

# ANIMATION WORLD

JUNE 2018

## PIXAR'S

### *INCREDIBLES 2*

BRAD BIRD MAKES A HEROIC  
RETURN



## SONY'S

### *HOTEL TRANSYLVANIA 3*

GENNDY TARTAKOVSKY TAKES  
THE HELM

### *BILBY & BIRD KARMA*

DREAMWORKS ANIMATION  
SHORTS MAKE THEIR DEBUT

## NINA PALEY'S

### *SEDER-MASOCHISM*

A BIBLICAL EPIC YOU CAN  
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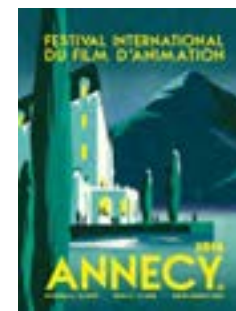
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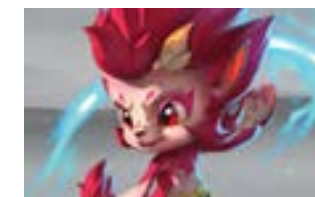
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# PUBLISHER'S LETTER



As we gather again for the largest festival dedicated to the world of animation, the scope of the Annecy International Animated Film Festival continues to grow. With an ever-increasing number of big studio features, shorts and series; the incredible work of a diversity of indie producers; and the latest VR/AR and immersive media productions, the animation industry is more expansive and vibrant than ever. And, once again, creative director Marcel Jean and Mifa director Mickaël Marin have done a superlative job of bringing together a truly representative sampling of this creative abundance in one beautiful place, and *ANIMATIONWorld Magazine* is again proud to be an

integral part of the celebration. With some 25 features screening in and out of competition, as well as a number of special events, this year's festival is a delight for fans of long-form animation. In our cover story, we talk to Brad Bird about *Incredibles 2*, the long-awaited sequel to his 2004 hit, which premieres at Annecy on June 15. We also talk to director Genndy Tartakovsky about his return to helm the third entry in the wildly successful *Hotel Transylvania* franchise, and take an in-depth look at both Nina Paley's highly personal biblical epic *Seder-Masochism* and Marc James Roels and Emma De Swaef's anti-colonial epic *This Magnificent Cake*. Directors Liu Jian, Masaaki Yuasa, and Gary Wang talk about their latest features, while Joe Strike provides a rundown of all the feature films in competition.

This year's guest country is Brazil, whose animation industry has experienced explosive growth over the past decade. Brazil-themed screenings, curated by the founders of Anima Mundi, include three programs of contemporary shorts, the best of Brazilian TV series, a documentary about Brazilian animation, and special showings of Ale Abreu's *Boy and the World* and Luiz Bolognesi's *Rio 2096: A Story of Love and Fury*. For those interested in the business side of things, Brazil will be invading Mifa with some 30 companies and more than 200 delegates.

Animated TV series are big and only getting bigger, with many major studios continuing to expand their offerings. Our stories on DreamWorks Animation Television and Warner Bros. Animation offer insider looks at two of these. We also talk to British animator Julia Pott about her new Cartoon Network series, *Summer Camp Island*.

DreamWorks Animation also has a new shorts program, and their first two productions, *Bird Karma* and *Bilby*, will open and close the festival. In our shorts coverage, we also preview some of the outstanding films in this year's competition, talk to first-time director Domee Shi about her new Pixar short *Bao*, and interview the creators at Google Spotlight Stories about their latest VR projects, which will be—that's right—spotlighted at the festival.

We also have pieces on festival poster designer Pascal Blanchet, Mifa Animation Industry Award recipient Women in Animation, and this year's special "Music in Animation" program.

So what are you waiting for? Start reading and enjoy *ANIMATIONWorld's* celebration of all things Animated @ Annecy!

See you by the lake,

Dan Sarto  
Co-Founder & Publisher, Animation World Network – [AWN.com](http://AWN.com)



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# FIRST-TIME DIRECTOR DOMEЕ SHI TAKES A BAO IN NEW PIXAR THEATRICAL SHORT

The first Pixar short directed by a woman explores loneliness, loss and the magic of dumplings.



BAO © 2018 DISNEY•PIXAR

## BY SCOTT LEHANE

An aging Chinese mother suffering from empty-nest syndrome gets another chance at motherhood when one of her dumplings springs to life in Disney-Pixar's new animated short *Bao*. The film, directed by Domee Shi, will screen with the company's *Incredibles 2*, which launches on June 15.



PHOTO BY DEBORAH COLEMAN/PIXAR

Director Domee Shi.

June 2018

Shi, who has worked on such films as *Inside Out*, *The Good Dinosaur*, *Incredibles 2* and *Toy Story 4*, drew inspiration for *Bao* from her upbringing as an only child in a Chinese-Canadian family in Toronto's bustling Chinatown. She explained that *bao* has two meanings in Chinese: said one way, it means "dumpling," but said another way, it means "treasure" or "something precious."

"Ever since I was little, my mother has always treated me like her precious little baby dumpling, always watching over me, making sure I was safe, making sure I had a good education and got into a good college," says Shi. "Growing up, she'd always make dumplings for me from scratch. Food was how my mom showed her love, and we've always had this special connection making dumplings together on weekends and holidays and Chinese New Year."

Shi is the first female director to tackle a Pixar short. She started working at Pixar right after school and, after two years as a story artist on *Inside Out*, she got the itch to make something of her own. Originally, she planned to make the film in her spare

time, but, after getting an unexpectedly positive response, she decided to bring the idea to Pixar, which has an in-house professional development program that allows employees to pitch ideas for shorts.

"I initially pitched the story to Pete Docter, the director of *Inside Out*, just to get his feedback," says Shi. "But his response was so positive—he encouraged me to pitch it to the studio. With his support and feedback, *Bao* got green-lit as the next Pixar theatrical short in 2015. I couldn't believe it got picked. It was amazing."

Producer Becky Neiman explained that the shorts program at Pixar is a place to try out new technology, as well as give new leadership opportunities,

**"Food was how my mom showed her love, and we've always had this special connection making dumplings together."**

ANIMATIONWorld Magazine



Pixar short Bao opens in theaters on June 15 with *Incredibles 2*.

and *Bao* is no exception. It's not only Shi's first time as a director, but Neiman's debut as a producer, and Rona Liu's as production designer.

Shi recalls that "after it got green-lit, I really started to dive deep into the story... I always knew I wanted to create a story about a lonely empty-nester mom who goes through this crazy dumpling fantasy in order to process her real son moving away. The core of that story was always the same, but in earlier versions of the story, I had more characters."

She explained that drawing beat boards—single images that capture crucial story points—helped her refine the story and figure out the pacing of the whole film.

Then, as she progressed to storyboards, she would send them to editor Katherine Ringgold. "We would work together in her dark office to cut the storyboards together with temporary sound effects and music to give us a rough version of the short called a story reel. It's kind of like the blueprint for what the short ends up being."

According to Shi, these story reels are very useful in seeing the big picture and getting feedback on what's working and not working.

"So after we have a basic idea of what the short's going to be, we move on to other departments down the pipeline, the layout and animation," she adds. "Animation is especially critical in *Bao*, because it's really where these characters come to life."

awn.com

**"Design elements that might look good on paper look really strange when you turn them into 3D shapes."**

to bring him into sculpting as quickly as possible, to see how that cuteness would translate into a 3D space. And one thing we discovered early on is that his arms actually cannot reach his mouth. And that gave us a lot of information and helped us identify certain problems that we might run into downstream, in animation."

She added that they also struggled to make sure the mother's charm comes through in the final film. "We did a lot of research trips to Chinatown and found that we were seeing a lot of bold fashion choices, and that's when we realized that we can actually use Mom's outfits—her colors and patterns—to support her emotional journey throughout the film."

"We wanted this short to be fun to watch, but also an accurate portrayal of a Chinese mom's life," concludes Shi. "And I think the crew did an amazing job of both." 🍡

Scott Lehane is a Toronto-based journalist who has covered the film and TV industry for over 25 years.



June 2018



A large, vibrant illustration of the Parr family from the animated film The Incredibles 2. Mr. Incredible is at the top, holding the family together. Elastigirl is on the left, holding baby Jack-Jack. Violet is in the center, and Dash is on the right. They are all in their red and black superhero suits, flying through a large, glowing purple sphere that resembles a planet or a large energy ball. The background is dark with some industrial structures visible.

# BRAD BIRD MAKES A HEROIC RETURN TO ANIMATION WITH THE INCREDIBLE INCREDIBLES 2

*The two-time Oscar winner continues the adventures of everyone's favorite superhero family in the long-awaited sequel to Pixar's 2004 hit.*

**BY DAN SARTO**

Pixar's most beloved and "super" family, the Parrs, blasts onto screens once again with the release of *Incredibles 2*, director Brad Bird's follow-up to his 2004 Oscar-winning animated superhero adventure. *Incredibles 2* will open in theaters in the U.S. and have its French premiere at Annecy on June 15. It will not be a good day for raccoons.

Much has changed at Pixar and in the animation business since 2004, when Bob, Helen, Violet, Dash and Jack-Jack first delighted audiences worldwide with their superhuman powers and quintessentially human frailties. For starters, the studio is now part of the Walt Disney Company, no longer the upstart juggernaut that defined CG animation. In addition, the studio is home again to prodigal sons Bird and Andrew Stanton (*Finding Nemo*, *Finding Dory*), both of whom returned to write and direct sequels to hugely successful animated films after leaving Pixar for the bright lights and big city of the live-action world.

#### THE POWER OF FAMILY

The success of the first *Incredibles* movie can be credited in large part to an aha moment that Bird had more than 20 years ago, long before he joined Pixar as its first outside director. "When I first had the idea," he recalls, "I went to a comic book shop

thinking 'I gotta think up new super powers.' And after about a half hour, I realized every power has been done by somebody, somewhere. Everything had been done. It was then that I realized I'm not very interested in the powers. What interests me is the idea of having a family and having there be a reason to hide their powers."

As anyone who has seen and enjoyed the end result of Bird's deliberations knows, his insight was sound, and led to the highest opening-weekend gross for a Pixar film up to that time.

Fourteen years later, *Incredibles 2* picks up right where the original story left off, a decision also rooted in Bird's interest in the characters' interpersonal relationships. "I thought about aging everybody the way everybody does and then I thought, 'No, that sucks.' The Parr family dynamic changes if the characters age. I'm not interested in a college-age Jack-Jack. It stays more iconic if everyone situates themselves. I was on the first eight seasons of *The Simpsons* and that's worked out rather well for them, so I'll stick with that."

Bird also explains that the long hiatus was due to his wanting to wait until he had the right story to tell. "The

**"What interests me is the idea of family."**



**"Any film that is ambitious has pain. It just comes with the territory."**

thing is, many sequels are cash grabs. There's a saying in the business that I can't stand, where they go [in gravelly voice], 'If you don't make another one, you're leaving money on the table.' It's like, Jesus, money on the table is not what makes me get up in the morning! Making something that people are gonna enjoy 100 years from now is what gets me up."

#### A MISSION TO ENTERTAIN

Though the new film continues to address key themes introduced in the original film, ultimately, the focus is on entertainment, making a film that audiences want to see, not making some kind of statement.

"We again explore the roles of men and women, the importance of fathers participating, the importance of allowing women to also express themselves through work, and that they're just as vital as men," says Bird. "There are feelings about the difficulties of parenthood, that parenting is a heroic act. All of those things are in this movie. I don't like to talk about the ideas as if the reason I made the movie was to push some agenda. It's more like you create something that hopefully is fun and entertaining and then there are places where you can put little ideas, here and there, that add dimension.

"The most important mission of the first movie was to entertain the crap out of people. The second thing was, 'Oh, we have some other things that we'd like to comment on and one of them is the role of men and women, fathers and mothers, how do teenagers view the world, midlife crisis, that kind of stuff.' So, there were a lot of little things buried in the movie. But, if I start to single one out and say, this movie is about that, it doesn't give you an accurate picture. It makes it sound like we're having broccoli and not desert."



INCREDIBLES 2 © 2018 PIXAR ANIMATION STUDIOS

#### LOCKING DOWN THE STORY

One of the production's greatest challenges was dealing with a significant shift in the film's release date; an entire year was lopped off the production schedule when *Incredibles 2* swapped dates with *Toy Story 4*. Bird has dealt with such disruptive change before.

"The original *Incredibles* was supposed to come after *Cars*," he remembers. "It was gonna be *Nemo*, *Cars*, then *Incredibles*. Our reels came together a little earlier than *Cars*, so we moved up. The same situation happened here with *Toy Story 4*."

Bird also dealt with a highly compressed production schedule when he took the reins on *Ratatouille* after Jan Pinkava left the production in 2005. "When I got involved," he says, "there was a little over a year and a half between my start and the finished film. And we only retained two lines of dialogue and two shots from all of the previous versions that had been done. So it was like running in front of a train, laying down track, like Wallace and Gromit."

But the tight schedule also forced Bird to lock in main story elements much earlier in production than is nor-

mal for a Pixar film. "We were talking about a lot of things that were usually further down the road. That's not a comfortable or usual way to work, because you kind of have to over-discuss things early. But it also helps everybody get clear. And then, when you get further down the line, things move more swiftly."

Ultimately, for Bird, the challenges of making a film as visually and narratively sophisticated as *Incredibles 2*, are worth it when he sees the great work a dedicated and motivated production team can accomplish under his direction. "Any film that is ambitious has pain. It just comes with the territory. So, on these films, I think the pain reliever is the joy that you get from telling a story. And if you can make it so it's not a negative experience for your people... Listen, very good movies have been made with miserable crews that had a horrible time making the film. There are endless stories of hard shoots that ended up making good movies.

"But, I think all of us agree that we

want our crews to take joy in making the film. So, we celebrate everybody's abilities. We try to keep an open dialogue, so if people feel like something isn't going right, they have a way to voice that. And everybody feels invested in the movie. It's their movie. Morale is something that is never discussed, but has a huge impact on the budget. If morale is good, for every dollar you spend, you get \$3 of value. And if it's bad, for every dollar you spend, you get 25 cents of value. It all shows up on the screen."

**"Morale has a huge impact on the budget. If morale is good, for every dollar you spend, you get \$3 of value."**



*The long-awaited Incredibles 2 picks up right where the original left off.*





# CRUISE CONTROL: GENNDY TARTAKOVSKY TAKES THE HELM OF *HOTEL TRANSYLVANIA 3: SUMMER VACATION*

*The acclaimed director returns to cowrite and direct the third installment of Sony Pictures Animation's ghoulish adventure comedy.*



HOTEL TRANSYLVANIA 3 © 2018 SONY PICTURES ENTERTAINMENT INC.

BY DAN SARTO

In 2011, after many years stalled in development, the troubled *Hotel Transylvania* was taken over by acclaimed director Genndy Tartakovsky—the sixth director attached to the film. The following year, the film took everyone by surprise by generating \$358 million at the global box office against a reported budget of \$85 million. *Hotel Transylvania 2*, also directed by Tartakovsky, fared even better in 2015, grossing \$473 million worldwide.

Yet, despite the box office success, Tartakovsky proclaimed that he was done with the franchise. Subsequent work with Cartoon Network reviving his award-winning, immensely popular

hit animated series *Samurai Jack* made him even more determined to work solely on his own material. “The *Samurai Jack* experience was so rewarding because I could literally do whatever I wanted,” he notes. “The ratings were amazing, and the response was so great, that I realized, ‘Yeah, I’ve gotta just do my own stuff.’”

Inundated with requests to direct other creators’ work, Tartakovsky said no, until Sony Pictures Animation made him an offer he couldn’t refuse—or, rather, embraced his idea of setting the film on a luxury cruise ship. “Honestly, it was that idea of the cruise that made me reconsider,” he says. “I actually went on a big family cruise, and ideas started talking to me. I started thinking, ‘Oh yeah, that feels

really good. It feels very natural to put them in this setting.’ And I’ve always wanted to do a Dracula-falling-in-love story, because it felt like it was time for him to have a different arc. After doing *Samurai Jack*, it felt like a good fit.”

**“We wrote the script to spotlight the animation. All the gags are more physical—there’s a different feeling to the film.”**

*The gags fly fast and furiously in the third iteration of the wildly successful Hotel Transylvania franchise.*



## A HAPPY MARRIAGE

While SPA President Kristine Belson loved the idea and was ready to go forward, Tartakovsky needed to know he would have the creative control he required to make the film properly. He explains, “While Adam [Sandler, the voice of Count Dracula and a creative force on the first two films] is still the voice of Drac, he wasn’t involved as much creatively on this film. Adam is amazing, very talented, and really funny. But it’s frustrating when sometimes I don’t get to do the gag that I want to do, when other people’s sensibility is different than mine. It’s like any marriage, or collaboration—creatively, there are ups and downs. So SPA set up a situation that was very favorable to me, and I decided, ‘I’ve got a really good story idea, the situation is different, so I’ll do it.’”

Creative control ultimately meant Tartakovsky assumed the writing chores, something he didn’t do on the first two films. “I wrote the script with Michael McCullers, and when we wrote it, we wrote it to spotlight the animation. So, all the gags are more physical. There’s a different feeling to the film. I was able to control things and make the film much more from an animator’s perspective.”

Writing as well as directing actually made Tartakovsky’s job simpler, since he was able to lock in the main story early and stick with it for the entire production. “There’s a very specific style to my storytelling,” he explains, “and because I was able to set the story up early and get it signed off on, things were easier. We had the basic structure of the movie early. Then, we just changed some locations, always playing with pacing, playing with sequences...

which could be the funniest, and the most impactful. But generally, the film is exactly the same as what we had at the start.”

**“I’ve always wanted to do a Dracula-falling-in-love story.”**







#### AN ANIMATION-DRIVEN APPROACH

The director appreciated that *Hotel Transylvania 3* gave him a chance to focus his attention, and production resources, on a more physical, cartoony style of animation. “Many of the animators worked on the first two films, which was very helpful. By having more scenes that are physical-gag-driven, and more visual, you have a chance for the animation to shine. Like, rather

than sitting in the car talking, or sitting at a table, there’s a dancing sequence or a swimming sequence. It makes it a whole different experience.”

The director was also able to enlist one of his long-time collaborators, Scott Wills (*Samurai Jack*, *Clone Wars*, *Sym-Bionic Titan*) as the production designer, which enhanced the creative dynamic and meant the animation could be pushed more than ever. “With him, I knew we could push the look, we



“**H**otel Transylvania 3 is the kind of broad animated comedy many studios have moved away from in their quest for more ‘family-friendly’ entertainment.”



could push the color, we could push everything, and have this be a really cool next chapter of *Hotel Transylvania*.”

Tartakovsky believes that *Hotel Transylvania 3* is the kind of broad animated comedy many big animation studios have moved away from in their quest for more “family-friendly” entertainment. He explains, “I always talk about tone in animation. In live-action comedy, you can have a movie like *When Harry Met Sally* or *Airplane* or *Dumb and Dumber*. Those are all very different comedies, all equally good. But, for some reason, in animation, you

have to have this formulaic comedy, most likely because of the success of all the Disney and Pixar films. But we have a much broader comedy. It’s sillier. It’s more lighthearted. We don’t take ourselves too seriously. If you can get like five to ten amazing laughs, and you’re watching a sequence and smiling, then it’s fun, and it’s money well spent. Sometimes, you need a little Three Stooges to balance all the drama and heartache in life.”

Ultimately, Tartakovsky acknowledges that SPA’s trust in his creative decision-making means the film’s suc-

cess, or lack thereof, rests firmly on his shoulders. “There’s a lot more pressure on this one, because I am responsible for writing it with Michael,” he concedes. “So, if it fails, I can confidently say it’s my fault. But at the same time, if it succeeds, then I can confidently say, all the decisions were correct! Yes, it was a challenge do a third film, to make it feel fresh and new, but at the same time, retain the core and everything that was successful about the first two. But, I’m super-excited, and very happy, about this film.” 🍷



*Extremism in the pursuit of big laughs is no vice in Genndy Tartakovsky’s wacky high-seas comedy.*





# WHY IS THIS FILM DIFFERENT FROM ALL OTHER FILMS?

*Nina Paley's extraordinary second feature Seder-Masochism is a biblical epic that you can dance to.*



SEDER-MASOCHISM © 2018 NINA PALEY

**BY SHARON KATZ**

Having plumbed the depths of the Indian *Ramayana* in her 2008 feature *Sita Sings the Blues*, filmmaker Nina Paley sets her sights closer to home (cultural heritage-wise) in her new film *Seder-Masochism*. A wild ride through the traditional Pass-over Seder, this splendid 2D animation offers a cornucopia of rich graphics set to musical themes ranging from liturgical to pop, the whole as profoundly humorous and intellectually challenging as the best of Monty Python.

