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News Briefs

Wrapped up: Cartoon Forum yields healthy crop of new toons

by Jocelyn Christie

Cartoon Forum held in Girona, Spain last week was ripe with a higher-than-usual number of well-developed pitches. In addition to the six projects KidScreen singled out in the [September issue](#) as likely to find financing, *Tinga Tinga Tales* (Tiger Aspect), *How To Drive Everybody Crazy* (TeamTo and Cake Entertainment), *Little J* (Aardman Animations), *Diego Oasis* (Millimages), *Step By Step* (2 Minutes and Art Mell) and *Bouncy Castle* (Spider Eye Animation) also generated a lot of interest from buyers, investors and producers in attendance.

Winning the crowd over with her passion for the project, Tiger Aspect head of animation and children's Claudia Lloyd kicked the Forum off with a superb presentation of *Tinga Tinga Tales*, a 52 x 11-minute preschool series that tells animal-centric African folktales (how the tortoise broke his shell is the subject of the pilot ep) using Tanzania's famed Tinga art style. CBBC has already ponied up a commission, but the studio is still looking for 50% of the US\$8.6-million budget from presales and distribution advances.

How to Drive Everybody Crazy is a gorgeous-looking CGI concept from the new creative shop run by Guillaume Helloin and Corinne Kouper. This 52 x five-minute book-based series stars a "junior anthropologist" who spends his time testing boundaries and feeding his findings into a manifesto for kids everywhere about how to manipulate adults. France 3 has had a hand in the project's development and will test it with its audience in a couple of months.

Little J is Aardman's first stab at 2-D animation for kids, and is fuelled by Jamie Oliver's mission to reshape kids' attitudes about food the world over. The series director, Tom Parkinson, previously brought *The Adventures of Big Jeff* (an irreverent short about a roller-skating Aussie nudist) to life. And his wacky touch is evident in the details that include a farting pickle character.

Millimages' *Diego Oasis* should continue the studio's sterling record for steadily getting series off the ground. This one puts a twist on genie lore when sand gets into the wish-granter's receptacle and bungs up the works. Millimages is ready to head into production, once a European co-producer is locked-in.

From the "out of left field" files this year comes *Step By Step*, a charming pencil-drawn series of two-minute shorts that eschews dialogue to explore the seemingly wondrous happenings in a toddlers's world - like how corn turns into popcorn and how twigs transform into a bird's nest. Nearly 50% of the budget is already in place via deals in England, Italy, Belgium and China, and the producers are looking for a French broadcaster or co-producer to get it fired up. Check out the riveting short film that kicked the project off at ftp.2minutes.fr (login stepbystep, password r2330t).

And overcoming the worst possible presentation timeslot (the last screening on the afternoon of the last day), Spider Eye had everyone laughing along as it introduced *Bouncy Castle*, a 52 x 11-minute toon about a kingdom of inflatable people inhabiting an inflatable world. The script-led series helmed by Trevor Ricketts (storyboard artist on *Charlie and Lola* whose writing credits include *Shaun the Sheep* and *Noah's Island*) looks sure to elicit lots of laughs from its five to seven target.

And the winners are...

Not surprising given the huge number of attendees it contributed, host country Spain took two of the three Cartoon Tribute awards this year, determined via on-site votes tallied over the course of the three-day Forum. LUK International walked away with Investor/Distributor of the Year and Televisio de Catalunya was singled out as Broadcaster of the Year. But TVC London founder John Coates' win as Producer of the Year was the high point of the ceremony, triggering a standing ovation and more than a few tears.

Euro animation matriarch steps down

Speaking of tears, there wasn't a dry eye in the house when Cartoon manager Marc Vandeweyer paid tribute to his partner in crime Corinne Jennart, who is leaving the organization to slow down and explore new avenues in the industry. Jennart and Vaneweyer started Cartoon Forum in 1990, and the event has grown exponentially in both size and importance over the years. Its support of European animation has played a vital role in

establishing the region's many veteran studios as power players in the global market.

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