

## SHOWBIZ IN



## NEW ROMANCE FOR JEN AND JOHN?

JENNIFER Aniston and singer John Mayer were seen lunching together in Florida, reported People.com on Saturday. The duo reportedly traded bites and shared dessert.

They met again for dinner, left together at about 1am and were reportedly seen holding hands when they returned to their hotel.

## DEL TORO TO DIRECT HOBBIT

GUILLERMO del Toro, director of Pan's Labyrinth and Hellboy II: The Golden Army, is directing The Hobbit and its sequel, New Line Cinema said.

The 43-year-old film-maker will move to New Zealand for four years to make the films, based on JRR Tolkien's works, with executive producer Peter Jackson.

- AP

## RICHARD QUEST IN REHAB

THE Guardian reports that CNN anchor Richard Quest has entered drug rehabilitation following his arrest on April 18 in New York's Central Park. Police said he had a plastic bag of what was believed to be methamphetamine.

As part of his court arraignment, Quest agreed to undergo drug counselling and therapy for six months.

CNN released a statement saying: "At this time, CNN's primary concern is for his health and well-being. We look forward to Richard returning to CNN International."

## JACKIE CHAN THE BOLLYWOOD STAR?

JACKIE Chan is ready for his Bollywood close-up, according to the Hollywood Reporter.

"India is the world's biggest market for movies. I want to do a film here. I am eagerly waiting for a good project," said Chan.

He was at the launch of the soundtrack of the Tamil film, Dasavatharam at the invitation of producer, Oscar Ravichandran.

## ENTERTAINMENT

## Merlion Tan goes to Toronto

It's a hit, together with its creator Jacen and other S'pore directors

JASMINE TEO

AS A child, Jacen Tan loved to tell stories through images, like the comics that he used to draw. Nowadays, he prefers to tell stories through moving images – short films like Zo Gang.

The film, directed by Tan, features a character called Merlion Tan. It, along with Tan, found its way to Toronto early this month for the third Toronto-Singapore Film Festival (TSFF).

Tan, 25, a Stomp multimedia producer, was part of a quartet of film-makers who went to Toronto on the Singapore Film Commission's Overseas Travel Grant. The other film-makers included Kelvin Sng (Kichiro), Elgin Ho (Nineteen Twenties) and Lee Chee Tian (Colours).

TSFF was founded in 2006 by Chia Yeow-Tong, 34, who is the festival's director.

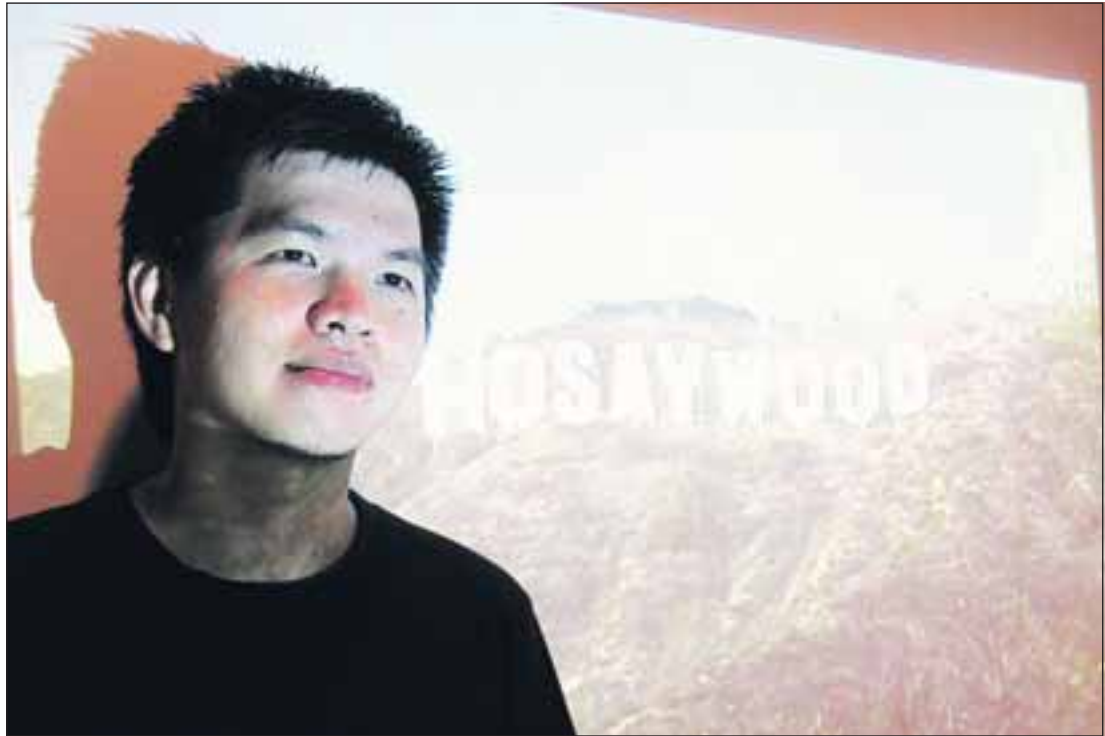
Chia, who was then going to Canada to pursue a doctorate degree in history at the University of Toronto, had produced CAFÉ, a short film directed by Kelvin Sng.