Knitting together the visuals is an informal dialogue between the filmmaker and her terminally ill, atheist Jewish father, who is still annoyed that Paley dropped out of university and

isn't earning a steady income. "He was just a frightened father worried about his kids," says Paley. But in the biblical context of the film, it isn't always clear exactly which patriarch Paley is referring to—especially since Paley's father is depicted here as a God-like figure arising from a U.S. dollar bill.

As an artist, Paley doesn't shy from raising thorny issues and generating conflict. In *Sita Sings the Blues*, her irreverence opened her to charges of unwarranted cultural appropriation. While she felt strongly about the material and identified honestly with it, critics accused her of exploiting deeply meaningful elements from a culture with which she had no connection.

No such conflict is inherent in *Seder-Masochism*, which began as a search for meaning in a ritual event familiar to Paley from her childhood. She was

also attracted to these stories because, as part of the Old Testament, they are foundational to Christianity and Islam, as well as Judaism.







**"As an artist, Paley doesn't shy from raising thorny issues."**

#### DANCING GODDESSES

After working on the film for three years, Paley had much of the Exodus story animated, but found she could not identify strongly with any of the characters in the original text. She wanted to incorporate a strong feminine presence, so she searched the texts, the myths, the commentaries, and the commentaries on the commentaries. Where are the Jewish goddesses? In the biblical narrative, there is almost no mention of them.

At that point, she turned to other sources for inspiration, including *The Creation of Patriarchy* by Gerda Lerner and *The Language of the Goddess* by Marija Gimbutas. While these books were illuminating, Paley decided she wasn't comfortable re-conceiving the film from a radical feminist position and chose to take a break, which wound up lasting several years.

Only very recently did the pieces fall



into place. Seeking something spiritual and existential that she could relate to that was also supported by archeology, Paley conceived of an introductory sequence based on 30,000-year-old stone goddess carvings. Redrawing the carvings as vector images in the 2D animation software Moho, it dawned on her that Moho supports rasterized images. She taught herself how to animate the bitmaps, and once she got them dancing, the pieces of the narrative began to come together.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the most endearing characters in the film are not the patriarchs, but these dancing goddesses. Animating them to the gospel standard "(Give Me) That Old Time Religion," Paley has them bopping in and out of the story, giving her revisionist narrative an overall structure, as well as a delicious twist.

#### SMASHING THE IDOLS

Paley brings in another goddess element by re-imagining the idol-making

**"The most endearing characters are not the patriarchs, but the dancing goddesses."**

at the foot of Mount Sinai. Instead of a calf, the molten gold takes the form of the ancient Egyptian deity Hathor, a fertile woman with the head of a cow. Was it she whom the Israelites were dreaming of while Moses climbed Mount Sinai in search of laws and rules? It's an interesting and provocative thesis, an invitation to debate, which of course is what the Seder is all about.

As if all of this were not enough food for thought, Paley also challenges us on the issue of terrorism, finding a parallel between twenty-first century extremists destroying priceless artifacts and the smashing of idols, as dictated in Exodus. To add to the cognitive dissonance, Paley sets this scene to the 70s pop hit "The Things We Do For Love" by the band 10cc.

The film's most affecting narrative through line comes from the recorded conversations Paley has with her gravely ill father. In these sequences, Paley visualizes herself as a small goat—a loaded image, considering the many references to the sacrificing of goats in the Bible. Her father, in his dollar bill skin and long flowing beard



and mane, presides in fatherly fashion over a family Seder table. Cultural rather than religious Jews, her extended family used the Seder to tell the exodus story and argue about which rituals were morally proper to follow and which should be omitted in the name of compassion. The father-daughter conversation, and bits of family history that Paley interpolates, imbue the film with a poignant personal component that grounds the more outrageous and whimsical elements.

Visually, the film offers a profusion of delights, with every scene providing its own pleasures. Among these are the marvelous use of light and dark as characters move from brightness and life to shadow and death; Escher-like negative-positive space reversals and illusions; and the remarkable dancing

Venus of Willendorf figurines, which appear only briefly, but are a joy to watch. Also, if you are not too busy tapping your toes or snapping your fingers to Louis Armstrong's rendition of "Go Down Moses," you might notice that the bouncing ball in some of the shots is actually tracking vowels and consonants on the wall of hieroglyphs behind the central characters, spelling out the English words phonetically. Coming in at just over an hour, *Seder-Masochism* is so full of visual, intellectual and emotional stimulation that it seems much shorter. In its own way, it's something of a Passover miracle.

*Author of the "Ambling Around" blog on Animation World Network, Sharon Katz is an Ottawa-based visual artist working in animation.*



*Like a good Seder, Nina Paley's biblical epic is a stimulating provocation that invites debate.*







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NIGHT IS LONG, WALK ON GIRL © 2017 GKIDS

# MASAAKI YUASA SPEAKS IN MANY COLORS

*The fearless multi-award-winning Japanese director embraces all of animation's many possibilities.*

**BY CHRIS ROBINSON**

In 2017, Masaaki Yuasa, already something of a cult figure in the animation scene, added substantially to that reputation by releasing not one, but two, stunning and widely acclaimed animated features: *Lu Over the Wall* and *Night is Short, Walk on Girl*. The former — about a displaced young boy who befriends a local mermaid — grabbed the Cristal for Best Feature Film at the 2017 Annecy International Animation Festival, while the latter — set during a seemingly endless evening of insane alcohol consumption in Kyoto, where a young university student creates some “chance” encounters to win over a woman — took home the Grand Prize for Animated Feature at the 2017 Ottawa International Animation Festival. Both films have been picked up for distribution in North America by animation powerhouse GKIDS.

The contrast between these two love stories couldn't have been much greater; yet anyone familiar with Yuasa's work — which includes short films and TV series, along with the cult favorite feature film *Mind Game* (2004) — probably took the disparate themes in stride. Bursting with visual energy, rapid-fire color patterns, sudden shifts in character design, and elastic character movements, Yuasa's style might





A college student pursues the girl of his dreams during a seemingly endless night in Masaaki Yuasa's *Night is Short, Walk on Girl*.

be described as a fusion of Tex Avery, Salvador Dali and Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard. You're never sure where you are in his kaleidoscopic dance dreamscapes, but no matter what the genre, Yuasa is consistently imaginative, magical and original. In short, he seems to get animation.

Unlike many animation artists, who either don't grasp or are perhaps fearful of the freedom inherent in animation, Yuasa gives us worlds and people that are stylized, exaggerated, distorted and impossible. Yet his works tell us more truths about individuals, relationships and society than those animators who endlessly recycle the same tired and predictable tropes and types.

#### THE HEIR TO KIERKEGAARD?

Yuasa's work lets the audience breathe. There are mysteries unexplained, left for us to ponder, to make sense of, or to walk away from. Every episode of, for example, the extraordinary series *Tatami Express* is a standalone work of art that rivals any indie animation short. In it, Yuasa takes the well-worn subject of feckless college students and turns it into an utterly surreal, time-shifting portrait of youth, identity, community and society. In fact, throughout all of Yuasa's work (whether it's the bizarre 2006 Romeo-and-Juliet-meets-flesh-eating-monsters series *Kemonozume*, or 2014's *Ping Pong*), we encounter anxious, feckless people drifting through life in search of a worthy purpose or, at

the very least, a meaningful connection. It wouldn't be stretching it to say that many of the characters who populate Yuasa's universe would be at home in the philosophical works of Kierkegaard, who similarly used shifting tones, voices, names and styles as he attempted to sort out the question of how one should live.

"I love both Tex Avery and Salvador Dali," Yuasa confirms. "I've been influenced by a lot of artists and I get inspired by a lot of things I see, hear, smell, and touch in everyday life. I often derive inspiration even from really modest visuals—a commercial, a cut from a movie, a movement from an anime, as well as nameless flowers and grasses blooming on the road, clouds, stars, and moons in the sky."

With regard to his stylistic choices, mixed techniques and wide palette of colors, Yuasa said he had to be careful "not to get inclined to dark colors too much, as both the movies are full of shaded and night scenes. I believe that things should be pleasant in principle and that is why shots get fresh and vivid in terms of color design when characters have a sense of pleasure in the story."

#### THE JOYS OF MULTITASKING

Getting even one animation feature out is a significant accomplishment, but releasing two outstanding features in a single year takes some kind of special talent. Of course, Yuasa had no idea he'd be undertaking two features at once. "It was when I was making *Lu*



"Yuasa's style is like a fusion of Tex Avery, Salvador Dali and Søren Kierkegaard."

*Over the Wall* that I got the green light to start the *Night is Short* project. I went into the preproduction phase while still making *Lu* because we wanted to use the freelance animators who were already working for us before they said goodbye."

When I asked how difficult it was to shuttle back and forth between two very different projects, Yuasa said that their differences actually made it easier. "They were quite different in visual style," he explains, "and that saved me from confusing their different movement styles of animation."

Although widely different in terms



Japanese director Masaaki Yuasa has won multiple awards for *Lu Over the Wall* and *Night is Young, Walk on Girl*.



of tone, style and intended audience, both films are ultimately about love, kindness and acceptance—themes that we all need to be reminded of in this erratic time of intolerance. "*Lu Over the Wall* is a story about a mermaid who just wishes to make good friends with human beings," Yuasa says. "It's about overcoming an irrational sense of discrimination and prejudice, about understanding and accepting alien creatures. Similarly, *Night is Short* is a fable about how you'll only be happy when you wish for someone else's happiness. Both movies depict how coming out of your shell can make things better. I love stories about opening up your heart."

After the mixed success of Yuasa's last feature, 2004's *Mind Game*—it was a critical success, but a box office failure—*Lu Over the Wall* has the potential to find a massive international audience. It's a gentle, soulful film that has many of the hallmarks of a successful family feature, but is much more inventive in terms of animation, story, character and technique. Unfortunately, though, it's unlikely that the film will make much of a dent in the North American market. "Orthodox narratives attract more moviegoers," Yuasa notes. "Innovative ones might not necessarily appeal to them. But I always dream of something

that is both innovative and appealing to people."

Since Yuasa has worked in so many mediums, it was only natural to ask if he has a favorite, or if each offers its own rewards. "I like to make features because you can see vividly how the audience sees your efforts," he says. "But I'm also enjoying making TV shows because they allow you to develop longer stories in more detail. Also it is pretty enjoyable to make a short piece once in a while because you can craft them so elaborately."

As for the future, Yuasa is—hardly a surprise—already finishing up his next project, *Devilman Crybaby*. Comprising 10 thirty-minute episodes, the series premiered in January as a Netflix original series. "There's lots of sex and violence," observes Yuasa. "I believe the story will make audiences cry and is highly unsuitable for children because it is unexpectedly shocking."

I'd expect no less from this master of delicious and sorely needed unpredictability. 🍿

A well-known figure in the world of independent animation, writer, author & curator Chris Robinson is the Artistic Director of the Ottawa International Animation Festival.

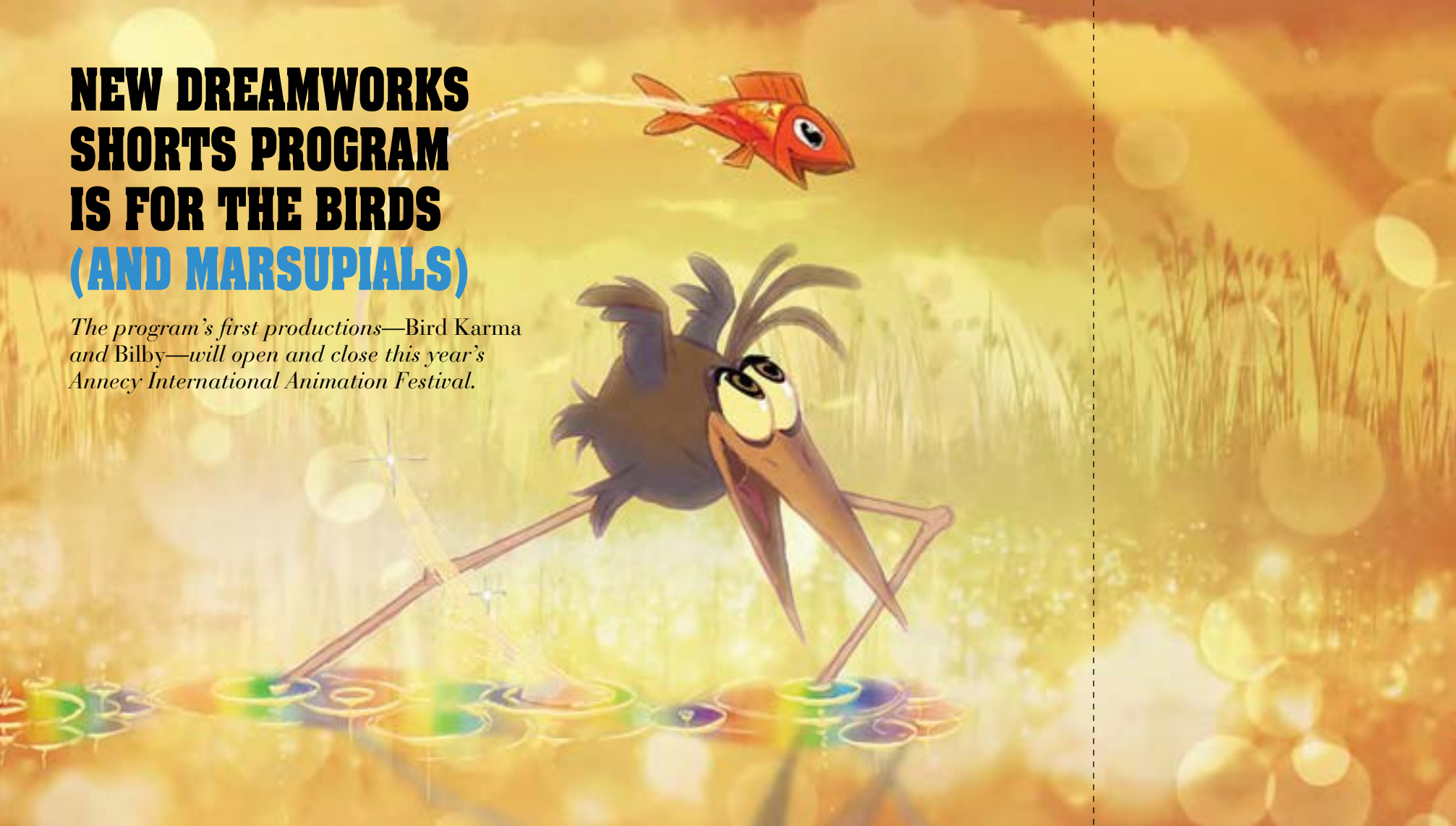


The award-winning *Lu Over the Wall* is a gentle fable about overcoming irrational prejudice.



# NEW DREAMWORKS SHORTS PROGRAM IS FOR THE BIRDS (AND MARSUPIALS)

The program's first productions—*Bird Karma* and *Bilby*—will open and close this year's Annecy International Animation Festival.



BIRD KARMA © 2018 DREAMWORKS ANIMATION



*Bird Karma* director William Salazar.

BY TOM MCLEAN

The 2016 transition from a publicly owned company to part of the Comcast-NBCUniversal family was rough and tumble for DreamWorks Animation. Gone was founder Jeffrey Katzenberg and in came a new wave of management. Among them was a new president of feature animation, Chris deFaria, tasked with managing the studio's feature slate, which included sure-fire hits like *How to Train Your Dragon 3* and less certain projects like *The Croods 2* and *Larrikins*.

When both *The Croods 2* and *Larrikins* were canceled (*The Croods 2* has since been restarted), deFaria needed something to boost the morale of an idled creative workforce. While he

recognized that making blockbuster features was essential for the studio's bottom line, he also knew that an animation studio is deep down a creative endeavor.

"Our competitive edge going forward was going to be how innovative was our storytelling, how innovative was our technology, and how committed were we to growing new artists and supporting some of the great artists we already had working there," he says. "It didn't take long to realize that a shorts program would do just that."

A new shorts program opened, with everyone at the studio eligible to pitch. Twenty-eight projects came in, and the first two finished have earned the honor of bookending the 2018 Annecy International Animation Festival. *Bird Karma*, directed by William Salazar, will open the festival; closing it is *Bilby*,

directed by Pierre Perifel, J.P. Sans and Liron Topaz.

## THE BEAUTY OF 2D ANIMATION

*Bird Karma* began life more than 20 years ago, when Salazar made a minute of animation of a bird dancing to tribal music—just for fun. When the shorts program was announced, he boarded out a story to go with the animation and pitched it as a short.

"It wasn't a pitch; he played us a reel," says Jeffrey Hermann, the producer of *Bird Karma* and the overall shorts program. "It was gorgeous, even in that early stage, and we just wanted to help finish it right."

Told over richly toned watercolor textures, Salazar's film features a long-legged bird that becomes enamored of a gloriously colored fish. When he finally captures and eats his elusive

awn.com

"Every time there was something that looked CG, we tried to make it look more handmade."

quarry, the karmic consequences prove highly unfortunate for him.

The short has a classic 2D look—there are ink and paint credits, folks!—and the rough, sketchy style is something Salazar says he has always admired. "As soon as [animation] was cleaned up, it lost something for me," he says. "Keeping it rough allows the movie to have this handmade look, and that's really important."

The studio had to create a pipeline for the short because it no longer had one for 2D animation, says Hermann. Despite the handmade look, the film is produced digitally, with the backgrounds painted on paper and then scanned into Photoshop. TVPaint was used for the animation, and Adobe After Effects for the rest. "Every time there was something that looked CG, we tried to make it look more handmade," Salazar says.

The Indian music Salazar animated the short to turned out to be problematic. "Our intention was to try to acquire the rights for that piece of music, and we weren't able to," says Hermann. "We had to replace it, and we were nervous because it had to be a different piece of music, but it had to do the exact same job."



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From top: *Bilby* directors Pierre Perifel, J.P. Sans and Liron Topaz.

"We did not leave this room for probably two weeks..."





BILBY © 2018 DREAMWORKS ANIMATION

#### LIFE AFTER LARRIKINS

*Bilby* evolved directly out of the canceled Larrikins feature, on which Perifel, Sans and Topaz had been animators. It was a painful process to go through, Parifel says, but the shorts program gave them a way to re-channel their energy and ideas.

“We felt that the characters were so appealing and had so much potential,” says Topaz. “And one of the things we were thinking about is how can we basically give a metaphor of what happened to us.”

*Bilby* is about a small Australian marsupial trying to survive in the harsh desert of the Outback. When a fluffy, defenseless chick shows up, Bilby saves it from a predator—only to find himself having to repeatedly defend his new friend from a wave of attackers, concluding with a climactic confrontation with an eagle.

The animators decided to pitch late in the process, with only two weeks before the deadline. So they found a room in DreamWorks’ campus and started

brainstorming. “We did not leave this room for probably two weeks, until we pretty much had the whole thing boarded,” says Sans.

They worked on a consensus basis, ensuring that all three were in agreement on everything. Their entry resembled an animatic more than a pitch, and was the first project chosen to go into production, with the artists given full creative freedom.

“Short films don’t have as much scrutiny as the features,” says Perifel. “So we were left very free to tell the story the way we wanted to.”

When others saw the passion the directors were putting into the project, they wanted to join in. Among them was producer Kelly Cooney, another *Larrikins* orphan, who handled the technical issues involved with *Bilby*.

“It was really kind of an amazing experience how the new technology and the artists all kind of came together,” Cooney says. “The results speak for themselves.”

*Bird Karma* has been making festival

“It was really amazing how the new technology and the artists all kind of came together.”

rounds, something DreamWorks plans to do with all its shorts. Of the 26 original pitches, eight are in some form of production and the studio plans to roll out a couple per year for the next few years.

But the Annecy screenings will be the program’s arrival, and deFaria is thrilled to launch with so high-profile a platform. “It’s an acknowledgement of the accomplishment,” he says. “It’s also really an opportunity for our artists to be among their peers and show off a little bit about what we can do.”

*Tom McLean has been writing for years about animation from a secret base in Los Angeles.*

## FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DU FILM D’ANIMATION D’ANNECY



From world premieres of highly anticipated animated features, to a bumper crop of exceptional shorts, to a trove of historical and contemporary treasures from this year’s guest country Brazil, the 2018 Annecy International Animated Film Festival offers something for every taste and enthusiasm. Whether you’re a veteran or a first-time attendee of the world’s largest animation festival, you’ll find that, when it comes to the art and the business of animation, Annecy has no equal.

In this special section, *ANIMATIONWorld* provides both an overview of the festival and an up-close look at some of the key components that comprise the essence of Annecy. We begin with interviews with artistic director Marcel Jean and Mifa head Mickaël Marin that offer an insightful perspective on this year’s festival, as well as what we might expect in the future. We also present comprehensive coverage of the special “Music in Animation” program and tell you everything you want to know about the Brazilian invasion of Annecy. (Hint: Get ready to samba!)

Finally, veteran AWN writers Chris Robinson and Joe Strike preview the short film and feature competitions, which are the heart of the festival, and there are also mini-profiles of 2018 poster designer Pascal Blanchet and 2018 Mifa Animation Industry Award recipient Women in Animation.

