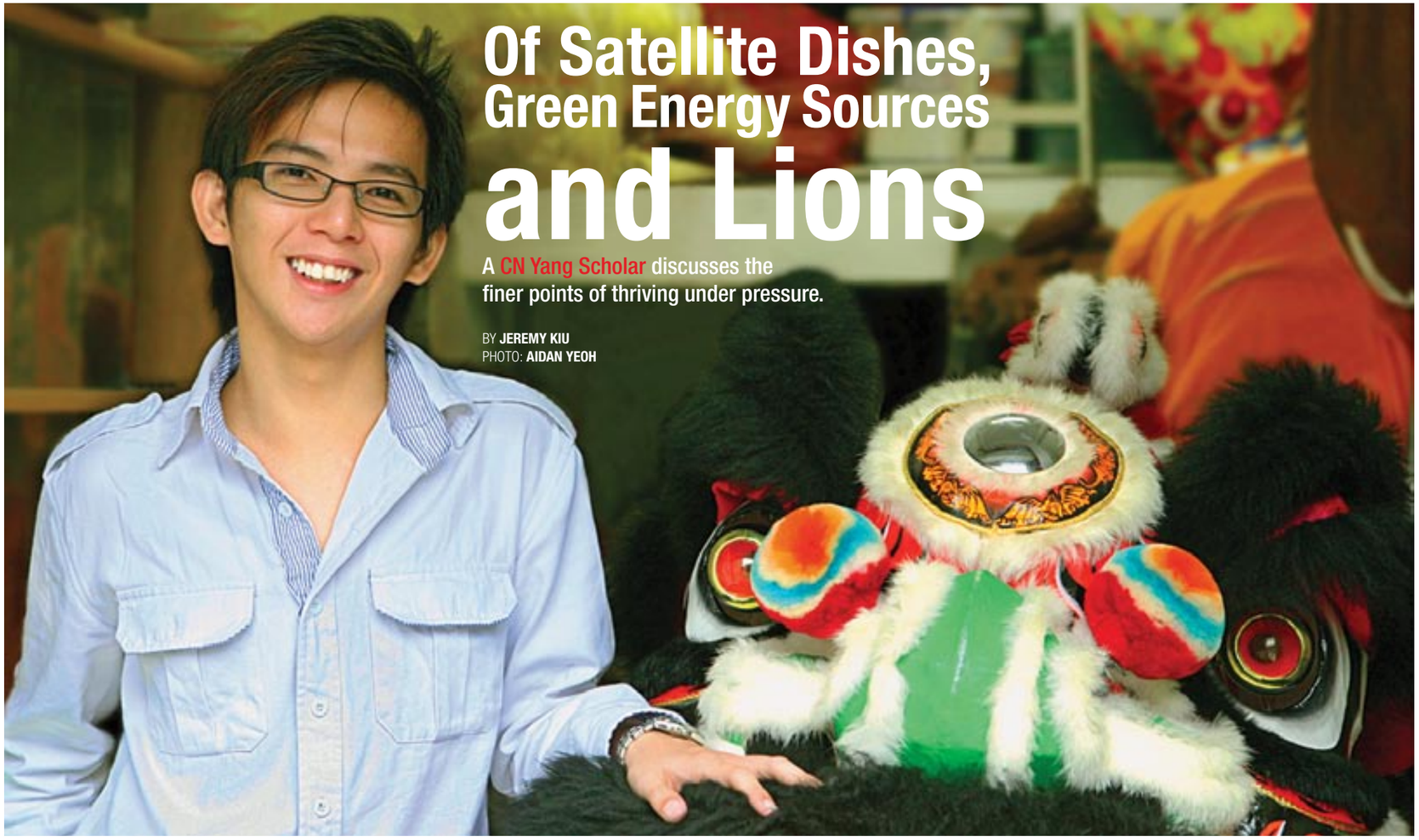

Of Satellite Dishes, Green Energy Sources and Lions

A CN Yang Scholar discusses the finer points of thriving under pressure.

BY **JEREMY KIU**
PHOTO: **AIDAN YEOH**

For 22-year-old CN Yang Scholar Jeremy Kiu of NTU's School of Chemical & Biomedical Engineering (SCBE), dealing with multiple responsibilities is simply part of a complete academic experience.

