**Tapping the film buzz**

We think that film festivals are made for film buffs and film students, but the business community would greatly benefit from it too, says Kirpal Singh, director of the Singapore International Film Festival (SIFF).

"The business community traditionally attends the arts, but we also welcome more serious attention from them in view of investments and also sourcing for building film directors and actors," says the first-time SIFF director. "I am academic and poet." And with a film festival, cost isn’t an issue. ’And with a film festival, it’s time now for the business community to wake up to the fact that there’s potential in the film industry, and especially festivals based out of Singapore, Dr Singh says.

Dr Singh points out, film festivals have a cultural force which SIFF can proudly lay claim to. The SIFF regularly sees 80 per cent postings in Twitter, blogs and websites are increasing, going to the movies. he adds.

The enthusiastic audience for films has surprised the National Museum has a complete retrospective of the Italian filmmaker Federico Fellini coming up, who’s a five-time Oscar winner known for his creative exuberance.

Over 300 tickets have been sold since the launch of the tickets, he says, and this is the biggest retrospective ever to be put together in Singapore for a director.

With film as the most immediate and best representation of history, the museum’s Cinema-Theatre will be screening Fellini’s film, and historical development of society and culture.

Could the film scene get a little crowded though - with the number of art house cinemas (The Substation, The Arts House, The Picture House at Cathay are some) and festivals being held a year? It’s not, if each organiser has a strong focus, quips Mr Zhang.

New offerings this year include Cinema Now at The Arts House, which will feature Asian contemporary movies but instead of the usual festival format - where several movies are shown over a short period of time - the movies will be screened for a week, once a month.

It’s a bid to revive interest in The Screening Room’s programming - which had a promising start when it first kicked off years ago - but had not been held in the long list of events in Singapore’s cultural calendar.

Going back to the power of film, one of the key points Dr Singh highlighted, is the wonder that when it comes to showcasing a country’s culture that the countries turn to film.

Think of the French festival, for example. “As a medium film is able to deliver stories in a truly unique way. Film brings places and people to life. It can be just like being there," says Australian High Commissioner Doug Chislett, about the Australian films shown here which enable Singapore audiences to get beneath the surface and experience something of the Australian culture.

Australian films attract strong interest, and its festival has been going on for 12 years already - even to the point of deeming itself from the SIFF this year. “It helps that Singaporeans love going to the movies,” he adds.

And they love it enough to be part of “movie-tasters” as the SIFF regularly sees 80 per cent attendance, and moviegoers social media postings in Twitter, blogs and websites are increasingly playing a big part in captivating budding filmmakers into the limelight, says Dr Singh.

“Film festivals are testing grounds where movie makers are given the scope to create and experiment. It’s such a tricky trade fair, but because film is so wide in its appeal, the public feels a part of it. “The enthusiasm of a rapidly growing fan base here and the number of well curated film festivals is giving rise to Singapore as the South-east Asian film hub. Now, it’s just a matter of the businesses getting into the act.”