

FANTOCHE

INTERNATIONALES FESTIVAL FÜR ANIMATIONSFILM
BADEN/SCHWEIZ

PRESS FILE ON THE START OF PRE-SALES FANTOCHE 2026

24th International Animation Film Festival
1 – 6 September 2026 in Baden, Switzerland
www.fantoche.ch

Baden, 11 August 2026

CONTENTS:

Pages 2 to 4: Press release on the start of pre-sales
Pages 5 to 7: List of feature films shown at the festival, with short synopses
Page 8: Important information for media professionals

FANTOCHE

Press release
Baden, 11 August 2026

Fantoche 2026: Start of pre-sales & press file

In 20 days, the 24th Fantoche will kick off with a film programme and supporting events on the theme of “Calling Planet Earth” and a focus on the impressive 90-year history of animated film in Egypt. Audiences for the family programme can look forward to a world premiere, while those attending the feature films can enjoy an exciting and diverse film experience, alongside some Swiss premieres. In the new “Artists’ Coffee & Cake” format, festival visitors can chat to directors of this year’s feature films.

Opening film “Light Pillar”

Following its world premiere at this year’s Berlinale and numerous festival screenings, the feature film debut of Chinese director Xu Zao has also impressed the Fantoche programming team. Set in the near future, “Light Pillar” tells the story of caretaker Zha, who, alone with his cat, tends to an abandoned film studio and the fading dreams for his life. In a surprising mix of live action, digital imagery and animation, a melancholic reflection on loneliness, virtual reality and the decline of cinema unfolds.

Feature films

18 feature films from five continents cover the entire wonderful spectrum of animated feature films. “**Allah n’est pas obligé**” follows ten-year-old child soldier Birahima through the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, where the child’s perspective, the irony and the power of animation create a sense of distance from the horror. The adaptation of the novel of the same name by Ivorian author Ahmadou Kourouma will also be presented in a **Making-of session** with director Zaven Najjar. Fantoche will also host the Swiss premiere of the DreamWorks production “**Forgotten Island**”! The film is set in the Philippines in the 1990s and follows two girls who dream of a mythical island. Years later, when they become stranded in the place they once dreamed of, their friendship is put to the test. Directing duo Joel Crawford and Januel Mercado (“Puss in Boots: The Last Wish”) place the emotional power of shared memories at the heart of the story. Japanese filmmaker Kohei Kadowaki’s “**We are Aliens**” is also about friendship. It is a classic coming-of-age story of two boys who couldn’t be more different, but who still grow closer together and apart again due to challenging living conditions. In “**Jim Queen**”, a gay influencer becomes increasingly heterosexual due to a mysterious viral infection, with some hilarious consequences. “**Blaise**” is another film that ranges from humorous to tragicomic. Its introverted young protagonist is forced to watch his parents air their own problems in front of his school psychologist. “Blaise” is based on the comic series of the same name, which creator and director Dimitri Planchon produced as a series for ARTE back in 2016. The list of all feature films and a short synopsis of each can be found starting on page 5.

FANTOCHE

NEW – Artists' Coffee & Cake: This year, industry experts and film enthusiasts will have the opportunity to put their questions to invited feature film directors during the new "Artists' Coffee & Cake" series moderated by Olivier Samter.

Competitions

77 short films will compete in the International Competition, Swiss Competition and Kids Film Competition. This year, the "Best Film" in the International Competition will also qualify for participation in the Academy Awards® (Oscars). Switzerland is also taking part in the International Competition with "Nonna Lucia" by Marcel Barelli from Ticino. The complete list of the selection can be found [here](#).

As of this year, Fantoche is an Annie Awards Qualifying Festival. This means that the winners of the "Best Swiss" and "Best International" prizes can compete for the **Annie Award** without having to pay a fee. The prize, awarded by ASIFA-Hollywood, is regarded as the "Oscars of the animation industry".

