

# Time for Some Danish!

Cartoon Forum gives TV animation producers many good reasons to spend a few fall days in the toon-loving town of Kolding. **by Ramin Zahed**

If you want to sample the best of European TV animation, you might want to book yourself a trip to Kolding, Denmark this year. Why Kolding? Well, that's where the crème de la crème of Euro TV toonmakers and investors will be holding court, September 21-24. Sponsored by the European MEDIA program for the European Union, the annual Cartoon Forum offers a chance for industry pros to present their animated projects to potential investors from 29 different European countries. To date, over 301 Cartoon Forum projects (a total budget of 980 million euros) have secured financing. These figures are nothing to sneeze at, especially if you're a heart-broken American, wishing a similar set up were available to U.S. TV animation producers!

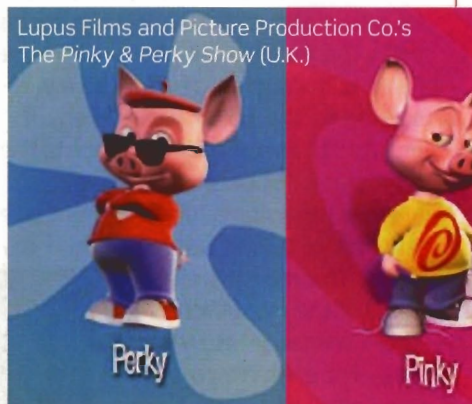
"This year the Forum is hosting 67 new TV series projects, representing a total budget of 233 million euros for 412 hours of programming," according to the event's managing directors Marc Vandeweyer and Corinne Jenart. "It's fitting that the Forum takes place in Kolding this year because there has been a veritable boom in Scandinavian animation. This is seen in the recent success of the feature *Terkel in Trouble* (by Nordisk Film and A.Film) and *Strings* (by Bald Film), as well as the celebrated work of Jannik Hastrup and the impressive number of productions under way at A.Film, such as *Asterix and the Vikings* and *The Ugly Duckling and Me.*"

Of course, any curious observer of the animation scene would like to know if the organizers were able to spot any trends in the Euro toon scene in 2005. One fact that jumps at you is that the U.K. still continues to dominate the field, with 19 projects (that's 27% of total entries) representing the Union Jack at the event. Spain is next with nine animated shows, followed by Germany with seven, France and

Ireland with six each and Italy with four. Denmark and Sweden clock in with three projects, while Iceland and Belgium have two shows at the Forum. Poland and Slovenia are two new additions to the mix and there are 16 new projects with partnerships from Hungary, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia and Poland.

The technological breakdown is also quite revealing. Overall, 28 of the featured shows use CG animation, 23 are traditionally animated, 11 are hybrids, four are listed as Flash shows, one is billed as a puppet-animated project and one uses live actors! (Yes, we're also wondering how that one live-action show plans to sneak under the radar at an animation event!)

One other service that Cartoon Forum provides is offering a breakdown of all shows by character and storyline. This year, there are more animated humans (33) than animals (10), with only eight shows featuring a group of animal friends and four shows dealing with magical creatures such as vampires, ghosts, monsters and elves. They also found two shows that deal with





GB Animation's *The Grimoire and Talisman* (U.K.)

Lion Toons' *Cosme the Astronaut* (Spain)



plants—one is about the food that lives in a fridge (Don't ask!), and the other has mushroom protagonists. Tom Cruise and his scientist posse will be happy to know that there are seven shows centered on friendly aliens from other planets. *Animation Mag-*

azine's favorite section is the "without category" of the report, which you can also file under "Only in Europe!" This is where you find those gutsy toons about that ever-suffering son of God, Jesus, a band of bubblegum friends, dustbin thingies and—what else?—a happy-go-lucky team of sperm adventurers (*A Sperm's Life* by Sweden's K Creativ).

Some of the titles that caught our attention were Poseidon Films' *Aesop's Fables* (U.K.), Lion Toons' *Cosme the Astronaut* (Spain), Telemagination's *Dooley* (U.K.), Monster Animation's *Fluffy Gardens* (Ireland), Magma Films' *Footballer's Husband* (Ireland), fish blowing bubbles' *Fridgees* (Germany), Icon Animation's *Hop & Calamity* (Spain), B.R.B. Internacional's *Khudayana* (Spain), Millimage's *Piccolo & Saxo* (France), Calon's *Safehouse Hotel* (U.K.), TV-Loonland's *Johnny Mutton* (Germany) and Brown Bag Films' *Wobbly Land* (Ireland).

Lupus Films and Picture Production Company's new (52x11) animated series *Pinky & Perky* will also bow at Cartoon Forum. The CG-animated show features updated versions of the two singing piglet puppets which had their own show on U.K. television from 1957 to the early '70s.

"We're taking our show to the Forum because it's the best way to get instant access to all the European financiers, broadcasters and distributors," says Lupus Films' managing director Ruth Fielding. "It also allows us to see what other producers' shows are like and what the general trends of the market are."

Fielding notes that the biggest challenge facing indie toon producers is keeping budgets low enough to get financed without compromising the quality of the show. "Buyers want brands which are far-reaching on

all platforms from TV to film, merchandising, the Internet, licensing and publishing."

Among the other quality debuts at the event is *Safehouse Hotel*, a new 26x30 Flash animation series produced by Robin Lyons' new company, Calon. Described as a cross between *Fawlty Towers* and *The Prisoner*, the show follows the adventures of a blissfully ignorant pair of parents whose hotel is listed as a safe house for global criminals. That means the kids in the family get to deal with spies and villains each week. The show was created by comic illustrator Mike Collins, penned by Peter David and illustrated by animator Jose Luis Agreda. As Lyons explains, "The creation of Calon has given us the chance to take a refreshingly new approach to our work. We're taking a different attitude, bringing on board new stimulating talent."

Another Cartoon Forum participant is GB Animation Company producer Piers Godden who is taking the beautifully drawn and imaginative *The Grimoire and Talisman* (13 x 26) to the Forum. The show is about a young knight and his apprentice sorcerer who have been accidentally transported to the modern world.

"The exposure of Cartoon Forum is second to none," says Godden. "I don't think there is any other event in the world where you can get so many decision-makers to sit down for 30 minutes and give you their undivided attention. No mobile phones, no other pitchers queuing up—just you and them in a darkened room! Scary, huh?"

So what kind of advice does Godden have for others planning to brave the process? "The first and most important thing is the belief that you have a great project and that others think the same way," he says. "Once you have this belief all you need is determination and stamina, a determination to get all the parties together and the stamina to keep going through the financial jungle ... Luckily, I believe that *The Grimoire and Talisman* has a magical quality that you rarely see. Combine this with the amazing design work of Kit Wallis and we're onto a winner!" ■

For more info about this year's Cartoon Forum, visit [www.cartoon-media.be](http://www.cartoon-media.be).

## On the Short List

Each year at Cartoon Forum, a special **Cartoon D'Or** award is given to an animator whose short project has been honored at other animation festivals in Holland, Portugal, Italy, Belgium, U.K. and France. The jurors are Karsten Kilerich, Philippe Leclerc, Peter Lord and Corinne Jenart. This year's nominated shorts are

- City Paradise* by Gaele Denis (U.K.)
- Falling* by Peter Kaboth (Germany)
- Flatlife* by Jonas Geirnaert (Belgium)
- Jo Jo in the Stars* by Marc Craste (U.K.)
- Little Things* by Daniel Greaves (U.K.)



*Little Things*