



## Jury report Best Children's Film

### 32<sup>nd</sup> edition Cinekid Festival 2018

The Jury consists of

*Marleen Slot*

*Maria Christina Villaseñor*

*Joya Thome*

*Jessica Kiang*

*Ernie Tee*

From micro animations aimed at the very young, to genre titles made in the image of Hollywood blockbusters, to sophisticated, older-skewing independent productions giving us honest insider experiences of cultures from across four continents, the 15 films selected for the 2018 Cinekid Best Children's Film Competition truly reflect the bristling diversity and liveliness of the international youth-movie scene. But if the selection speaks to Cinekid's commitment to inspiring kids of all ages with the sheer joy of cinema, it also made judging this eclectic and variegated selection a challenge for the International Jury. The differing perspectives from our five members -- a filmmaker, a producer, a programmer, a teacher and a critic -- made for some crackling and instructive conversations about the nature of children's film, in an atmosphere of mutual respect and irreverent good humor in which it was a real privilege and pleasure to participate.

Given all those variables, it's perhaps surprising that our final decision should have been unanimous, but we believe that speaks to the inarguable quality and value of the four titles we're highlighting:

#### **Wangdrak's Rain Boots**, directed by Lhapal Gyal

A Finalist Nomination goes to Lhapal Gyal's lyrical, beautifully shot and performed "Wangdrak's Rain Boots" the shimmeringly lovely story of a little boy in rural Tibet who, during a season of rain and flooding, longs for a pair of Wellington boots such as those worn by his schoolmates. This charming film, embedded with deep fondness and authenticity in a little-seen culture, is a terrific example of how the sweetest and simplest of stories can be elevated by superlative, evocative craftsmanship, with perhaps only its slight overlength keeping it from occupying a higher position here.

#### **Supa Modo**, director by Likarion Wainaina

Length is not an issue for our second Finalist Nomination, Likarion Wainaina's "Supa Modo," which moves with bright, colorful speed through the heartbreaking yet optimistic story of an irrepressible, superhero-obsessed Kenyan girl with terminal cancer. The film is remarkable for avoiding sentimentality and broadening its focus out from its stouthearted protagonist, to embrace the family members and community beyond. They say it takes a village to raise a child; with humor, warmth and a moving faith in the healing power of cinema and storytelling, "Supa Modo" gives us an unforgettable portrait of the courage and kindness that a village can display when it is about to lose one.

#### Special Mention: **Winter Flies**, directed by Olmo Omerzu

Far from the sun-baked earth of Africa, the dirty snow and slush of wintertime in the Czech countryside is the setting for Olmo Omerzu's "Winter Flies," to which we award our Special Mention. Although thematically suitable only for the upper end of the Cinekids' age bracket, this melancholic but mischievous story of two young runaways making an illicit cross-country road-trip through a forbidding frozen landscape deals with its provocative topics with grace and wit,



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building to a surprisingly moving depiction of an odd-couple, against-the-odds friendship. And on every level of craft -- cinematography, editing, performance and scripting -- it is outstanding, delivering its offbeat story so sensitively that it also functions as a masterclass in finding beauty and meaning in the starkest of circumstances.

Winner: Rosie & Moussa, directed by Dorothee Van Den Berghe

Our overall winner lies somewhere between the ready accessibility of "Supa Modo" and the more challenging young-adult orientation of "Winter Flies" but that doesn't make it a compromise choice. Rather, in Dorothee Van Den Berghe's "Rosie & Moussa" we found the film we all agreed best embodies the true spirit of Cinekid. Lovingly made, beautifully photographed, and powered by two potentially star-making performances from young, first-time actors Savannah Vandendriessche and Imad Borji, it's a film that wears its cultural and social wisdom so lightly that it never feels like a "message" movie. Instead this Brussels-set story of tentative connection overflows with compassion for all of its characters, and maintains, with clear eyes and a full heart, a perfect balance between the bittersweet realities of life in a fractured family, and the consolations of friendship, growing self-confidence and a sparkling imagination. It was one of the first films we saw, but despite all the wonders we experienced, in all the worlds we visited subsequently, it never left us.



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