

PRESS RELEASE:

41st OULU INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH FILM FESTIVAL WINNERS 2022

Free for publication

ECFA Award

Given by the International Jury: MY ROBOT BROTHER

Director: Frederik Nørgaard

ECFA Short Film Award

Given by the International Jury: ORCHESTRA FROM THE LAND OF SILENCE

Director: Lucia Kašová

Children's Film Competition

Children's Film Competition Award given by the Children's Jury:

director Rane Tiukkanen

Film: ROI

Youth Film Competition

Global Future Prize given by the Youth Film Competition Jury: THE ALBANIAN VIRGIN

Director: Bujar Alimani

Finnish Competition

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

BLANKET

Director: Teppo Airaksinen

ECFA AWARD: MY ROBOT BROTHER

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 – festival programmer at the Goldener Spatz and for children's section at the Nordic Film Days Lübeck **Hanna Reifgerst** from Germany, managing curator at the Riga International Film Festival **Kristine Simsons** from Latvia and producer at the Northern Photographic Centre **Taija Jyrkäs** from Finland.

The winner is MY ROBOT BROTHER directed by **Frederik Nørgaard**.

Jury statement: *"The winning film takes the audience on a time travel to the near future. Through the script's creative vision it is rising the question who we are going to be and who we are. Will there be humanoid robots among us during the next decades? What influence will it have on ethics? But the film also deals with everyday matters bringing up topics like family relations and peer pressure. The film has a strong main character who empathetically takes the audience on her journey, balancing technology and humanity. In the end sincere relationships are the ones that matter."*

Director **Frederik Nørgaard**: *"Thank you so much for selecting MY ROBOT BROTHER as one of the ECFA Award candidates of 2022 and for your great and important effort to promote European children's films. It's more important than ever before. Streaming services might be an open window to the audience, but it's unfortunately also a window where the narratives and stories being told become more and more generic and streamlined. And to you dear audience, thank for watching and remember to keep going to the cinema - that is truly where the magic happens."*

ECFA Short Film Award: ORCHESTRA FROM THE LAND OF SILENCE

ECFA Short Film Award was founded by the European Children's Film Association in 2018. It is given to the best European short film by the same International Jury.

The winner is ORCHESTRA FROM THE LAND OF SILENCE directed by Lucia Kašová.

Jury statement: "We keep forgetting that here in Europe we have always had the chance to dream. The winner of the ECFA short film award increases the awareness of another Afghanistan – the one we seldom see in the news. The film also shows the incredible reality that there are still groups of people that are not allowed by the Taliban to play music and enjoy art. With this film it becomes once again clear that documentaries can change the world. And art is part of politics and even war (which we see with an Ukrainian band touring the world telling the story about the war going on in their country), the same important story is told by the film ORCHESTRA FROM THE LAND OF SILENCE."

Director **Lucia Kašová**: *"Thank you so much for this prize on behalf of my producer, the Festival Pohoda, and my amazing crew that travelled to Afghanistan with me. This is for the Zohra Orchestra and for the kids who were able to emigrate to Portugal, all 108 students, and they keep on playing music there. So, this prize goes for them and thank you so much for the award."*

CHILDREN'S FLM COMPETITION AWARD: ROI

The Children's Jury gave the Children's Film Competition 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 **Rane Tiukkanen** with his film ROI.

Jury statement: "ROI is touching, well conceived, executed and gripping. Although it has a wide range of emotions and scenes, it is still effective and the story is told clearly. The plot is clear, it moves at an appropriate pace and has unpredictable twists and turns. The actors are skilled in their roles, each character's personality is easy to discern and the dogs are well trained. The film is realistic and has things that could happen in real life."

Director **Rane Tiukkanen** comments: *"I am overwhelmed, happy and extremely grateful for the selection of the Oulu International Children's and Youth Film Festival jury and the award for Roi! This has been a film that the whole team has put their hearts into, from script to shooting and post-production. I can certainly say on behalf of the whole team that this award means a lot to us all. For me, this story of Roi, of girls and boys, children and adults, has always been a very personal one because of its themes and milieu. For me, this film is about acceptance and being accepted. I hope that we can relate to each other, people and animals with compassion and see through the mistakes that have been made and accept difference, in all its forms. To quote Valo, the heroine of the film, it doesn't matter if you are a cat or a dog. It's up to you to decide what you want to be. Thank you!"*

Honorable mention

The Children's Jury gave an honorable mention to directors Ben Stassen and Benjamin Mousquet for their Belgian-French film CHICKENHARE AND THE HAMSTER OF DARKNESS. *"The film is fast-paced and colourful, with fun and effective animated characters. Despite the exciting situations, the film is not scary and the most important thing is that being different is not an obstacle to success. Audience members even younger than the Jury immersed themselves in the story enthusiastically."*

GLOBAL FUTURE PRIZE: THE ALBANIAN VIRGIN

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 THE ALBANIAN VIRGIN by **Bujar Alimani**.

Jury statement: *"The film we have chosen, through not so mutual agreement, was serious and touching. The time and place of the events are not very distant but the culture depicted was very different compared to ours and the world is viewed from a different perspective. The character development was smooth and we liked the visual elements of the film."*

Director **Bujar Alimani**: *"The Albanian Virgin has been a long and very difficult journey. Made in two seasons with a distance from one to another, it marks the longest production of my career. I am happy that the film is finally making the way of festivals around the world and is being appreciated by critics and the public. Such a film comes from an important cinema of a small country where its events attract more and more cinematographers inside and outside Albania. We strengthened the European support of our co-producers with the power of interpretation of Albanian actresses, bringing to the big screen a piece of Albania of the past and the future."*

LOOK AT ME... AWARD OF THE MEDIA FOUNDATION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF FINLAND: BLANKET

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 **Urpu Sarlin**. The award goes to *BLANKET* and its director **Teppo Airaksinen**.

Comments by **Urpu Sarlin**: *"The theme of the film is very topical. The child lives in the midst of a war, like millions of children in Europe today. On its part, the film can help us understand and support children who are now living in the shadow of war. The film is a skilful feat. The narration is slow in tempo but keeps its grip in a magical way. The angles highlight the child's perspective. The lead role is played discreetly and gracefully. The child's experience is at the heart of the whole story."*

Director **Teppo Airaksinen**: *"Thank you for this award you gave to Blanket. The film was shot about two years ago, and of course it is now more topical than ever. It was shot before the events in Ukraine, which of course have now put the whole film in a different light. But it was made with love and passion and of course the film should serve as an example that hopefully better times are ahead."*

You can find photos of the winners on our homepage: www.ouluilmfestival.fi/en/news-winners-2022/

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