Enjoy! 🍷



# ANNECY 2018: STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

*Annecy programmer Marcel Jean discusses the challenges of finding the right balance for a major international film festival.*



IMAGE BY LOU SCAMBLE

**"A**nnecy gives you a perspective on the past, present and future of animation."

Marcel Jean, artistic director of the Annecy International Animation Film Festival.

## BY DAN SARTO

Marcel Jean took the helm as artistic director of the Annecy International Animated Film Festival in 2012, ushering in an era of change for the storied event held every June in the French city of Annecy, near the border with Switzerland.

Founded in 1960, the festival has grown to be a major stop on the international festival circuit. It is one of the four international animated film festivals sponsored by ASIFA—the body that bestows the Annie Awards every year.

AWN publisher and editor-at-large Dan Sarto recently spoke with Jean about the state of the industry and his plans for this year's festival.

**Dan Sarto:** Is it just me, or are we seeing a surge in independent animated feature production?

**Marcel Jean:** You're right. There are more and more filmmakers who are well-known in the world of shorts who have decided to work on features. It's clearly happening. I must say, also, that even the short films tend to be longer and longer. Every year we receive more and more 15-to-20-minute shorts.

**DS:** From a programming standpoint, how do you straddle the line between the big studios and the independent world in a way that works for both?

**MJ:** Well, when I took on this job at the festival six years ago, my first impression was that it was an important place for the major studios, but that it was very hard to find a place for more experimental work.

That is the reason that I created the Off-Limits section—as well as the Young Audience section and the Perspectives section—to make sure that there was still room at the festival for that kind of programming. To me, it's very important to offer a big-picture overview of the situation in the animation world.

And I want the festivalgoers to be able to decide what kind of festival they want to have, because a festivalgoer like you and another festivalgoer can have two completely different experiences.

I think there is enough room in Annecy to offer that.

**DS:** So what do you have planned for the spotlight on Brazil?

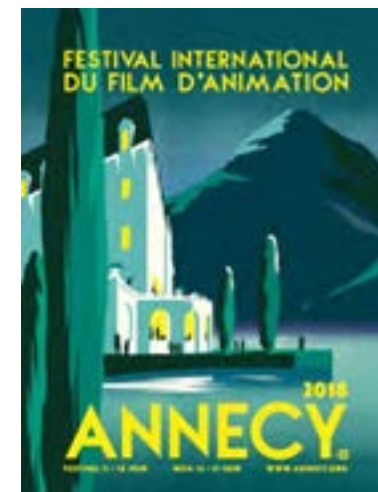
**MJ:** There will be Brazilian speakers in different conferences and roundtable discussions at the Mifa and the festival. On the festival side, we prepared a retrospective of Brazilian animation with the people of the Anima Mundi festival. There will also be a celebration of the most important recent Brazilian animated features, as well as a program on Brazilian television animation.

*Continued on page 32*

# PASCAL BLANCHET EVOKES ANOTHER TIME IN 2018 ANNECY FESTIVAL POSTER

*Canadian illustrator and graphic novel artist channels the early twentieth century in his Deco-inspired design.*

## BY JON HOFFERMAN



Joining a long and illustrious tradition, Canadian graphic artist and author Pascal Blanchet has brought his considerable talents and signature style to the creation of this year's poster for the Annecy International Animated Film Festival. The poster, which features iconic elements of the picturesque French town, is in Blanchet's trademark streamlined, Art Deco style and incorporates colors associated with 2018's guest country, Brazil.

"Creating the Annecy poster was a superb opportunity," says Blanchet, "especially as it evokes the classic travel posters and seaside resorts of the 1930s. Everything was in place, with the superb lake, the spectacular mountains and the all-white Imperial Palace."

A self-taught artist born in 1980 in Trois-Rivières, Canada, Blanchet has contributed illustrations to many leading publications, including *The New Yorker*, *Wired*, *San Francisco* magazine, and *The National Post*, as well as Penguin and Tor books. His graphic novels, which are published by La Pastèque, include the award-winning *La fugue* (2005), *Rapide-blanc* (2006), *Bologne* (2007), *Nocturne* (2011), and *En voiture! L'Amérique en chemin de fer* (2016). Blanchet also designed the album covers for Pierre Lapointe's *Paris tristesse* and *La science du coeur*.

Currently, Blanchet is directing his first animation short film with the National Film Board of Canada. Produced by Julie Roy, *The Procession* takes place at a woman's funeral, "an endless afternoon during which the family, guests, friends, leave one by one to finally leave the bereaved alone in the face of his loss." *The Procession* is scheduled for release in winter of 2019. 🎬





# GROWING MIFA MARKETPLACE BRINGS MORE BUSTLE TO ANNECY

*Mifa head Mickaël Marin details new offerings at this year's edition of Europe's largest animation marketplace and pitching forum.*



IMAGE BY FRANÇOIS BLIN

// *think that more people are aware about what Annecy can do to help get a project produced."*

Mickaël Marin, CITIA managing director and head of economic development & Mifa.

## BY SCOTT LEHANE

Over the last 10 years as head of Mifa—Europe's only dedicated animation marketplace and pitching forum—organizer Mickaël Marin has guided the event through a period of enormous growth, especially internationally. The four-day event, running June 12-15 alongside the Annecy International Animated Film Festival, offers a global platform for financing, sales and co-production deals, as well as education, recruitment and, of course, networking. The event is expected to draw more than 10,000 people, including 3,000 accredited producers, distributors and broadcasters.

Last year, the market added 1,000 square meters, bringing it to a total of 4,200 square meters. This year, the exhibit area will grow by another 600 square meters, making room for several new exhibiting partners, including delegations from Cameroon, Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru and Georgia. In addition, 2018 will see the return of an Irish pavilion.

Creative Europe, which organizes "Media Umbrella"

// *Eastern European animation is booming."*

booths at major international film fests and markets in order to help smaller companies and startups get a precious little sliver of floor space, is organizing an Eastern European pavilion that will be over 100 square meters.

"More than 40 professionals from Eastern Europe will participate in this pavilion," says Marin. "And I think that's one of the trends this year—Eastern European animation is booming. And it's really important for us, because we really want to see how we can help professionals from Eastern Europe participate in Annecy."

He added that he expects to see more projects from Eastern Europe in the festival selections.

"The biggest difference from other events is that we combine the Annecy festival and the Mifa market," Marin observes. "We have all the creative people coming at the same time, and so we can help develop connections."

He added that these connections can help newcomers meet investors, distributors, broadcasters and producers to launch new projects, or just recruit new talent.

Overall, 468 projects were submitted to Mifa this year—compared to 325 in 2017—with 121 submitted to the "Animation du Monde" category.

Marin explained that the surge in interest is probably because they have a better dialog now, especially with animators in emerging markets. In fact, a key focus for Mifa is help-

*Continued on page 32*



Women in Animation president Marge Dean.

## BY JON HOFFERMAN

Women in Animation (WIA), an association founded in 1995 to advance the interests of women in the field of animation, has been named the recipient of the 2018 Mifa Animation Industry Award, becoming the first organization to be so honored. The award, which was created to highlight those "who have contributed to the changes in the animation industry through their achievements, investments and reflections," will be presented during the Annecy International Animation Film Market, taking place June 12-15.

# WOMEN IN ANIMATION TO RECEIVE FOURTH MIFA ANIMATION INDUSTRY AWARD



*Women's advocacy group is the first organization to receive the prestigious honor for contributions to the industry.*

"The Annecy International Animation Film Festival/Mifa is the most important global gathering of the entire animation industry," said WIA president Marge Dean. "It is a tremendous honor for Women in Animation to be recognized by Annecy for our work in opening the doors of our industry to all people with a focus on diversity, inclusion and belonging."

Stated Mifa head Mickaël Marin, "We are delighted to give this prize to Women in Animation and, through this association, to all organizations who work for the equal status of women in the animation sector. This award is a demonstration

of Annecy's engagement to raise awareness and put into practice a real sense of equality."

For the second year, WIA will also co-host the Women in Animation World Summit with their French counterparts Les Femmes s'Animent (LFA). The day-long symposium of panels and discussions will take place on Monday, June 11 at Annecy's Impérial Palace Hotel. Based around the theme of "Inclusion," the panels include NextGen World View, What 50/50 Means to Allies, A Conversation with Oscar-Celebrated Woman Directors, and Developing Diverse Talent. 🌐





## MARCEL JEAN

Continued from page 28

**DS:** What's the biggest challenge of programming a big festival like this?

**MJ:** I think balance is the most important criterion for the festival. We must find the right balance between the experimental films and the films from the major studios.

And there are more and more players every year. Many years ago, Warner wasn't a player, now they're big. And almost every year, there are important new studios. It means that we need to make a place for all these different players.

**DS:** What is it that makes Annecy so special within the animation community?

**MJ:** I think it's the fact that Annecy gives you a perspective on the past, present and future of animation. What I mean by that is that there is the festival, the market, and more than 2,000 students that come together at the same place, at the same time.

So, while you have the retrospectives and tributes to the history of animation, there is also the present state of the industry with the market and with the different competitions. And then, there are all of these enthusiastic young people

## MICKAËL MARIN

Continued from page 30

ing talent from emerging markets like South America, Asia and Africa to break into the global industry, with an education program designed to give them a better understanding of how the industry is organized and what it takes to develop a project through to completion and international distribution.

"I travel a lot with my team. We travel to a lot of festivals and markets," he says. "Sometimes we are invited to meet talent in some countries, and what we do is work with local experts and film commissions to meet the talent, follow their project and then help improve the project. Then, the projects are stronger when they apply for the competition."

He explained that this network of worldwide contacts has grown as the market has grown, especially in the feature film industry. In fact, this year they've received a huge number of feature films for the festival.

Among other changes, Marin explained that, this year, the library—which includes roughly 500 titles selected for the festival, as well as projects that participate in Mifa—will migrate online, where the films will be available for up to a year.

Mifa will also put a spotlight on music in animation, setting up meetings between filmmakers and composers. Meanwhile, the expanded Mifa campus will offer workshops, master classes and panel discussions.

The organization has also been pursuing international expansion. Marin said that they were very happy with the first ANIMATION IS FILM festival held in L.A. this past October, which featured some of the films screened at Annecy, along with others that were still works-in-progress. He added that

from all over the world who represent the future.

Almost every week I receive a message from somebody saying, "I went to Annecy when I was a student and it basically changed my life because this is where I found my first job. Since then, I've worked for over 20 years in the industry and I came back last year with a TV show that I directed or that I produced, which was in competition..."

If you ask me for one element, for one key ingredient, I would say it's the students. The students are the blood of Annecy.

**DS:** Have you thought about adding more screenings to accommodate more films in the future?

**MJ:** I think there is already heavy pressure on the festivalgoers, because there are a lot of screenings in Annecy.

What could happen in the coming years? We could possibly decide to open the festival on Sunday night instead of Monday evening, just to make sure that when we arrive on Monday morning, the festival is already open and we're ready for a full day of programming.

We won't do that this year, but this is the kind of thing we're always discussing. 📺

they are planning a similar event in South Korea, targeted for August 2019, in an effort to break into the Asian market.

Marin, who has served as head of Mifa since 2008, was recently appointed CEO of parent organization CITIA. He will continue to oversee the marketplace, but when he assumes the new role July 1, he will also manage the Annecy festival, the educational program and the Forum Blanc, as well as a lot of the organization's local events and activities.

Summing up, Marin explains that, in the past, when people in the animation industry had to choose between going to Cannes or going to Annecy, they would drop Annecy. The difference now is that they go to Annecy. "I think that more people are aware about what Annecy can do to help get a project produced," he says. "Of course, we always need to explain to people what they can do in Annecy, but it's not like I remember 10 or 15 years ago." 📺

**"These connections can help newcomers meet investors, distributors, broadcasters and producers to launch new projects, or just recruit new talent."**



# ANNECY 2018 SPOTLIGHT: SPECIAL PROGRAMS AT ANNECY CELEBRATE MUSIC IN ANIMATION

*Screenings, a conversation with animator-composers, and a nine-film concert capture the multi-dimensional legacy of music in animated films.*



### BY SARAH VAN SCIVER

From the familiar (think Henry Mancini's *Pink Panther* theme) to the esoteric (e.g., Georgy Sviridov's propulsive "Time, Forward!" in Theodore Ushev's *Tower Bawher*), this year's Annecy International Animation Film Festival shines a spotlight on music in animation. Music adds integral dimension to the worlds animation creates, helping to catalyze laughter, nostalgia, uncertainty, or excitement. More, memorable musical motifs reinforce the timelessness of some of the best-loved animated excursions: the hilarious antics of the aforementioned

Pink Panther are inseparable from Mancini's signature saxophone melody; a cheese-loving Englishman and his faithful dog are instantly recognizable from Julian Nott's jaunty brass melody for Aardman's *Wallace and Gromit*; and serious sniffles are in store when we hear Michael Giacchino's bittersweet melodies from *Up*.

Catchy, classic theme songs and inconspicuous textural music form the fabric of films' reality. Earworm melodies and emotional impressions echo with lasting impact for audiences. In recognition of the essential role played by this non-visual element, Annecy Artistic Director Marcel Jean devised a series of special events to highlight the

longtime creative relationship between music and animation.

"Both are based on rhythm; in a certain way, both are art of time," says Jean of the special affinity between the two art forms. As he notes in the festival announcement about the program, even in the silent era filmmakers "dreamed of creating visual music by moving graphic shapes according to specific rhythmic dynamics ... The greatest animators have made musical films and the greatest composers have written works for animation ... We want to let the composers speak for themselves, to endow them with a place of honor in our Festival programming, and to enable public and professionals alike to meet them."





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Screening in competition, Sébastien Laudenbach's music video for Dominique A's "Toute latitude" will be in the spotlight at Annecy 2018 with a live concert performance.

### THE COMPOSERS SPEAK

Jean will provide this platform for composers when he moderates a panel featuring three highly accomplished animator-composers: Rosto, Patrick Bouchard, and Vladimir Leschiov.

Best known for his award-winning short film trilogy and online graphic novel *Mind My Gap* (1998–2014), Dutch artist Rosto's work also includes television, music videos, and the animated musical *The Monster of Nix* (2011). Most recently, he completed the last of a tetralogy featuring his music project Thee Wreckers, *Reruns* (2018).

Canadian Patrick Bouchard's sculpture-making brought him into animation, and playing in a progressive rock band led him to soundtracks. His short film *Les ramoneurs cérébraux* (*The Brainwashers*) won the Jutra Award

for animation in 2003, and he went on to win the award two more times with *Dehors novembre* (2005)—based on a song by Les Colocs—and *Bydlo* (2012), inspired by the music of Mussorgsky.

Vladimir Leschiov, a Latvian animator who studied at the Janis Rosenthal Art School in Riga and Sweden's Konstfack, is the founder of the animation studio Lunohod. His short films include *Insomnia* (2004), *Lost in Snow* (2007), *Sparni un Airi* (*Wings and Oars*) (2009), *Villa Antropoff* (2012), and *Rainy Days* (2014), which was created with tea and ink.

### CLASSICAL, POP, OPERA AND MORE

The festival will also be presenting four screening programs—organized around four thematic motifs—dedicated to music in animated films. “Classical,” “Pop Rock,” and “Opera” gather films from the last half-century or so based on examples of those musical genres, while “De Visu” offers a selection of more abstract works that integrate music in different ways.

Among the films that interpret clas-

“The greatest animators have made musical films and the greatest composers have written works for animation.”

sical music in reflective or fantastic fashion are Georges Schwizgebel's *Jeu* (2006), Koji Yamamura's “Parade” de Satie (2016), Michael Dudok de Wit's *Le moine et le poisson* (1994), Norman McLaren's *Sphères* (1969), Michaela Pavlatova's *Le Carnaval des animaux* (2006), and Patrick Bouchard's *Bydlo*. The composers include Serge Prokofiev, Erik Satie, Arcangelo Corelli, Camille Saint-Saëns and Johann Sebastian Bach.

The pop rock selections feature musical films with rhythms and themes dictated by songs. Notably, the songs tend to take on new meanings when paired with visuals. Selections include *Are You Lost in the World Like Me?* (Steve Cutts, 2016, music by Moby); *Take Me Out* (Jonas Odell, 2003, music by Franz Ferdinand); *There, There* (Chris Hopewell, 2003, music by Radiohead); *Mutual Core* (Andrew Huang, 2012, music by Björk); *Millhaven* (Bartek Kulas, 2010, music by Nick Cave); *The Velvet Underground Played at My High School* (Robert Pietri and Anthony Jannelli, 2017); and *Steriogram* “Walkie Talkie Man” (Michel Gondry, 2003).

From Chuck Jones's incomparable *What's Opera, Doc?* (1957, music by Wagner [sort of]) to Carlos Vogel's ineffable *Une furtive larme* (2011, music by Donizetti), the opera selections are as variegated as the musical genre itself. In addition to Jones's and Vogel's small masterpieces, the films include *Aria* (Pjotr Sapegin, 2001,



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© 1994 FOLIMAGE

music by Puccini); *Stromae* “Carmen” (Sylvain Chomet, 2015, music by Stromae/Bizet); *La course à l'abîme* (Georges Schwizgebel, 1991, music by Berlioz); *La gazza ladra* (Giulio Gianini & Emanuele Luzzati, 1964, music by Rossini); *Opera Vox* “Rigoletto” (Barry J. C. Purves, 1993, music by Verdi); and *The Tale of How* (The Blackheart Gang, 2006, music by Markus Wormstorm).

Finally, the “De Visu” category spotlights films that attempt to create something like visual music, paralleling, interweaving, and/or opposing the soundtrack in a variety of permuta-

tions. Among the selections are *Virtuos Virtuell* (Thomas Stellmach and Maja Oschmann, 2013, music by Mertens/Spohr); *Angeli* (Leif Marcussen, 2002, music by Handel/Dvorák/Beethoven/Koppel); *Bildfenster/Fensterbilder* (Bert Gottschalk, 2007, music by Schubert); *Bru Ha Ha!* (Steven Woloshen, 2002, music by Satie); *Recordare* (Leonardo Carrano and Alessandro Pierratini, 2009, music by Mozart); and *Tower Bowher* (Theodore Ushev, 2005, music by Georgy Sviridov).

### OCTUOR DE FRANCE

In a special live event, Octuor de France, an octet under the artistic direction of clarinetist Jean-Louis Sajot, will perform new scores composed by Gabriel Thibaudreau for nine classic silent films. Having a modern composer craft scores for these films reinvents the silent film convention of live pianists or organists creating on-the-spot film scores, and offers a rare opportunity to hear a composer's complete compositional thoughts crafted for a specific musical ensemble.

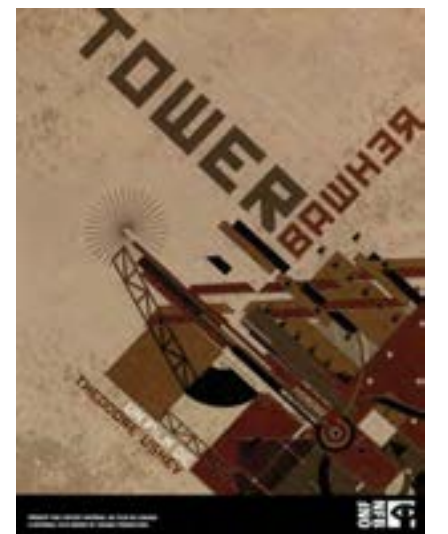
“Music adds integral dimension to the worlds animation creates, helping to catalyze laughter, nostalgia, uncertainty, or excitement.”



Clockwise from top left: The Velvet Underground Played at My High School, Björk's Mutual Core, Le moine et le poisson.

Among the films to be screened are Winsor McCay's *Little Nemo* (1911), Dave Fleischer's *Jumping Beans* (1922), James Stuart Blackton's *Haunted Hotel* (1907), Walter Ruttmann's *Lichtspiel Opus 1* (1921), and Len Lye's *Tusalava* (1929).

Asked what initiatives currently exist or are planned for the future to continue to celebrate and strengthen the composer-animator bond, Jean emphasized Annecy's partnership with the Society of Authors, Composers and Publishers of Music (SACEM), saying, “We will certainly try to find ways to increase our involvement in the promotion of music as an important part of the aesthetic in animation.”



Sarah Van Sciver is a musician and writer, crafting songs, scores, and sound for film, theater, and studio album releases.



© 2016 YAMAMURA ANIMATION, INC.

Koji Yamamura's “Parade” de Satie.



# DRINKING DEEP FROM THE SPRING OF CREATIVITY: BRAZIL IN THE SPOTLIGHT AT ANNECY

From the country's first recorded animation from 1917 to the vibrant contemporary scene, the 2018 Annecy International Animated Film Festival presents the best of a century of Brazilian animation.

