

FANTOCHE

INTERNATIONALES FESTIVAL FÜR ANIMATIONSFILM
BADEN/SCHWEIZ

Press release
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Between natural disasters and hope: Fantoche 2026 is on!

Festival Director Ivana Kvesić opened the 24th edition of the Fantoche International Animation Film Festival together with representatives from politics and culture as well as the curators of this year's main programmes. Among them were the Mayor of Baden Markus Schneider, Michael Umbricht, General Secretary of the Cantonal Department of Education, Culture and Sport, and Maja Gehrig and Youhanna Nassif, who curated the main theme "Calling Planet Earth" and the programme focusing on Egypt, respectively.

At its opening ceremony, the 24th Fantoche International Animation Film Festival, with the main theme "**Calling Planet Earth**" dived into a world that at first glance seems strange and threatening, but is also part of our wonderful planet. As always, Fantoche impresses with its creative and decorative presentation of the festival theme during its opening and closing ceremonies. This year, the **Abyss** takes centre stage at both celebrations, a supposedly dystopian place that tells of life in the deepest depths, but also of adaptation and hope. The stage design captures this ambivalence and transforms the stage into a mysterious, magical underwater world. Recycled PET bottles were also used here, which, ironically, has resulted in a symbol of environmental pollution being transformed into a new, fragile landscape.

Dressed as a fish, presenter and comedian **Jane Mumford** took the audience down into the cool depths of the ocean, far away from heatwaves, capitalist lust for power and fantasies of escaping to Mars, and in doing so posed the key question of the evening (and this year's festival): "Humans and nature – who actually needs to be saved from whom?" She was accompanied by the Swiss electro-rock duo Ikan Hyu.

The fact that Fantoche brings people together far beyond the screen was reflected in the welcoming addresses given by the city and canton. In their speeches and during their discussion with the presenter, **Mayor Markus Schneider** and **Michael Umbricht, Secretary General of the Department of Education, Culture and Sport of the Canton of Aargau**, highlighted the importance of the festival for Baden and the region. With a twinkle in his eye, Umbricht recounted his transformation from a dutiful but rather unenthusiastic first-time visitor into a die-hard Fantoche fan, who now makes sure to keep two days free in his calendar every year for the festival. It is precisely the unpredictable nature of the programme that makes the whole thing so fascinating to him – some films remained unfamiliar, while others left their mark and continued to have an impact years later: "It surprises us, moves us, makes us laugh, amaze us – and sometimes even makes us see the world differently for a few minutes."

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It is precisely these different, or even unfamiliar perspectives, that characterise this year's two main programmes. Swiss animation filmmaker **Maja Gehrig**, curator of "Calling Planet Earth", and **Youhanna Nassif**, director of the Egyptian Animatex Festival and curator of the programme focusing on Egypt, gave insights into their respective programmes. While Gehrig's films explore the question of what separates and connects humans and nature, Nassif focuses on the roughly 90-year history of Egyptian animated film, from restored works by pioneer Ihab Shaker to a new generation of Egyptian animation filmmakers.

Festival Director Ivana Kvesić had reason to be tickled pink: in 2026, Fantoche was recognised by **ASIFA-Hollywood as an Annie Award-qualifying festival**, making it one of only seven festivals worldwide to receive this distinction. In addition to the best film in the International Competition, the best film in the Swiss Competition can also qualify for the Annie Awards: "This will allow us to open yet another door to the international stage for our Swiss filmmakers." Kvesić emphasises the power of animated films, which lies in their ability to depict socially critical issues with humour and to convey complex contexts in an accessible way. For the coming days of the festival, she hopes above all for curious and open-minded visitors, a lovely time and enriching encounters – which is precisely what the new **"Artists' Coffee & Cake"** format aims to promote.

In conclusion, the festival director once again touched on our treatment of the planet: "We don't need nature for decoration – we need it to survive," she said, summing up the urgency of the festival's theme "Calling Planet Earth". It is less about saving the Earth – which will continue to exist even without humans – than about the question of how we live on it and what kind of world we want to leave behind for future generations. This attitude is also reflected in the development of Fantoche itself: rather than pursuing growth at any price, the festival deliberately focuses on professionalisation, improving quality, careful use of resources and inclusion. **The festival's inclusion initiatives were evident at the opening ceremony, which was interpreted simultaneously into sign language throughout the event.** For the first time this year, there will also be a "Relaxed Screening" offering that provides an accessible and relaxed cinema experience for everyone.

Photographs of the opening ceremony are available [here](#) from Sept. 2nd, 2026

The full programme is available at fantoche.ch/en

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