

European Animation Awards to Launch in 2017

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JUNE 27, 2016 | 03:54AM PT

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Despite Brexit, the U.K. to play an important part in an highly inclusive European project

Brexit notwithstanding, Europe looks set to have a new prize event, the European Animation Awards (EAA), which are inspired by America's Annie Awards and backed by many of the preeminent figures in Europe's animation industry.

The new plaudits come after a period of "massive growth" of Europe's animation industry, which merits broader kudos recognition, said Jean-Paul Commin, EAA secretary general, who added that the United Kingdom "is and will remain, despite Brexit, an active player in our project."

"There has been a huge improvement not only in the quantity but quality of animation in Europe. We have some of the best animation schools and European animated features are travelling better," he said.

The first European Animation Awards gala ceremony will take place in 2017. Peter Lord, creative director of Aardman Animations and producer of many of Europe's

most-watched animated movies – such as the stop-motion “Chicken Run” and “Wallace and Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit” – has been named president of the EAAs.

Vice-presidents are Dane Marie Bro, based out of Copenhagen’s Danske TegneFilm (“The Boy Who Wanted To Be a Bear”); France’s Didier Brunner, the dean of Europe’s 2D animation (“The Triplets of Belleville,” the “Kirikou” franchise) who originated the idea of the EAA; and Ireland’s Paul Young, at Cartoon Saloon, producer of “The Secret of Kells,” “Song of the Sea” and now “The Breadwinner,” whose co-producers include New York’s Gkids and Angeline Jolie-Pitt. Between them, Aardman, Brunner, when at Les Armateurs, and Cartoon Saloon have won seven U.S. Academy Award nominations for best animated feature since the award’s launch in 2002.

Founding members also include the U.K.’s Michael Rose, a producer on Fernando Trueba’s Oscar-nominated “Chico & Rita.”

The EAA held its first board meeting at Lyon’s Cartoon Movie this March and first general assembly at France’s Annecy Animation Festival in mid-June. Both Cartoon, an initiative of Europe’s Creative Europe Media Programme, and Annecy will collaborate with the EAAs, Commin said.

Despite growth, Europe has no specific awards event dedicated entirely to animation: National cinema prize events, the U.K.’s Baftas and France’s Cesars, simply recognise a best animated feature. Aiming to become “the highest animation honour in Europe,” the EAA will give far broader recognition to many key arts and craft posts in maybe as many as 18 to 20 categories. Juries look set to select the original longlists, but the final winners will be selected by EAA members. That makes it essential for the EAA to reach out to a large membership spread across Europe, which might include animation school students, Commin said.

The EAA will appoint a full-time director and ambassadors to represent them over Europe’s 40-odd countries.

Just what an EAA Award might be called is now under discussion. The favoured idea is the Emiles, in part honour of France’s Emile Cohl, one of the first animators in Europe, though eclipsed in his lifetime by George Melies.

John Hopewell contributed to this report

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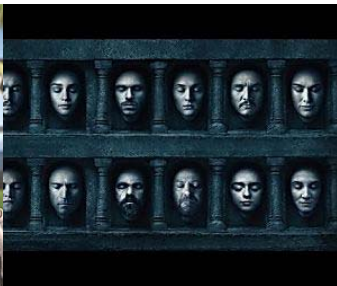
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