



Animayo reveals its surprise star guest: John Musker, legendary Disney director, for the first time at a festival in Spain

Musker will head Animayo's Oscar-qualifying animated short competition jury

- **John Musker will chair the International Jury of Animayo Gran Canaria 2024, where the winning piece will earn a direct pass to the preselection for the Oscar® Awards, making Animayo the first and only animation festival in Spain qualified by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in Hollywood for the Best Animated Short Film category.**
- **John Musker is the director of unforgettable titles such as "The Little Mermaid", "Hercules", "Aladdin," and "Moana" from Walt Disney Animation Studios, where he worked for 40 years as an animator, writer, director and producer.**
- **For the first time at a festival in Spain, at Animayo Gran Canaria, Musker will lead the master class 'Bringing Dreams to Screens,' focusing on writing and directing animated feature films, and the drawing workshop 'Three Wishes.'**
- **Animayo will host the Spanish premiere of John Musker's short film "I'm Hip" (2023), followed by his exclusive master class 'How It Was Made' on Wednesday, May 8 at 6:00 PM at Espacio CICCA, with free admission until full capacity is reached.**
- **Animayo is also unique in its class in Spain in qualifying the best short film of animation in the Spanish language "animation with Ñ," also awarded with a direct pass to the preselection for the Oscar® Awards.**

Damián Perea, director and producer of Animayo Gran Canaria, has finally revealed the name of the surprise star for its 19th edition, a closely guarded secret until now. It is none other than John Musker, the legendary Disney director known for films like "The Little Mermaid," "Hercules," "Aladdin," and "Moana," and who has a 40-year legacy at Walt Disney Animation Studio as an animator, writer, director, and producer.

Once again this year, Animayo has managed to get Musker to participate for the first time in an animation festival in Spain. A full participation, as he will preside over the Animayo Gran Canaria 2024 International Jury, give a drawing workshop and a master class on writing and directing animated feature films. In addition, Animayo will host **the Spanish premiere** of his short film "**I'm Hip**", **followed by an exclusive master class** in which John Musker will explain the 'how he made' this animated musical, among others, selected for the Annecy screenings and on the short list of the latest Oscar® Awards.

Getting to know him better, John currently lives in La Cañada, California, with his wife Gale, a former Disney researcher. **He grew up in Chicago, Illinois**, as part of a large Irish Catholic family. He pursued English Literature at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, with two years at CalArts (California Institute of the Arts) as part of the new Character Animation Program in the mid-1970s. There he not only learned from Disney and Chouinard veterans like Elmer Plummer, Bill Moore, and Ken O'Connor, but also from classmates such as Brad Bird, Henry Selick, John Lasseter, Tim Burton, and Chris Buck. **At Disney, his mentor was Eric Larson, one of the legendary "Nine Old Men,"** known for animating the cat Figaro in "Pinocchio" among other distinguished characters.

Musker became an animator on "The Fox and the Hound" (1981), and later teamed up with Ron Clements to direct "The Great Mouse Detective" (1986) alongside Disney veterans Burny Mattinson and Dave Michener. Ron and John went on to write and direct "The Little Mermaid" (1989), which John co-produced with Howard Ashman. They also wrote and directed several subsequent animated films including "Aladdin" (1992), "Hercules" (1997), "Treasure Planet" (2002), and "The Princess and the Frog" (2009). John's most recent project was "Moana" (2016), once again directed with Ron Clements, along with co-directors Don Hall and Chris Williams.

In spring 2018, John Musker retired from Disney Feature Animation and **in spring 2023 completed the hand-drawn animation for his own short film, "I'm Hip,"** which was then shortlisted for Best Animated Short Film at this year's Oscar® Awards.

John Musker's actions will be added to those of more than 30 star guest speakers for this 19th edition of Animayo, International Festival of Animation, Visual Effects and Video Games, which will be held in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria from 8 to 11 May, both included. Outstanding guests "come to share their knowledge, transmit their experiences in a close way, to teach and motivate new generations, professionals who mingle and interact with the public at the Festival, participating in autograph signings," as stated by Damián Perea.