BY CHRIS COLMAN

When Brazil won consecutive Annecy Cristal Awards for *Rio 2096: A Story of Love and Fury* and *The Boy and the World* in 2013 and 2014 respectively, the animation world couldn't help but take notice.

But in truth the twin victories were just the icing on the cake for an industry that has enjoyed remarkable growth over the past decade. In 2008, there were just two animated shows in production in Brazil. Today 44 homegrown shows are being shown on Brazilian television and being exported to more than 150 countries. Moreover, 2017 also saw the release of seven feature films, with another 25 currently in production, including numerous co-productions with Latin American and European partners.

Annecy named Brazil its "Country of

Honor" for 2018, with artistic director Marcel Jean declaring, "Brazilian animation has burned its star status into Annecy's firmament... We want to show how this major territory is a powerful spring of creativity, how Brazilian animators have drunk deep from these waters to establish an unusual and striking expression."

## THE BIRTH OF A FESTIVAL

In tracing pivotal moments in Brazilian animation, we might look to the country's first recorded animation, *O Kaiser*, in 1917, or to *Tourbillon*, by Bassano Vaccarini and Rubens Lucchetti, the first Brazilian film to appear at Annecy, in 1963. But probably the most important milestone came in 1993, when four frustrated animators decided to start a festival.

Back in the 1970s and 1980s, there was no Brazilian animation industry. Ennio Torresan, now a story artist at DreamWorks Animation, explains that a realistic aspiration for a young

Brazilian artist in those days was "to be accepted at Annecy with an animated short, then get a real job at a bank, or become an art teacher. We never thought this thing would last a lifetime... We were cavemen drawing on the walls of a zoetrope."

In 1982, the government of Brazil brought Canadian animators over to lead the nation's first animation training. Filmmaker Marcos Magalhães, freshly back from a scholarship at the National Film Board of Canada, joined the project and set off on a nationwide search for like-minded animators. Among those were Aída Queiroz, César Coelho and Léa Zagury.

The following years proved transformative. "We got this opportunity to come together, discuss films from all over the world and make our own work. We were opening our minds to other possibilities," says Magalhães. Their collective earned prizes at international festivals, including Magalhães' film *Meow* winning at Cannes in 1982,



Ale Abreu's Oscar-nominated *Boy and the World*. Opposite page: Annecy 2013 Cristal winner *Rio 2096: A Story of Love and Fury*, directed by Luiz Bolognesi.

but there was no continuity. Seeking to build something more permanent, the quartet founded Brazil's first festival, Animamundi.

The first festival attracted 7,000 attendees and grew rapidly from there, stimulating a boom in independent animation production in the process. In the early days, only one or two Brazilian films were submitted each year. Today, Animamundi annually receives over 300 domestic projects and attracts over 100,000 visitors to events in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.

Empowered by such hefty numbers, the festival has been able to wield influence among would-be investors, producers and government policymakers, including enacting real measures like establishing a special line of credit for animation production.

"I think we are responsible in some ways for the growth of the industry," says Zagury. "We created a venue where people could network, see new productions from other countries, and learn. A lot of the young animators

doing well right now began at Animamundi."

External factors also played a part. First, the greater availability of computers and software brought down the cost of production and put tools in the hands of filmmakers. Then, in 2011, domestic producers urged the government to pass a law obliging all cable TV channels to reserve a three-hour block each day for Brazilian productions, prompting the commissioning of swaths of new shows.

## THE BRAZILIAN INVASION

In 2015, the creative industries in Brazil were worth US\$47 billion, making up 2.64 percent of the country's total GDP. With animation an increasingly important component, the Brazilian government is not missing the opportunity to showcase its industry on the world's largest stage.

The Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency, Apex-Brasil, whose mission is to promote Brazilian audiovisual content abroad, is mastermind-



"Brazilian animation has burned its star status into Annecy's firmament."

ing a "Brazilian invasion" of Annecy this June, organized by four export bodies and bringing 30 Brazilian companies and over 200 delegates.

Leading the charge is Brazilian Content, which has managed the Brazilian delegation at Mifa since 2012. Comprising more than 600 companies, of which around half are in animation, Brazilian Content promotes independent TV and digital content production abroad, enabling partnerships between Brazilian and foreign companies.

Alongside them will be Cinema do Brasil, in charge of Brazilian film, and FilmBrazil, the largest advertising network in Latin America, representing over 50 Brazilian production, interactive, and postproduction companies.

Another government-backed agency, Brazil Music Exchange, will bring live bands in to perform around town. Ruben Feffer, the maestro behind several animated film scores, including *The Boy and the World*, *Tito and the Birds*, and at least eight TV series, will also appear on the "Music & Animation"

"The most important milestone came in 1993, when four frustrated animators decided to start a festival."



*Tito and the Birds*, directed by Gabriel Bitar, André Catoto and Gustavo Steinberg.





© 2015 COMBO ESTUDIO



© VITRINE FILMES

Cidade dos Piratas (City of Pirates)  
(1983) by Raúl Ruiz.

“Magalhães believes Brazilian creativity is its greatest asset: ‘We aren’t known as work-for-hire.’”

panel in Mifa.

There will also be a Brazilian animation history exhibition curated by ABCA (Brazilian Association of Animation Cinema), and a special book, film, website and advertising campaign created by Apex-Brasil.

### LIGHTS, ANIMATION, ACTION!

For the Brazilian festival content, Annecy has granted creative control to the Animamundi founders. Alongside screenings of the best TV series episodes and a documentary about Brazilian animation—*Luz, Anima, Ação*—there are three programs of shorts.

The team opted to focus on the vibrant contemporary scene, rather than curate any specifically historical programs.

Over the years, Animamundi has screened all of Ale Abreu’s works, and will bring his Oscar-nominated *Boy and the World* to the giant screen on Annecy’s Pâquier lawn. There will also be screenings of *Rio 2096: A Story of Love and Fury* and, if they can dig up a copy, *Amazon Symphony*, Brazil’s first animated feature-length film from 1951.

In addition to the curated program, the Official Selection includes eight Brazilian productions, including the

feature *Tito and the Birds*, episodes of the TV series *Angeli the Killer* by Coala Filmes, and Copa Studio’s *Jorel’s Brother*, which Coelho describes as “one of the best TV series in the world. Very funny and at the same time very Brazilian.”

Brazil will also compete in the Short Film category (*Guaxuma*, a Brazil-France coproduction), Off-Limits Shorts (*Boy Transcended from Phosphene* and *The Feather Pillow*) and Commissioned Films, for which Vetor Films is bringing two projects. Brazilian Fabio Yabu, who wrote the book-turned-animation *Sea Princes*, will be on the jury.



© 2016 FASFAVOR DESENHOS ANIMADOS

Projeto do Meu Pai (My Father’s Project) (2016) by Rosária Moreira.



Guida (2014) by Rosana Urbes.

### GET READY TO SAMBA

Brazil will organize the Mifa Opening Party on June 12, while the 45-square-meter Brazilian pavilion will provide the venue for a caipirinha-soaked reception co-hosted with other Latin American delegations on the following Wednesday. For those seeking the scoop on Brazil’s production landscape and co-pro opportunities, there is the annual Territory Focus and a panel session featuring TV Pinguim, producers of *Fishtronaut* and *Show da Luna*, Brazil’s most successful television property.

Brazilian Content Executive Manager Rachel Do Valle says that the goal is “to promote Brazil’s animation industry and to generate new business, partnerships and co-productions. It’s a step-by-step process to become more international.”

Magalhães believes Brazilian creativity is its greatest asset. “In co-productions, most of the creative parts are



Sob o Véu da Vida Oceânica (Unravelling the Ocean’s Veil) (2017) by Francisco Meirelles.

Brazilian,” he says, “We started by creating our own IP characters and shows. We aren’t known as work-for-hire.”

Despite the large positive strides in recent times, Brazil’s industry still faces challenges. Domestic distribution remains stunted, particularly for art house content, while recent political and economic turmoil has tempered growth. Yet those involved in Brazilian animation remain optimistic.

“We’ve always had waves in the country where everything was bet-

ter, then went bad” says Zagury. “But Brazilians are very creative. It doesn’t matter what happens, we’re always going to be moving up.”

Chris Colman is a writer and producer based in Shanghai. He’s the founder of the China Animation & Game Network, encouraging communication in the industry via live creative networking events.



# POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND FAMILY ISSUES STAND OUT IN A STRONG LINE-UP OF FEATURE FILMS

*From Belle Époque Paris to biblical Egypt, the films in this year's feature competition offer a bracing diversity of styles, themes and cultures.*

BY JOE STRIKE

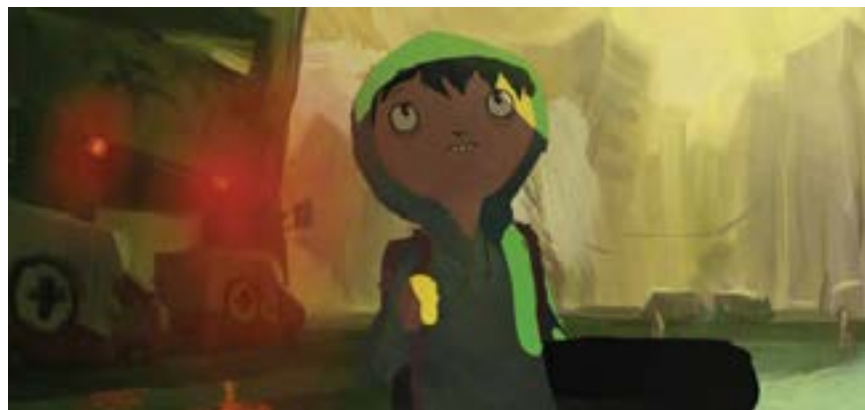
One thing you can say about Annecy this year: There's no shortage of courageous children on view. Multiple films in the feature competition focus on adolescent kids finding their way in the world, or coming to the aid of their parents.

The festival opens with Michel Ocelot's *Dilili à Paris*. Set in Belle Époque Paris at the cusp of the twentieth century, the film follows Dilili, a young, dark-skinned Kanak girl from the southwest Pacific islands, as she tries to unravel the mystery behind kidnappings of young girls.

The film is rich in beautifully rendered period detail, but its story of women victimized by men ("the main evil of the planet," according to Ocelot) gives the film a contemporary resonance. The director describes *Delili* as "something like a fairy tale, except the 'fairies' are historical people who have left us a rich and open civilization."

A resolute girl is also the hero of *The Breadwinner*, Ireland's Cartoon Saloon's third Oscar-nominated feature after *The Secret of Kells* (2009) and *Song of the Sea* (2014). In regressive Afghanistan, where women aren't allowed to leave home unescorted by a man, 11-year-old Parvana disguises herself as a boy to help support her family and search for her arrested father.

Angelina Jolie, who is familiar with the plight of young Afghan girls from her charity work, joined the film as an executive producer. "She had a deep understanding of the problem," says director Nora Twomey. "She articulated subtleties of character and culture I was able to sew into the tapestry of the film." *The Breadwinner* was financed in part by GKIDS, the film's U.S. distributor.



TITO AND THE BIRDS © 2017 BITS FILMES



DILILI À PARIS © 2018 NORD-OUEST FILMS



VIRUS TROPICAL © 2017 TIMBO ESTUDIO

Top to bottom: Tito and the Birds, Dilili à Paris, Virus Tropical.

Like Parvana, the male protagonist of Brazil's *Tito and the Birds* is a child in search of a missing father, but with an extra challenge: trying to stop the "fear pandemic" sweeping the country and transforming people into misshapen monsters. The key to a cure may lie in his scientist father's research into cooing pigeons.

*Tito* won critical financing in a competition held by Brazil's National Bank of Development to help fund animated features. Its impressionistic design underscores its horror film premise—and kept its budget under control. According to co-director and screenwriter Gustavo Steinberg, "It's no use getting the perfect style if I cannot produce it, so we developed the look and concepts to make it happen."

Director Mamoru Hosada's previous films *The Girl Who Leapt Through Time* (2006) and *The Boy and the Beast* (2015) featured youngsters as protagonists. *Mirai*'s hero Kun is not quite yet a youngster, but rather a sensitive four-year-old who runs away when his baby sister Mirai joins the family. His flight leads him to a magic garden, where he encounters his mother as a little girl, his great-grandfather as a young man, magical beings—and his now grown sister. The adventures help him accept his sister as one of the family. Like *The Breadwinner*, *Mirai* is being distributed in the U.S. by GKIDS.



MIRAI © 2018 STUDIO CHIZ

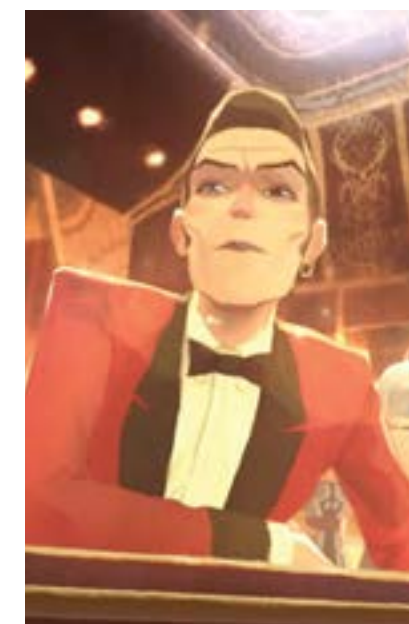
Top: The Breadwinner. Bottom Left: Mirai. Bottom Right: Gatta Cenerentola.

The French-language film *Funan* might be considered the "flip side" of *The Breadwinner*: instead of an adolescent girl searching for her father, *Funan* follows a young Cambodian mother separated from her four-year-old son in the midst of the Khmer Rouge's genocidal rampage. The film's strong visual style employs solid swaths of color, facial features rendered in thick black strokes, and sophisticated shadowing. *Funan* is a semi-autobiographical, first directing effort by 32-year-old Dennis Do, whose goal was to "explore complex relationships in a context of extreme oppression."



THE BREADWINNER © 2017 AIRCRAFT PICTURES, MELUSINE PRODUCTIONS, CARTOON SALOON

"In this year's feature competition, there's no shortage of courageous children on view."



GATTA CENERENTOLA © 2017 MAD ENTERTAINMENT, RAI CINEMA, BIG SUR SRL, SKYDANCERS, TRAMP LTD, O GROOVE





FUNAN © 2017 LES FILMS D'ICI LUNANIME BYBA, BAC FILMS, WEBSIDER PRODUCTIONS, THINKASIA

Above: Funan. Below: Seder-Masochism.

A graphic novel by Columbian-Ecuadorian cartoonist Paola “Pow-erpaola” Gaviria is the basis of the autobiographical *Virus Tropical*, a first feature from Colombian filmmaker Santiago Caicedol. Its title comes from the imaginary malady diagnosed by doctors who refuse to believe a tube-tied woman is pregnant.

The film’s finely drawn, black-and-white style was provided by Gaviria, who created some 5,000 original drawings for the production. A bravura sequence early in *Tropical* follows a sperm cell on its way to fertilizing the egg that will eventually become the film’s protagonist, also named Paola. The trials of childhood, adolescence

and teenage rebellion follow, as Paola copes with moody sisters, a fortune-telling mother and a defrocked priest father, as she makes her way to adulthood.

Also in competition is *Seder-Masochism*, Nina Paley’s first feature since *Sita Sings the Blues* (2008). Her deconstruction of the Book of Exodus and the defeat of “the Goddess, human-kind’s original deity” by the forces of patriarchy echoes *Sita*’s feminist retelling of the cruel treatment of a prince’s wife in the Indian epic *Ramayana*.

Twenty-five hundred years after the events explored in Paley’s biblical epic, a different perspective on the Holy Land is offered by Cam Christian-

sen’s animated documentary *WALL*. Scripted by Oscar-nominated screenwriter and playwright David Hare, who also appears on-camera, Christiansen’s film charts the impact of the 440-mile barrier Israel has built to protect itself from (and isolate) adjacent Palestinian lands.

Using a muted palette, together with a dreamlike and occasionally unsettling combination of 2D, CGI and motion-capture techniques, the National Film Board of Canada production incorporates the experiences of people living on both sides of the controversial structure. Producer Bonnie Thompson predicts that *WALL* will have a more emotional impact on its viewers than a conventional documentary. “Documentaries often make you feel like you’re going to learn something,” she says. “But animation is a little bit seductive: you’re pulled into a story.”

While it sounds like it might be a feline version of the classic fairy tale, *Gatta Cenerentola* (“Cinderella the Cat”) is actually a stylish crime thriller set in a dystopic future Naples. In this grown-up retelling of the glass-slipper saga, a pistol-packing Cinderella faces down her evil stepmother and not merely two, but six, equally villainous stepsisters.

*La Casa Lobo*, or *The Wolf House*, is easily the most challenging feature film in the competition. As much an art piece as a narrative work (production took place in art galleries and at public exhibitions in six countries), the stop-motion *Lobo* is reminiscent of



SEDER-MASOCHISM © 2018 NINA PALEY



WALL © 2017 NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA

Top to bottom: WALL, Okko's Inn, La Casa Lobo.

the work of the Brothers Quay or Jan Švankmajer. Directors Cristobal Leon and Joaquin Cocina took their inspiration from the history of a reclusive Jim Jones-style Chilean cult, imagining the kind of movie the cult leader might have made to keep his followers in thrall. (“What if he had been a sort of Walt Disney, what story would he have told?”) Assuming his perspective, they weave a tale of a young woman who flees the cult, only to find herself trapped in a nightmarish house.

Unfortunately, not much can be said about the final feature in the competition, *Okko's Inn*. At the time of writing, the film was still in production and information about it was hard to come by. Its director Kitaro Kosaka is a longtime Ghibli veteran, working with the legendary Hayao Miyazaki on *Nausicaä* (1984), *Castle in the Sky* (1986), *Spirited Away* (2001), *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004) and *Ponyo* (2008); with credentials of that order, one can reasonably hope for a film with more than a touch of Ghibli magic to it. 🐾

Joe Strike has written about animation for numerous publications. He is the author of *Furry Nation: The True Story of America's Most Misunderstood Subculture*.



OKKO'S INN © 2018 DLE INC., MADHOUSE, INC.



LA CASA LOBO © 2018 ANTO

“*La Casa Lobo* is easily the most challenging film in the competition, as much an art piece as a narrative work.”



BY CHRIS ROBINSON

There is the usual assortment of old and new in play in this year's Annecy short film competition. Veteran animators Paul Bush (*Ride*), Riho Unt (*Mary and the 7 Dwarfs*), Gerd Gockell (*Not My Type*), and the French duo of Alain Gagnol and Jean-Loup Felicioni (*The Cat's Regret*) all have films competing this year. The competition also features the long-awaited return of David Fine and Alison Snowden, whose film *Animal Behaviour* (about an assortment of animals in group therapy) is the couple's first short film since the 1994 Oscar winner, *Bob's Birthday*.

Other highlights include new works from Vladimir Leschiov (*Electrician's Day*), Marcus Armitage (*That Yorkshire Sound*), Patrick Bouchard (*The Subject*), Nikita Diakur (whose previous film *Ugly* won numerous prizes in 2017, including the Grand Prize at that year's Ottawa International Animation Festival). Then there's John Morena, a relative unknown on the animation circuit, who not only has an astonishing five films in competition, but actually made 52 short experimental films in 2017. Now, that's productivity.

Beyond these films, there are a handful of shorts that ignited a wee gleam in my eye this year and should be — pending the always unpredictable and occasionally mystifying tastes of juries — collecting a few ribbons, coins and shiny trophies during the next couple of years at festivals.

**A** handful of shorts that ignited a wee gleam in my eye should be collecting a few shiny trophies in the coming years."

# ANNECY 2018: THE SHORT AND SHORT OF IT

*Outstanding films from a diversity of countries highlight this year's shorts competition.*



I'M OK © 2018 ONE/NFB



## I'M OK (ELIZABETH HOBBS, CANADA/UK)

Following the end of a fiery and passionate love affair with Alma Mahler (muse to many an artist of her time and the widow of composer Gustav Mahler), Austrian expressionist painter Oskar Kokoschka enlists in the First World War. He suffers serious wounds in battle. As medics rush him through the forest of the Russian front, he encounters a fever of memories, emotions, daydreams and nightmares as he struggles to find himself and be, well, OK.

Highlighted by a lively operatic soundtrack and beautifully improvised images taken from ink drawings, *I'm OK* places us in a hazy, hurried, transient world that aptly mirrors the confusion and fragility of Kokoschka's state of being. Inspired by Kokoschka's art, the images act like faint memories as they struggle to take shape, find form and being — before vanishing as rapidly as they appeared.

## TEARS OF CHIWEN (SUN XUN, CHINA)

Though he's better known as a painter and artist, Sun Xun's animation work — as vividly demonstrated in *Tears of Chiwen* — is equally impressive. In discussing the genesis of the film, Sun Xun says that he started with two words: "tradition" and "mythic." *Chiwen* is a mythological Chinese dragon that often appears as an architectural ornament. Placed on rooftops or elsewhere on buildings, it is believed, according to Feng Shui theory, to protect inhabitants against fire, flood and typhoon. *Chiwen* has also been described as "the dragon who likes to swallow things."

