



Australian Government

**SCREEN**  
AUSTRALIA

## ScreenSingapore Singapore, 5–12 June 2011

Report by Ross Matthews, Head of Production Investment



**ScreenSingapore**  
新加坡影汇

**mda**  
Media Development Authority  
Singapore



## Inaugural ScreenSingapore

Singapore's Media Development Authority (MDA), along with an impressive list of sponsors, hosted the inaugural ScreenSingapore at the Capella Hotel on Sentosa Island, 5–12 June 2011.

The MDA of Singapore promotes the growth of globally competitive film, television, radio, publishing, music, games, animation and interactive digital media industries. It also regulates the media sector to safeguard the interests of consumers and promotes a connected society. The high-profile board of ScreenSingapore along with the organising team planned a three-pronged strategy designed to make a strong first impression – which for the most part it did.

First there was a series of high-profile red carpet premieres (one each night of the festival); secondly a busy schedule of events dedicated to the business of film; and thirdly a three-day expo.

The opening night featured a film from China, and then came a night of Japanese cinema, an action night, a Singaporean night, a Hollywood night, a Bollywood night and the closing night featured the Asia Pacific premiere of the **Tom Hanks** and **Julia Roberts** dramatic comedy **Larry Crowne**. Tom Hanks was in attendance. Each of these nights was a star-studded red-carpet premiere complete with paparazzi, crowds of onlookers and well-attended receptions.

The organisers suggested that there were 700 registrations including over 500 trade attendees from all of the major Asian territories.

The Chair of the ScreenSingapore board, expat Australian distributor and financier **Greg Coote**, pressed the point that Singapore is well-positioned to present itself as a central hub for the Asian film industry. The city state's status as a multi-industry hub places it in a strong position to exploit the rapid growth of the Asian film sector as the movie business becomes increasingly global. **Aubeck Kam**, CEO of MDA, expanded on this point, "Singapore is already a global and regional centre for a wide range of industries from finance to transport to biomedical sciences. We hope that Singapore can likewise serve as a regional and global city to serve the international media industry."

The film business events at the festival were of good quality and the highlights are listed below.

## Film Finance Forum presented by Winston Baker in association with *Variety*

This was a day-long forum covering a wide range of topics including panels on business and finance trends in Asia, accessing capital and risk mitigation, big screen to digital scene, and co-production and co-financing opportunities. I was part of a panel comprising **Graham Mason** from New Zealand, **Heng Li Lang**, Director of Finance Cooperations, MDA and myself. The topic was 'Government Incentives for Live Action Productions, Animation and 3D Installations'.

The keynote address at this forum was given by **Jim Gianopulos**, Chairman and CEO of Fox Filmed Entertainment. While pointing out the challenges of the changing media environment – fragmentation, a maturing DVD market, low-cost alternatives to entertainment, and theft – Gianopulos was clear that the challenges in this transition are far outweighed by the opportunities. And there are opportunities aplenty in the Asian market.

While the box office take for American films remained fairly static over the last 10 years, international box office had doubled in the same period. More importantly Asia's share of the international box office grew to 42 per cent in 2010. Anticipating possible accusations that he was advocating renewed Hollywood hegemony, Gianopulos pointed to Fox's commitment to local productions through Fox International. He identified three of the largest overseas markets as having a box office share for local films of over 54 per cent. Gianopulos also announced a substantial fund as a co-venture between Fox and RGM Films, a company based in Singapore and run by **Devesh Chetty**.

### Daily 'In Conversation Series'

- **Greg Coote and Sanford Panitch** – Producing for a Global Marketplace  
Sanford is head of Fox International Productions (FIP) and oversees local production activities in 11 countries. He defined his productions as films which don't need the US to recoup. The US studios have seen the mix of their business radically change as international box office receipts overtake domestic US earnings.
- **Michael Werner and Daniel Yun** – The Changing Landscape of Film Distribution.  
Michael is the chairman of Fortissimo Film Sales and Daniel is a Singapore-based producer and distributor who is taking a financial and distribution interest in several Australian films.
- **Shekhar Kapur** – Directing in the East and West  
Shekhar is the Academy Award®-winning director of *Elizabeth* as well as many Indian films. He produced a wonderful documentary entitled *Bollywood – The greatest love story ever told*, which had its Asian premiere screening at the festival.

