



by Valerio Caruso

CARTOON FORUM VARESE

The capital of Animated films

In September Varese hosted the 14th Cartoon Forum, the European market for animation cinema

23rd October 2003

"I created Gino the Chicken, but he has possessed me, now I behave like a chicken. I think its contagious.... To free me from this I'll make a TV series, I'll lose Gino in the web". The words of **Andrea Zingoni**, author of *Gino the Chicken*, the extremely successful cartoon character who came to fame on the website www.my-tv.it and who's also set to feature in a TV series produced by RAI Fiction. Apart from chickens lost in the web, we have also run into a pig given up for dead in *Pig Nick*, who is transferred through the sewers and transported as far as the ocean; *Skunk*, a polecat who's adopted by a Chinese panda; *K-Bob*, *Poo* & *Hank* three defective genes who try to get back into the immune system; *Podziomek*, a polish gnome who tells us European myths; and many other characters from the creative minds working in European animated cartoons. There were also Slovak and Polish projects presented at the festival for the first time. From September 17 to 20, Varese was turned into the cartoon capital, for the 14th edition of the European market of animation films, the Cartoon Forum.

European producers presented 82 projects, worth a total value of €285 million, to representatives from 108 TV channels and 154 investors. The 5 biggest European countries covered 82% of the projects shown: 22 from Britain, 17 from Italy, 16 French works, 7 from Spain and 6 from Germany. There was a rise in the number of short format entries, lasting between 10 and 13 minutes, which are easier to fund. This year the average cost per minute produced was €9,146 as opposed to €10,555 in 2002. The films were mainly adventure stories and comedies, aimed at a audience aged between 5 and 12.

According to the organisers there are already 19 projects ready to get off the starting blocks and can be made in a short time:

- *Holly's Helpline* / Sirlol Productions (UK) / 26 x 11'
- *Monster Allergy* / Rainbow (It) / 26 x 24'
- *Mark Logan* / Pictor Media (Fr) / 1 x 52'
- *Germes* / Futurikon (Fr) / 26 x 24'
- *Tama & Melody* / France Animation (Fr) / 26 x 24'
- *Trot Trot* / Storimages (Fr) / 53 x 13'
- *Hairy Scary* / Alphanim (Fr) / 52 x 13'
- *Louie* / Millimages (Fr) / 52 x 7'
- *The Children of Okura* / Les Films de La Perrine (Fr) / 26 x 26'
- *Anna and the Moods* / Caoz Ltd (Ice) / 1 x 30'
- *Newt & the Fifos* / Monster Animation and Design Ltd (Irl) / 39 x 7'
- *Angelo* / NDF-Neue Deutsche Film (Ger); Magma Films(Ire) ; A.Film (Den) / 26 x 22'
- *King Catastrophe* / Kayenta Production (Fr) / 78 x 7'
- *Chop Socky Chooks* / Aardman Animations Ltd (UK) / 26 x 13'
- *Village People* / The Illuminated Film Company (UK) / 26 x 24'
- *Tom* / Studio Film Bilder (De) / 26 x 5'

- *Charlie and Lola* / Tiger Aspect Productions (UK) / 26 x 10'
- *Skunk* / The Cartoon Saloon Ltd (Ire) / 26 x 13'
- *Katie Morag* / Fabbydoo Corporation (UK) / 26 x 11'

Added to this list are a further 22 projects that can be made in the medium term:

- *Angels and Devils / A*; Ellis Productions (Fr) / 52 x 13'
- *Animal Pharm* / Atomic Arts (UK) / 13 x 24'
- *Bob Screen Defective Detective* / Digital Salade (Fr) / 52 x 13'
- *Camelia* / Graphilm (It) / 26 x 6,30'
- *Giak & Zak* / Matitanimata (It) / 26 x 13'
- *Gino the Chicken (lost in the Net)* / My-TV (It) / 52 x 13'
- *Grubby Girls* / Mikrofilm (No) / 26 x 2,30'
- *Johnny Smile* / Clan Celentano (It) / 7 x 11'
- *Little Leonardo* / Alconi (It) / 52 x 13'
- *Nat & Pat* / Crea Video (Fin) / 26 x 5'
- *Oscar the Balloonist* / Animation studio Ludewig (De) / 26 x 5'
- *Pig Nick* / Fanciful Arts Animation (Es) / 13 x 13'
- *Rat-Man* / StraneMani (It) / 52 x 13'
- *Sam Hamwich Superhero Sandwich* / TV-Loonland (UK) / 26 x 11'
- *Santa Queen* / Timoon Animation (Fr) / 52 x 13'
- *Sara & the goal girls* / Black Maria (Es) / 26 x 26'
- *The Frightened Family* / Red Kite Productions Ltd (UK) - 52 x 11'
- *The incredible adventures of Kika and Bob* / Submarine BV (NI) / 26 x 13'
- *The Knight with the Lion* / Folimage (Fr) / 1 x 48'
- *Trolls of Troy* / Dargaud Marina (Fr) / 26 x 26'
- *Willo the Wisp* / Elephant Productions (UK) / 13 x 5'
- *WWW* / MBM Associati (It) / 26 x 26'

The culmination of the closing ceremony of the Cartoon Forum, which took place on September 20, was the award of the Golden Cartoon prize for the Best European animated short film, given to *Sans Queue ni Tete* by **Sandra Desmazières**.

