

PRESS RELEASE
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ANIMATION COMPANIES AND PROFESSIONALS FROM NINE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES NOMINATED FOR THE 2026 CARTOON MOVIE TRIBUTES

Producers, distributors and directors from nine European countries have been nominated for the **Cartoon Movie Tributes**, which celebrate the most outstanding achievements in European animation over the previous year. The winners will be voted by the professionals attending **Cartoon Movie**, the pitching and co-production event for animated feature films that will hold its next edition on March 3 to 5 in the French city of Bordeaux, Nouvelle-Aquitaine.

Nineteen European companies and organisations share the spotlight in the **Producer of the Year** category as co-producers of four feature films that were presented at Cartoon Movie in development stages.

French companies **Folimage** and **Les Armateurs**, in co-production with Belgium's **Lunanime** and **Dragons Films**, and France's **Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Cinéma**, **Will Production**, **JPL Films**, **Pictanovo**, **Folimage Animation** and **TNZPV Productions**, are behind "**The Songbirds' Secret**" by Antoine Lanciaux, the first feature film to be made entirely with paper cut-outs in a century. After being presented in development at Cartoon Movie 2019 and screened as a sneak preview at the same event in 2025, the film has been selected for more than 50 international festivals.

"**Stitch Head**" is a co-production led by Germany's **Gringo Films**, alongside Luxembourg's **Fabrique d'images** and Germany's **Senator Film Produktion** and **Traumhaus Studio**. Co-directed by Steve Hudson and Toby Genkel, the film is a 3D animated monster fantasy comedy aimed at children and family audiences that was released in Europe in October 2025. This film was presented in concept at Cartoon Movie 2017 and two years later returned to this event in development stage.

"**Tales from the Magic Garden**" is a stop-motion animated puppet feature collectively directed by David Súkup, Patrik Pašš, Leon Vidmar and Jean-Claude Rozec. Addressing grief and the healing power of imagination, the film is an international co-production involving **MAUR film** (Czech Republic), **Vivement Lundi !** (France), **Artichoke** (Slovakia) and **ZVVIKS** (Slovenia). At Cartoon Movie, it was presented in development in 2019 and as a sneak preview in 2025.

France's **Special Touch Studios** and **Creative Touch Studios**, Luxembourg's **Paul Thiltges Distributions**, Canada's **Yzanakio**, together with Belgium's **Need Productions** and **Lunanime**, complete the list of nominees in this category with "**Allah Is Not Obligated**", Zaven Najjar's feature debut. Starring a Guinean orphan forced to become a child soldier, the film was presented in development at Cartoon Movie 2018, had its world premiere at the Annecy Film Festival, and is set for a theatrical release in France on March 4 this year.

Meanwhile, companies from Croatia, France and Spain contend for the **Distributor of the Year** award.

Drawing on its vast experience as a theatrical exhibitor, Croatia's **Kino Mediteran** made the leap into distribution in 2014. Focusing on European independent films, their catalogue includes films such as "Fox and Hare Save the Forest", "Tafiti - Across the Desert" and "Diplodocus". The company has a network of cinemas throughout more than 20 Croatian coastal towns.

Created by Emmanuelle Chevalier and Marie-Agnès Bourillon in 2000, Paris-based **Les Films du Préau** is engaged in the distribution of films for young audiences. With a diverse catalogue, both geographically and format-wise, the company has distributed titles such as "Living Large", "The Gruffalo" and "Petite Casbah", among others.

Founded in June 2000, Madrid-based **Flins & Pinículas** is dedicated to distributing high-quality films for family audiences in Spain. With titles such as "The Amazing Maurice", "Niko: Beyond the Northern Lights" and "Zak & Wowo", animation plays a central role in their catalogue.

The five directors selected for the **Directors of the Year** category have won international recognition at film festivals and awards ceremonies, with projects that were presented at Cartoon Movie during their development stages.

