

881 hits \$2.41 million in takings

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LOCAL director Royston Tan's movie 881 crossed the \$2-million mark in box-office receipts last Friday.

As of Monday, the \$1-million Mandarin-Hokkien musical has grossed \$2.41 million here, according to Golden Village which distributes the film.

This makes 881, which opened on Aug 9, the second-highest grossing Singapore production this year, taking over from mafia thriller *Protege*.

The Hong Kong-Singapore collaboration starring Andy Lau and Daniel Wu made \$1.66 million here.

881 is now only about \$360,000 away from topping director Jack Neo's *Just Follow Law*, which grossed \$2.77 million.

Tan is confident that 881 will become the No. 1 Singapore film this year as it still has 30 prints in the theatres.

"Aunties and uncles went to watch in the first weeks of release. Now that it's the school holidays, it's the students' turn to watch," he says.

The film is also doing well on other fronts. Its soundtrack has sold over 9,000 copies. The main cast members and



PHOTO: GOLDEN VILLAGE
**MUCH TO SING ABOUT:
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crew have been invited to the Pusan Film Festival, one of the biggest film markets in Asia, held in the South Korean city of Pusan next month.

Tan hopes 881 will breach the \$3-million mark next month.

"It will be the biggest birthday present I can have," says the director, who will cele-

brate his 31st birthday on Oct 5.

While the film's popularity has soared because of word-of-mouth praise, controversy may have also helped boost ticket sales.

On Aug 1, cast members were pelted with rotten eggs by two people on a motorcycle.

Over the weekend, a netizen nicknamed "boy=)" claimed on Neo's official blog that Neo was behind the attack.

Another netizen, who signed on as "Jack Neo", hurled verbal abuse at other netizens on the same forum.

Neo is currently in China and was not contactable. However, on his blog, he condemned his imposter and said: "This person might also be named 'Jack Neo' but he should state that he is not me."

He also requested the netizen "Jack Neo" to come forward and apologise via e-mail by this Sunday or he would go to the police.

When asked about this, Tan said: "On a personal level, Jack and I are friends. At the end of the day, we are one big family so there is no need to sabotage each other.

To the netizens, he said: "Let us support the whole film industry together."