

FANTOCHE

INTERNATIONALES FESTIVAL FÜR ANIMATIONSFILM
BADEN/SCHWEIZ

Press Release

Baden, 8th of September 2024

This was Fantoche 2024

From the 3rd to the 8th of September, the 22nd Fantoche International Festival of Animated Film offered many highlights and discoveries from current Swiss and international animation filmmaking. With the festival focus on Austria and “All We Need is Love”, empathy and love took centre stage. A total of around 21,500 admissions were recorded. In the international competition, “This Is a Story Without a Plan” by Cassie Shao from the USA won the “Best Film” award; “Pear Garden” by Shadab Shayegan from Germany won the international audience award. In the Swiss competition, “Sans Voix” by Samuel Patthey was honoured as “Best Swiss” and also received the Swiss Youth Award. The Swiss Audience Award went to “Dieter” by Rolf Broennimann. The children’s jury chose “Bubbles” by Lezhi Xiao from China as “Best Kids”, while “THE SWINEHERD” by Magnus Igländ Møller and Peter Smith from Denmark won the Children’s Audience Award. The 23rd Fantoche will take place from the 2nd to the 7th of September 2025 in Baden.

Highlights and Audience Favourites

As always, the six festival days offered numerous opportunities to meet international filmmakers and gain unique insights into their work, as well as to discover the latest multimedia developments or current feature-length films from all over the world. The first highlight was the opening of the Re-Mix exhibition at the Aargauer Kunsthaus, where Swiss animation filmmakers set works of art into motion using augmented reality. At the multimedia exhibition REFRESHxFANTOCHE #3, two robodogs were among the audience favourites. In the cinema, Hayao Miyazaki’s (for now) last and very personal feature film “The Boy and the Heron” was completely sold out twice. On Thursday morning, Fantoche also screened the documentary “Hayao Miyazaki and the Heron” about the seven-year production process, which moved the audience to tears. Other audience favourites included the feature film “Sultana’s Dream” (Isabel Herguera, ES/DE 2023), as well as numerous sold-out competition and “Best of” programmes. The “All We Need is Love” programmes also sold well. Unusually, this year’s programme included a total of three feature-length films with Swiss participation: in addition to the opening film “Sauvages” (Claude Barras, CH 2024), also “Reise der Schatten” (Yves Netzhammer, CH 2024) and “Invelle – Nowhere” (Simone Massi, IT/CH 2023).

Being able to present three new, Swiss, feature-length animation films in the same year is very special and satisfying. As producer Tendayi Nyeke points out in her making of the Disney+ series “Kizazi Moto: Generation Fire”, there is still a lack of large animation studios in Switzerland – as we know them from the USA, Japan or France, for example – that can handle such extensive projects as feature films or series. Together with Oscar-winning director Peter Ramsey (“Spider-Man: A New Universe”), Nyeke produced an Annie Award-winning science fiction anthology, 10 episodes of Afro-futurism, which, unlike the Marvel franchise “Black Panther”, were realised by various directing teams from South Africa to Egypt. On Wednesday, Nyeke described what such a production

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means for animated filmmakers from an entire continent. In two “Meet the Artists” sessions, Regina Pessoa on Thursday and Osbert Parker on Friday talked about their careers, while on Industry Day, Baden-born CGI artist Ramón Arango recounted his path from HSLU to an internationally successful career with major studios.

On Saturday, Claude Barras, his producer Nicolas Bulet and puppet animator Elie Chapuis spoke about the making of “Sauvages”. From the first sketch, which was created during the “Ma vie de courgetti” tour, to the finished film, they talked about this major Swiss production – demanding sustainability in terms of content and production – with lots of pictures and anecdotes. At the end, the audience raised the question of the extent to which AI could influence small-scale processes of stop motion, which had already been the subject of much discussion one day earlier at the 10th Industry Day.

Industry Day & Swiss Animation Industry Award

“What will happen to our jobs in the future?” a participant asked the AI panel that kicked off Industry Day on Friday. The scepticism towards the new technology, and above all the still largely unregulated use of it, was palpable. The production of animated films is likely to change fundamentally in the coming years. Robbert van Rooden (Inlusio Interactive) and Jonas Trottnow (Animationsinstitut Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg) described how AI is already taking over certain time-consuming intermediate steps and that the new software requires new skills, which are already increasingly being taught at universities. In Switzerland, concrete regulatory options will be discussed from 2025, but Salome Horber (Suissimage) expects it to be several years before the relevant laws come into force. The legal basis is in place in Swiss data protection but the large corporations that are currently training AI with existing data are not based in Switzerland.

However, AI will always lag behind the times; trained data will never be able to reflect the zeitgeist, says van Rooden. Unconventional voices are therefore becoming increasingly important. Accordingly, the second international panel featured renowned animator and storyboard artist Aya Suzuki (jury member of the International Competition), senior story artist Kayvon Darabi-Fard, anthropologist and screenwriter Diane Schaefer and game designer Klaus Lyngedal, who addressed the various forms of storytelling, a topic that was also explored in greater depth in an interactive workshop in the afternoon. Other presentations focussed on self-marketing and immersive gaming experiences. After the varied afternoon programme, the SAIA (Swiss Animation Industry Award) – and no less than three Special Mentions – was presented to “The undesirables ?! / Les indésirables ?!” by Gianni Maranzano.

Take-away from the Festival Direction

We are pleased that we were able to increase the total number of admissions again compared to previous years. This is mainly due to the renewed increase in cinema admissions. In general, we have tried to streamline the programme, which means that although there were fewer programme blocks overall, they were programmed in a more audience-friendly way: the films and filmmakers were given more space, which was well received. Our new social inclusion measures were also well received, with an inclusive school class attending the festival for the first time. Fantoche recorded an audio description for “Sauvage”, which will now also be available for the cinema release. These are the first steps upon which we will continue to work in the coming years. For this we draw energy, as every year, from the wonderful festival atmosphere: *All We Need Is Love*.

For questions regarding the press release:

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Pictures for download can be found [here](#).