Irene Iborra Rizo has become the first woman to direct a stop-motion feature film in Spain with her feature debut "**Olivia and the Invisible Earthquake**". A co-production between Spain, Belgium and France, this social drama aimed at family audiences had its world premiere at the Annecy Festival and has been nominated for both the European Film Awards and the Goya Awards 2026. The film follows a 12-year-old girl who sees her world turning upside down when her family is evicted from their home.

French directors **Mailys Vallade** and **Liane-Cho Han** debut in feature film directing "**Little Amelie**" is an adaptation from Amélie Nothomb's bestseller "The Character of Rain". This poetic and deeply moving coming-of-age has been selected for nearly 40 international festivals — including Annecy, where it won the Audience Award 2025 — and has been nominated for major awards, including the 98th Academy Awards, the César Awards and the European Film Awards (EFA), among others.

Reza Memari's "**The Last Whale Singer**" is the German-Iranian director's second feature film following "Richard the Stork". An animated fantasy for family audiences, the film stars Vincent, the orphaned son of the last Whale Singer. Pitched at Cartoon Movie at various stages — in concept in 2018, in development in 2020 and in production in 2025 — Memari's new work is a co-production between Germany, the Czech Republic and Canada that has already been sold in more than 30 international territories.

Rounding out the category is French director, writer and illustrator **Ugo Bienvenu** with **“Arco”**, a sci-fi film premiered at Cannes that won several awards at Annecy and the European Film Awards. Bienvenu’s debut film tells an optimistic, colourful story about Arco, a boy from an idyllic future who accidentally lands in 2075 and, with the help of a young girl named Iris, shares a hopeful vision of the future before finding his way home. The film is in the race for Best Animated Feature Film at the Academy Awards, as well as for the César Awards and the Annie Awards.

CARTOON MOVIE TRIBUTES 2026 NOMINEES

European Producer of the Year

- **Folimage / Les Armateurs** (France) / **Lunanime** (Belgium) / **Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Cinéma / Will Production / JPL Films** (France) / **Dragons Films** (Belgium) / **Pictanovo / Folimage Animation / TNZPV Productions** (France) for “The Songbirds' Secret”.
- **Gringo Films** (Germany) / **Fabrique d’Images** (Luxembourg) / **Senator Film Produktion / Traumhaus Studios** (Germany) for “Stitch Head”
- **MAUR film** (Czech Republic) / **Vivement Lundi !** (France) / **Artichoke** (Slovakia) / **ZVVIKS** (Slovenia) for “Tales from the Magic Garden”.
- **Special Touch Studios / Creative Touch Studios** (France) / **Paul Thiltges Distributions** (Luxembourg) / **Yzanakio** (Canada) / **Need Productions / Lunanime** (Belgium) for “Allah Is Not Obligated”.

European Distributor of the Year

- **Flins y Pinículas** (Spain).
- **Les Films du Preau** (France).
- **Kino Mediteran** (Croatia).

European Director of the Year

- **Irene Iborra Rizo** for “Olivia and the Invisible Earthquake”.
- **Mailys Vallade & Liane-Cho Han** for “Little Amelie”.
- **Reza Memari** for “The Last Whale Singer”.
- **Ugo Bienvenu** for “Arco”.

ABOUT CARTOON MOVIE

Since its first edition in 1999, 504 films have been financially supported by Cartoon Movie with a total budget of €3.37 billion. Organised by CARTOON, Cartoon Movie is an annual forum aimed at strengthening the production and distribution of animated feature films in Europe. The event has the support of Creative Europe – MEDIA, CNC (Centre national du cinéma et de l’image animée), Région Nouvelle-Aquitaine, Bordeaux Métropole, Pôle Image Magelis and France Télévisions.

CARTOON – European Association of Animation Film is an international non-profit association based in Brussels that organises Cartoon Movie, together with Cartoon Forum, a co-production forum for animated TV series, and the training seminars CartoonNext, Cartoon Springboard, and Cartoon Business.

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