

FOCUS ON SWISS ANIMATION – AN INTRODUCTION TO SWISS ANIMATION – ZAGREB 2010

It is a great pleasure and honour for Swiss animation to present – under the name FOCUS ON SWISS ANIMATION – the Swiss animated creation of the last few years at the Animafest Festival of Zagreb 2010, a festival dedicated to animated films and one of the leading animation events in the world.

Swiss animation, which started to develop in earnest in the 60s, has an excellent reputation globally, and features at many festivals abroad as well as in Switzerland. The big names in Swiss Animation are also big names in the field of worldwide animation, as demonstrated by two of the most famous Swiss animators: Georges Schwizgebel and Ernest “Nag” Anserge. But these two animation superstars, who raised Swiss’s animation’s global profile, are just the two trees out of a forest full of young and talented people, all of whom are looking forward to emerging from the woods and discovering the world for themselves.

SWISS FILMS – the national agency for the promotion of Swiss cinema – in collaboration with Animafest – offers these young animators that very opportunity. It proposes that audiences discover an overview of Switzerland’s “animated” artistic creation from the early 70s to present, showcasing nearly 60 films in four different programs. A unique occasion to see or to revisit the classics, but also to discover new names on the Swiss animation scene, such as Isabelle Favez, Claude Barras, Maja Gehrig, Claudius Gentinetta, Marina Rosset, Rafael Sommerhalder and, last but not least, Samuel et Frédéric Guillaume. At the end, a rich and large choice of different animated techniques will be proposed for viewing at Animafest.

The World Festival of Animated Film in Zagreb invited Georges Schwizgebel to create the trailer of its 20th anniversary edition and the globally reputed animator accepted this invitation. It is therefore natural that we offer the audience in Zagreb a FULL RETROSPECTIVE of his work. From the very beginning, the animated “paintings” of the Swiss master continue to fascinate all eyes that are offered the chance to see or revisit these jewels of animated cinema. Presented in festivals worldwide, the unique, magical and poetical world of Georges Schwizgebel is stopping off in Zagreb for a 14-film journey.

The second part of the tribute to Swiss animation – the program SWISS ANIMATION YESTERDAY – which is a program composed of 17 films and curated by the Swiss Animated Film Group for its own 30th Birthday, shows the Animafest audience a decade of Swiss animated films, from the early 90s to the end of the last century. This affords a unique chance to discover or rediscover highly singular and striking works of Swiss animated cinema. In addition to the great names mentioned earlier, we’ll have the pleasure of viewing original works produced by art schools and young talented filmmakers. Most of the animated techniques are represented and various themes been put into images: from political comments to satirical visions, as well as artistic and visual experimentations.

Directly after the second program, the third program, which is called SWISS ANIMATION TODAY – highlights the major names in Swiss animation today, at the beginning of this new century. Claude Barras and Cédric Louis “Banquise” (screened in official competition in Cannes 2006), Isabelle Favez’ “Valise”, Zoltan Horvath with “Nosferatu Tango”, Claudius Gentinetta & Frank Braun with “The Cablecar” or Samuel and Frédéric Guillaume with “Bonne journée Monsieur M.” The Guillaume Twins directed the first long animated film in Swiss cinema with “Max & Co.”, and opened the door for others, namely Claude Barras and Cédric Louis, who are in production of their first feature animated film.

A panorama of Swiss animated films wouldn't be complete without a program dedicated to works made and produced by art schools. In the SWISS SCHOOL PROGRAMME, the audience can see about 15 films, most of them produced at the HSLU (Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts) with works by Maja Gehrig, Marina Rosset, Jadwiga Kowalska or Rafael Sommerhalder. These names, amongst many others in that program, are without doubt the names that will make Swiss animated cinema tomorrow, as most of these rising talents feature in world animation today, and look forward to following in the footsteps of Georges Schwizgebel and Nag Ansoerge.

Finally, I would briefly like to mention that Swiss animated cinema is also very present in the different section of the Festival in Zagreb, as illustrated by the fact that of the seven Swiss production or co-production presented, five of them are in a competitive section. This shows once again the extraordinary vitality of our national animated cinema.

For this journey through Swiss animated film, we had to make difficult choices of films and filmmakers. We would have loved to have screened many other movies and animators, but there is simply not enough space to show it all. However, we strongly believe that there will be many other places and opportunities in the very near future to present the excellent quality of Swiss production in this specific field of cinema.

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