.

He said his experience with activism has taught him that change takes time. "We need to continue speaking up and campaigning, even if the impact might not be immediate...to shape a better future, if not for us, then for others to come."



IRIE AMAN, 23
Co-founder of magazine The Local Rebel

When Ms Irie Aman first spoke up on the sensitive topic of queer Muslim issues, she faced backlash and even incidents of stalking by hostile strangers.

The editor-in-chief of independent magazine The Local Rebel, which gives voice to intersectional feminist issues, said she was angry at the state of the world.

"I saw so much that could be better and wanted to be a part of the solution. I'm excited by the potential of communities to come together to demand better," she said.

Intersectional feminism explores issues faced by women of colour, or those who have a different sexual orientation, for instance.

Ms Aman is now waiting for Covid-19 restrictions to ease so that she can hold workshops for queer Muslims to understand how spirituality and sexuality go together.

CLEAN SWEEP

SAMANTHA THIAN, 26
Founder of social enterprise Seastainable

A scuba-diving trip with her father when she was 16 led Ms Samantha Thian to make protecting the environment her full-time pursuit.

With her savings from giving tuition while she was in university, she started Seastainable, a social enterprise that organises events like workshops and panel discussions to help people become more aware of their carbon footprint.

The enterprise is now profit-generating, even after she shut down its retail arm – which sold items such as metal straws and reusable cups – to stop encouraging consumerism.

This year, Ms Thian also started a community-led initiative to clean up East Coast beach after she saw rubbish collecting on the shore.

The Telegram chat she created now has more than 2,700 people who have helped to pick up more than 12 tonnes of trash since July.



ST PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG



RAEESAH KHAN, 27
Politician

Ms Raeesah Khan of the Workers' Party made history this year by becoming Singapore's youngest-ever parliamentarian.

At just 27, she has had a history of fighting for the rights of the disenfranchised. In 2016, she started the Reyna movement, which has helped to support Rohingya refugees in Kuala Lumpur as well as female education in Singapore.

She faced a police probe into her Facebook posts earlier this year, but was successfully elected as an MP of Sengkang GRC in the general election.

"I think my proudest achievement is being able to overcome the challenges that this year has thrown at me," she said.

"My aspiration for the future is that we see a country that allows everyone to reach their full potential. All of us, regardless of age, want to see a Singapore that progresses without leaving anyone behind."



NADIA A. SAMDIN, 30
Politician

Elected on the People's Action Party slate for Ang Mo Kio GRC headed by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in July, Ms Nadia Samdin is one of the youngest MPs in Parliament.

A lawyer by training and a former journalist, she has advocated for issues such as early intervention for at-risk youth and modern loneliness, especially among seniors, which has been made worse by the Covid-19 pandemic.

She has also spoken up on the need for more blue and green spaces.

"I'm no stranger to being in rooms where I am the minority in age, race and gender," she said.

Her desire to represent the voices of those who may be marginalised drives her to speak up in Parliament, where most MPs are older than her.

Still, she asserted: "Age should not hold anyone back. Young people are willing to be counted on. Community building is more meaningful when everyone, regardless of age, participates."



FRANCESCA PHOEBE WAH, 29
Founder of non-profit group Bless

A fund-raising drive started by Ms Francesca Phoebe Wah during the circuit breaker period raised over \$180,000 and helped more than 3,000 people living in rental flats put food on their tables for three months.

She had noticed that part-time jobs were the first to go as a result of the fallout from the coronavirus pandemic. Residents in rental flats are more likely to hold part-time jobs.

Brought up in a low-income family, Ms Wah has worked with underprivileged groups for about six years since her university days.

She founded Bringing Love to Every Single Soul, or Bless, in 2014. The non-profit group counts among its activities reading sessions with underprivileged children at the void decks of rental housing blocks.

Her next project is to work with her fiancé to make sure families living in rental flats have their own laptops and are able to keep up with digitalisation.



PHOTO: NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

ANDY TAY KAH PING, 30
Scientist

When he was seven, Assistant Professor Andy Tay was already asking questions such as "Why do tigers have stripes?" when he visited the zoo. When his parents failed to give him the answers, the curious boy would look them up in encyclopaedias.

He is now in the field of cancer research, pursuing answers to chronic healthcare problems like cancer and pain.

His research is motivated by his parents – his mother is a breast cancer survivor, while his father, who used to work as a construction worker and is now a taxi driver, suffers from lower back pain.

Hoping to create a real-world impact and one day help his loved ones and many other families, Prof Tay focuses on developing nanomaterials to engineer immune cells for treating cancer.

An assistant professor at the National University of Singapore, he was the only Singaporean selected in the Class of 2020 World Economic Forum Young Scientists for his cutting-edge research.