World premiere: "Nussbaumbandi"

It has been more than a decade since Switzerland produced a series of animated films. "Nussbaumbandi" was based on an idea by Hynek Bureš and produced by Dschoint Ventschr in collaboration with Swiss Television SRF. Before the animal gang makes its appearance as a bedtime story on Swiss television, they will be gracing Fantoche with the world premiere of all 26 episodes.

"Calling Planet Earth"

This year's festival focus programme was curated by Maja Gehrig and explores the relationship between humans and nature, asking itself which of the two actually needs to be saved. The two short film programmes "98,856 Frames of Bonding", which celebrates the beauty of the human bond with nature, and the rather dystopian "105,600 Frames of Splitting", illuminate this fragile balance.

The two thematic feature films "Dandelion's Odyssey" (2025) and "Pom Poko" (1994) explore what it means when the natural foundations of life are lost – the former through a sensory approach and entirely without dialogue and the latter through playful humour and satire.

There will be no 08/15 Talk this year on the focus theme: before the participants join moderator Simon Spiegel in a discussion on "Rethinking Nature, Narrative and Responsibility", they will kick off the session with short introductory remarks. The discussion will be joined by, among others, Geena Gasser, whose film "Banana Soup" received the Trickstar Nature Award at the Stuttgart International Festival of Animated Film, and Seraina Gabathuler, certified Green Consultant and member of the Sustainability Working Group of the Zürcher Filmstiftung.

Country focus Egypt:

Few industry experts know that Egypt's animated film industry can look back on 90 years of history, starting with the Frenkel Brothers, who created "Mish Mish Effendi", the first cartoon hero of the Arab world in 1936. Two short film programmes are dedicated on the one hand to the pioneers of Egyptian animated film and on the other to contemporary filmmakers. As part of a retrospective on director Ihab Shaker, the versions of his films restored by the Egyptian Cinémathèque will have their world premiere at Fantoche. The subsequent talk "Animated Films on the Egyptian Scene" will take place in collaboration with the Arab Film Festival Zurich and its Animation Lab.

FANTOCHE

For industry professionals:

“Hope is a word with 24 fps”: with the motto of its 12th Industry Day, Fantoche offers a counterpoint to crises, wars and AI. The **Artist Talk** with renowned British director **Joanna Quinn** (“Affairs of the Art”) is particularly noteworthy in the established programme lineup, which consists of talks, workshops and opportunities for professional networking. The festival also offers opportunities for professional immersion and networking aside from Industry Day, including the **FOCAL workshop** on “Producing Low-Budget Feature Films in Europe” and four **Meet the Artists sessions** with Cheng-Hsu Chung (“Adorable”), Sarah Cox (Aardman Animation), Joanna Quinn (“Affairs of the Art”) and Momoko Seto (“Dandelion’s Odyssey”). As every year, Fantoche will also feature a “Find a Producer” event. This year’s **retrospective** is dedicated to Swiss director **Isabelle Favez**.

Art, fun & games and ... a tattoo?

Once again, Fantoche is dedicating a special focus to game design – for example with the newcomer platform for young game designers “Game Pop-up”, a workshop jointly hosted by Lucerne School of Art and Design and Zurich University of the Arts, and, for the fifth time, the exhibition in collaboration with Zurich University of the Arts entitled “REFRESH x Fantoche”.

And when you’ve had your fill of watching, talking, analysing and networking, there is a wide programme of supporting events on offer, from quizzes and karaoke to taking a dip in a thermal bath or even getting a spontaneous tattoo: Basel-based illustrator and tattoo artist Bianca Caderas, known for her bizarre, quirky and always adorable little characters, will be on hand at Fantoche with her ink and tools. Register via Instagram [@hometownglory_tattoos](#), or, with a bit of luck, grab a slot on site.

Inclusion

Accessibility and inclusion are key priorities for Fantoche. The inclusion measures will be expanded further this year. Among them will be a relaxed screening of the “Festival Gems” panorama programme, which offers a kind of “best of” of this year’s festival favourites.

