

# Rising Sun Trooper

While many anime and game fans have dreamt of living and working in Japan, few people have actually managed to do so. Danny Choo, son of luxury shoe designer Jimmy Choo, chose not to follow his father footsteps and instead pursue his dreams. Today, he not only lives and work in Japan, he also runs **DannyChoo.com**, a highly popular web portal for people who want the latest news on anime figurines and information on Japan culture. GameAxis Malaysia manages to track Danny down and asks him about how he came to achieve his dreams.

**GAX:** Hi Danny, thanks for agreeing to this interview. For starters, perhaps you can briefly introduce yourself?

**Danny Choo:** Sure. I was born in London, England, and I majored in languages: Japanese and Korean. When I left university, I worked at Japan Airlines for about a year, and then I worked at Nature as a marketing executive, a scientific journal. This was about 9 years ago. It was my first time working and living in Japan, so it was a very precious experience for me. I worked in a number of companies including Microsoft before starting up my own company called Mirai Inc.

What my company does now is develop consumer-generated e-commerce platforms. These days, to have an e-commerce platform alone is a very difficult thing to maintain. What a company needs is a community for niche group of people. And business entity will sell to that community. One of my company goals is a large-scale website that can be managed by a handful of people instead of 20 – 40 people. In order to do that, the site has to be build correctly from the beginning using a different approach. For example we have tools to read the EXIF information in an image and adjust it accordingly to your specifics.

I run a website called DannyChoo.com, which basically focuses on Japanese culture and figures. I like writing about figures and Japanese culture, and I want to share that information with readers outside Japan. There are a lot of readers within Japan, but my blog's main audience is for folks who live outside Japan, those who enjoy Japanese culture. I also provide information on the things that people may need to know when living in Japan, for example, looking for apartments, looking for property to buy, looking for a job, throwing rubbish, and so on.

**Unlike most anime bloggers, you often blog and ask your readers about their aspirations as well as give them advice on life. Why do you choose to blog about these kind of topics?**

Because I am passionate about such topics. There's something inside me that makes me want to share the culture that I'm surrounded by. I know very well that there are many people outside of Japan who enjoy such topics. I remember when I was a student back in UK, I used to enjoy Japanese culture and there was no Internet at the time. I knew I would have been grateful myself if there was a source where I could go to and see what's it like to live in Japan. It almost feels like I live in Japan through these photos. I want to share them with folks.

**You're living with many people considered the otaku dream. You're married, living and working in Japan, and maintaining your hobby for figurines. How do you manage to achieve all this?**

I believe just being passionate about what I do really. It's like at 6 o'clock, most people would go home, and some people stay behind. But I continue working. It doesn't really feel like work; it just feels like a part of my hobby, really. On weekends, I would spend off days like I

would be at work. Though most people would consider it work but I consider it part of my hobby. Lots of people separate their work and their hobbies. For me, I merge them together. I guess that one of the reasons why I get a lot of things done.

**Several of your readers find your blog posts highly motivational and see you as a source of inspiration. How do you respond to that?**

For me, it's still Day 1 for me. I've been around quite a bit, not all of it has been easy and there have been some difficult times. But all this times I've gained a lot of experience and I feel that I want to share my experience with my fellow comrades. If I can be a source of motivation for folks who are looking to contribute to something, all the better then.

**Online, you're also known as the Tokyo Trooper, dancing on the streets of Tokyo while wearing a Star Wars Storm Trooper costume. How did that come about?**

Back in 2005, they were showing Star Wars Episode 3 and the TV was showing reruns. I remembered my childhood dream of wanting to be a storm trooper. So I asked my wife if I could buy some armor, did a lot of research on the armor, and initially I decided to walk around Tokyo and took some videos. But that got a little boring so I decided to put some dancing into it.

