

Animation business is turning pre-school audience business

59 new animation projects with a total budget over 168, 5 million, 762 animation industry professionals from 29 countries and a lot of mountains in the horizon. This is Cartoon Forum, the annual European animation co-production event in the city of Pau next to the Pyrenees Mountains in southern France.



Chorus Arraya Presented local music in the outdoor dinner by michel Brebant

The September event run along the usual lines: producers have some 40 minutes time to present their new ideas to the 106 broadcasters and 132 investors attending the Forum. The Forum has faced one major problem: it's too popular. The number of participants would easily grow bigger than it is possible to handle without becoming a major market place.

And this is exactly what the managers of Cartoon Corinne Jenart and Marc Vandeweyer do not want. Important part of the success of Cartoon Forum is the familiar atmosphere and meeting somewhere outside the major cities.

Europe is full of fascinating places where we just never happen to go. Just

like Pau, a jewel for a city with historical monuments and breathtaking mountain view. Should Cartoon Forum take place in cities like London or Paris it would lose a lot of the unique atmosphere, and actually it's soul.

This year, however, did bring some changes in the 17th Forum. The pre-selection of projects was tighter than before and limited to 60. Last years Forum in Kolding, Denmark, hosted a total of 72 projects.

As the tv-channels are the main buyers of the animation series, the selection committee was set up of representatives of television channels. The projects presented to the Selection Committee for Pau Forum were obliged to be already at least in

development, as earlier also projects in concept stage were accepted. Cartoon also looked more carefully that the producers have not guaranteed all finance before Forum.

All this tells of two things: Cartoon Forum is very popular with more and more producers who would like to participate and that the European animation industry begins to be fully developed.

Cartoon Forum do not have to take any more most qualifying projects, it can make rules stricter and guarantee anyhow full number of participants. This should lead to the raise of the quality of the projects, or at least that these are more professional.



All the project pilots of the morning session are presented in the breakfast Croissant Show by Michel Brebant



<Bingo Bongo>

According to Cartoon information 25 projects (42 per cent of the total) presented in Pau have obtained 100 million euro in financing in the short term.

Strong France

The strong country of European animation industry is still France. 21 of the projects (31 per cent of the total) come from France. UK delivered 10 projects (15 per cent), Germany eight (10 per cent) and Italy five (7 per cent).

The Frenchmen are even a little bit worried about their too strong role. In a press conference about the French animation industry they called even more cooperation with other European producers.

The missing of strong coproducers in big markets like Germany makes it more difficult to export series. Paradoxically the main coproduction partner for French animation producers is Canada, not any European country.

Most sought target audience were preschool kids. 22 of the projects presented (37 per cent of the total) were created for the under-six audience, with 20 (34 per cent) directed at children between 6-9

years.

This year the animated series for adults and older teenagers were completely missing. Still few years ago cartoon Forum had every time some projects aimed for people over the kid years, but not now.

Animation is expensive business and producers want to be sure to get their money back. The safest bet is to make animation for kids. Some series are made for family audience, but those are usually made on the rules of lowest common nominator in the business, kids.

Series of 26 and 52 episodes make up 75 per cent of the total number of projects, with an average duration of 11 minutes per episode. 3D and 2D animation were the most used animation techniques with 20 and 18 projects respectively.

The five projects that arouse the most interest at the event were Pocket Rockets (Millimages, Toons N Tales and Millimages UK); Bingo Bongo (Lobster, JetMedia and Sofidoc); Jeremy (Futurikon); High Spy (Alphanim) and The Annoying Thing (League of Good People and Castelrosso Films).

Action and slow food

And yes, there were many interesting projects. French production Bingo Bongo is one of those. It aims to bring back the classical, "true American cartoon style", as the producer Serge Bromberg said.

The word action is too mild to describe the series. 26 six minute parts are wild humour without dialogue. There is no beginning, middle or end, the series jumps straight into action. And the action is animals fighting with each other.

Well, this sounds dubious but actually the series, which is based on the images of Federico Vitali, is in fact in the spirit of American cartoon. If you like it, you will like Bingo Bongo. As producer Bromberg said: "This is the return of classical American cartoon if it has ever even been away."

The production will cost slightly above the average price of all the series, 9,600 euro per minute. Cartoon calculated that the average cost of the series presented in Pau is per minute between 6,000-9,000 euro.

Another French production Yum! Yum! is in every sense completely different than Bingo Bongo. This object animation from Bordeaux is made of 13 two minute parts, and every episode features the execution of a food recipe with some tips for final decoration. Every recipe is simple, need no cooking and is easy to do with even small kids.

"It is a problem in France that children do not eat enough fruits and vegetables, so we do these attractive", said the producer-director Frederic Clemencon. "Usually in food programmes a top chef is making the