Starting with a long tracking shot, *Tears of Chiwen* takes us through an assortment of Asian-inspired mythical imagery and landscapes before being interrupted by an Abraham Lincoln-like figure standing outside what appears to be a temple. Slowly but surely, images and icons from Western culture begin to



TEARS OF CHIWEN © 2017 P/ANIMATION STUDIO

subtly invade the screen.

Exquisitely animated, this beguiling work explores — and laments — the demise of Asian influence in the world, pushed aside by the often brash and

facile voices of modern Western cultures that have infiltrated, effaced and increasingly silenced Asian traditions, and, with them, cultural and individual identities.

## CYCLISTS (VELJKO POPOVIĆ, CROATIA)

In a gorgeous Mediterranean seaside village, the final cycling race of the season is about to begin. The two top racers envision not just a championship, but an erotic payoff from a local paramour. As the race unfolds, the two rivals slip into sensual daydreams about their anticipated orgasmic payoff, unaware that the woman of their fantasies has other plans.



BICKLIST © 2018 LEMONADE 3D/KRUPNI KADAR, BAGAN FILMS



Inspired by the paintings of Croatian artist Vasko Lipovac, director Veljko Popović (*Planemo*, 2016) has created a quiet, old-school piece, marked by gentle comedy and erotic beauty. Of Lipovac he says, "He was an artist of the people, bridging that gap between high art and your local fisherman or port worker. He managed to create something that was poetic, complex and of high artistic value, but was at the same time accessible, funny and based on simple everyday moments."





### MR. DEER (MOJTABA MOUSAVI, IRAN)

Normally, animation films that borrow the often exhausted hallmarks and tropes of live-action works are tedious, leaving you wondering why on earth the artist used animation to begin with. *Mr. Deer* is different. Set on a subway car during an apparent global catastrophe, this riveting, tense and creepy work touches on class, race and ethics, depicting a disturbingly familiar world where people have become vile beasts with no sense of morality or compassion.



MR. DEER © 2018 RED DEER STUDIO

### III (MARTA PAJEK, POLAND)

The much anticipated sequel to Pajek's incredible *Impossible Figures and Other Stories II* (2016) is set in a similar dreamscape, but this time a middle-aged man and the female protagonist from *Impossible Figures* meet in some kind of waiting room. From there, they slowly begin to explore the floral garden



III © 2018 ANIMOON SP. Z O.O.

landscapes of their bodies, organs and faces. Their reactions shift between pleasure and horror, gentleness and aggression, becoming increasingly more hostile as they continue their explorations.

Pajek, like Samuel Beckett, uses

minimalist settings, sounds and designs to explore a complex bouquet of themes: unhealthy, stagnant relationships; the inevitable decay of the body; and the impossibility, no matter how hard we try, how deep we dive, of ever really knowing or reaching the core of another.

### A FLY IN THE RESTAURANT (XI CHEN & XU AN, CHINA)

This mesmerizing cut-out film from the unsung Chinese animator Xi Chen (*The Swallow* [2014], *The Poem* [2015]) and Xu An (who co-directed *The Swallow*) is set in a local restaurant. Told from what seems to be the perspective of a rotating ceiling fan, the film follows the interior and exterior action as a cook chases a fly and a variety of patrons (soldiers, hunters, artists, men, women) mingle, sleep, eat and come and go.



Along the wall of the restaurant is a slogan that translates as "Revolution is Not a Dinner Party."

Mixing shades of red for the exteriors with dirtier, greyer interior colors (depicting a dreary daily existence), *A Fly in the Restaurant* is a not-so-subtle critique of a complacent populace ensconced in a Chinese landscape in constant political and social flux.

Ironically, the only character with any life and purpose seems to be the fly — and everyone wants to kill it. 🪰



A FLY IN THE RESTAURANT © 2018 CONGRONG FILM



# MARC JAMES ROELS AND EMMA DE SWAEF RETURN WITH *THIS MAGNIFICENT CAKE*

*The Belgian filmmaking duo employ stop-motion and multiple perspectives to critique the brutal effects of colonialism.*



THIS MAGNIFICENT CAKE © 2018 MARC JAMES ROELS, EMMA DE SWAEF

## BY CHRIS ROBINSON

*"I do not want to miss a good chance of getting us a slice of this magnificent African cake."*

— King Leopold II

It's a tad early to begin making bold predictions, especially given the unpredictable nature of festival jurors, but for my money, *This Magnificent Cake* by Marc James Roels and Emma De Swaef is one of the finest animation films of 2018. This complex, multi-layered 45-minute work is set in the late 19th century during Belgium's colonization of the Congo Basin in West Africa. Divided into five chapters, the film shows the experience and effects of colonization from a multitude of perspectives: a king (based on Belgium's King Leopold II), slaves, a crooked businessman, and an army deserter.

*This Magnificent Cake* is an astonishing, sensitive and original stop-motion work that eschews time and subtly drifts between reality and illusion as it explores the crushed dreams and lives caused by the disastrous, brutal and inhuman effects of colonialism on both the innocent and the guilty, the good and the awful. With dashes of magic realism, Roels and De Swaef place us in a sort of dreamscape where we're never quite sure where we are, and never quite sure if what the characters are experiencing is real or not. It's wonderfully disorientating.

### THE WORST INDIVIDUALS

"I don't really remember how or when we came up with the idea," says Roels,

*"This Magnificent Cake is an astonishing, sensitive and original stop-motion work that eschews time and subtly drifts between reality and illusion."*

"but I do remember both of us really getting into *Journey to the End of the Night* by Céline and being inspired by that. In one chapter, the main character meets a black servant sitting in the kitchen of a manor making bombs. In another chapter, the main character describes going to an African colony to work and how terrible that was. The one idea that stuck with both of us was that it was nearly always the very worst individuals that Europe had to offer who ended up going to these colonies."

While two chapters focus on the utterly devastating experiences of slaves, the other storylines are tragic in different ways. One involves Van Molle,



ANIMATIONWorld Magazine

*"We try to use materials that walk the fine line between revealing what they are and creating the illusion of something completely different."*

a baker who has fled to Africa with the profits from his family's bakery. The other follows Louie, an army deserter who escapes to Africa to avoid enlistment or prosecution.

"The two storylines," says Roels, "were initially going to be part of one story, in which a young Belgian in colonial Africa is terrified by the very imposing and promiscuous behavior of his next-door neighbor. Many drafts later, this next-door neighbor with his odd habits and excessive drinking morphed into the character of Van Molle, the shady baker. Writing the film, we went through so many different iterations we sometimes wonder if one of those drafts lying somewhere in a drawer is the real gem and this just a meek compromise. As Emma often says, 'Did we get off one stop too late?'"

The decision to make an anthology film came quite late in the pre-production process. In early drafts of *This Magnificent Cake*, Roels and De Swaef had no specific storylines or consistent characters. "It was supposed to be a fragmentary portrait of a period and setting," says Roels. "Then we realized we were getting stuck and actually really missed following characters through a longer narrative. Right up until the start of the shoot, we were cutting out characters and settings, some of which had already been built (e.g., a manic Jesuit, a bereft ape). We wanted to find a good balance of drama, comedy, tragedy, absurdity and plain stupidity, which might have been a little too much for a single narrative to handle."

### ROCKING THE WINDY WOOL

For those familiar with the duo's previous work — the widely adored and acclaimed 2012 short *Oh Willy...*



*This Magnificent Cake creates a wonderfully disorienting dreamscape in which we never quite know where we are.*

and its follow-up *Fight*, created as the trailer for the 2013 edition of the Bruz National Animation Film Festival — their distinctive "windy wool" look will be instantly recognizable. The materials enhance the oddly dreamy and realistic atmosphere of their work. "We try to use materials that walk the fine line between revealing what they are and creating the illusion of something completely different," explains Roels. "Most things are pretty obvious, there's a lot of wool and fabrics involved. We travel around a lot to find the right materials — a clearance sale of Flemish velvet in Roubaix, alpaca wool from Manchester, and horsehair from the horsehair capital of Rennes."

Working alone on any film obviously has its own challenges, but a collaboration could potentially create other kinds of obstacles (administration, organization, egos). Not so, it seems, for Roels and De Swaef. "Writing and developing is always a long period of brainstorming together," says Roels. "During production our roles are kept pretty separate. While Emma oversees set construction and puppet making, I'm mostly gathering reference material and working on the shooting storyboards. (These are storyboards that are actually useful during the shoot instead of the impossible flights of fancy of our

initial boards). During the shoot, I am also not too involved with the animation, mainly keeping busy framing shots and lighting sets while Emma and her team set up the decors."

One of the most striking aspects of the film is the subtle and pleasantly minimalist use of sound and music. So many films — animated or otherwise — too often rely heavily on audio effects to inspire emotional reactions in an audience. In *This Magnificent Cake*, the quieter moments (whether it's a slave speaking to the decapitated head of a friend, a servant bathing the king after he's pissed himself, or the extremely touching, albeit bizarre, moments between the drunk and a snail) generate tension and, more often, compassion for this sad lot of characters.

"We're very finicky about using music," admits Roels. "Finding the right music is always a long drawn-out process that usually takes months of listening to various things. Every now and then, a certain piece of music will transform the scene, and that is the best feeling. The film is actually pretty dense in terms of sound. Our sound designer Bram Meindersma was constantly running out of the amount of layers he could use in his software. There's a lot going on in those quiet moments." 🎧





# GOOGLE SPOTLIGHT STORIES RETURNS TO ANNECY

*Experimental storytelling is pushed to the limits with four new VR experiences, including a new short film directed by John Kahrs.*

BY JENNIFER WOLFE

Google Spotlight Stories is bringing four new virtual reality projects to Ancey this year: *PIGGY*, *Age of Sail*, and *Back to the Moon*, as well as a behind-the-scenes look at the VR experience created for director Wes Anderson's new stop-motion animated feature, *Isle of Dogs*.

A division of Google's Advanced Technology and Projects (ATAP) group, Google Spotlight Stories has won a slew of accolades for its experimental shorts, which have paired top animation talents with pioneering technology in order to push the boundaries of immersive, interactive storytelling.

Partnering with VR@Ancey for the third year running, Google Spotlight Stories will be presenting a Studio Focus Session on Wednesday, June 13 at 6:00 p.m. Entitled "Animation Everywhere," the session will be moderated by GSS executive producer Karen Dufilho and creative director Jan Pinkava with GSS directors Fx Goby, Hélène Leroux and John Kahrs joining in on the discussion.

**HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU, PIG** *PIGGY*, directed by Pinkava and Mark Oftedal (*Buggy Night*), is essentially a set-up for an experiment in interactivity. "It's an allegory of desire," Pinkava says. "Piggy is everyone who wants something that they're not allowed to have. He wants this cake, but he's too embarrassed to eat it while we're watching. As long we're watching him,

**"We're exploring new techniques, just as Georges Méliès was doing in his time."**

AGE OF SAIL © 2018 GOOGLE SPOTLIGHT STORIES



or watching the cake, he can't have the cake. It's as simple as that."

How can Piggy avoid the viewer's gaze? "Normally, you'd do such a thing as a classic Warner Bros. series of gags in an animated short, and we wanted that kind of feeling," Pinkava explains. "But now it's interactive and the timing is up to the audience to some extent. The question is, can you do something funny and comedic when you're giving up a lot of the timing of the gags to the audience?"

The genesis of the project, according to Pinkava, was wanting to explore technical developments in the platform. "What is it that we want to be better at? How can we push our tools to do more?" he asks. GSS developed a number of things for *PIGGY*, including, for the first time, device-independent viewing. Previously, each project had to be tested extensively across multiple devices and optimized for each one, resulting in the production of multiple versions of the same film. "One of the big improvements we made, under the hood, was to make the technology more general, so it doesn't matter what you use—a VR headset, small screens, big screens, whatever—our software

just works. Regardless of what kind of device you're watching it on."

But the biggest development with *PIGGY* is the level of interaction between the character and the viewer. The viewer watches Piggy, and, in a



Left to right: GSS creative director Jan Pinkava, executive producer Karen Dufilho and *PIGGY* co-director Mark Oftedal.

new twist for VR, Piggy watches the viewer right back. This interactivity is achieved with the use of a trigger system that can be applied to objects, locations, and even entire scenes, along with improved eye-tracking technology. "Piggy's eyes really follow you in that 3D space," Pinkava notes. "If you're wearing a VR headset and wandering around the room, his gaze follows you. You have the feeling that he's really watching you. You're watching him, he's watching you, and between you is the cake that he's trying to get."

While *PIGGY* might appear to be one of the more simplistic shorts to come out of Google Spotlight Stories, its apparently straightforward minimalism belies the amount of research and development the project entailed. "It's

probably the one that took us the longest, that's been the most painful, that's been the hardest to produce," Dufilho comments. "The character interactivity has to be so precise and so good. And that's really the trickiest part. Making something really hilariously interactive is an art in and of itself."

## REAL-TIME GRAPHICS

Meanwhile, *Age of Sail*, directed by John Kahrs and produced at Chromosphere, is one of the longest and most visually complex VR projects GSS has undertaken to date. "Kevin Dart's shop, Chromosphere, is brimming with talent," Pinkava asserts. "They're a rare place where they're extremely collaborative. People come there to do good work that they really care about. I can't think of a better place you'd want to go if you want your show to look beautiful."

With production design by Céline Desrumaux, *Age of Sail* employs an illustrative style reminiscent of Patrick Osborne's Academy Award-nominated *Pearl* (2016), yet also delivers a sweeping, cinematic experience, and—in a first for Google Spotlight Stories—dialogue. "Dialogue is a new thing for us," says Dufilho. "We're using actual voices and real performances, so that makes it tricky, and a little risky."

A tribute to a time before the Wright Brothers conquered the skies, *Age of Sail* takes place entirely on the open sea, which according to Dufilho, involved a lot of calculation. "The specifics of it feel real. It's math, but it's lovingly done math," she says. "And it's just phenomenal. Water has been done a lot; it's not a new thing. But water in real-time is new. It takes a lot



Google  
Spotlight  
Stories

**"Dialogue is a new thing for us. We're using actual voices and real performances, so that makes it tricky, and a little risky."**

of math to make it work and keep it looking beautiful."

## TO THE MOON AND BACK

Described by Pinkava as "one of the most richly realized and complex Google Doodles ever made," *Back to the Moon* is an homage to Georges Méliès, the father of visual effects. "It's a fully interactive animation production that is a Google Doodle," he says. Full of many of the iconic, classic stage effects and gags that Méliès pioneered, the new Google Spotlight Stories short is produced by Nexus, the studio behind last year's *Rain or Shine*, and directed by Fx Goby and Hélène Leroux.

"Fx and Hélène even went to the Cinémathèque Museum in Paris to talk to the world experts on Georges Méliès and show them the work, and got their blessings," Pinkava recounts. "We're exploring new techniques, just as Méliès was doing in his time. It's kind of fitting that we're using this very new and innovative technology to celebrate someone who was pioneering new technologies and techniques in his own time."

Jennifer Wolfe is editor-in-chief of Animation World Network.



GOOGLE SPOTLIGHT STORIES  
presents

# PiGGY

directed by  
JAN PINKAVA & MARK OFTEDAL



## THE MONEYGOROUND: LIU JIAN'S *HAVE A NICE DAY*

*The Chinese director's violent, yet serene, film explores the contradictions of modern China through a colorful group of unsavory characters.*



HAVE A NICE DAY © 2017 STRAND RELEASING

### BY CHRIS ROBINSON

*Oh, but life goes on and on and no one ever wins, and time goes quickly by just like the moneygoround...*

— “The Moneygoround,” The Kinks

*It was not this spring morning which they considered sacred and important, not the beauty of God's world, given to all creatures to enjoy—a beauty which inclines the heart to peace, to harmony and to love. No, what they considered sacred and important were their own devices for wielding power over each other.*

— *Resurrection*, Leo Tolstoy

A slightly different Tolstoy quote from the same novel opens Liu Jian's acclaimed animated feature *Have a Nice Day*, which, one year after being pulled from the Annecy Animation Film Festival by the Chinese government, is screening out of competition this year. But the quote above also serves as a nice summation of this pulp-inspired crime feature that kicks off with a young man stealing a bag of money from a crime boss to pay for his girlfriend's plastic surgery. From there, with echoes of Stanley Kubrick's failed-heist classic *The Killing*, Jian (who also made the 2010 animated feature *Piercing 1*) takes us on a tense and torrid chase, following an assortment of feckless, no-good people as they wander

through rainy, dilapidated landscapes in search of the bag of money—a prize they associate with freedom and a chance to finally escape their shitty existence.

While there are also clear reverberations of Quentin Tarantino in *Have a Nice Day* (e.g., ultraviolent, overlapping storylines, and a whole lot of happenstance), this is more than an entertaining, turn-your-brains-in-at-the-door caper film. Jian's story is a none-too-subtle commentary on problematic aspects of contemporary China, as well as a meditation on globalization, hypercapitalism, and our eternal hope regarding the promises offered by cold hard cash.

“The movie is set in a town outside a small southern city in China,” says Jian. “And the trends of rapid urbanization and industrialization in the country





**“W**hat some might call surrealism is often the reality in modern China.”



change a small town like this in vivid, as well as subtle, ways. I am fascinated by all of these changes and by the people whose lives are affected by them.”

Yet Jian, following Tolstoy, observes that while we keep on destroying each other and the landscapes in which we live, the sun still comes up, the seasons change, water continues to flow. There is all this beauty around us that we just can't seem to see anymore—an idea seemingly referenced by a surprisingly serene, intermission-like scene of water calmly flowing that opens chapter three of the film. Echoing the film's Tolstoyan epigraph, the river just flows and flows, unnoticed by anyone, except us, the audience.

Throughout the film, the characters are engulfed by littered, broken and abandoned buildings and landscapes. Jian effectively uses those images to

mirror the inner state of the characters, people who seem without hope, without dreams, all trapped in a hellish world that seems right out of Dante. “I use the minor actions and subtle movements of the characters to evoke their emotions,” Jian explains. “These expressions, along with the vivid landscapes and interiors in which the characters exist, constitute the poetic—and in some sense, sad and melancholy—aesthetic philosophy of the film. The relation of human beings and the environment is coexistence. Without these people, this specific environment would not exist, and vice versa.”

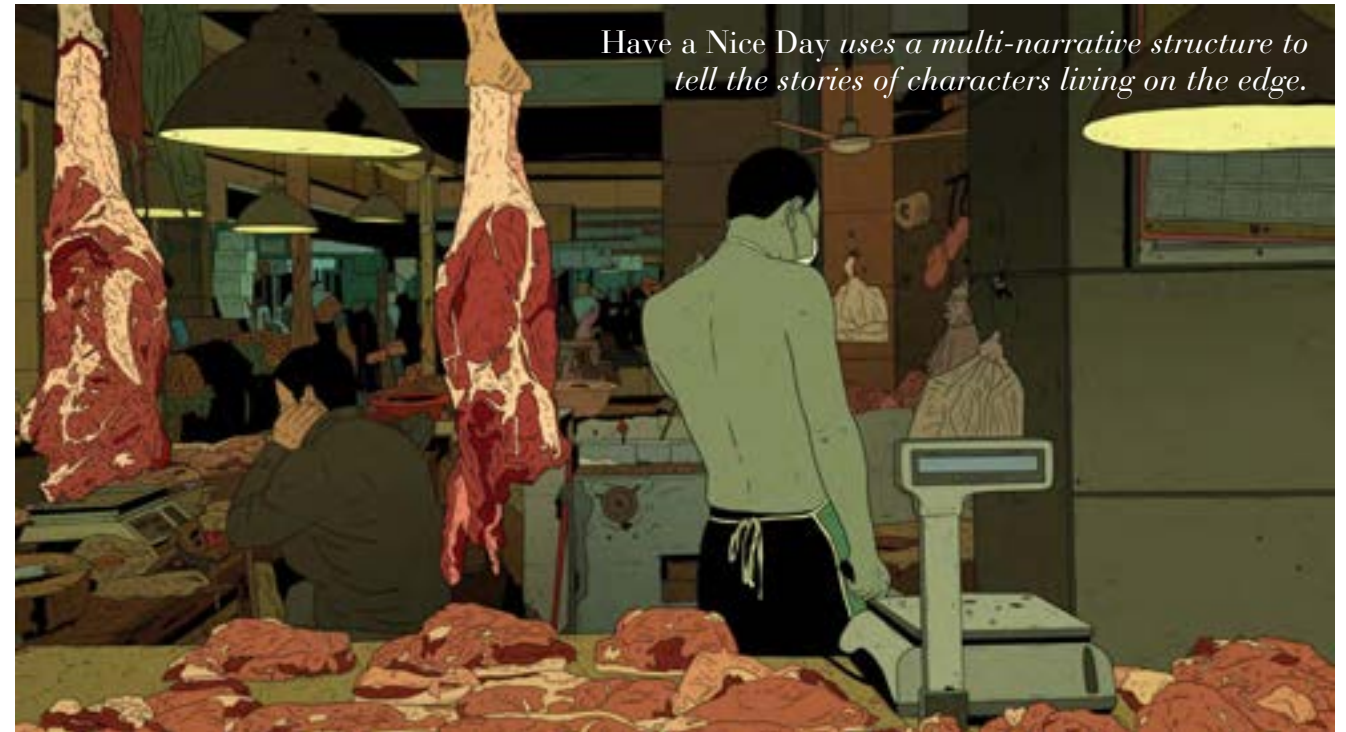
The tone of *Have a Nice Day* is also intriguing for its fusion of relatively simple, stark designs with touches of magic realism. “My favorite artistic style (and in fact my artistic philosophy) is plain and simple,” Jian says. “The elements of magic realism are born out of simple reality. What some might call surrealism is often the reality in modern China. There are so many uncertainties and possibilities in such a dynamic and lively space. Magic realism is happening around us almost every day. Life at times can resemble a surreal comedy filled with both jubilation and self-paralysis.”

