



# FULL SCREEN AHEAD

- LOOKING BEYOND 20 YEARS  
OF SUPPORTING SINGAPORE CINEMA



## A REVIEW

### SINGAPORE FILM COMMISSION (SFC) TURNED 20

SFC, which celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2018, was set up with the mission to develop Singapore's film industry and nurture filmmaking talent. Over the years, SFC has been a constant champion of local films. The continued support has led to a steady pipeline of cinematic offerings, and an increasing number of Singapore film talent has gained recognition on the world stage with their compelling stories.

This document details SFC's efforts in supporting Singapore's film industry, and outlines its plans in steering the industry into the future. With feedback from key stakeholders, including filmmakers, production companies, exhibitors, distributors, film schools, and international counterparts, three collaborative thrusts - (1) Talent Development, (2) Internationalisation, and (3) Audience Cultivation - have been identified as key strategies to propel Singapore's film industry towards the next stage of growth.



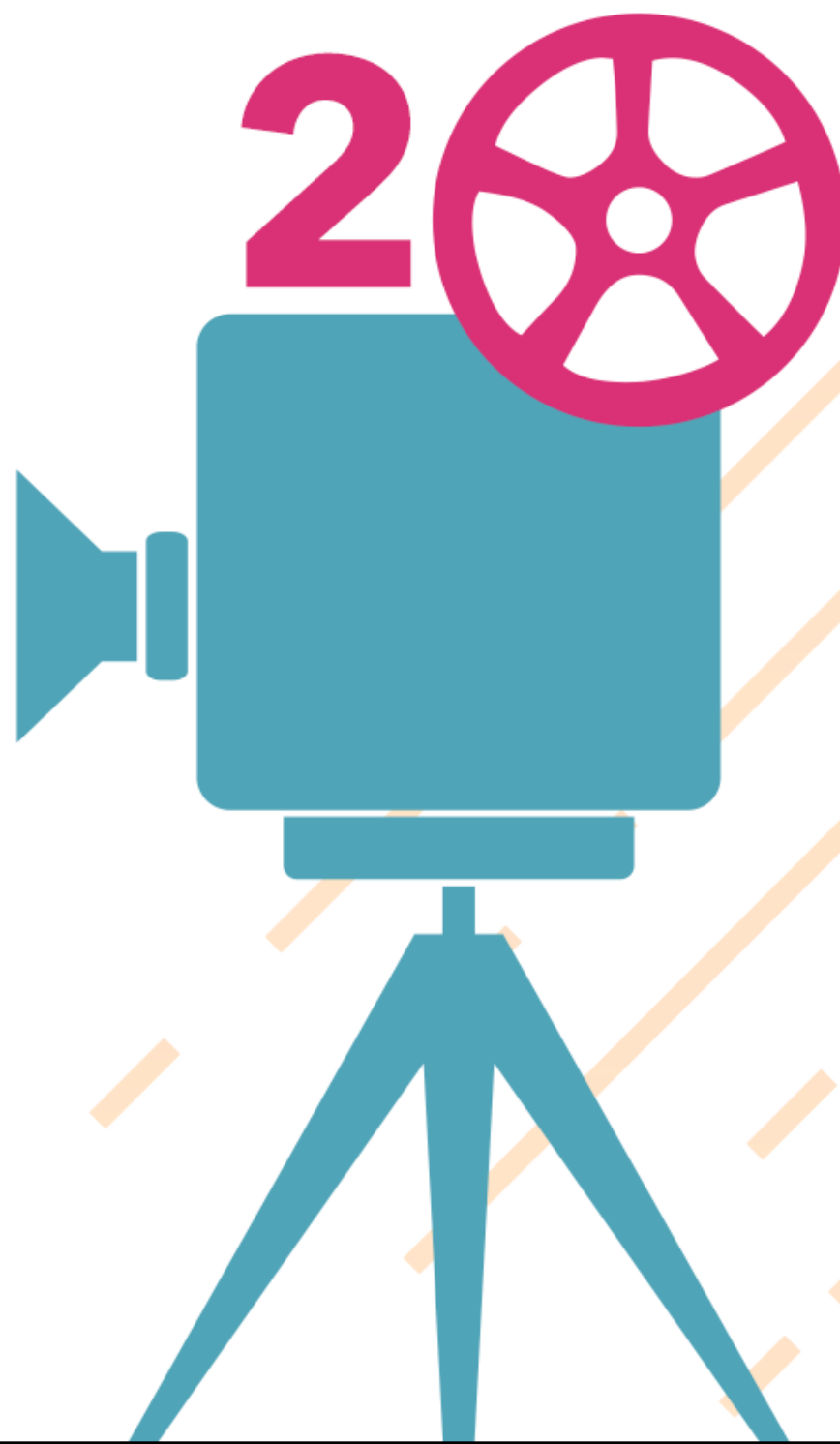
## LOOKING BACK:

### 20 YEARS OF SINGAPORE FILMS

In the late 1990s, pioneering filmmakers like Eric Khoo, Kelvin Tong and Jack Neo helped revive interest in local films, both on home ground and overseas. Singapore's strong movie-going culture as a national pastime, as well as bold forays into international film festivals like Cannes, helped whet a collective appetite for more home-grown filmmaking efforts.

By the early 2000s, a second wave of filmmakers, including Royston Tan, Boo Junfeng, Tan Pin Pin and Anthony Chen, had released their own films: some gritty and introspective, others flamboyant and whimsical, but all telling authentic Singapore stories which resonated with audiences.

As Singapore's film industry continues gathering pace, the average output now stands at around 10-15 films a year. Up-and-coming filmmakers like K. Rajagopal, Yeo Siew Hua, M. Raihan Halim and Kirsten Tan have joined the stable of Singapore talent who continue to make their mark with accolades, acclaim and awards on the world stage.





# MILESTONES IN SINGAPORE'S FILM HISTORY

**1995:**  
Eric Khoo's *Mee Pok Man* sparks resurgence of local interest in filmmaking



**1997:**  
Eric Khoo's *12 Storeys* becomes first local film selected for Cannes Film Festival



**1998:**  
Formation of Singapore Film Commission to develop a vibrant Singapore film industry. *Money No Enough* written by Jack Neo sweeps S\$5.8 million at local box office. Glen Goei's disco-inspired *Forever Fever* is internationally distributed by Miramax



## 1995-1999 REVIVAL OF LOCAL FILMS

**2005:**  
Asian Film Archive is set up to preserve Asia's rich cinematic heritage



ASIAN FILM ARCHIVE



## 2005-2009 INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION AND BOX OFFICE SUCCESS

**2007:**  
Anthony Chen's short film, *Ah Ma*, is the first Singapore film to garner a Special Mention at Cannes



**2008:**  
A steady slate of local films, like *The Leap Years* and *Painted Skin*, enjoys commercial success. Eric Khoo's *My Magic* remains the only Singapore film to compete for Cannes' prestigious Palme d'Or



**2003:**  
Jack Neo's *Homerun* receives one win and two nominations at Taipei Golden Horse Awards



**2002:**  
Horror film *The Eye* is Singapore's first regional co-production with Hong Kong and Thailand



## 2000-2004 INCREASED REGIONAL INTEREST IN LOCAL FILMS

**2010:**  
Boo Junfeng's *Sandcastle* becomes the first Singapore film invited to Cannes' International Critics' Week



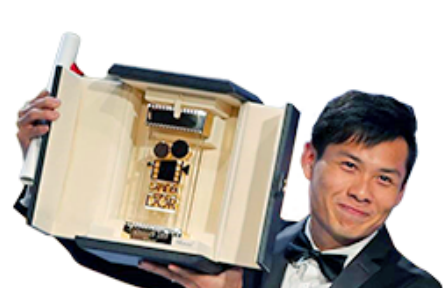
## 2010-2015 FILM FESTIVAL SUCCESS AND HOLLYWOOD INTEREST



**2015:**  
With SFC's support, local production house Infinite Studios partners Hollywood to produce two films shot in Singapore: *Agent 47* and *Equals*



**2013:**  
Anthony Chen's debut feature *Ilo Ilo* wins Cannes' prestigious Camera d'Or and Best Film at the Taipei Golden Horse Awards, and sweeps over 40 more international awards. Jack Neo's *Ah Boys to Men 2* is highest-grossing local film



