



## CARTOON MOVIE UNVEILS TRIBUTES WINNERS IN BORDEAUX

European animation celebrates its latest achievements at Cartoon Movie, the pitching and co-production forum dedicated to European animated features, which concludes its 28<sup>th</sup> edition today in Bordeaux. Voted by the industry professionals attending the event, the Cartoon Tributes recognise the companies and individuals whose work has made a significant impact on the European animation industry over the previous year.

The **Producer of the Year** prize went to France's **Special Touch Studios**, Luxembourg's **Paul Thiltges Distributions**, Belgium's **Lunanime & Need Productions**, and Canada's **Yzanakio** for "**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 was released in cinemas across France on March 4.

Meanwhile, the **Distributor of the Year** award went to Paris-based **Les Films du Préau**, an independent film distribution company focused on high-quality films for young audiences. Founded in 2000 by Emmanuelle Chevalier and Marie-Agnès Bourillon, the company boasts a diverse catalogue of more than 200 titles, including "Living Large", "The Gruffalo" and "Petite Casbah".

The **Director of the Year** award was presented to **Reza Memari** for "**The Last Whale Singer**", his second feature after "Richard the Stork". An animated fantasy for family audiences, the film follows Vincent, the orphaned son of the last Whale Singer, who must overcome his fears and discover his own voice to help save the oceans. Presented at Cartoon Movie at different stages — from concept in 2018 to development in 2020 and 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.

The award ceremony took place at the Palais des Congrès de Bordeaux, where 50 new animated projects from 21 countries were presented over two days with the aim of finding new partners and investors to help bring them to the screen.

**Photos of the winners are available [at the following link](#).**

Also among the nominees were Folimage, Les Armateurs, Lunanime, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Cinéma, Will Production, JPL Films, Dragons Films, Pictanovo and TNZPV Productions for "The Songbirds' Secret"; Gringo Films, Fabrique d'Images, Senator Film Produktion and Traumhaus

Studios for “Stitch Head”; and MAUR film, Vivement Lundi !, Artichoke and ZVVIKS for “Tales from the Magic Garden” in the Producer of the Year category. In the Director of the Year category, the nominees were Irene Iborra Rizo for “Olivia and the Invisible Earthquake”, Maïlys Vallade and Liane-Cho Han for “Little Amélie or the Character of Rain”, and Ugo Bienvenu for “Arco”. For Distributor of the Year, the nominees were Flins y Pinículas (Spain) and Kino Mediteran (Croatia).

#### **Cartoon Movie Tributes 2026 winners:**

- Producer of the Year: **Special Touch Studios** (France) / **Paul Thiltges Distributions** (Luxembourg) / **Lunanime** (Belgium) / **Need Productions** (Belgium) / **Yzanakio** (Canada) for “**Allah Is Not Obliged**”.
- Distributor of the Year: **Les Films du Préau** (France).
- Director of the Year: **Reza Memari** for “**The Last Whale Singer**” (Germany).

#### **About Cartoon Movie**

Since its first edition in 1999, 513 films have been financially supported by Cartoon Movie with a total budget of €3,42 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, Magelis, Creative industries hub in Angoulême, 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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