Sadly, this daily tragic farce isn't limited to China, as anyone who has



lived in the U.K. or U.S. during the last couple of years can attest.

Technology also takes some punches in the film. Everyone is glued to their phone, some like zombies. Then there is the character Yellow Eye, who is constantly coming up with new innovations, invariably for unsavory purposes. Clearly Jian seems to be suggesting that reliance on technology has also played a role in creating this hopeless society. “Everything has two facets,” he says. “Even very great things can have side effects. But the level of the side effect depends on other factors. Technology is



*Have a Nice Day uses a multi-narrative structure to tell the stories of characters living on the edge.*

**“D**espite its violent imagery and swift pace, *Have a Nice Day* is an unusually quiet, almost calm film.”



the same. We need higher IQs to invent greater technological products. But using these products lowers our IQ at the same time.”

Interestingly, despite its often wince-inducing, violent imagery and swift pace, *Have a Nice Day* is an unusually quiet, almost calm film. The silence adds a feeling of claustrophobia and reinforces the sense that these people are all trapped in some sort of hell.

“I was very serious about the music and soundtrack,” Jian relates. “I would rather not use any music if there is no best fit. Fortunately, we found great music [including two songs courtesy of the Shanghai Reclamation Project, a group that, aptly, combines traditional Chinese instruments with hip hop and electronica]. *Have A Nice Day* is the kind of film that explodes its energy



in a calm storytelling style, with the simplicity of animation film language. Indeed, it was my intention to create the cold, yet powerful, atmosphere.”

The downside of the film is that, while it succinctly pinpoints many of society's shortcomings, in the end it offers no solutions. But of course there are no easy answers. We have dug ourselves into a very deep hole, with potentially destructive systems to which we are inextricably attached. How

does one break free of a network in which we are so severely and complexly entwined?

Jian doesn't know. I don't know.

But, hey, have a nice day. ☺







# CATS & PEACHTOPIA

## LOOKS AT FATHER-SON RELATIONSHIPS FROM A FELINE PERSPECTIVE

*The third feature by Beijing start-up Light Chaser Animation combines old and new to tell a universal tale of love, growth, and airborne hijinks.*



CATS & PEACHTOPIA © 2018 LIGHT CHASER ANIMATION STUDIOS

BY CHRIS COLMAN

As China's box office began to hit unprecedented heights in 2013, Light Chaser Animation emerged amid the hype declaring its intention to build a world-class studio capable of producing Hollywood - quality animation, only at a fraction of the cost.

It was a highly ambitious project, particularly in an immature market like China. Four years on, though, the Beijing start-up founded by Gary Wang, Zhou Yu and Yuan Ye has delivered on many of its promises.

Light Chaser has assembled a team of 170 passionate young Chinese artists, developed a suite of proprietary production tools, and released, on schedule, three technically and visually accomplished CG-animated features in a little over two years. The latest of those releases, *Cats & Peachtopia* (2018),

is being screened out of competition at Annecy this year, Light Chaser's second film in two years to be presented on the world's biggest animation stage.

### THE TYRANNY OF THE MARKET

Despite the company's considerable technical accomplishments, however, box office performance has been well below expectations. After a modest gross of RMB78 million (US\$11.4 million) for their debut effort *Little Door Gods* (2016), ticket sales have declined with each subsequent production. *Cats & Peachtopia* was released in China on April 5 and earned just RMB17.75 million (US\$2.82 million) in its first week, with little hope of climbing much higher.

That reality poses serious questions for a studio whose stated target has always been the domestic market. The decision to focus on China was partly a desire to tell "authentic Chinese stories that will touch our hearts," as

Wang said at Annecy in 2017, but was also based on the recognition that they couldn't compete on an international scale against the likes of Pixar, Dream-Works or Disney.

While more realistic, focusing solely on China was still a challenging undertaking. After years of subpar, childish content, the domestic audience had grown jaded and skeptical that a homegrown studio could produce quality animation for the whole family. With this in mind, Light Chaser set a maximum budget of \$12 million per production, less than one-tenth the cost of a typical Disney feature.

That cautiousness was counterbalanced by Wang daring to write and direct the first three movies, despite having no prior experience in either discipline. Indeed, while many large studios in China look overseas for experienced creative guidance, Light Chaser is resolutely powered by homegrown talent. Wang places particular impor-



Like *Light Chaser's* previous films, *Cats & Peachtopia* is set in China and employs distinctly Chinese elements.



tance on culture and language. “The very minimum requirement is to speak Chinese fluently. If you work in L.A., you have to speak English. In France, you have to speak French. That’s a very big barrier, especially for artists.”

“Four years after declaring its intention to build a world-class animation studio, Light Chaser has delivered on many of its promises.”



#### “HOME AND AFAR”

For *Cats & Peachtopia*, as with *Little Door Gods* and *Tea Pets* (2017), Wang has penned an original story set in China, employing distinctly Chinese elements. Co-founder and executive producer Zhou Yu says, “Gary was inspired by the cats in his house, and by the concept of ‘home and afar.’ It’s a father-and-son story, about growth, adventure and dreams.”

*Cats & Peachtopia* tells the story of father and son cats, Blanket and Cape, living a carefree life in a tower block in the southwestern Chinese megacity of Chongqing. Curious about the outside world and longing for his deceased mother, Cape sets off in search of the cat heaven Peachtopia. Blanket goes after his son and adventures ensue.

The official press kit elaborates further on the film’s themes and goals: “Fathers plays an important role in cultivating their child’s social development, self-awareness, and sense of security. We hope this father-son adventure can alert people to the importance of fatherly love and accompaniment, so fathers can care more for and spend more time with their children.”

The entire film was produced over four years by Light Chaser’s in-house team in a converted warehouse on the outskirts of Beijing. They used the studio’s own rigging system, hair tools, large-scale building auto-modeling system and vegetation systems. The image quality is characteristically high, and the attention to detail impressive. The city scenes were modeled on actual

street views and effectively capture an authentic Chinese city.

Light Chaser engaged Xi’an rocker Xu Wei and old school Taiwanese pop star Emil Chau to pen theme songs, and worked with Skywalker Sound and a local studio for the sound design. Zhou also mentions that, in an effort to maximize audience appeal, the studio held more test screenings for *Cats & Peachtopia* than it did for previous productions.

“Cats & Peachtopia is a father-and-son story, about growth, adventure and dreams.”

#### THE ROAD AHEAD

Many more contenders in China’s current animation feature film gold rush are set to emerge in the coming two or three years. Companies including Tencent, Enlight Media-backed Coloom, and Huayi Brothers are making significant investments in talent and small studios in an effort to produce the next *Big Fish & Begonias*. Yet Light Chaser’s plight offers a warning about the uncertainty of the domestic market.

Longtime Nanjing animation studio Original Force has encountered comparable financial difficulties with its debut feature *Duck Duck Goose*, reaping just RMB37 million (US\$5.9 million) in its first month. Meanwhile, the biggest domestic animated film successes in China in the past two years remain those based on established TV series (the latest Boonie Bears movie made

RMB523 million), online comics (*One Hundred Thousand Bad Jokes 2* took RMB31.7 million) and online games (the sixth film of the *Seer* series, *Invincible Puni*, made RMB101.6 million).

Despite the continuing challenges, Light Chaser is forging ahead with its fourth feature, a fantasy love-story prequel to the well-known Chinese Legend of the White Snake. Developed in-house by the Light Chaser team and skewing to a young adult audience, it is scheduled for release in early 2019.

Right now, Light Chaser is looking forward to seeing how the international audience at Annecy responds to its latest effort. If *Cats & Peachtopia* is the hit they hope it will be, they may have to reconsider their belief that only the big American studios can compete in the world market. 🐱







SUMMER CAMP ISLAND © 2018 CARTOON NETWORK STUDIOS

# UNCONDITIONAL LOVE: JULIA POTT JOURNEYS TO *SUMMER CAMP ISLAND*

*With a new series in production at Cartoon Network Studios, the Adventure Time alum reflects on learning to collaborate and the benefits of selling out.*

BY JENNIFER WOLFE

**S**ummer Camp Island, the new 2D-animated television series from British animator and illustrator Julia Pott making its debut on Cartoon Network this summer, is about two best friends, Oscar and Hedgehog, at a magical summer camp run by three teenage witches.

"It's kind of like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* for children," Pott explains. "It's got werewolves and witches and magic, and it taps into that feeling from when you're a kid and you think everything is possible, everything has the potential to be magical. It's got a kind of Charlie Brown vibe; it's very sincere, with a

very sort of soft humor. It's gentle. It's a gentle show."

Pott, who was named one of Variety's "Ten Animators To Watch" in 2017, will be presenting a special sneak preview of the series this month at Anecy as part of the "Cartoon Network Celebrate Women in the World of Animation" panel to be held at 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 14. Meanwhile, the pilot for *Summer Camp Island* has been rounding the festival circuit, with screenings at Ottawa, TIFF, the AFI Fest and Sundance, among others.

## A TEAM EFFORT

An alumna of the *Adventure Time* writing room, Pott has shepherded *Summer Camp Island* from original concept

through pitching and development and on into production at Cartoon Network Studios with a team of roughly 30 artists. "At its core it's still the same show, but aesthetically it's changed quite a lot," Pott acknowledges. "The backgrounds are completely different, and, coming from an illustration background, it's more in tune with my illustration style. The characters have

"I really love being in the writers' room. I feel like I've made some of my closest friends in there."



Summer Camp Island director Julia Pott.

"We wanted to have a best friendship that was just unconditional friendship love."

definitely developed," she says.

"A lot of the team comes from *Adventure Time*, so it's been a very collaborative process," Pott continues, noting that she developed the series in a "little black box" for nearly two years on her own. "Now that there are all these people involved, they're all putting their stamp on the characters and growing it together, which is really lovely."

In addition to adding new characters, collaboration also brought changes to the relationship between the two original characters. "In the pilot, originally, Oscar had a crush on Hedgehog, and as we developed it into the show we took that off the table completely," Pott recounts. "We wanted to have a best friendship that was just unconditional friendship love with nothing romantic there, just these two people that really support and love each other no matter what."

Now living in Los Angeles—following a stint in Brooklyn, NY directing spots for the likes of Oreo, Toyota and MTV's Liquid Television via prodco Hornet—Pott is fully immersed in the world of production. Making the pilot allowed her to observe all the stages of television production first-hand, from storyboards and animatics through editing and sound design. That's a long way from her solo undergraduate film, *My First Crush* (2007), and her early collaborative efforts at the Royal College of Art, where she completed her thesis film, *Belly*, in 2011.

Fans of Pott's work might recall Oscar from *Belly*. Her visual style is unmistakable, filled with whimsical characters and a soft, muted palette that evokes the serious side of being young. Her storylines are equally thoughtful and earnest, recalling the tough lessons of childhood.

"I really love being in the writers' room," she enthuses. "I feel like I've made some of my closest friends in there. It's like going to work to sort of hang out with three of your closest

friends. I've made some really, really good friendships here and that's been great. I think learning not to be so critical of yourself, or learning how to take criticism with a grain of salt, has been a great learning moment for me. Getting a thicker skin."

## LETTING GO AND SELLING OUT

For Pott, one of the biggest lessons of *Summer Camp Island* has been "learning how to let stuff go when it's not perfect," while still being able to love it. "I met up with [*Adventure Time* creator] Pendleton Ward right after the show got picked up, and he said that if you can find one thing in the episode that you really love, that's a victory," she recounts. "There's been a lot of hurdles, but I would say the biggest hurdle is getting over my own self-criticism or not feeling terrible if you feel like something is slipping through your fingers a little bit."

At a talk delivered at last year's Ottawa International Animation Festival, Pott spoke approvingly of what she called "selling out," tracing the path of personal projects she had developed into commercial viability. And, although she's quick to note, "for the record," that she doesn't consider working at Cartoon Network selling out, Pott is just as keen on the concept as she was in 2017.

"There's this stigma to selling out, and when I was, like, a cocky mid-twenties person, I felt very strongly about selling out too; but how are you supposed to make money?" she asks, rhetorically. "You're doing this so that you can sustain yourself and make a

living. I don't think there's any glory in doing something for free, or not collaborating with people who can fund your work. I always felt like that was kind of an immature stance. Everyone can do whatever they like, but I dunno. I think 'selling out' has pushed my work so much further, and it means I can keep doing what I want. If you work with the right brand and the right people who want to retain your vision, that's good, it's collaboration. People give artists a hard time for selling out, but it's better than not being able to make your work."

"I met up with Adventure Time creator Pendleton Ward right after the show got picked up, and he said that if you can find one thing in the episode that you really love, that's a victory."



*Summer Camp Island taps into the childhood feeling that everything has the potential to be magical.*



# DREAMWORKS ANIMATION TELEVISION SPREADS ITS WINGS

*In creating multiple family-friendly series for Netflix streaming, the studio finds an exhilarating creative freedom.*

BY TOM MCLEAN

Little has had a greater impact on television animation in recent years than the expansive deal between Netflix and DreamWorks. Signed in 2013, the deal called for the studio to produce 300 hours of exclusive content for the streaming service.

While DreamWorks had made series before, the scope of what was required for Netflix was beyond anything it had produced to date. Veteran animation executive Margie Cohn was brought in to be president of DreamWorks Animation Television, quickly hiring staff to handle the load.

Since then, 12 DreamWorks series have streamed exclusively on Netflix, among them: *TurboFAST*, *All Hail King Julien*, *The Adventures of Puss in Boots*, *Dinotrux*, *Dawn of the Croods*, *Voltron: Legendary Defender*, *Spirit Riding Free*, and Guillermo del Toro's *Trollhunters*, the first in a trilogy of series the Oscar-winning director has created for the studio. DreamWorks has won 17 Emmy Awards in that time, and there are six more shows on the way this year to Netflix, and more for other outlets.

Cohn says the studio has 20 shows in production right now, and there's still room for more. "We have a limit," she says. "I don't think we've reached it quite yet. But we want to make sure

that we maintain our quality and that we're developing everything to be its best possible version of itself."

## NEW PRODUCTION DEMANDS

Producing animated series for streaming is slightly different from producing them for broadcast or cable. With Netflix dropping blocks of 13 episodes at a time, viewers can watch an entire season at any rate they want and without commercial interruption.

This more immersive experience lends itself to serialization and to more complex—and meaningful—storylines. Cohn cites as an example *Trollhunters*, del Toro's mythology-laden series set in the mystic town of Arcadia. "I think there's nothing like that on television for families now," she says. "It just kind of really re-invents what people are expecting from animated television. It's definitely more like reading a book series or enjoying a series of movies."

Developing content that meets that standard on a television-like budget

**"We want to make sure we're developing everything to be its best possible version of itself."**

**"Streaming gives the studio freedom to make the shows it wants to make."**

and schedule is daunting, Cohn says, but the studio's upcoming shows—a mix of originals and series based on features—demonstrate it can be done.

*The Boss Baby: Back in Business* dropped its first 13 episodes on April 6, following up on the hit feature with stories focused on the relationship between the titular character and his brother, Tim.

Executive producer Brandon Sawyer says producing for a streaming audience offered creative freedom in surprising and simple ways. For example, he says, the relationship between Tim and Boss Baby's assistant Staci changes from antagonistic to respectful after an episode in which they work together.

"We tried to track a lot of little things like that," he says. "If you were paying attention—or even if you weren't—you subconsciously felt this thing where these characters have an actual relationship with each other beyond just the story of the day."

For *The Epic Tales of Captain Underpants*, executive producer Peter Hastings says the 2D show is more inspired by Dav Pilkey's hugely successful book series than last year's animated feature. "The movie and the TV show are separate properties based on the same material," he says.

## CREATIVE FREEDOM

Streaming shows also are not beholden to advertisers in the same way, giving the studio freedom to make the shows it wants to make. "It's really changed the business and what can be made because it's not a finite schedule to be filled," Hastings says. "It's more about what we want to make, and what we want to see."

Blurring the line between original and revival is *Harvey Street Kids*, a comedy that stars Little Audrey, Little Dot and Little Lotta from the old Harvey Comics line as regular kids in a neighborhood that executive producer Brandon Hay describes as "the best place in the universe to grow up and be a kid."

"This show is unapologetically driven by three distinctly different girl characters," adds executive producer Aliki Theofilopoulos. "We were grateful that the studio wanted to do this. We've made really great stories with the characters, and it just so happens that the boys love it too."

Hay says his experience on *Harvey Street Kids* and *Dawn of the Croods* has been more fun than broadcast, where the stop-and-start nature of making a pilot, halting while it gets sold, and then going back into production can radically change the original nature of a show.

With a commitment to a certain number of episodes right from the start, "you get to learn a little more as you go," Theofilopoulos says. "On the one hand, there's the scary part, because you're trying to build a train while you're driving it. But the fun part is we also have that room to figure out things ourselves. We can try things with a character and find what works."

## EXPANDING UNIVERSE

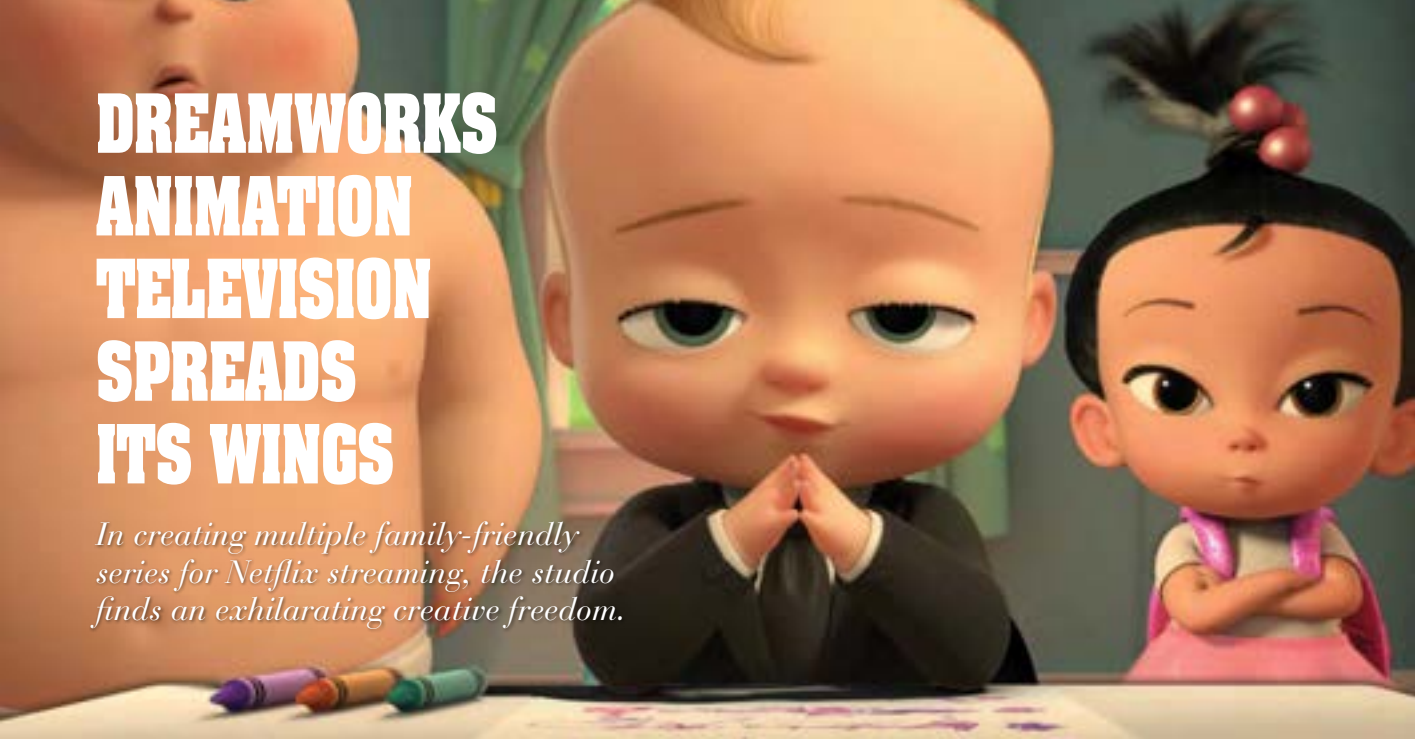
DreamWorks is also developing a *She-Ra* series for Netflix, reviving the 1980s girls' version of *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*, with Eisner-winning cartoonist and animator Noelle Stevenson at the helm. And *Fast & Furious*, based on the popular movie series produced by DreamWorks' new owner Universal Studios may be the first of many visits to that studio's vault.