For questions about this press release: Karin Dehmer, media@fantoche.ch, +41 78 857 44 75.

FANTOCHE

FEATURE FILMS 2026

Allah n'est pas obligé (2025)

In search of his aunt, ten-year-old child soldier Birahima becomes caught up in the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. With unsentimental sympathy and a keen sense of the power of words, **Zaven Najjar adapts the award-winning novel by Ivorian Ahmadou Kourouma**, balancing brutality and black humour.

Decorado (2025)

The unemployed Arnold increasingly feels that he is living on a theatre set. Inspired by his short film of the same name, **Alberto Velázquez** lets his quirky and emotionally broken animal characters grapple with the question of whether and how it is possible to escape from a surveillance-capitalist construct of reality.

Light Pillar (2026)

In the near future, caretaker Zha and his cat tend to an abandoned film studio. When not working, he dives deeper and deeper into virtual reality. Balancing laconic humour and shaky live action, Zao Xu's feature debut tells a tale of loneliness and unfulfilled desires. Swiss premiere.

All You Need Is Kill (2025)

During an alien invasion, Rita enters into a time loop that feels like a computer game. In contrast to the live action version of the **Japanese science fiction novel** starring **Tom Cruise (The Edge of Tomorrow)**, the anime version of "All You Need Is Kill" focuses on the female protagonist and captivates viewers with its expressive aesthetics and bright colours.

Born in the Jungle (2026)

Nine-year-old Elisabeth would rather spend the summer in the city. But when her little brother disappears into the Venezuelan rainforest, she discovers an almost mystical world. In child-friendly images, Edmunds Jansons tells a story of courage and a mysterious mythical creature. Swiss premiere.

Bouchra (2025)

When Moroccan director Bouchra grapples with her queer identity in the film, the narrative layers become increasingly blurred. For this autobiographically inspired piece of metafiction, Meriem Bennani and Orian Barki combine minimalist animated animal characters with real background images.

Forgotten Island (2026)

With quirky characters, zany ideas and karaoke, **DreamWorks** takes us to the Philippines of the 1990s, where Jo and Raissa dream of living on a mythical island. Years later, when they actually end up there, the girls' close friendship is put to the test. At its European premiere at the Annecy International Animation Film Festival, Forgotten Island received a standing ovation lasting several minutes. Swiss premiere.

FANTOCHE

Le mystère de Lucy Lost (2025)

Why does 11-year-old Lucy have white hair? Why can't anyone else see her friend of the same age? And what do the people in the village have against her? All of this is closely linked to the First World War, but Lucy's search for belonging carries an emotional weight even outside of this context. "Le mystère de Lucy Lost" is a poetic blend of historical drama, fantasy and coming-of-age.

Miss Moxy (2025)

Moxy is a pretty spoilt house cat. When she is suddenly left on her own, she has to team up with a well-trained dog and an ageing swallow. With a love for local details, the **Dutch-Belgian children's film** tells a tale of self-determination, friendship and respect.

We Are Aliens (2026)

The shy Tsubasa is both fascinated and annoyed by his eccentric school friend Gyotaro. Through shifts in perspective and subtle character work, this feature debut develops a complex portrait of friendship and growing apart that goes beyond the boundaries of a classic coming-of-age story. The film is considered one of the **most interesting awards hopefuls for 2026**. Its announcement alone attracted attention, as director **Kohei Kadowaki** was previously known mainly for his elaborately staged music videos, many of which combine hand-drawn animation, rotoscoping and 3D elements. Swiss premiere.

Blaise (2026)

When his parents share their own problems with the school psychologist, 16-year-old Blaise wishes the ground would swallow him up. Little by little, such laconic scenes build into a sharp satire on insecurity, miscommunication and failed rebellions. Swiss premiere.

