

FRANK GLADSTONE AND MICHAL MINICH-MLCOUSEK: BAB 2024 DIALOGUE

What are your impressions from what you experienced at the Biennial of Animation Bratislava 2024?

When I got to Bratislava and saw the opening moments of the festival, I thought, “This is really more than I expected!” It really was professionally done and very well presented. It seemed like there was a solid history behind the event and that you and your team had a lot of experience. I simply hadn’t heard about the festival before, which is true, so from my point of view, the Biennial was, in a very positive way, a happy surprise and more than I had anticipated. Of course, I had a great time. I got to do something that I love to do, which, basically, was to talk about animation. I decided to approach my presentation like a candid discussion, and I was very gratified about how well my talk was accepted by everyone there. So, at the risk of repeating myself, I think that everything worked great; the festival presentation was great, the organization was great, and everything seemed to happen pretty much on time, which never happens in festivals. All in all, it was really well done.

What would be some of your advice for our future?

The Biennial should grow more, become a little bit bigger and more encompassing. Not so much bigger, however, that you lose the festival's intimacy, which is such an important strength. That said, it is also important to stay focused on the Biennial's mission, recognizing and celebrating films for children. That way, the event can continue to develop goals and a definitive style and personality. Once that is established, it's only going to get better and better. Of course, Mishko, this is predicated on you being a part of it. I know the festival has been around, in one iteration or another, for a long time, but you and BIBIANA are, for all intents and purposes, ushering in a new era.

How do you suggest you would invite guests to participate next time?

Well, I am thinking it's going to be in two parts. Think about making a two-day event for the Biennial. Perhaps the first day would be specifically for children, with professionals jurying the nominated films and also featuring special presentations by filmmakers and historians. The second day could be more focused on the filmmakers; those who are in the industry and who concentrate on children's programming, discussing the ins and outs of filmmaking for kids. The pros might be here for both days, but the first day would be films and the second day; presentations, panels and workshops. Finally the last half of the second day would be reserved for the awards. I know this is all just conjecture right now and the festival needs an organizational deep dive but, at the end of the day, the structure will drive the event. You will not only have space for the young kids and the older kids - the high school kids, even college kids - but also a place for professionals to network and discuss and deal with the issues that everyone in our industry has. You will have to publicize this. You will have to talk to people about it and show them something to get them excited. I know there's a lot of footage from the 2024 Biennial that could be made into a “sizzle reel” and, with that as an introduction, you

can develop your Biennial of Animation Bratislava “elevator pitch” to raise interest and attendance.

What would you say to a potential guest or panelist to attend?

First of all, I would find the people who are invested in children’s programming, both the filmmakers and also the broadcast network reps, streaming service programmers, gaming companies, feature film producers, distributors and so forth. I would sit down with these folks and ask them, “Do you know about the Biennial of Animation Bratislava? Let me tell you a little bit about it and what we’ve planned for this coming year.” This means that you have planned, to some extent, what the Biennial is going to offer before you go out and talk with the people you want to recruit. Once the plan is set, and you have a teaser (your sizzle reel, for instance) and something you can leave with them, like a brochure, then it’s “Have you been there? This is a great place for you to meet. We need you on our jury. We’d like you to make a presentation. We’d like you to sit on a panel. We want to give you an award!” I know for me, personally, I only want to go to festivals where I’ve got something to do; an assignment so to speak. There are others who are most interested in who they may get to meet and talk with on a personal basis. For them, you need to be able to say, “You know who is going to be there? The head of programming for such and such. Last year’s Oscar winner. This important filmmaker. The Biennial is organized so that you’ll have the opportunity to talk with them.”

For others, outside of our dialogue here, how would you summarize your whole experience with the Biennial of Animation Bratislava?

I met a lot of great people there and I had a wonderful time. And it was a real honor to address the participants and get so many thoughtful questions about my own 50-year career in animation. Of course, it was also an honor to receive the Albín Brunovský Honorary Medal. More than that though, to me, was the great collection of films we saw, the enthusiasm of everyone there and also the potential for the Biennial of Animation Bratislava to become a world class event. Maybe we’ll see each other in Bratislava for the next Biennial in 2026. In fact, I am already looking forward to it!

Thank you so much, Frank!



Frank Gladstone is a member of the International Jury of the Biennial of Animation Bratislava. He has been working as a professional animator, producer, director, writer, and teacher for more than 50 years. From 1973 to 1989, he managed his own Emmy award-winning studio, Persistence of Vision, Inc., producing commercials and educational films. Since then, he has worked for the feature animation divisions at Disney, Warner Bros., IDT/Starz Media, and DreamWorks.

Currently, he is president of his own animation consulting firm, Gladstone Film, Inc., and is the past Executive Director of ASIFA-Hollywood, the largest honorary animation society in the world. In that capacity, Frank has also been the executive producer of the annual and influential Annie Awards.

Mr. Gladstone was a producer at Warner Bros. Feature Animation and for Walt Disney Feature Animation, he worked with production crews on *Rescuers Down Under*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin*, *The Lion King*, *Pocahontas*, and *Mulan*. His feature film credits with DreamWorks include *The Road to Eldorado*, *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron*, *Sinbad: Legend of the Seven Seas*, and *Shark Tale*.