"It will be family friendly, of course," says Cohn of the series. "We're going to push the envelope, but keep it more in line for a general audience."

With the streaming world still awaiting details of Disney's long-promised service, Cohn says she's not too worried about it, thanks in part to DreamWorks' shows being on multiple platforms. The studio has *The Adventures of Rocky & Bullwinkle* and *Kung Fu Panda: The Paws of Destiny* in the works for Amazon Prime Video, *Where's Waldo* for Universal Kids, and a *Mr. Magoo* series co-produced with Xilam for France 3 and CITV in the United Kingdom. And the studio just signed a huge deal with Hulu to produce original programs that will begin streaming in 2020.

"We're not exclusive to Netflix and we're expanding where we place our shows," she says. "There are very few people making quality animated series for kids and family, and we're one of the few untethered ones who are doing it—maybe the only untethered one. So we believe that there's going to be a lot of demand for our content."

Left: DreamWorks Animation Television President Margie Cohn.



THE BOSS BABY: BACK IN BUSINESS © 2018 DREAMWORKS ANIMATION TELEVISION



HARVEY STREET KIDS © 2018 DREAMWORKS ANIMATION TELEVISION



THE EPIC TALES OF CAPTAIN UNDERPANTS © 2018 DREAMWORKS ANIMATION TELEVISION





## WARNER BROS. ANIMATION RAMPS UP FOR THE STREAMING AGE

*WBA series VP Audrey Diehl reveals what she looks for in new talent and what gives a pitch that special spark.*

BY SCOTT LEHANE

Audrey Diehl, a 14-year veteran of Nickelodeon, joined the creative team at Warner Bros. Animation last summer as vice president, series, reporting directly to WBA president Sam Register. In this role, she shepherds new projects into development and fields pitches for new ideas, while looking for properties in the Warner Bros. collection with the potential for a reboot.

"When I started, I was thrown right into the deep end, working on the new *Animaniacs* reboot—helping them to staff up, find the right cast, and bracing some of our current clients, because obviously it's a very satirical show, so we're finding ways to talk about what's happening now," she says.

Slated for release in 2020 on Hulu's over-the-top (OTT) streaming service, the series is currently in pre-production on the first and second episodes. "We're just getting going, establishing the style, finding the voice and figuring out how we're going to honor the characters and make sure that it's as beautiful and as fun and as groundbreaking a show as it was when it came out in the 1990s."

The reboot was announced in January as part of a two-season, straight-to-series order that also brought the entire original series to Hulu's video-on-demand service. Steven Spielberg is returning as executive producer of the series.

Diehl is also currently developing a new animated series based on the Harley Quinn character from DC Comics' *Batman* for a new direct-to-consumer DC Comics streaming service slated to

launch later this year in partnership with Warner Bros. Digital Networks.

She explained that the show is targeted at adults, and they are planning "a completely different kind of show that I think isn't out there right now, especially in the superhero space. It's been really fun to push the character into a place where she can really be both a badass antihero, but also funny, and the heroine of her own story."

### A NEW GOLDEN AGE OF TELEVISION

The bustling studio currently has 17 series in production, with several new projects in the pipeline.

"It's a really exciting time in animation," says Diehl. "I think the content still has to be great, because the consumer is super-demanding and they have so many options. But I think the great thing about working at a place like Warner Bros. is that we can sell everywhere, and so we have the opportunity to make kids shows for Cartoon Network, and also make shows for Netflix and Hulu and for other digital platforms. It's an opportunity to do all kinds of different types of shows for all



different kinds of audiences." She added

that the proliferation of new streaming services and outlets "allows people to spread their wings in animation and show that animation isn't a genre, it's a tool."

As for the future, Diehl says, "We're really looking at making all different kinds of projects, and we're leaning extensively into our existing Warner Bros. library. And then, in addition, we are looking at original pitches, so I'm also building this small original slate that we're working on as well."

As we enter an era that some have called a new "Golden Age" of television, with new streaming services competing for content and talent cropping up on a weekly basis, Diehl says it's an especially exciting time in animation. "Twenty years ago, most of the animation was going for the kids networks, and now I think it's opening up so we can make animation for other audiences... but we want our content to break through, and show that animation can work for any genre and any audience. It's not just kids. It's not just families. It's not just college students. Which means that we need to make sure we're making things that are smart and interesting and engaging so that audiences will want to spend their time on them."

"Animation isn't a genre, it's a tool."





A new series based on the Harley Quinn character from DC Comics' Batman is part of a new streaming service slated to launch later this year.



#### THAT SPECIAL ELECTRICITY

Overall, she reported that the studio is looking for talented people and new ideas. "Jobs tend to shift around in animation and right now there are a lot of jobs here at Warner Bros. and we're interested in bringing in talent that wants to take a crack at the characters we have here."

Diehl explained that when it comes to hiring new talent, the most important thing she looks for is skills. But beyond that, "I'm looking for people who really connect with these characters. Maybe they fell in love with animation because of these characters and then built a career in it. I'm looking for that level of passion. And then I'm also looking for people who are inspired to try new things with Warner Bros. content and Warner Bros. characters."

"We all fell in love with Looney Toons and a lot of the Hanna-Barbera characters. Probably everyone who works in animation connected with them. So, we're hoping to bring in people who are really inspired to work with those characters and make something really special out of them in a way that's really going to break through and blow everybody away."

So what does she look for in a pitch?

"I think it's important to have a really interesting and specific point of view from the person pitching, whether it's a take on an existing Warner Bros. property or an original idea—just something that feels inspired by the person who wants to make it," she says. "That comes from their own unique perspective and has their own unique take on it. That's the thing that always gets me the most excited."

"Usually when people are expressing themselves in that way, there's an electricity to the pitch and a passion that's coming through from them that I feel could possibly translate to the screen. I think I can just tell when people are excited to be making a show and it makes them excited too."

**"P**robably everyone who works in animation fell in love with Looney Toons and the Hanna-Barbera characters."



Audrey Diehl, Warner Bros. Animation vice president, series.

ANIMATIONWorld Magazine





# CG GLOBAL ENTERTAINMENT OFFERS A TOTAL ANIMATION SOLUTION

*The Chinese media company integrates project financing, development, content production and distribution within China and throughout the world.*

**BY RUDY CHAN**

**CG GLOBAL ENTERTAINMENT LIMITED (CGGE)** is a Hong Kong-based holding company with offices in China and the United States, with partner studios throughout Asia. The company focuses on several areas:

**CONTENT CREATION – FROM IDEA TO SCREEN**

CGGE provides original IP creators with a total solution that include:

- Securing financing
- Story development
- Script development
- Pre-production
- Chain of titles and legal support
- Production and outsourcing partners
- Original music and scoring
- Production control
- Post-production

CGGE is currently investing in the CG animated feature film, *Dreamers*, to illustrate the company’s capabilities and commitment to developing and producing a movie project from start to finish. We encourage you to find out more by visiting CGGE at MIFA booth G401 at the Annecy International Animation Festival 2018.



**CONTENT DISTRIBUTION**

CGGE helps Chinese companies secure international distribution for their feature film and TV series projects. Content is trans-created into English and/or other languages from its original Chinese language version. In addition, CGGE can help foreign companies distribute their IPs in China and other Asian markets—CGGE will help foreign studios get the necessary Chinese government approval to distribute their shows on various theatrical, broadcast and digital platforms in China.



**360 IP DEVELOPMENT**

CGGE will help their clients tailor a 360 IP development strategy and execution plan that includes concept design, IP development, product manufacturing, licensing, merchandising, feature film and TV series production, games and VR/AR/360 Immersive experiences.



**CHILDREN’S CHARITIES**

CGGE is planning to partner with Hunan Zhangjiajie’s “Glass Bridge” in China, along with Haim Dotan, the bridge’s architect, to organize a charity concert, tentatively set for 2020, to benefit children’s charities around the world. As CGGE’s main business is providing entertainment for kids and families, there is no better way to show support for our world’s next generation than through this fundraising effort. A non-profit subsidiary with committed funding is being established to assist organizations that specialize in helping children all around the world. CGGE welcomes companies to join this effort to provide care and support for children in need across the globe.



*CGGE head Raymond D. Neoh (left) and architect Haim Dotan.*

**OUR VISION**

- Build a world-class global digital media platform
- Connect the best creative and technical people together through our digital platform Provide the best professional service for our global members
- Produce projects with teams of leading professionals from around the world
- Invest in education to nurture talent and train future industry leaders
- Continue Research & Development to push technology and creativity to new heights
- Create the environment and opportunity for the next generation to shape the future and change the world



# LET'S GET DIGITAL: A GLOBAL ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA ECOSYSTEM IS ON THE RISE

*CG Global Entertainment and Animation World Network are developing a global digital communications platform and membership program to connect the entertainment media world.*

BY RUDY CHAN

The CGGE-Global Digital Entertainment Media Platform's objectives are to support, educate, lead, guide and finance the growth of the global digital entertainment media industry. The CGGE global membership program is set to service educational institutions, industry organizations, production studios, students and individual professionals—as well as other related groups and individuals—across the globe. The platform will eventually be the hub of a global digital media ecosystem, so that members can find key resources they need for their creative projects and business development efforts. The platform will also provide online access to educational programs and vocational training materials for self-improvement and professional qualifications.

In addition, the platform will establish a development fund to support creativity, invest in productions, and sponsor scholarships for members. The platform also will organize and support professional conferences and events, including the Global Entertainment Media Industry Awards, and will establish a Digital Media Hall of Fame “to honor the past and present, and inspire the future.” As a part of this campaign, the platform will produce an online video series, “Who to Watch in Global Digital Entertainment Media,” starting this summer, to document the excellence of top industry professionals.



The CGGE-Global Digital Entertainment Media Platform is establishing regional networks to both bring regional content and information to the global community, as well as localize international content into different languages. The platform will feature and promote local digital media development and production in various native languages, together with English and Chinese versions, to link the two most important markets together. In 2018, the platform will launch a portal website that covers all of Southeast Asia, followed by regional site coverage in Korean and Japanese. In 2019, coverage will be extended into French, German, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese.

The CGGE global membership program services will include an extensive member information directory, recruitment services for both employers and job seekers, access to information on co-production development and financing opportunities, service work outsourcing, specialized educational pro-

grams, R&D projects, business financing and more.

The CGGE-Global Digital Entertainment Media Platform is also building a global digital media industry “big data” system for our members to access. The “Global Digital Media Industry Directory - China Edition 2018” has just been published, with a North and South America Edition, Europe Edition, and Global Edition—covering regions from Africa to Japan—set to follow in the coming years. The “Global Digital Media Industry Directory - China Edition 2018” provides access to more than 10,000 entertainment media studios, game developers, academic institutions and related organizations instantly. The directory is filled with insightful and pertinent information about the digital media industry in China, a valuable asset for anyone wanting to enter the Chinese entertainment media market.

Please see the “China Edition 2018 Directory” advertisement for full details.



# GOLDEN EGGPLANT MEDIA BRINGS CREATORS AND INVESTORS TOGETHER TO PRODUCE QUALITY ANIMATED PRODUCTS

*Company helps incubate properties, bringing together creative talent and financiers to produce content for international distribution.*

BY SOPHIA ZHU

Close to 200 professionals from the film, animation and media industries attended a unique conference at the Beijing International Film Festival this past

April 2018, exploring and discussing strategies for promoting the creative incubation of properties in China. Among the projects attracting the most attention were those presented by Golden Eggplant Media (Beijing) Co. Ltd.

Established by veterans of China's animation and film industries, Golden Eggplant Media is dedicated to incubating potential properties, as well as producing fine animated film and TV series for both domestic and international markets through collaboration with professional teams and financial partners.

“It is key to make the right match between the property and the team,” says Joan Ge, cofounder and CEO of the

company. “Discovering high potential properties is the first step; bringing in the right creative team with a professional director and producer to develop the property is the second. From there, we will present the properties with the team to film investors for production fundraising.”

Golden Eggplant Media acquires the rights to published books and online properties, as well as initiating projects through exclusive agent agreements or joint ventures with artists or writers. New properties currently in development include the feature films *Snack Kingdom*, *King of Lion Dance*, *Dragon Print*, *The Legend of Maya*, *Detective Panda* and *The Pianist in the Forest*, and the feature film/TV series *Little Mushroom Girl*.

Golden Eggplant Media is looking to collaborate with property owners, animation talent—including directors, animators, designer and writers—and investment agents and film funds from all over the world.

With its extensive connections to artists, producers, production studios, movie theater chains, and marketing and distribution partners in China, Golden Eggplant Media is committed to joining the ranks of the top creating, producing, marketing and distribution companies in China.

“It is key to make the right match between the property and the creative team.”





# AFTER 20 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE, ORIGINAL FORCE AWAKENS

CEO Harley Zhao continues to lead creative and technological achievement at China's largest and most acclaimed animation studio.



BY EMMA WU

Headquartered in Nanjing, the capital of six historical Chinese dynasties, leading animation studio and content creator Original Force was founded by CEO Harley Zhao, a super-fan of the *Star Wars* franchise. The company name is derived from the core concept of *Star Wars*—exploring and realizing one's own potential.

In 1999, Harley left his secure bank job and set up Original Force in a small office in the Nanjing Jinpeng Hotel, where his dream of animation first set sail. In 2001, Harley became an Autodesk Maya Certified Professional, taking on the additional role of mentor to animators at his young studio.

Before long, Original Force received RMB5 million of angel financing, which enabled Harley to acquire three animation companies in Beijing and Chengdu. Later, Original Force secured orders from renowned companies in China and beyond, including Microsoft Studios, EA, 2K, Tencent, Warner Bros., and The Third Floor, further expanding its business abroad.

At the end of 2010, Walden International, a well-known venture capital firm in the Asia-Pacific region, invested tens of millions of RMB into Original

Force, boosting the company for further development. One year later, Original Force was chosen over five world-famous animation studios to produce *Dragons: Riders of Berk*, a TV series spinoff of DreamWorks Animation's Oscar-nominated hit feature *How to Train Your Dragon*. The whole Chinese animation industry exploded with excitement at the news—it was the first time a Chinese animation studio became a major player in a world-class international project.

The DreamWorks Animation series proved to be a big success, scoring 8.4 out of 10 on the Chinese social networking service Douban. Two animators from Original Force were nominated for Annie Awards for “Outstanding Character Animation.” The whole industry marveled at Original Force's achievements, but the company set its goals towards even higher accomplishments.

That same year, Original Force created the CG teaser for Tencent's hit online game *Asura*, presenting magnificent fighting scenes with exquisite visual effects. *Asura* was a gaming milestone for Tencent, their most heavily invested game at the time. Combining archetypal Asian elements with Hollywood-caliber visual effects, the *Asura* trailer was the very first Chinese commercial animation selected for SIGGRAPH's Electronic Theatre. This caused quite a

stir in the animation industry, with one media outlet even reporting, “This is the best presentation of Journey to the West ever!”

Original Force later participated in the production of *Monster Hunt*, a 2015 Chinese box office smash hit. The studio created the thrilling scenes of a human vs. monster war at the beginning of the film, together with a series of amazing panoramic views of villages and mountains. Original Force also took part in the 2D drafting of some monsters, and the shaping of the main animated characters Huba, Pang Ying, and Zhu Gao, which were adored by the audience.

In 2016, Original Force participated in the production of the UAE film *Bilal*, the first CG feature from the Middle East that later earned an Oscar nomination for Best Animated Feature. From layout to final rendering and compositing, Original Force produced the scenes of the hero's final revenge

“The whole industry marveled at Original Force's achievements, but the company set its goals towards even higher accomplishments.”

against the villain.

In the same year, Original Force was selected as the exclusive CG creator of Guo Jingming's *L.O.R.D: Legend of Ravaging Dynasties*. As the very first CG/live-action film in China, *L.O.R.D.* began a new chapter in the studio's development. With only a little over a year to finish the production, Original Force put nearly 500 artists on the project, providing a strong support for the industrialization and sustainable development of the animation industry.

In August 2017, Original Force's very first original 3D animated family film *Duck Duck Goose* was screened at the Cannes Film Festival and scored the highest overseas sales among Chinese animation films, restoring the confidence of China's animation industry. On March 9, 2018, *Duck Duck Goose* was released in China and received praise from audiences of all ages.

So far in 2018, Original Force has worked on *Monster Hunt II*, completing 30% of the film's CG shots, including multiple sequences that successfully present the performance of Huba and Benben, the two main CG characters, making robust contributions to the visual effects of the film.

After continually sharpening its professional competence over two decades, Original Force is now renowned in the industry. With more than 1,200 artists, including senior animators who have worked at world-famous animation studios like Disney and Pixar, Original Force has grown into an ecosystem that integrates IP development, project investment, content innovation, R&D, IP licensing, and talent training.



awn.com

“The reason that Original Force can spend 20 years realizing a dream is that we are extremely patient in developing talent.”

Equipped with a complete industrialized production pipeline, Original Force has forged long-term relationships with studios like DreamWorks, Sony, The Third Floor and Lion Stage in its core business, feature animation production. So far, Original Force has set up independent subsidiaries in Beijing, Chengdu, and Wuhan, as well as in the U.S. and Thailand.

Building momentum from past achievements, Original Force keeps moving forward, an innovator with global, ecological, industrial and technological perspectives.

Industrialized animation production requires efficient pipeline and technical management. Original Force's artistic team works to ensure that intensive tasks are completed on schedule through industrialized management. To ensure pipeline efficiency, Original Force has set up the Pipeline Development Department to develop and improve pipeline management systems suitable for industrialized production.

Knowing that all its efforts depend upon people, Original Force has spent considerable energy and resources on talent training, which plays a key role in the company's success. Harley Zhao believes that the biggest problem facing the animation industry is not the lack of talent, but the lack of patience to develop talent. He says, “The reason that Original Force can spend 20 years realizing a dream is that we are extremely patient in developing talent, which can hardly be done by others.”

High-quality CG output requires not only industrialized production, but also advanced technologies. For many years, Original Force has devoted considerable resources to technological research. In 2015, together with Nanjing University, Original Force set up an Ultra-Realistic 3D Body Scanning Laboratory, one of the few laboratories jointly established by private enterprise and academia for



studying the application of 3D technology in animated films, TV shows, games, and VR. Ultra-realistic 360° scanning technology, which can capture even a pore in detail, has been applied to the production of several of Original Force's projects. In 2017, Original Force was authorized to develop Avatar motion capture technology in Asia, and began research on Ncam real-time technology. Artists were sent to Beijing and Shanghai to investigate possibilities for VR photography technology R&D. After many days working around the clock, the team finally overcome significant technological barriers and found a solution for the application of the new technology, perfectly incorporating real-time live action into the visual world of Unreal Engine 4.

Through industrialized production reform and technological research, Original Force has been striving to transform itself from an animation producer into an international content creator. In the future, Original Force will stick to the production of high-quality original animation and entertainment content and strive to continue in its role as an industry leader. With animation, Original Force is always serious! 🎬







# **DRAGON MONSTER BRINGS TRADITIONAL CHINESE CULTURE TO SCHOOLCHILDREN**

BY SOPHIA ZHU

With the support of a series of recent government policies, an increasing number of animations featuring themes and stories based on traditional Chinese culture are being developed in China. *Dragon Monster*, an animated TV series by Xanthus Media Shanghai, is among the best and most influential of those targeting schoolchildren. *Dragon Monster* has become a key project supported by the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT) and it will be introduced to the Middle East and North Africa through China's One Belt and One Road Initiative within two years. Xanthus Media Shanghai is also actively seeking opportunities

to distribute *Dragon Monster* in other regions around the world. With the ever-increasing Chinese cultural influence on the international stage, *Dragon Monster* provides a great opportunity for increased distribution across Europe, America and Asia-Pacific regions. The series targets children 6-9 years old and integrates Chinese totem culture—the divine dragons, *qilins*, phoenixes, tortoises and other sacred animals from the traditional Chinese text *The Classic of Mountains and Rivers*. *Dragon Monster* tells the story of these sacred animals from heaven entering the human world, meeting destined little friends, and running for the totem. *Dragon Monster* has been described as a Chinese version of the Japanese Digimon. First broadcast on CCTV-14 in prime time on Feb 26, 2018, *Dragon Monster* was ranked in the top 10 among

national animation programs during the period of Spring Festival and winter vacation in China. It has been broadcast on over 20 key Chinese TV channels and viewed on mainstream video websites including Tencent, Youku, Sohu, Wasu TV and Mango TV over 300 million times. Distributor SpaceToon Kids TV is also promoting localized versions of *Dragon Monster* in the Middle East and North Africa. *Dragon Monster* is especially popular among young children and their parents. The animation style, which

**“Dragon Monster centers on daily life, which inspires children about how to think and solve problems.”**

includes Chinese elements, educational storylines and interesting intonations and dialogue, has helped schoolchildren learn about traditional Chinese cultural values—as well as develop good manners and behavior—in a pleasant way. Last year, AWN had a chance to interview Mr. Liu Chang, the creator of *Dragon Monster*, who shared his experiences working on the project.