John Musker's first appearance will be on Wednesday, May 8 at 6:00 PM, with free entry until full capacity is reached, **at the CICC space** where he will take part in the live presentation of this edition's guests and **where his Spanish premiere short film "I'm Hip" will be screened,** followed by his exclusive master class on how this animated piece was made, featuring a cat absorbed in a jazz song and dance, humorously proclaiming his "modernity" to the world, who is less convinced than he is. **The following day, Thursday, May 9, from 4:30 to 8:30 PM, he will conduct the animated**

drawing workshop 'Three Wishes', and on **Saturday, May 11**, from 10:00 to 11:30 AM, he will deliver his master class 'Bringing Dreams to Screens' focusing on the writing and direction of animated feature films.

Moreover, as previously mentioned, John Musker will serve as the **president of the International Jury at Animayo Gran Canaria 2024**, whose winning piece in this category will get a direct pass to the Oscar® Awards pre-selection, as **Animayo is the first and only animation festival in Spain to qualify for the Oscar® Awards in the international animation short film category**. Joining Musker on this jury will be Shuzo Shiota (Japan), Elena ø Alexa (Denmark), Patrick O'Keefe (Los Angeles, USA), and Sara Koppel (Denmark and USA).

At this point, it should be noted that since 2022 **Animayo is also the only festival of its kind that qualifies the best animated work in the Spanish language "animación con Ñ"**, so it will grant a **second direct pass to the Oscar® pre-selection** to the winning piece determined by **the jury for this section, which will be made up of:** Gisela Prunés (Los Angeles, USA, and Barcelona), Lucía Peralta (Madrid, Spain), Gustavo Sánchez Pérez (Toronto, Canada), Ramón Rosa (Madrid, Spain), and Mercedes Delgado (Toronto, Canada). In addition to these, the Festival has the Cinematics, VFX, and Music Videos Jury composed of: Gisela Prunés, Lucía Peralta, Gustavo Sánchez Pérez, Ramón Rosa, and Mercedes Delgado.

In total, contenders for the Official Animayo Palmarés, comprised of 5 official international competition sections, include the 'My First Festival' official section for children. The selection of **short films resulting from an annual competition of more than 2,000 works** of 2D animation, 3D animation, visual effects, experimental cinema, advertising pieces, animation spots, music videos, video game cinematics, and virtual reality. Shorts **from more than 80 countries such as** Spain, the United States, Germany, Norway, France, Hong Kong, Poland, Argentina, Uruguay, or Australia. The, approximately 50 pre-selected short films will be screened at the Guinguada Theater in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria during the physical phase of the Festival, from May 8 to 11, inclusive."

Overall, **Animayo Gran Canaria 2024 will once again position Gran Canaria and its capital, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, at the epicenter of the industry with an ambitious and expert program for which 14 face-to-face master classes** have been designed, covering topics such as animation, production, VFX, or leadership, among others, 4 workshops focused on practical learning of skills and abilities in areas of animation, matte painting, illustration, and artificial intelligence, in addition to **15 educational talks, 5 premieres and screenings, 3 author presentations, 5 school stands, 20 talent stands, 2 exclusive exhibitions** including the European premiere of the exhibition of the **Art behind "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse" by Sony Pictures Animation**, and 12 hours of **recruitments, portfolio reviews, and signings with more than 15 participating industry companies** such as Platige Image, one of Europe's leading video game cinematic studios, creators, among others, of the series filmed in the Canary Islands "The Witcher".

With both in-person and online formats, Animayo, from Gran Canaria (Spain), **extends its programming to other cities and countries, in its "Animayo Itinerant" version, developing actions in Los Angeles, Madrid, Barcelona, Lanzarote, Portugal, the Czech Republic, Brussels, Chicago, Mumbai, Prague, Colombia, Belgrade, Korea, among others.**

ANIMAYO becomes a reality once again, **thanks to the strong push and committed support offered by its sponsors:** the Cabildo de Gran Canaria, the Society for the Promotion of the City of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Turismo Gran Canaria, the Foundation of La Caja de Canarias, the Government of the Canary Islands, ICEX-Invest in Spain, as well as the involvement of production companies, studios, schools, and universities, in addition to numerous private companies that strongly support