The first time I put dancing into it was in Akihabara and that video got quite popular. So I continued making them; it's fun at the same time and it's good exercise! [laughs] So the first stage was just walking around Tokyo, and the second stage was dancing. Now I haven't announced this anywhere yet, but I want to start doing is make short movies. The first one we're going to do is called Salary Man Trooper. It's about this Storm Trooper who gets out of bed, goes to the train with his briefcase and tie, goes to office, see him in the office, some sort of story about that. That's one scenario.

**How did you get into collecting anime figurines?**

It started with Gundam. I collected Gundam for a while but when you go looking for Gundam stuff, you often come across this kind of figurines. One day I picked up a figurine, Aya Natsume from Tenjo Tenge by Bome, so I got that and it started from there. Because I write so often about figures, I became acquainted with folks like Goodsmile. Basically my company builds their website, and I also write for their official English website called Danny's Corner as I couldn't think of a better name.

Figurines also make life so much more interesting. For example: With [Danny takes out a Kagami Figma figurine and puts it next to his plate], without. [He puts the figurine away] It's completely different. I usually bring one figurine everywhere, and right now Kagami is my favorite.

**What's your current favorite anime series?**

My craze for the moment is Keremko DX. It's awesome. I've been reading the manga, and it's really crazy and cool. There are a lot of cute girls in it. The animation is quite decent and it's a lot of fun.

**Do you have any particular all time favorites?**

Hmm...I like Strike Witches, Macross the Movie, Gun x Sword was good, Cowboy Bebop...I mentioned Strike Witches, right?



Danny Choo in his Storm Trooper outfit, posing with passerbys of Tokyo



**For me, it's still Day 1 for me. I've been around quite a bit, not all of it has been easy and there have been some difficult times. But all this times I've gained a lot of experience and I feel that I want to share my experience with my fellow comrades.**

**Some anime fans complain that anime series today are rehashes of the same themes, archetypes and stories. Do you believe that there is still space for innovation, or have the anime industry just ran out of ideas?**

To make an anime series costs a lot of money. Anime series don't make any money when they broadcast on TV. They make all their money on DVD sales and licensing as well. Unfortunately, one of the reasons there's a lot of fan service is because it sells, like Strike Witches, though I thought it was a great series [laughs]. Sure, lots of it seems is like typical anime: there's a guy and there's a girl who falls out of outer space...

**Yeah, or a mysterious girl who comes to the guy's life and wacky hijinks follow, and usually he chooses the mysterious girl...**

Yeah, but people like that sort of things. Of course not all anime are like that. There are different variations. I guess it's just what people are looking for really. So to answer your question, it's both yes and no.

**You work closely with figurine makers, especially Goodsmile Company. How did you become acquainted with them?**

I try to do as much networking as possible. You find that there are a lot of people on the Internet who want to keep everything to themselves. They keep the traffic within their websites, they don't like sharing, they think sharing ideas is like giving away secrets and people are going to steal it. These folks they tend to not grow, so what I generally advise is to network with other people who have similar interests.

Through one of my meetings, I met someone who knew Goodsmile, they introduced us, and it was well over one year ago. And we've had a good relationship since then.

**Recently you unveiled a new English company site for Goodsmile Company. What else do you have in store for overseas figurines and anime fans?**

I used to have a website called figure.fm. Users could come along and post their figures and stuff like that. But I closed it down and I want to bring people together like DannyChoo.com. So what I'm going to do now is figure.fm is going to be a mash-up website. It's going to read feeds from Flickr, DannyChoo.com, and people who have a figure blog, I'm going to pull their feeds as well. It's going to be one place where they can go see everything basically. Hopefully it will be up by Q1 next year.

**Before we wrap up this interview, do you have any last words for our readers?**

To the folks who regularly visit DannyChoo.com, thanks for your support. DannyChoo.com isn't the same without readers. What I'm going to do on my end is to continue to do what I do and I hope folks will continue to read and enjoy.



Kagami Hiiragi, Danny's current favorite Figma figurine which he brings to wherever he goes