What's big, white, has a horn and creaks when you move it?

The answer is what I was working on as an Associate Engineer with ST Electronics, the company I joined after I had completed my National Service. The job gave me a clear picture of the structure of an engineering company, and I felt that studying at SCBE would provide me with the technical knowledge to complete my education as an engineer. And to answer the question above, I was working on satellite dishes.

DAYS ONE TO 10

Upon coming to NTU, I had mixed emotions – happy that I was back in school, but feeling lost at having to hit the books again after so long. Then I was accepted into the CN Yang Scholars Programme, and I soon found that what it offered was a competitive environment to kick-start my university education. My fellow participants were highly-motivated and had excellent academic results, and the programme allows us to gain research experience right at the start of our freshman year. Over the past three semesters, I have made many friends amongst the programme participants, and they were the ones who helped me to assimilate back into academic life.

The highlight of the programme for me was the research module that we had to do in our second semester. I have a special interest in clean energy sources. Hence, when I was looking for a topic for my research project, I was immediately attracted to the subject of photocatalytic water-splitting techniques, which put me under the tutelage of Asst Prof Xu Rong of SCBE.

Doing research requires a lot of patience. You can plan what you want to achieve from day one to day 10, but sometimes you end up having to start from scratch when something goes wrong on day nine. It takes perseverance to get even the least result. The commitment required of us was enormous, but I learnt a lot through the project and am glad to have been given the opportunity to conduct independent scientific research.

In October, we had the chance to display the fruits of our labour to Prof CN Yang himself when he came to receive his honorary degree. Learning how to present our research results was a good experience for us, and it was an honour to meet Prof Yang, as well as interact with President S R Nathan at the convocation ceremony.

DRAGONS AND LIONS

I am currently the Chairperson of the Dragon and Lion Dance Troupe of the NTU Cultural Activities Club, and right now, we are all hard at work on our major event for March 2009, the 5th NTU Institutional Lion Dance Competition. Some undergraduates find that taking part in extra-curricular activities is unnecessary. I beg to differ. Books and lectures can only teach us so much; other skills such as interpersonal communication, conflict management and planning require practice in real life. For many of us, the university represents the last training ground before we start work. That's why we should take this chance to train ourselves to handle increasingly difficult demands.

As my third semester in university comes to an end, I will be completing the programme curriculum. How time flies; I believe I speak for most of the programme participants when I say that the current semester is the most difficult ever, only to find the next semester even worse. But then, isn't that what real life is like, and that as we get older, there will be more difficult decisions to make, and greater responsibilities for us to shoulder? ■

> "Doing research requires a lot of patience. You can plan what you want to achieve from day one to day 10, but sometimes you end up having to start from scratch when something goes wrong on day nine."

Nanyang honours

PHOTOS: **NTU CED**

Research review: (Left) At the School of Physical & Mathematical Sciences, Prof CN Yang and NTU President Dr Su Guaning review the latest round of research projects by NTU's CN Yang Scholars; (right) Prof Yang giving his public lecture on China's economy.

The premier CN Yang Scholars Programme at NTU was launched in 2006, and is named for Prof CN Yang, Nobel Laureate in Physics (1957). In October, Prof Yang received an honorary Degree of Doctor of Science (*honoris causa*) from NTU, in recognition of his contributions to science and his longstanding bonds with the university. Prof Yang first visited Nanyang University in 1967, and in 1971, was appointed the External Examiner for its Department of Physics. In 2005, he became a member of the International Advisory Committee at NTU's Institute of Advanced Studies.

In his acceptance address, Prof Yang noted the many challenges facing students today, and asked them to confront them boldly: "I would like to remind the young people here that they are living in a great period in the history of mankind. With the cumulative effect of scientific and technological development over the last two centuries, the productivity of mankind has enormously increased. But you must also realise that with this increase comes latent dangers. I can foresee that in another 50 years, the world will be propelled into a period that is fraught with challenges of all kinds. It is important for each of you to remember this, and to seize the opportunity to help us get through this critical period in our history."