**AWN China:** How do you assess the world's IP market for children's content?

**Liu Chang:** Disney, once called the “children's IP empire,” has gradually become an entertainment empire covering all ages with its series of Pixar and Marvel hero IPs. Currently, Disney has a strong IP industrial chain supported by five businesses: media networks, theme parks, studio entertainment, consumer goods and interactive media. However, with the increasing global export of Chinese culture, we believe more and more original Chinese children IPs will have success in international markets in the coming years.

**AWN China:** Can you share with us the most satisfying part of *Dragon Monster's* successful launch this past year?

**LC:** Since the animation launched, more and more parents and children have expressed their love of *Dragon Monster* on WeChat and Weibo and what they hope to see in Season 2. That made me realize *Dragon Monster* is not just an

animated property—it really has had a positive impact on families. What makes me proud is that various partners have since come to us for consumer products and themed experience licensing rights. *Dragon Monster* has truly become a part of children's and their parents' everyday life. Kids can watch *Dragon Monster*, wear the branded clothes, play with the dolls and games, and stay in themed rooms during travel.

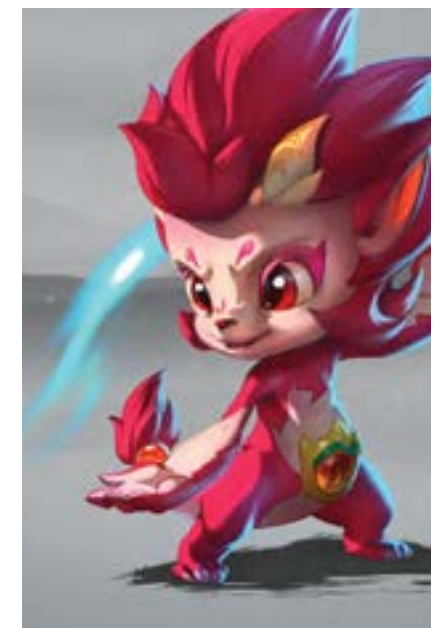
**AWN China:** Because it includes many traditional Chinese elements, do you have any trouble with the distribution of *Dragon Monster* overseas?

**LC:** We haven't encountered any cultural issues yet. The storyline of *Dragon Monster* centers on daily life, which inspires children about how to think and solve problems. It also helps them establish a positive world view, concept and value of life. Like the idea of “justice” central to Marvel heroes and *The Monkey King*, these are common values around the world. The concepts of family, friendship and faith that *Dragon Monster* promotes are also universal.

**AWN China:** What's the next step for *Dragon Monster*?

**LC:** Frankly speaking, it is not yet time for full commercial development and consumer product licensing of *Dragon Monster*. Our most important task now is to further promote the distribution and cooperation of the show on other

TV channels in China and other regions around the world. The production of Season 2 has been completed and is ready for distribution. We are hoping to work with local agents from various countries for the overseas market.



**“The concepts of family, friendship and faith that Dragon Monster promotes are universal.”**







## DREAMERS STUDIO

# TAKES AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO ANIMATED MOVIE MARKETING, MERCHANDISING AND DISTRIBUTION

*The company specializes in real-time, data-driven promotion based on audience choices tracked in China's largest theatrical ticketing system.*

BY YANG JUNJIE

**D**reamers Studio, owned by Weiyang Technology, is committed to developing the value of animation and comic movie properties through excellence in innovation. Since it began, Dreamers Studio has specialized in developing domestic and foreign animation movie projects, providing project investment, development, production, promotion and distribution, as well as merchandising, game production, stage shows and theme park licensing.

The company has been involved in many famous animated films—including *Boruto: Naruto The Movie*, *A Silent Voice*, *Kunta: The Floating Planet*, *Tofu*, *The Wind Guardians* and *Dinofroz*—in roles ranging from copyright invest-

ment, marketing and promotion, and distribution in China, to copyright trading within and outside of China. Using an Internet integration strategy, the studio has helped companies establish their brands and increase company value.

Dreamers Studio has three teams working on animation development, each specializing in Chinese, European/American and Japanese animation, respectively. They are widely recognized by the industry thanks to their thorough understanding of the Chinese market, customized marketing strategies for targeted audiences, and outstanding production capabilities.

The company selects the best animation projects from around the world to invest in and help secure financing, then helps local and foreign animation companies with fund management. To secure the best promotion results,

Dreamers Studio uses extensive data analysis to bring the most effective and precise approach to the target audience, maximizing marketing performance for every animation movie.

Since Dreamers Studio is a part of Weiyang Technology, which owns China's biggest online ticketing platform, they can provide a one-stop experience for users that integrates content promotion, ticket sales and merchandising.

The studio's marketing arm teams with a wide array of media partners, including mainstream websites, variety shows, newspapers, TV, magazines and professional journals. They have resources covering 318 cities in China—29 first-tier cities, 48 second-tier cities, 137 third-tier cities and 104 fourth-tier cities. They own thousands of class A media resources and are always one step ahead of the competition.

Their marketing department has been doing crossover marketing for numerous animation projects; the teams comprehensively integrate rich and diversified channels and customize marketing plans using multi-dimensional communications to promote animation movies.

The studio also has vast experience in working with new media, including numerous apps with millions of users, over ten thousand KOLs, and web celebrities with Chinese fan bases in the millions. Dreamers Studio fully mastered hundreds of famous public accounts on WeChat and Weibo. Through long-term training and preparation, they can now directly approach and influence millions of netizens, effectively promoting and marketing animation movies even when they are still in production.

Dreamers Studio customizes marketing and promotion strategies for all of its clients. Depending on the target audience, the company employs different media with highly focused messages to ensure maximum brand exposure. Based on accurate, real-time age and gender data collected from theatre screenings, they analyze different platforms and, if necessary, will adjust the execution and increase effort and exposure to underperforming segments to make sure maximum results are achieved.

Dreamers Studio will continue to contribute to the development of China's animation industry, expanding cooperation on Chinese and international animation projects, and hopes to create more and more popular IPs and content with all parties in the future. 🍀



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DREAMERS STUDIO







# SILKROAD PROVIDES INTEGRATED VISUAL SERVICES FOR A BOOMING INDUSTRY



*The China-based technology company is a one-stop shop for all things CG*

## BY RUDY CHAN

**S**ilkroad Visual Technology Co., Ltd, a digital services provider based in Shenzhen, China, specializes in CG applications, using state-of-the-art computer graphics technology to produce innovative visual designs and other creative properties. Established in 2000, Silkroad combines technical strength with forward-thinking creative design capability, providing its customers with a wide variety of integrated digital visual services in architecture, design, exhibition hall design, advertising, animation, games, movies, sports, entertainment events, and related areas.

Today, Silkroad, which was the first visual technology company to be listed on the Chinese stock market, employs more than 1,700 employees across the country. The company's services are based on years of expertise in various areas of visual technology, and Silkroad is rapidly becoming a global player in the field of digital visual technology and its applications.



### ANIMATION AND DYNAMIC VISUAL SERVICES

Silkroad employs CG technology to help clients realize their creative vision through animation, dynamic visual effects, and related digital applications. Primarily, they provide services for movies, commercials, and multimedia exhibition and display projects that promote clients' work and services. Their multimedia projects incorporate a wide variety of technologies—including holographic imaging, phantom imaging, air imaging, interactive touch,

somatosensory technology, and virtual/augmented reality—to construct highly artistic and personalized display scenes with a strong experiential component. These projects are often combined with scenery and various forms of performance and stage machinery to create a more powerful and immersive viewer experience.

A recent project was an animation for the National Museum of China based on the famous series of paintings "The Qianlong Emperor's Southern Inspection Tour."



### VR/AR

With its extensive strength in VR/AR technology, Silkroad has created a multiplayer VR system, "Silkroad Environment 1.0," for their real estate clients. This system can create a virtual sand table, city planning tour, sand table tour, mock-up flat, IMAX cinema, conference room, etc. Based on their clients' needs, they can set up customized parameters to offer them an immersive experience of moving between the different rooms.



### RENDERING

In cooperation with Alibaba, Silkroad has developed a global cloud rendering service platform and has quickly become a leader in global cloud computing and cluster rendering in China. The company has clients from over 50 countries and regions, including a number of Oscar-winning studios. Silkroad has provide rendering services for Chinese mega-hits, including *Wolf Warriors II* and *Monkey King: Hero Is Back*.

### SILKROAD VISUAL MASTER CONFERENCE

The company also organizes an international technology conference, the Silkroad Visual Master Conference and Visual Creative Competition, now in its fourth season. Attendees include academics and professionals from a wide range of creative industries, including Pixar artists, SIGGRAPH creative producers, Autodesk Research scientists, creative directors from leading Korean digital content studios, senior executives from top Chinese creative studios, and leading university professors. The conference aims to introduce state-of-the-art visual technology and artistic practice to local Chinese markets to help companies raise their capabilities and expertise to world-class standards. In addition, Silkroad hopes to build an interactive communication platform for visual-technology industry professionals in China and abroad, as well as help promote local Chinese companies globally.







## YOUR CHINESE MEDIA PRODUCTION PARTNER



Guandong Winsing Company Limited has been specializing in 3D animation production, program distribution, merchandising and brand marketing since 2003. As a major children's entertainment and educational content provider, WinSing has been involved with animated films and TV series, live shows, indoor theme parks, and product merchandising.

Having created a raft of well-known animation characters represented by GG Bond, WinSing has successfully built a rich library that comprises more than 20,000 minutes of original work, winning a number of awards for their outstanding quality. With the corporate philosophy, "Colorful Animation, Wonderful Life," WinSing devotes itself to providing the best cultural content and products for families and strives to be the best in this field.

### THE AWAKENING

**CG feature animation—  
seeking co-production partner  
for global distribution**

In ancient China, there are beasts hidden inside the Earth which have not been conscious for hundreds of millions of years. With the accidental triggering of a curse, the beasts have been awakened and the Earth thrown into chaos. Clued into a conspiracy to awaken the beasts, our hero gathers talented youngsters from all around the planet to help fight against evil and thwart this horrific plot.

### THEME PARK

With the theme of "GG Bond," Party Map is a comprehensive IP theme park specially designed by WinSing's engineers. Based on WinSing's animation assets, Party Map has integrated with more than 60 growth entertainment projects, including theme parties, parent-child stage interactions, and training programs for children's drama performances and other events.



### LICENSING PRODUCTS

Collaborated with hundreds of well-known domestic and international enterprises, WinSing has licensed merchandise in 50+ industries, including toys, home supplies, daily chemicals, etc. The products are well received both at home and abroad, with annual revenue in excess of US\$45,000,000.



Visit WinSing at Mifa booth 4B06.

For more information, contact Zhibin Gu at [zhibin\\_gu@winsing.net](mailto:zhibin_gu@winsing.net).

### WINSING LIVE SHOW

Launched in 2014 by WinSing Performance, WinSing Theatrical is a parent-child theater focusing on parent-child live shows. Taking children's live shows as the core, WinSing Theatrical is the first in China to build an animation entertainment ecosystem centering on WinSing's animation brands.

### THE LION LEARNS TO LION DANCE

**CG feature animation—  
seeking co-production partner  
for global distribution**

Big Star is a lion who lives comfortably in the zoo, but his heart is suffering because he likes to dance. The other lions ignore him or laugh at him. However, the festive lion dance held in the zoo offers an opportunity to rekindle his confidence in himself. He feels that learning the lion dance is a new way to realize his dream. In his journey to become the lion dance champion, he learns about friendship, humiliation and hard work. The Lion Learns to Lion Dance is a heartwarming coming-of-age comedy/adventure story for the whole family to enjoy.





# Kre8tif! 2018: A ONE-OF-A-KIND FESTIVAL IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

*The annual event in Cyberjaya, Malaysia features conferences, a business exchange, a multimedia festival, and more.*

BY RUDY CHAN

To help develop the creative content industry in Malaysia, the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) has organized Kre8tif!, an event that aims to spark innovation and exploration of major trends across the creative sector. Taking place August 6-12, 2018 in Cyberjaya, Selangor, Kre8tif! will include conferences focused on key areas in creative industries, business networking between local and international companies, pitching and matching, exhibitions of new technologies and IPs, hands-on VR/AR and 3D printing experiences, screenings of movies and shorts from all over the world, music concerts, talk shows and more.

**Kre8tif CONFERENCE** is a gathering of leading minds in animation, licensing & merchandising, visual effects, and digital technology programmed into business and technical tracks. The conference will offer the following:

- Knowledge sharing in creative content-related business and technical tracks
- Interactive panel sessions sharing experiences and views from industry leaders
- Meetings between international, regional and local industry players
- Business matching sessions with international buyers
- Vibrant networking events across the Kre8tif! Content Festival

Animation developers, animators, visual effects artists and designers, licensors and licensees, broadcasters and students from all parts of the world will gather together to share and showcase their work and bring out new ideas to inspire others.

# kre8tif!



**Kre8tif! BUSINESS XCHANGE** is an ideal platform for creative companies looking to dramatically impact the industry and the world. This session is a networking and value-creation platform designed to help business leaders expand their businesses to the next level. It brings together international, regional and local buyers of the industry to exchange thought leadership, business insights and trends.

**Kre8tif! XHIBITION** is open to all creative and technology companies to showcase their IPs, current hardware, software and services to Kre8tif! delegates and the public. With its strong Kre8tif! branding, the Xhibition is an ideal venue for companies to reach out to existing and new customers. It is also a place where creative companies are able to meet with hundreds of job seekers from around Malaysia.

**Kre8tif! ENTERTAINMENT XPERIENCE** is being introduced for the first time this year. This exciting new segment encourages attendees to observe and interact with the latest applications from mobile VR to haptic technologies, 3D printing, and immersive realities.



**“K**re8tif! aims to spark innovation and exploration across the creative sector.”

**Kre8tif! SHORTS SCREENING** is a showcase of the year's best works from students and professionals from all over the world. This screening provides attendees with an in-depth exploration of the world of animation, visual effects, and scientific visualization.

**Kre8tif! CONTENT FESTIVAL** celebrates creative technology, art and design, and music by bringing together creative studios, professionals, artists, and students—as well as communities—to share and shape experiences that educate, challenge and inspire.

The festival's programs and activities include:

- Screenings of Local and International Features
- Mascots and Celebrity Appearances
- Talk Shows
- Community Booths
- Food Trucks
- Concert



**Kre8tif! @ SCHOOL** is an animation program that enables students to develop artistic skills that can lead to college admissions and lucrative careers using the industry ICT tools. It is a two-day intensive hands-on animation workshop targeted at secondary school students. Upon completion, all participating students will be invited to submit their animation clips of not less than 30 seconds to the Kre8tif! Young Animator Competition. The top four will be showcased at Kre8tif!.

Finally, if you want to get animated physically, you can join the **Kre8tif! COSTUME FUN RUN** on Aug 4. This exciting event is aimed at encouraging people of all ages and backgrounds to improve their mental and physical health through running and exercise. No ordinary run, the Costume Fun Run is designed to appeal to pop culture fans and health enthusiasts alike, allowing participants to enjoy a scenic run, while showing off their best costumes. The Kre8tif! Costume Fun Run is open to everyone aged 7 to 60. 🏃‍♂️







# GIGGLES FROM ASIA

Malaysia’s Giggle Garage Animations brings creativity, passion and fun to kids and family entertainment.



BY RUDY CHAN

With a name like “Giggle Garage”, the mission of this Malaysian animation company is fairly self-evident—to bring laughs and fun to kids around the world. Established in 2010, Giggle Garage Animations creates original character brands and high-quality animated content for children and families. The studio has created more than 60 hours of content for television and digital platforms, with global partners including BBC Kids, ABC Australia, Netflix, Media Prima, Astro Malaysia, SK and EBS Korea. Giggle Garage also provides CGI animation services, post-production, VFX, and content commissioning for multiple digital platforms. The company was named “Most Admired Animation Company in Malaysia” by Top10 Asia Media in 2014.

“At Giggle Garage, we believe that we can help people to have more fun and to feel good,” says Zeno Gabing, executive director and co-founder of Giggle Garage Animations. “We use our creativity and passion to create beautiful CGI animated content, so we can continue entertaining you.”

Original CGI projects produced by Giggle Garage include the preschool TV series *Origanimals*. The show was completed entirely by the studio with financial support from Malaysia’s Ministry of Finance. In 2016, *Origanimals* won the Grand Prize for Best 3D Animation in Television Programming at the Asian Television Awards. Currently, the show is available in more than 100 countries and the company is actively seeking licensing partners to further develop and expand the *Origanimals* brand.



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Giggle Garage has also proven to be one of the most reliable and cost-effective partners for co-producing television series. Recent successful co-productions include *Kazoops*, *Cam & Leon*, produced with Astro Malaysia, and *Boing the Play Ranger*, produced with Crazy Bird Studios, SK Broadband and EBS from South Korea. *Kazoops* is a top rated Australian show launched on Cbeebies in the UK and Kids ABC in Australia in July 2016, and subsequently streamed to the rest of the world on Netflix in over 18 languages. Consumer products and publishing launched in Australia and the UK in late 2017.



In April 2018, the studio partnered with Primeworks Studio to develop *Fridgies*, a slapstick, non-dialogue comedy series featuring refrigerator magnet characters. Giggle Garage is also developing a new preschool show called *Salad Bunnies*, in which a group of special bunnies use their inherent strengths—their *salad power*—to help the residents of Sunnyville. Salad power encompasses special abilities gained from consuming vegetables and fruits, including enhanced vision and brain performance, speed and agility, strength and endurance, and a healthy heart.

Giggle Garage will be bringing *Fridgies* and *Salad Bunnies* to Mifa/Annecy 2018 for meetings with interested co-producing partners, distributors and investors.



# BEAST HAUNTING

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Now seeking globe  
Co-production partner  
Artist & Talents  
Contact: [info@bigbigsun.com](mailto:info@bigbigsun.com)  
Meet us at Annecy MIFA  
Booth [4.G01]

大千世界  
BIGBIGSUN

## INTRODUCING THE GLOBAL DIGITAL MEDIA INDUSTRY DIRECTORY CHINA EDITION 2018

*In both English and Chinese*

Today, China is one of the most important markets for the global digital media industry. China is also the fastest growing market in the world for the consumption of digital media, whether animations, games, VR/AR, streaming media, comic books or related content. In 2017, the Chinese animation market size was estimated to be US\$25 billion dollars and is expected to reach US\$36 billion annually within the next 3 years.

With more than 200 million people under the age of 24, the Chinese market for digital media consumption will soon be the biggest in the world.

China has more than several hundred thousand companies involved in the so-called "Culture Industry." Many are inactive or not involved in the digital media industry. The Global Digital Media Industry Directory China Edition 2018 gives you instant access to more than 3,000 significant and important companies including animation studios, game developers, academic institutions and related organizations in China. These companies are all genuine and active in the industry. They are looking for co-production partners, service work outside China, and international businesses looking to expand into China.

The Global Digital Media Industry Directory China Edition 2018 is more than just an industry directory. It is also an up-to-date industry report, full of insightful and helpful information about the Chinese media industry, covering government policies, China's relationship and perspective on the digital media world, and creative development efforts in animation, games, interactive and peripheral sectors. It also features detailed digital media sector assessments and analysis, touching on the difficulties the industry is facing, sectors expecting the greatest amount of growth, and what shape that growth is expected to take. One chapter is dedicated to each covered sector.

The objectives of this directory are to help our industry decipher and better understand China's digital media industry and the government's role in its oversight.



### How This Directory Will Benefit You!

If you want to develop a mobile game, have an idea about creating an animation series, or are looking for Chinese partners that can co-develop technology and products with your company, this directory is made for you.

If you are new to China's digital media industry, the Global Media Industry Directory will provide comprehensive information about what to do and what to avoid in China. If you are already seasoned in China's media industry, you will find the directory an up to date resource to find new production partners or developers inside China.

Whether you are from China, or want to start your business in China, this directory is for you.

The directory is being published in both English and Chinese and will be available on a USB thumb drive at the CGGE MIFA Booth 4G01. Or, order online at [www.CGGE.media](http://www.CGGE.media).



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