

PRESS RELEASE:

42nd OULU INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH FILM FESTIVAL WINNERS 2023

Free for publication

A BETTER WORLD Award

Antonia Ringbom

ECFA Award

Given by the International Jury: TOTEM

Director: Sander Burger

ECFA Short Film Award

Given by the International Jury: DON'T BLOW IT UP

Director: Alžbeta Mačáková Mišejková

Children's Film Competition

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

Director: Ted Kjellsson

Film: HÅKAN BRÅKAN

Youth Film Competition

Global Future Prize given by the Youth Film Competition Jury: UFO SWEDEN

Director: Crazy Pictures

Finnish Competition

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

Director: Petteri Saario

Film: RAP AND REINDEER

The festival launches a Godmother partnership with Pia Hiltunen, Member of Parliament.

A BETTER WORLD Award

A brand new award is given to an individual, an organisation, or, for example, a working group, who has made a contribution to the field of children's and youth cinema. The first A Better World Award goes to animation artist **Antonia Ringbom**. Over the decades, she has, among other things, run hundreds of film workshops for children and young people around the world, especially in Africa.

Antonia Ringbom: *"A better world. Wow, what a beautiful name for the award. My ambition is to be empathetic, understanding and present. I believe in equality and co-operation. In the beginning of the 80s the world looked almost as terrible as now. The threat of nuclear bomb and pollution made me make the film Anima and the Monster Destruktor. The monster turned out to be conducted by humans. So it was also possible to be stopped by humans. Should be done now. The Yellow Giraffe TV series took me to Africa in the 90's. The Senegalese started the cultural centre RIAC, now participating in a co-production called Les copains, Friends. Hope, optimism, pacifism, solidarity need a lot of support and force now. But creativity and art, nature, being together... We can not only cry, we must lunge, laugh, dream in colours. For a better world. Thanks!"*

ECFA AWARD: TOTEM

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: Icelandic actress and screenwriter **Kolbrún Anna Björnsdóttir**, **Marta Kraus**, director of the Polish international children and youth film festival KINOKLUB, and **Alexi Puranen**, screenwriter and producer of the Oulu-based production company Whatevergroup.

The winner is TOTEM directed by **Sander Burger**.

Jury statement: *"In a world full of borders and social obstacles, Ama, a strong and determined girl fights for her right to have big dreams and a place to call home. The actors, especially the lead perform really well in a wide spectrum of emotions. The film has a distinct and consistent - dark and raw - visual style that's different from what we usually see in children's films. The spirit animal is a fun and clever way to visualize the themes of freedom and equality while also adding a heightened touch to the overall mood and look of the film. The film takes the audience on an adventure while still beautifully maintaining a sense of realism, but never falls into the trap of gender stereotypes. The grown-ups don't have all the answers. Even the parents sometimes do the wrong things for the right reasons that is of course love. The film is a beautiful and edgy reminder for us all of how everybody should be treated equally."*

Director **Sander Burger**: *"We are over the moon with the ECFA Competition Award at the Oulu International Children's and Youth Film Festival. Thank you for the incredible honour! In TOTEM Ama discovers her roots on a courageous odyssey through Rotterdam with a smidgen of magic. We hope that the audience felt inspired to stand for your rights no matter what age and to stimulate the imagination. Truly amazing to see how TOTEM resonates in different countries and to receive such heartwarming reactions."*

ECFA Short Film Award: DON'T BLOW IT UP

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 DON'T BLOW IT UP directed by **Alžbeta Mačáková Mišejková**.

Jury statement: *"The winner has a clear story and message. It's a beautiful, universal story that applies to both young and adult audiences. The inner mood of the characters is portrayed in an inventive way. The film shows an honest essence of a childhood without falling into the trap of gender stereotyping."*

Producer **Martin Vandas**: *"If our film is about not being puffed up and insulted, then this award is the way to go. We are very happy about it because it is a film that a mother made for her children and about her children. And now she has to show them that she won't be puffed up with pride that she won such an amazing and prestigious ECFA Short Film Award."*

CHILDREN'S FLM COMPETITION AWARD: HÅKAN BRÅKAN

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 3000 euros.

The winner of the Children's Film Competition is **Ted Kjellsson** with his film HÅKAN BRÅKAN.

Jury statement: *"A lot of effort has gone into devising the plot of the film. It is well scripted, well executed, easy to follow and inspiring. One of the lessons to be learned from the story is that adults can play and have*

fun in the same way as children. The plot has exciting underlying ideas and twists, with music and sound effects to contribute to them. There is plenty of humour in the events and dialogue and a climax in every scene. The structure is good because it is compelling, creative and unpredictable. All the actors do well in their roles, in showing emotion and are believable, with special mention to Håkan and the funny security guards. The quality of the cinematography is good and the video game world is effective and coherent."

Leading actor **Silas Strand**: *"Thanks for this award. It means a lot to me and the people behind the movie. Rakastan Oulua!"*

Honorable mention

The Children's Jury gave an honorable mention to director **Andrei Huțuleac** for his Romanian film THE WISHING TREE: CHILDHOOD MEMORIES. *"The film is touching and sad in a good way. It is also unique in that it tells the story of a young person with cancer, a subject rarely dealt with in children's films. The plot moves along smoothly and the actors know how to immerse themselves in their roles. It is skilfully shot and the subject is beautifully handled. The idea of a fantasy world and the wishing tree leading to it is a very good one."*

GLOBAL FUTURE PRIZE: UFO SWEDEN

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 UFO SWEDEN by **Crazy Pictures**.

Jury statement: *"The characters were well written and the audience was interested in what would happen to them. Creative camera work and high-quality music created a good mood and the sound design was effective. The film was exciting and funny and kept the viewer interested throughout, right from the gripping beginning. The plot was not predictable and the film's story unfolded in a suitably swift and straightforward manner. It was a positive surprise that the film dealt not only with UFOs but also with human relationships. It had a nice 80s-90s sci-fi vibe to it."*

Crazy Pictures: *"What an honor to receive this award from the Oulu jury. Thank you very much! We're so glad that the film has been received so well in all ages and especially among the youth audience!"*

LOOK AT ME... AWARD OF THE MEDIA FOUNDATION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF FINLAND: RAP AND REINDEER

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 **Outi Rousu**. The award goes to director **Petteri Saario** for his documentary *RAP AND REINDEER*.

Comments by **Outi Rousu**: *"The film cleverly ties together three stories. The film closely follows the protagonist, a young man, as he reflects on his life choices and his own identity. Through its protagonist, the film examines the culture and status of minorities, in this case the Sámi, but also how important nature and living in harmony with nature are to us. This makes the viewer reflect on the life values and the global issue of the state of the environment and climate change. The film rightly extends an invitation to the viewer: 'Look at me'."*

Director **Petteri Saario**: *"A warm thank you for this great honour. As a documentary filmmaker, I think it is extremely important to make films for a young audience. It is somewhat shameful how little we know about the Sámi, the indigenous people of Finland. It has been a pleasure to make the film and follow Mihkku's life for several years."*

You can find photos of the winners on our homepage: <https://www.ouluilmfestival.fi/en/news-winners-2023/>

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Festival director Mika Anttolainen
mika.anttolainen@oufilmcenter.fi

Festival producer Marja Seppänen
producer@oufilmcenter.fi

www.ouluilmfestival.fi/en/home/