ST PHOTO: MARK CHEONG

CHEN CHEE YANG, 29
Founder of Carta Genomics

Born as an in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) baby 29 years ago, entrepreneur Chen Chee Yang is now helping parents who go for IVF make one of their toughest decisions: which embryos to implant. Dr Chen founded Carta Genomics in 2018 to provide clinical-grade genomics testing to produce healthier IVF babies.

Employing machine learning, he is able to predict the risk of an embryo developing diseases like breast cancer and Alzheimer's later in life, based on the interactions between multiple genes and the environment.

A qualified doctor and neuroscience graduate from Imperial College London, he practised medicine in Britain before returning to Singapore to build his company. The firm has partnered top IVF clinics worldwide and is expanding its Singapore team, with the goal of bringing genetic testing to more Asians.



ST PHOTO: MOHD KHALID BABA

LAVERNIAH ANNADORAY, 29
PhD student

Determined to translate science from bench to bedside, Ms Laveniah Annadoray set out to design a drug that can be administered with ease, given how most people struggle to stick to daily medications.

She went into research in engineering DNA and ribonucleic acid (RNA) – both genetic sequences – to treat diseases. This led to the development of a new circular microRNA interference technology platform, which generates medications targeting the small RNA (or microRNA) that drives disease progression. The drugs are more stable and hence allow for longer dosing intervals.

Last month, Ms Annadoray became a recipient of the National University of Singapore's Medicine Kickstart Initiative grant, which will support the commercialisation of the platform through a spin-off company that will be launched in Britain and Singapore.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF PETER YEOW

PETER YEOW, 29
Researcher

Mr Peter Yeow's colour blindness may have got in the way of his dreams of being a doctor, but it was not a roadblock in his path in biology.

He decided to pursue a career in cancer research as another way to save lives and further his interest in the subject.

Currently pursuing a PhD in clinical medicine at Oxford University under a scholarship with the Agency for Science, Technology and Research, he made a ground-breaking discovery in identifying a novel way to selectively kill aggressive breast cancer cells that have a specific genetic fault, while leaving normal cells unharmed.

What is even more promising is that this genetic mark is also found in many other cancer types.

This result was so significant that the study was published in the journal *Nature*. Mr Yeow is one of the lead authors of the paper.

FIGHT CLUB

SHEIK FARHAN SHEIK ALAU'DDIN, 23
Silat world champion

With two-time silat world champion Sheik Alau'ddin as his father, Sheik Farhan Sheik Alau'ddin has some grand shoes to fill.

He grew up watching his father's training sessions, going to the community club in Jalan Besar as regularly as he went to school, he said.

These days, he spends all his free time – sparse as it is as he is serving his national service – training.

He has swept the gold medals in the past few years at events like the SEA Games and Asian Games, and was crowned world champion in Bali in 2016.

He says silat is just "something I have to do". This year, with the coronavirus putting a pause on most things, he has trained even more efficiently and feels better prepared than ever, he said.

He added that with desire, effort and discipline – his three qualities for what makes a good athlete – anyone can succeed.



ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM



Find out more about these outstanding young Singaporeans: str.sg/30-young-singaporeans

ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE



QUAH TING WEN, 28
Swimmer

After breaking two national short-course swimming records at the International Swimming League in Hungary in October and last month, Quah Ting Wen took a well-deserved break while serving her stay-home notice back in Singapore.

She is one of the few athletes who has had events to compete in this year. She swam again at the Olympic trials this month, just a few days after the end of her stay-home notice.

"I like to put myself in situations where I feel challenged. I want to see how I perform when I touch the water after being on land for two weeks," she said.

The 28-year-old said her mentality has changed this year.

Whereas in the past she found it difficult to separate pride from arrogance, she now gives herself credit where it is due and has greater trust in herself.

"Swimming well in Hungary and personal growth went hand in hand," she said.



ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

AMANDA LIM, 27
Swimmer

With no access to a pool or gym during the circuit breaker period, Amanda Lim, winner of six consecutive SEA Games 50m freestyle gold medals, worked out twice a day in April and May at the void deck of the housing block where her family lives.

It has been a strange year for the

swimmer, with competitions, including the Olympics, postponed or cancelled. She said she is proud to have kept to her training routine nonetheless, which has kept her in form for swimming meets.

She is raring to add a seventh consecutive gold medal to her SEA Games haul. After clocking 25.06

seconds in her 50m SEA Games freestyle race last year, it will "definitely" be under 25 seconds come next year, she said.

Outside the pool, she is part of the product development team at Fullerton Health, working with others to supply healthcare professionals with medical equipment.