To find out more about the world of European animation, Cineuropa has interviewed **Max Gusberti**, the deputy director and head of animation at RAI Fiction; **Manuel Cristóbal**, the producer of *El Bosque Animado* the first European 3D animated feature length film; **Iain Harvey** who presented the "Village People" project to the Cartoon Forum, which garnered a lot of interest at Varese.

The idea behind the Cartoon Forum, which is co-financed by the EU's Media Programme, is to help European producers to enter into agreements with TV channels and financial backers. This year, the Cartoon Forum was sponsored by the Varese Chamber of Commerce, the Varese Province, the municipality of Varese, the Lombardy Region and RAI Fiction.

Manuel Cristóbal, 3D producer

by Valerio Caruso

23rd October 2003

The 2004 edition of the **Cartoon Forum** will be taking place in Spain, at San Sebastian in Galicia. **Manuel Cristóbal** is the executive producer at Dygra Film, the production company based in La Coruña in Galicia. Dygra Films is the first European company to have produced a animated feature length film in 3D.

Why did you think of trying to get funding for an animated feature length film in Spain?

"After the film *Kirikou e la strega* we thought that there was a niche for animated films in the European market. The film cost €3.5m, and all the funding was raised in Spain. We managed to keep the costs low thanks to 3D. I think that 3D is a real alternative to help us avoid localising animation by having it done in Asia. Co-production in Europe is a necessary evil, it's useful for getting more funding. It's been essential for Dygra to concentrate the production on *El Bosque Animado* in a single studio: it meant lower costs, higher artistic control and quicker production time".

What was the marketing budget for *Bosque Animado*?

"€1 million. But it's important not to confuse advertising and marketing. There was a unique and original promotional campaign for *El Bosque Animado*. We organised different animations for schools and a travelling exhibition which was seen by more than 200,000 people. We created a website with a lot of teaching content. Europeans are finally understanding the importance of websites. The film was seen in a lot of European countries, a rare event for "live" films".

Do you think that a pan-European distribution company can guarantee a better distribution for European films?

"Distribution companies are complementary partners, which need to be involved in the production to get a minimum guarantee. But the more partners you have, the more complicated the work gets for the producer. In addition European distribution companies aren't used to distributing animation films. One thing that would be useful is some coordination with the future sales companies. Bearing this in mind I think it would be useful to invite sales agents to Cartoon Movie, funded by the Media Programme".

What will Dygra Films' next production be?

"We're working on a loose adaptation of "A Midsummer Night's Dream". The film will be called "El sueño de una noche de San Juan" and will have a budget of €6m. We already have distribution deals in place in France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Portugal and Holland. We're developing new production techniques to allow us to create very expressive and elastic characters. It will all be put together with a high quality of animation".

Iain Harvey, produttore "illuminato"

di Valerio Caruso

23 Ottobre 2003

Iain Harvey è produttore di serie d'animazione e dirige la società **The Illuminated Film Company**. Iain era al Cartoon Forum di Varese dal 17 al 20 settembre 2003 e ha presentato una serie televisiva di 26 episodi da 24 minuti "Village People", ispirata alle sitcom inglesi. La presentazione della serie al Cartoon Forum ha attirato il maggior numero di professionisti, investitori e responsabili di reti televisive. Cineuropa l'ha incontrato.

Che cosa ha pensato delle produzioni presentate quest'anno al Cartoon Forum?

"Lo standard è di anno in anno superiore. I piloti presentati sono di altissima qualità. Le storie sono molto diversificate. Penso che i produttori abbiano capito cosa vogliono le televisioni e cosa si aspetta il pubblico".

Come nasce l'idea di "Village People"?

"Lo sceneggiatore Oliver Lansley mi ha sottoposto l'idea circa due anni fa. Si tratta di una serie molto divertente, con molto humor e linguaggio internazionale, ingredienti questi indispensabile per vendere la serie all'estero. Per arrivare ad un concetto soddisfacente abbiamo investito molto nella fase di sviluppo: due scrittori hanno affiancato lo scrittore durante 12 mesi. All'inizio abbiamo lavorato soprattutto sui personaggi che sono la base delle sceneggiature. Finita la fase di sviluppo, ho avuto la fortuna di incontrare Edward Foster, il regista ideale per questa serie".

Diventa sempre più difficile trovare finanziamenti per l'animazione. Come vive questa situazione?

"Prodotte un prodotto di animazione può essere un incubo. Le televisioni non prendono rischi. Credo che le reti televisive dovrebbero investire di più nella fase di sviluppo, dove i rischi sono altissimi e dove è molto difficile trovare finanziamenti. Investire nello sviluppo è l'unico modo per avere prodotti soddisfacenti e con potenziali di diffusione internazionale".

Realizzate molte coproduzioni?

"Sì, le coproduzioni sono una buona opportunità per lavorare insieme e vendere i propri prodotti all'estero. Ovviamente i produttori devono essere pronti ad accettare compromessi e capire di cosa hanno bisogno i coproduttori di altri paesi per soddisfare il proprio pubblico".