"Instead of waiting to send CAFÉ to an established film festival, we thought it would be good to start a Singapore film festival in the cineaste city, as Singaporean films are not often screened there," said Chia.

The lure of a festival showcasing purely Singapore films in a foreign land intrigued Tan.

"I decided to submit my film to TSFF because I wanted to be part of a unique event showing all-Singaporean films in a western country," he said.

To Chia, TSFF might not be Cannes or Pusan, but the third instalment of the festival could very well be the burst of energy that the Singaporean film industry needs.



WIDER APPEAL: Jacen Tan has taken his film to an international audience. (PHOTO: JASMINE TEO)

The festival began with just eight films screened at the inaugural festival two years ago. Only 150 people turned up.

But his mettle and perseverance paid off. The third festival saw about 650 people packed into the Innis Town Hall in the University of Toronto.

The festival has also been extended to three days and with a larger lineup this year – seven screenings of 23 films altogether.

Some say that taking made-by-Singapore films to an international level is the ingredient for success here.

"Singapore films need to travel and come back with international recognition before being recognised at home. It's strange but true," film-maker Sng observed.

In which case, local films are not doing too badly. This year so far, 14 local short films and documentaries were screened or have competed in overseas festivals like the Berlin Film Festival, Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival and Rotterdam International Film Festival, according to the Singapore Film Commission (SFC).

More than 50 film-makers are supported by the agency, under the Media Development Authority of Singapore (MDA). With the Overseas Travel Grant, they attend festivals where their short and feature length films have been selected for competition or screenings.

All four film-makers who attended the TSFF agree that the main selling point of Singapore films is its global outlook that serves as a bridge between eastern and western cultures.

Said Tan: "It is exciting to see foreign audiences react to my film. Some locals look down on local films, saying that they can't sell overseas. But judging from the reaction we received in TSFF, I think Singaporean films are on the right track."

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## HELPDESK 我的字典

Film festival: 电影节  
diàn yǐng jié

Lure: 吸引 xī yǐn

Feature length film:  
长篇电影  
cháng piān diàn yǐng

## One night in the slammer for Amy Winehouse

GRAMMY-winning singer Amy Winehouse was cautioned for common assault on Saturday after spending the night in custody, police said.

The British soul diva had handed herself in at a police station in central London on Friday for questioning.

A 38-year-old man had claimed he was assaulted at 3.20am on Wednesday in the Chalk Farm area of north London.

Winehouse admitted com-

mon assault after slapping a man with an open hand and accepted the caution, her spokesman said in a statement.

"Amy was fully cooperative with enquiries and apologised for the incident," the statement added.

Winehouse, who makes as many headlines for her erratic behaviour as for her singing, was released on Saturday morning without charge.

However, the incident will be on her record, and can be count-

ed against her if she is charged for similar incidents in the future.

The statement went on to say she was looking forward to recording new music. She is currently working on the theme song for the new James Bond film.

The singer, whose increasingly troubled private life has overshadowed her recording success, is said to be worth an estimated £10 million (\$27 million) in the latest Sunday Times Rich List.

She has fought a very public battle with alcohol, drugs, self-harm and an eating disorder.

She was charged with possessing cannabis in Norway last year and is awaiting a court appearance over the allegation.

Her husband, Blake Fielder-Civil, 25, appeared in court on Friday charged with attempting to pervert the course of justice and inflicting grievous bodily harm. He denies the charges.

- AFP, REUTERS