



Heroine with local accent

Singapore-born actress voices character in newly released video game

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A video game character developed by a Swedish and London company has grabbed the attention of the online community here with her strong, distinct Singaporean accent - to the amusement of the voice actress behind it.

London-based actress Liz Sutherland, a Singapore-born Eurasian, told Life! in an e-mail interview that she was "stunned at the response the game has had in Singapore and how much gamers are analysing the character".

On YouTube, videos of the character's dialogue have chalked up more than 100,000 hits. There is a Facebook fan page created for the character, described as a "Singapore heroine", which now has more than 700 members.

Sutherland voices the fictitious character Bolo Santosi, the leader of an anti-government faction on the island nation of Panau, in the new action game *Just Cause 2*, which was released in the United States on March 23. The game is a sequel to *Just Cause*, released in 2006.

She said the producers wanted to use a Singaporean accent as the game is set fictitiously in South-east Asia.

"They wanted to give Bolo a Singaporean accent but exaggerated it to give a South-east Asian sound. She's not meant to be a natural-sounding Singaporean," said Sutherland, who is of Chinese-Scottish parentage.

Netizens speculated on forums that theatre actresses Margaret Chan and Neo Swee Lin and comedienne Irene Ang might be behind Santosi's voice.

The actress, who is in her 30s, grew up in Singapore and studied at the United

World College in Dover Road.

She moved to London when she was 18 to study acting. She received first-class honours in drama from Manchester University and has remained in London since to pursue an acting career.

Some local gamers have panned Santosi's "campy" voiceover, while others say "it's so bad, it's good".

Mr Goh Eck Kheng, chairman of the Speak Good English Movement, says: "It's a theatrical accent because I don't think any Singaporean speaks like that. Singaporeans may recognise it as Singaporean but it could also be a Malaysian voice."

"To the rest of the world, unless they have intimate contact with Singaporeans or Malaysians, it is just a strange, unfamiliar accent."

Sutherland said that during the recording, she was directed to "make the accent stronger, to keep her emotionally detached and her speech very measured".

"The director and writer had very firm ideas about Bolo's character and the style of delivery," she said.

She has done voiceovers for games such as *Cursed Mountain* and *Deep Silver* and for documentaries such as BBC's *Natural World* and *A History Of The World*. She is currently filming a TV sitcom for BBC called *Ideal*.

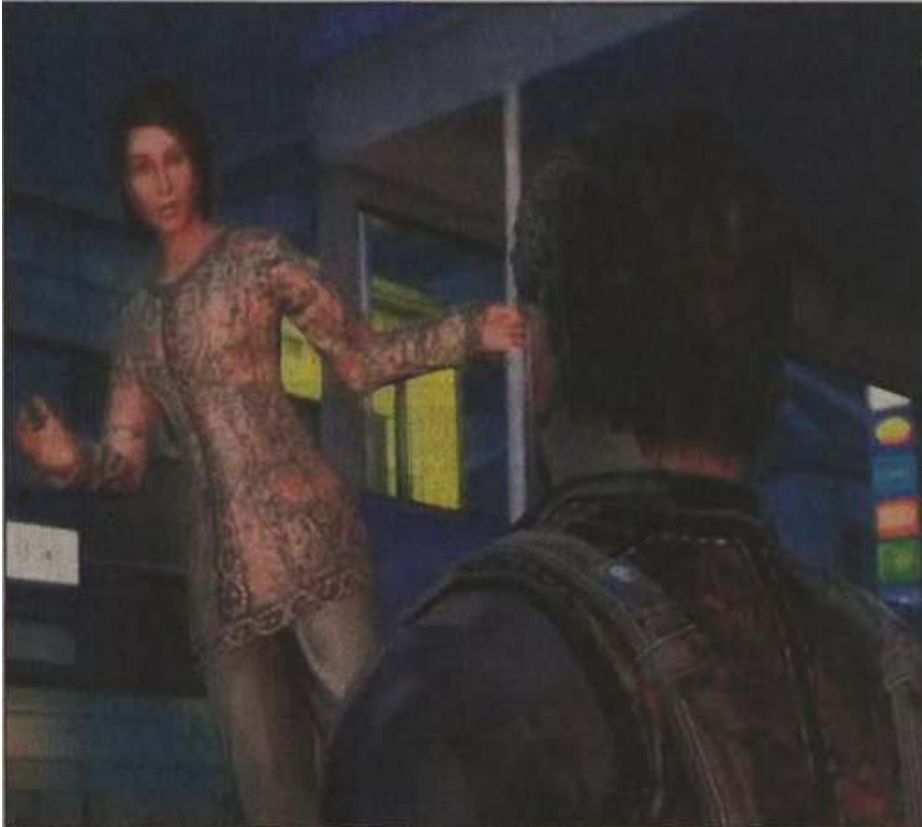
Her natural accent is a London accent, she said, but she slips into Singlish when she is with Singaporeans. "But it's more natural than Bolo's," she added.

"The game is like a B-movie and is utterly outlandish, so a naturalistic voice-over wouldn't have worked. It's an over-the-top game which is pure fun escapism. I hope audiences in Singapore can appreciate the humour of it."

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Additional reporting by Eddino Abdul Hadi

What do you think of Bolo Santosi's accent? Write to stlife@sph.com.sg



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Liz Sutherland (above), a Singapore-born Eurasian who provides the voiceover for the video-game heroine

A screen capture (left) from the video game Just Cause 2, which features the character Bolo Santosi (far left), who speaks with a Singaporean accent.