**2016:**  
Two Singapore films are screened at Cannes: Boo Junfeng's *Apprentice* and K. Rajagopal's *A Yellow Bird*



**2017:**  
Kirsten Tan's debut feature, *Pop Aye*, becomes the first Singaporean film to win major awards at Sundance Film Festival and International Film Festival Rotterdam



**2018:**  
Yeo Siew Hua's *A Land Imagined* makes history as first Singapore film to clinch Locarno International Film Festival's top prize



## 2016-PRESENT ESTABLISHED PRESENCE OF SINGAPORE FILMS

**2018:**  
Sandi Tan's *Shirkers* wins the World Cinema Documentary Directing award at Sundance Film Festival and is acquired by NETFLIX. It's a behind-the-scenes account of what could have been Singapore's first contemporary Indie film, had it been completed in 1992



**2018:**  
Shot primarily in Singapore, megahit *Crazy Rich Asians* is produced by Warner Bros. Pictures in partnership with Infinite Studios with SFC's support

**2018:**  
Producer Low Ser En wins Singapore's first BAFTA (Best British Short Animation award) for her stop-motion short film, *Poles Apart*







## SETTING THE SCENE

## READY POOL OF TALENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Southeast Asia presents burgeoning opportunities for digital and mobile content with its increasingly sophisticated audiences and robust market growth. Singapore stands out in particular with its growing pool of local media talent and the presence of international media companies like Discovery, Fox and Disney. As a result, the country is well-positioned to broker deals, aggregate the best regional content ideas and bring together talent for collaborations.

Opportunities are also growing for Singapore to become a regional springboard for new media and digital services, as well as an ideal testbed for the use of data insights in driving content innovation and audience engagement. Over-the-top (OTT), media giants like Netflix and HBO Asia have established their regional headquarters in Singapore from which to grow their content operations in Asia, significantly expanding the opportunities for Singapore content creators and filmmaking talent to develop original content for VOD audiences in Asia and beyond.



NETFLIX ORIGINAL  
TRIAD PRINCESS



HBO Asia commissioned 'Folklore', a horror series that was produced by Singapore production company Zhao Wei Films and directed by filmmaker Eric Khoo, and 'Grisee', an original period drama series co-produced with Singapore-based production house Infinite Studios.

Home-grown OTT platform Viddsee ventured into producing original content, starting with its first commissioned short film, *Time*, supported by SFC. Data analytics were used to craft *Time*, which was targeted specifically at online audiences.



## STRONG GROWTH IN SOUTHEAST ASIA



### INTERNET PENETRATION IN...

SOUTHEAST ASIA

Approx.  
**480 million**  
Internet users  
by 2020<sup>1</sup>

Of this, more  
than **90%** are  
on mobile<sup>2</sup>

SINGAPORE

**97%** high-speed Internet connectivity/  
high internet connectivity rate<sup>3</sup>

**148.8%**  
mobile  
penetration  
rate<sup>3</sup>



### VIDEO-ON-DEMAND SERVICES IN...

ASIA PACIFIC

Expected over  
**400 million**  
paying  
subscribers  
by 2022<sup>4</sup>

Total local  
content  
spending by  
VOD  
operators<sup>4</sup>  
Expected to reach  
**US\$10.1 billion**  
(2022)

**3.7x**

**US\$2.7 billion**  
(2017)

SINGAPORE

**33.4%** user  
penetration in 2019

**37.7%** user  
penetration expected  
in 2023<sup>5</sup>

**US\$75 million**  
revenue in 2019

**US\$102 million**  
revenue  
expected in 2023<sup>5</sup>



## THE FUTURE OF MEDIA: CAPITALISING ON TRENDS AND HARNESSING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH THREE KEY STRATEGIC THRUSTS

Exciting times lie ahead for media and films. With the unabated demand for quality content, the only way to gain a foothold is for Singapore's media companies and talent to be future-ready.

The following are three strategic thrusts which have been identified to propel the film industry to greater heights:

### TALENT DEVELOPMENT



### INTERNATIONALISATION



### AUDIENCE CULTIVATION



<sup>1</sup> "e-Conomy SEA: Unlocking the \$200B Digital Opportunity, Google and Temasek | <sup>2</sup> e-Conomy SEA 2018 - Southeast Asia's internet economy hits an inflection point, Google and Temasek | <sup>3</sup> IMDA's Annual Survey on Infocomm Usage in Households and by Individuals For 2018 | <sup>4</sup> "Asia on Demand: The growth of VOD investment in local entertainment industries", Alphabeta, October 2018 | <sup>5</sup> Digital Media Report 2018 Video-on-Demand, Statista





## STRATEGIC THRUST #1: TALENT DEVELOPMENT

### NURTURING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CONTENT CREATORS

Modern audiences have more choices of content and formats across a wide range of media platforms than ever before. This makes it imperative for content creators to consider the new generation of digital native viewers when producing and presenting their content. Hence, talent development remains key to growing the next generation of content creators with the versatility to tell stories on multiple platforms. Within this context, Singapore remains focused on nurturing successive generations of storytellers and film talent who can take the industry to greater heights.

#### HOW:

Enhance support for Singapore film talent and companies to strengthen their storytelling capabilities, harness distribution of their content onto new digital platforms, and facilitate business opportunities and collaborations that help establish Singapore as a premier filmmaking hub in Southeast Asia.



Filmmaking talent **Kirsten Tan** who directed the multi-award winning film *Pop Aye* tells versatile stories, from art-house films to high-end commercials.



As one of Singapore's prolific content creators, **Boo Junfeng's** storytelling talent seamlessly traverses multiple platforms, from films and video installations, to helping Singapore's National Day Parade 2018 as creative director.

## PROGRESSIVE PATHWAY TO DEVELOP AND GROW TALENT



### 1. INVEST IN FUTURE STORYTELLERS

Structured training in digital media and filmmaking at Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs)

Offer scholarships to promising individuals to pursue specialised fields in filmmaking



### 2. PROVIDE FUNDING SUPPORT THROUGH GRANTS

Help promising talent turn their storytelling ideas to reality

Grant support for short and feature films, with special support for first- and second-time feature filmmakers



### 3. HONE CAPABILITIES WITH GUIDANCE FROM MENTORS

Provide coaching and mentoring opportunities by industry experts and veterans to boost the skills of aspiring talent in areas such as scriptwriting, directing and producing

Conducted through masterclasses, workshops and one-on-one consultations



### 4. FACILITATE COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Create networking opportunities for industry professionals to spark off collaborations and translate ideas into viable projects

Support promising talent who are selected to attend top-tier filmmaking labs and project development platforms



### 5. FOSTER AN ENVIRONMENT FOR EXPERIMENTATION AND INNOVATION

Enable future talent to capture the mindshare of new generation audiences; grow capabilities to tell compelling "byte-sized" stories

Harness data insights to enhance content creation and distribution



### 6. OPPORTUNITIES TO SHOWCASE WORKS

Establish a strong Singapore presence at film markets and festivals, both at home and internationally

Steer local content creators towards digital distribution of content on online OTT platforms such as Viddsee, Netflix and iTunes



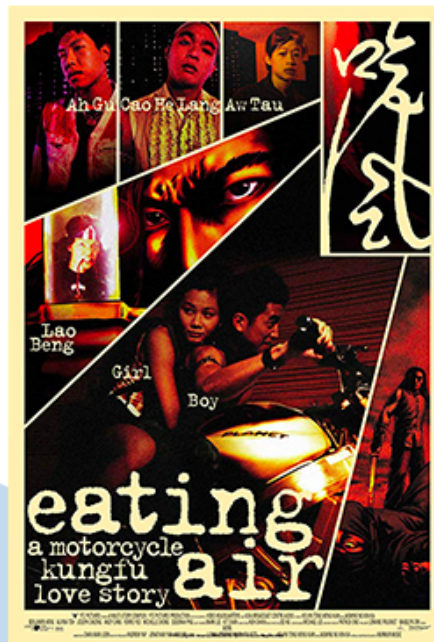


## STRATEGIC THRUST #2: INTERNATIONALISATION

### TOWARDS "MADE-WITH" SINGAPORE

To further sustain the growth of Singapore's film industry, there is also a need for collaborations and partnerships to allow media companies and talent to develop strong business links, best industry practices and widen audience reach. Singapore's strength in brokering international media deals and being a robust digital business hub present opportunities for local companies and talent to tap into the strong growth in Southeast Asia.

In the 1990s, the Singapore film industry comprised only a small number of largely independent filmmakers, telling stories meant solely for local audiences. Since then, the country has come a long way from the early days of producing purely "Made-in" Singapore films.



"The increase of well-trained film professionals and government support has helped create the right environment for...talented filmmakers to flourish." – Fran Borgia, founder of Akanga Film Asia



*Eating Air*, a "Made-in" Singapore film that captured the zeitgeist of the country's turn-of-the-century revival in telling home-grown stories.

## GAINING MOMENTUM

Today, Singapore has a flourishing and integrated ecosystem made up of local and international players in the film, digital media and broadcast industries. Excitingly, this growing multinational presence has helped pave the way for films that celebrate stories told from a Singapore filmmaker's perspective, but that can appeal to international audiences. One such film is *A Land Imagined*, a co-production between Singapore's Akanga Film Asia, France's Films de Force Majeure and the Netherlands' Volya Films, with the participation of Singapore's mm2 Entertainment. With local filmmakers making forays to co-produce with international talent, Singapore is gradually building up its profile as the go-to country in Asia for filmmaking opportunities.



Eric Khoo's *Ramen Teh*, a Japanese, Singapore and French co-production, has been sold internationally to at least 30 territories around Europe and Asia.



Helmed by director Yeo Siew Hua, *A Land Imagined* is a three-country co-production which clinched the top award at Switzerland's prestigious Locarno International Film Festival.



Singapore production house Infinite Studios offered logistical support for Hollywood blockbuster *Crazy Rich Asians*, with SFC helping to facilitate on-location shoots for the film's Singapore backdrop. The film went on to gross over US\$238.5 million world-wide.

## HOW:

To encourage more international co-productions with Singapore, SFC will work with other regional film commissions to build up a producers' network, in order to create potential opportunities for collaborations. A Southeast Asia Co-Production Grant was launched in 2018 to nurture creative producers who can work with and aggregate the best regional talent and projects. These would help establish Singapore as a hub for Southeast Asia content producing and filmmaking.





## STRATEGIC THRUST #3: AUDIENCE CULTIVATION

### GROWING FILM LITERACY AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

In any country, cultivating audience appreciation in areas of film literacy and awareness of home-grown content is vital for the media industry to thrive. Organisations such as the Singapore Film Society, Singapore International Film Festival and Objectifs - Centre for Photography & Film provide opportunities for audiences to catch a variety of world cinema, including Singapore films. However with significant shifts in audiences' viewing habits and ease of access to diverse content choices, cultivating and shaping audiences' favourable perception of local content becomes even more difficult. As such, there is a need to amplify public engagement efforts of Singapore content and engage audiences in innovative ways.

#### HOW:

### EXPLORING AVENUES TO CONNECT WITH NEW AUDIENCES

In 2018, SFC organised B.Y.O. Cinema, a series of experiential film screenings at various outdoor locations that allowed the public to enjoy the shared experience of film watching. With younger audiences (15 to 34 years old) in particular, SFC's focus is introducing them to Singapore films through innovative and unique watching experiences, as a means to attract and expose them to a wide selection of quality Singapore films. Through such interactions, SFC aims to educate audiences about Singapore films and the platforms on which they can be accessed.

SFC also recognises that cultivating an appreciation for Singapore films with future generations of audiences must be introduced early. To achieve this, SFC will work with partners to explore outreach activities for students and educators.



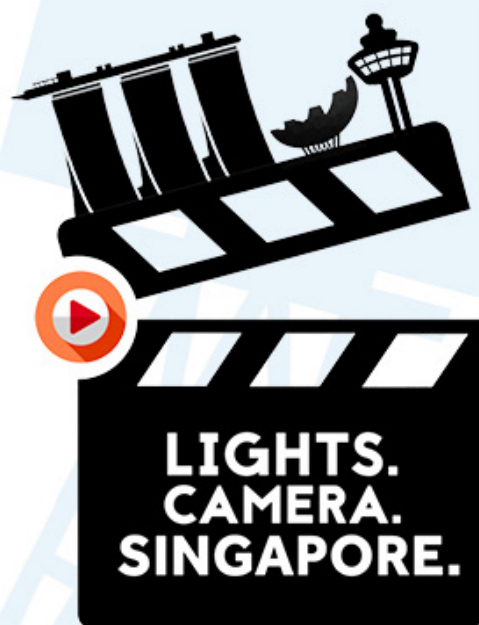
SFC organised B.Y.O. Cinema which screened iconic titles like 881, Ilo Ilo and Ramen Teh.



## GROWING ACCESS TO LOCAL CONTENT

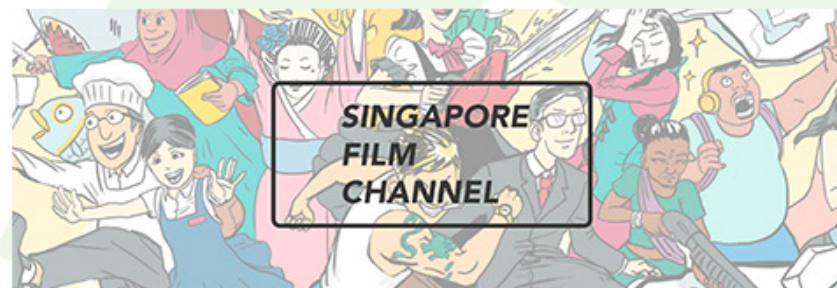
In addition to film literacy efforts, SFC's continuing collaborations with partners such as Mediacorp and Viddsee enable audiences to access and enjoy local films all year round.

In 2018, SFC collaborated with national broadcaster Mediacorp to launch the initiative "Lights. Camera. Singapore." to broadcast 30 local films on free-to-air TV and its digital video platform, Toggle, to extend the reach of Singapore films to a wider audience. Moving forward, SFC will ramp up marketing support to create an awareness of the digital platforms where Singapore films can be viewed.



The curated selection under "LIGHTS. CAMERA. SINGAPORE." included films like *7 Letters*, *The Leap Years* and *Wonder Boy*.

To preserve Singapore stories for future generations and facilitate their access onto digital platforms, SFC will continue to work with partners such as the Asian Film Archive (AFA) to support their restoration-related initiatives.



The Singapore Film Channel on Viddsee showcases diverse stories and filmmakers from Singapore.



Three 1998 films, *Forever Fever*, *Money No Enough* and *The Teenage Textbook Movie*, were digitally restored in 4K and jointly screened by the AFA and SFC to commemorate the films' 20th anniversary and as part of the Singapore Media Festival 2018.





# TOWARDS THE FUTURE OF CONTENT

Singapore's successes to date on the international film festival circuit have fuelled its rising status as a hotbed for film projects and talent from the region.

To stay competitive in a media landscape which is increasingly consumer-centric in content creation and distribution, Singapore film talent and companies have to acquire new capabilities and expand their networks and markets.



## COLLABORATE THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

Foster collaboration with regional media businesses through partnerships. Facilitating more opportunities and connections will help local media talent build a sustainable pipeline of monetisation opportunities, especially for the digital content market.



## CHAMPION CONTENT & CAPABILITIES

Deepen storytelling capabilities and expand possibilities by infusing content creation with new technologies (e.g. virtual reality/augmented reality) on emerging media platforms.

Provide progressive support for promising new media talent and grow their potential as content creators and storytellers.



## CULTIVATE CONSUMPTION OF SINGAPORE CONTENT

Raise awareness and appreciation of local content among audiences in Singapore and globally, while boosting demand with partnerships that aim to showcase content produced by Singapore filmmaking talent.

Integrating investment into the above three crucial 'C's with the three strategic thrusts (Talent Development, Internationalisation and Audience Cultivation) will help elevate Singapore's status as Asia's media and digital technology hub and gateway to Southeast Asia markets.

The time is now for the industry to work in close tandem with SFC.

If you have any collaboration ideas, suggestions and/or feedback, SFC welcomes you to write to us at [SFC@imda.gov.sg](mailto:SFC@imda.gov.sg)



## ABOUT THE SINGAPORE FILM COMMISSION (SFC)

Part of the Info-communications Media Development Authority (IMDA), the SFC is charged with developing Singapore's film industry and nurturing filmmaking talent. It is advised by a committee comprising members from the film, arts and cultural community. Since 1998, the SFC has supported more than 800 short films, scripts, and feature films, as well as film-related events in Singapore that showcase home-grown talent and works.



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