They’re screaming all the way to the top

A VIDEO game which can turn players’ screams into light on the screen has won Singapore students the top prize at a global game design festival.

Titled Lurking, the survival-horror game clinched the award for best student game at this year’s Independent Games Festival (IGF), held in Shanghai between Oct 19 and Oct 21.

Three of the six finalists in the student game category were from Singapore, with the rest from China. There were 121 entries in total for this category this year.

Lurking took four final-year game design students from the DigiPen Institute of Technology Singapore six months to create.

They describe it as a “sound-based game inspired by echolocation”.

Players start in the dark and “see” in the game by using sound.

To make the game more immersive, players can play with a microphone, which picks up whatever noise they might make – breathing, speech, screams – and translates them into waves that illuminate the game world.

Lurking’s game producer Justin Ng, 25, said: “A lot of those who came to our booth to try the game said it had a cool concept and that they liked the atmosphere of the game.”

It also won an award outside the student category, for excellence in technology in the main competition, which is open to all independent developers.

The IGF is the independent game design wing of the annual Game Developers Conference, the largest international annual gathering of professional video game developers.

Teams from Singapore have done well in the competition since the first IGF China in 2009.

In five out of six years, game developers from Singapore have clinched either best student game or best game at the festival.

Another Singapore team from DigiPen finished as runners-up for Iris, their 2D side-scrolling adventure platform game, which requires players to jump over obstacles, like in the classic platform game Super Mario Bros, among other things.

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While Lurking aimed for an atmosphere of suspense and horror, Iris went in the opposite direction with elegant, colourful visuals and soothing background music.

“The most common word we heard from those who played our game at the showcase was ‘beautiful’,” game designer Muhsen Hassan, 33, said in an e-mail.

“We were quickly led to conclude that our game’s aesthetics was the main contributing factor to its mass appeal.”

Lesterh@sph.com

Winning local games at IGF China

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<td>2014</td>
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Source: GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE CHINA

ST GRAPHICS

(From Left) Mr. Justin Ng, Mr. Dexter Chng, Mr. Soo Zhong Min, and Mr. Bryan Teo from the DigiPen Institute of Technology Singapore took six months to create the survival-horror game Lurking. Their game beat five other competitors, including teams from China. ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN