

**PRESS RELEASE:**

**40<sup>th</sup> OULU INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH FILM FESTIVAL WINNERS 2021**

**Free for publication**

**ECFA Award**

Given by the International Jury: THE APE STAR

Director: Linda Hambäck

**ECFA Short Film Award**

Given by the International Jury: 90%

Director: Jerry Hoffmann

**Children's Film Competition**

Starboy Award given by the Children's Jury:

director Guðjón Ragnarsson

Film: RAISE THE BAR

**Youth Film Competition**

Global Future Prize given by the Youth Film Competition Jury: BORN2DRIVE

Director: Daniel Fahre

**Finnish Competition**

Look at Me... Award of the Media Foundation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland:

FINDERS OF THE LOST YACHT

Director: Taavi Vartia

**ECFA AWARD: THE APE STAR**

The ECFA Award was founded by the European Children's Film Association in 2010. It is given to the best European film in the Children's Film Competition by the International Jury – foundress and director of “Ojo de Pescado” International Film Festival of Children and Youth **Alejandra Fritis Zapata** from Chile, director, screenwriter and producer **Vivian Papageorgiou** from Greece and a teacher of Film Studies at Oulu University **Aino Isojärvi** from Finland.

The winner is *THE APE STAR* directed by **Linda Hambäck**.

Jury statement: *“This year's feature film selection was bold and versatile and gave a lovely insight to contemporary European children's film. The winning feature, The Ape Star, is a delightful, self-aware, and self-confident 2D production with creative, colourful aesthetics and a rebellious spirit. The film offers diverse representation of intriguing characters seeking beneath the surface. It embraces heartfelt themes of loneliness and acceptance, extending the significance of having a family to fondness, togetherness and communality.”*

**Director Linda Hambäck:** *“Thank you so much for giving me and the film The Ape Star, me and my team, this fantastic award of ECFA. I'm very very happy. Thank you so much!”*

**ECFA Short Film Award: 90%**

ECFA Short Film Award was founded by the European Children's Film Association in 2018. It is given to the best European film in the Children's Film Competition by the same International Jury this year for the first time in the history of the festival.

The winner is 90% directed by **Jerry Hoffmann**.

Jury statement: *"It was an honor to have the opportunity to watch seven amazing films with different cinematic approaches and techniques that reflect important thematic issues. Although it was a tough decision, we found that the short film 90% stood apart, because it demonstrated sophisticated cinematography full of youthful energy, from the choices of camera angles to lighting. The use of costumes allowed for a flexible, non-binary identity play. Overall, the exploration of cinematic means constructed a narrative which, although portraying difficult and very personal themes, shed intimate, yet comforting and joyful light on the various screen encounters and their significance. The acting of the protagonists was convincing and passionate and also the music complemented the film's atmosphere, uplifting its occasionally dark tones."*

#### **STARBOY AWARD: RAISE THE BAR**

The Children's Jury gave the Starboy Award, sponsored by Oulun Energia, to the director of the best film in the Children's Film Competition. The award consists of 2500 euros.

The winner of the Children's Film Competition is **Guðjón Ragnarsson** with his film RAISE THE BAR.

Jury statement: *"The award-winning film differs from more conventional documentaries because of its strong, developing and surprising plot arc as well as its unexpected twists and climax, all of which result from real events. From a humble hobby rises a more and more goal-oriented team under the guidance of an enthusiastic and unprejudiced parent-turned-coach whose methods are questioned by outsiders from time to time. The key messages of the documentary, as noted by the children's jury who are the same age as the team in the film, are the important and topical aspects of equality, acceptance and striving for a common goal."*

**Director Guðjón Ragnarsson** comments: *"It was such an honor to hear that our film "Raise the bar" won the Starboy award in the Children's Film Competition. It gives me extra pleasure to hear that the film resonates with the young audience. Young people are the future and the film was made with that as a guiding light. I am so happy with this award! I'm truly humbled and speechless. Thank you!"*

#### **Honorable mention**

The Children's Jury gave an honorable mention to director **Martin Mieke-Renard** for his Danish film BUSTER'S WORLD. *"The film looks at topics that adults find difficult to encounter, such as dying and being different, through the eyes of the 11-year-old title character in a natural and positive way. Bewildering and mishap-ridden moments are approached with humour. The possibility of relating to emotions helps with overcoming different situations. With the compassionate Buster, it is easy to follow the plot and experience the world optimistically even in moments of grief."*

#### **GLOBAL FUTURE PRIZE: BORN2DRIVE**

Awarded by The Finnish 4H Organization's Association in Oulu, the 1000-euro Global Future Prize is given by a jury of young people to the best youth film in the festival. The winner is BORN2DRIVE by **Daniel Fahre**.

Jury statement: *"This year's winner of the Youth Film Competition is an eventful and exciting film. It is very fast-paced and gives you shivers. The film is well shot and its sound well recorded. We were able to identify and imagine ourselves in the film. The choice was clear."*

**Director Daniel Fahre**: *"Thank you for this award. We are truly honored to receive it. I wish to thank all the crew, and the Solberg family for letting us follow them with a camera. Our goal with this film was to make an*

*action packed and entertaining documentary for a young audience, so to win at Oulu International Children's and Youth Film Festival means a lot to us. Thank you!"*

#### **LOOK AT ME... AWARD OF THE MEDIA FOUNDATION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF FINLAND: FINDERS OF THE LOST YACHT**

The Media Foundation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland grants a 1500-euro award to a Finnish feature or short film at the festival. This year the recipient was chosen by **Paula Heino**. The award goes to *FINDERS OF THE LOST YACHT* and its director **Taavi Vartia**.

Comments by **Paula Heino**: *"Finders of the Lost Yacht is based on Väinö Riikkilä's book Viimeiset kaanit (1951). The stories, quite familiar in Finland, are situated in Kotka, a seaside town in South-East Finland. Like a fairytale, the story allows children to step safely into an adventurous world. The movie's central themes are friendship, trust, sense of community and caring for each other. The screenplay shows how polluted the Baltic Sea is, and how South-Eastern Finland goes through structural change. The circumstances affect the lives of the main characters and their families. The music composed by Panu Aaltio and presented by Kymi Sinfonietta, local child actors and their grown-up actor colleagues give the film a genuine touch."*

**Director Taavi Vartia**: *"On behalf of myself and the entire production, I would like to thank you for this recognition. At the same time, I thank the crew and the actors for throwing themselves into the project and the enthusiasm that made possible the completion of the film in very challenging times. Special thanks to our young heroes Olavi, Oskari and Sara, your commitment and bubbling fresh attitude to film making made the story fly. And I would like to thank separately the heirs of the author Väinö Riikkilä, who has trusted me with this classic subject for several decades. This delightful accolade we have now received from Oulu is yet another important milestone for our film and also for our great adventures to come. Thank you.!"*

You can find photos of the winners on our homepage: [www.ouluilmfestival.fi/en/news-winners-2021/](http://www.ouluilmfestival.fi/en/news-winners-2021/)

#### **THE SECOND OULU CHILDREN'S FILM FORUM 16<sup>th</sup> NOV. 2021**

The second Oulu Children's Film Forum was held on Tuesday the 16th of November 2021 in Oulu. The forum consisted of addresses given by professionals and panel discussions where all attendees were encouraged to bring their questions. This year forum discussed the challenges in international production, distribution, and financing of children's films.

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