### China

China is the world's fastest growing cinema market and was a consistent focus of attention throughout the panels and forums. In 2010, two Chinese films broke US\$100 million in their domestic markets. Theatrical box office in China is growing so rapidly that it will soon overtake Japan as the world's largest film market outside North America. Five hundred and twenty-six domestic films released in China in 2010, up from 456 films the year before. In the last 24 months, five public companies in China have set up equity funds totalling US\$3 billion which now enters the market. Many of the films funded by these equity funds lose money, but it does not appear to be stemming the flow of high-risk equity into film. It is indeed the 'Wild East'.

## Business matching breakfast

The MDA organised a business matching breakfast. Australian attendees were seated with their Asian counterparts to discuss business and production opportunities. The breakfast was well-attended and productive.

## Bait 3D panel



Around 150 people attended a panel and screening of some *Bait 3D* clips and a discussion relating to this first Singapore/Australian 3D co-production. The panel comprised **Gary Hamilton** from Arclight, **Ian Maycock** from Blackmagic (Post and VFX facility), **Kenneth Tan** and **Ian Wee** from MDA, the film's producer **Chris Brown** and me. The session lasted well over its one-hour slot and the interest level was high. Later that week Chris Brown, Gary Hamilton and I viewed some of the latest shark VFX footage at Blackmagic – impressive and suitably scary.

## Meetings

- IFS Capital: **Chua Chye Seng** (General Manager Development) and **John Sim** (Principal Investment Group) – this is a publicly listed and well-capitalised investment group who have provided offset and discounting loan funds to *Mental* and *The Sapphires*. Their terms are competitive and they are fast and reliable.
- Twentieth Century Fox International Productions – **Sanford Panitch**, President
- SIMF Management Pte Ltd – **Chan Pui Yin**, President
- Homerun – **Daniel Yun**, CEO & **Gu Qiao**, Producer – finances & distribution
- 852 Films – **Andrew Ooi**, President – Hong Kong producer
- Hopscotch Pictures – **Sukee Chew**
- Astro – **Azlina Megat** – Malaysian producers
- Salon Films (HK) Ltd. – **Fred CY Wang** – Hong Kong producers
- Infinite Frameworks – **Mike Wiluan** – VFX Facility
- Toonz – **P Jayakumar**, CEO – animations studio, India
- MDA – **Kenneth Tan**, Asst CEO
- Fortissimo Films – **Michael Werner**
- Gateway Law Corporation – **Michael Leow**
- Goodloe & Anderson – **Shannon H Anderson** & **Bianca Goodloe** – LA law firm

- **Julie Heckscher** – Deputy High Commissioner
- **Karen Robson** – LA lawyer

## Australians in Singapore

**Michael Wrenn**

**Christopher Mapp**

**Paul de Carvalho**

**Meredith Garlick**

**Bill Leimbach**

**Mandaley Perkins**

**Ben Grant**

**Kylie du Fresne**

**Michael Robertson**

**Debra Richards**

**Ian Booth**

**Mike Lake**

**Janelle Landers**

**Aidan O'Bryan**

## The Expo

While the general festival organisation was excellent and everything worked, I have to say that the expo was effectively non-existent. Fifteen small booths were constructed outside the Capella Grand Ballroom and they were for the most part unattended. The only two substantial sales companies at the festival were Arclight and Fortissimo. They both booked a booth which remained largely unattended – each had a chair and a poster and that was it. The only active booth was Ausfilm, manned successfully by **Debra Richards** and her team – they did quite a lot of business. The MDA team worked out of a hotel room and seemed to be extremely busy. The organisers made a valiant but unsuccessful attempt to create a market atmosphere and will have hopefully learned useful lessons for next year's event.

## Conclusion

It was well worth the visit to attend the birth of a new Asian festival. The birthing had its problems but in the end it was quite successful and the festival is a healthy infant. There are timing issues for the organisers – the festival sits too hard on the heels of Cannes and overlaps into Shanghai. A solution will not be easy in a crowded festival market.

Singapore is a safe, friendly city, its infrastructure is reliable and its financial systems are secure and professional. This city could well become the Asian media hub that the festival organisers hope for.