Carmen, l'oiseau rebelle (2026)

In Seville in 1840, a street boy and a pickpocket try to save the charismatic Carmen from her prophesied fate. Sébastien Laudenbach translates the plot of Bizet's opera "Carmen" into a contemporary, visually overwhelming plea for solidarity and resistance. Swiss premiere.

Jim Queen (2026)

As a result of a mysterious viral infection, influencer Jim Parfait seems to be slowly becoming heterosexual. Nicolas Athane and Marco Nguyen mix the cult of the body, football, pulsating beats and social fears to create a **light-hearted comedy about the self-image of gay cis men**.

Junk World (2025)

In a dystopian world, robots and humans must work together to investigate an anomaly in the space-time continuum. For this sprawling **prequel to "Junk Head"**, Takahide Hor and a small team have created a stop-motion grotesque featuring time loops, absurd ideas and eccentric characters.

FANTOCHE

Last Blossom (2025)

On his deathbed in prison, former Yakuza member Akutsu tells his life story to a plant. In an undramatic way, Baku Kinoshita weaves a web of decisions and questions of conscience that lend an unexpected depth to the **idiosyncratic characters**.

Muyi, la légende du village de femmes (2026)

Muyi lives in a remote village populated only by women. As she gets closer to the secrets of her community, her view of the world starts to waver. Balancing tradition, freedom and self-determination, she seeks her own path. "Muyi" is a coming-of-age story blending Chinese mythology and adventure film. Swiss premiere.

Nobody (2025)

A clumsy demon in the form of a pig and three other marginalised creatures pose as heroes of the legendary "Journey to the West" to attain immortality. In China, the lovable buddy movie, based on deception and loyalty, became the **most successful Chinese animated film**.

Son of a Bitch (2026)

In search of his father, Ismael, the son of a prostitute, crosses the arid hinterland of Brazil with his three-legged dog. With stubborn characters, coarse language and woodcut-style aesthetics, this witty road movie sets itself apart from the animated mainstream. The film is a collaborative work of four Brazilian filmmakers aged between 26 and 70. Swiss premiere.

FANTOCHE

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

Opening ceremony

The festival will be opened at 6 pm on Tuesday, 1 September 2026, by Dr Michael Umbricht, Secretary General of the Department of Education, Culture and Sport, Canton Aargau, Markus Schneider, Mayor of Baden, as well as the curators Maja Gehrig and Youhana Nassif and Festival Director Ivana Kvesić.

Online film library

You can access our online film library via promotion@fantoche.ch. If you miss any of the films from the competitions, you can view them via the online film library, which is available until the end of September 2026. Fantoche can provide media professionals with screeners for some feature films on request.

Images to download

High-resolution image files are available to download [here](#).

Filmmakers and animation experts in attendance

Fantoche is looking forward to welcoming numerous international and national filmmakers to Baden for six days. You will find a list of attendees [here](#).

Are you interested in an interview? Contact media@fantoche.ch.

Fantoche app

The Fantoche app for iPhone, iPad and Android can be downloaded for free from the iTunes App Store and Google Play Store.

Media accreditation

To receive media accreditation, please register on the Fantoche website. You will then receive a confirmation and a personal booking code for your tickets as well as further information for accreditation. You can pick up your accreditation at the information stand in the festival centre. With the booking code you can reserve your desired tickets in advance and show them on your mobile phone. Alternatively, you can collect your tickets from the festival centre from Tuesday noon (1 September 2026) or at the counter of the respective cinema from Wednesday afternoon (2 September 2026). Please present your accreditation.

Social media

[instagram.com/fantoche_festival](https://www.instagram.com/fantoche_festival)

[facebook.com/fantoche.ch](https://www.facebook.com/fantoche.ch)

[youtube.com/FantocheAnimation](https://www.youtube.com/FantocheAnimation)

[linkedin.com/en/fantoche](https://www.linkedin.com/en/fantoche)

#fantoche #fantoche2026

Contact for media professionals

Karin Dehmer, +41 79 286 81 87, media@fantoche.ch