

NIKO - BEYOND THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

PRODUCTION NOTES

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NIKO – Beyond the Northern Lights - INFO SHEET with OPENING and MAIN CREDITS

OPENING CREDITS

An

ANIMA VITAE, CINEMAKER, ULYSSES FILMS, MOETION FILMS, A. FILM PRODUCTION

production

in association with

TELEPOOL
NORDISK FILM
GLOBAL SCREEN
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ESTONIAN FILM INSTITUTE

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MAIN CREDITS

Director

Kari Juusonen

Co-Director

Jørgen Lerdam

Screenplay

Kari Juusonen
Hannu Tuomainen
Marteinn Thorisson

Additional Dialogue

Richie Conroy
Mark Hodgkinson
Moe Honan

Producers

Antti Haikala
Hannu Tuomainen
Emely Christians
Moe Honan
Anders Mastrup

Production Designer

Mikko Pitkänen

Editor

Benjamin Mercer F.C.E

Composer

Eímear Noone

Sound Designer

Aza Hand

Animation Supervisors

Sami Rozier
Luca Bruno
Seraphina "Maylee" Meiliana

VFX Supervisor

Ville Nevalainen

Supervising Technical Directors

Olli Rajala
Friedolin Dreesen

CG, Lighting & Rendering Supervisor

Nico Rehberg

Compositing Supervisor

Tim Liebe

Production Supervisor

Jamie Dower

Associate Producers

Anne Kokbøl Jørgensen

Sonja Matthes

Timo Suomi

Studio Manager Germany

Jana Bohl

Line Producer

Noora Kuronen

Line Producers

Germany Viola Lütten

Ireland Fiona Healy

Denmark Lise Ann Mangino

Production Companies:

Anima Vitae, Cinemaker, Ulysses Films, Moetion Films, A.Film Production



NIKO – Beyond the Northern Lights - FACTS

Format	CGI Animation
Target	Family Entertainment, core target children 5-12 years
Genre	Family Adventure
Original language	English
Delivery	Summer 2024
Countries	Finland, Germany, Ireland, Denmark
Budget	€ 7,2m
Running time	85 mins.

NIKO – Beyond the Northern Lights – SHORT SYNOPSIS

After a tearful goodbye, Niko leaves his family behind to fulfil his biggest dream and take his place next to his father on Santa's Flying Forces.

Stella, an unknown challenger, arrives to compete for Niko's spot. Despite their competitiveness, the pair take a liking to each other, and Niko shows Stella where Santa's sleigh is hidden. However, on the night before Christmas Eve, Stella steals it. Gunned by Stella's betrayal and desperate to appease his angry father, Niko heads to the frozen North to recover the sleigh. He is accompanied by his old friends Wilma and Julius.

As our heroes face grave danger, difficult choices are made that change Christmas forever.

Through friendships, old and new, Niko learns to forge his own path and reconcile old hurts in this heartwarming adventure.



NIKO – Beyond the Northern Lights – SYNOPSIS

Young reindeer NIKO says a tearful goodbye to his mother, brother and sister, as he leaves Home Valley to take his place on SANTA'S FLYING FORCES beside his father, PRANCER. For Niko, it's a dream come true: to become a famous flying hero, like his father.

However, when STELLA, a worthy challenger shows up unexpectedly, in accordance with the ancient rules, Niko must compete with her for his place on Santa's Forces. Stella is Niko's age and while the two are highly competitive, they can't help taking a liking to each other. In an attempt to impress her, Niko breaks the rules and shows her where Santa's Sleigh is kept. Big mistake! That night the sleigh is stolen, and Stella is the number one suspect. A distraught Niko must now confess to his disappointed father that he lost Santa's sleigh on the night before Christmas. This is not the Flying Forces debut of his dreams! Prancer makes Niko stay behind while the Forces scatter to look for it, but determined to make up for his mistake, Niko takes off on his own, accompanied by his best friends, flying squirrel JULIUS and weasel WILMA.

Niko's instinct to travel north is confirmed when they run into a group of LEMMINGS who mistakenly believe that Julius is their magical leader. The three friends manage to slip away on their quest but the Lemmings are born followers and they have plans for Julius!

Meanwhile, Stella lands the sleigh at the arranged meeting place with her father ILMAR and brother MORTEN. She's starting to feel bad about taking the sleigh, as she realises that her father's plans are much more sinister. Rather than simply fly it once and return it back to Santa – he plans to keep it and cancel Christmas! . Stella is crestfallen and regrets her betrayal of Niko.

Niko Julius & Wilma are delayed when they run into thick fog and are forced to shelter in a forest. It's an eerie place, it's not long before trouble finds them when they are attacked by a hungry WOLVERINE. Niko manages a narrow escape, but Wilma gets lost and Julius stays behind to track her down. With time running out Niko flies on alone, until he reaches the edge of the vast Eternal Sea. He battles the arctic elements before locating Stella, Ilmar, Morten and the sleigh on a large iceberg that looks disturbingly like a replica of Santa's Fell. There, Niko is confronted with a big revelation from Stella: her father's motive for stealing Santa's sleigh goes back to Prancer. When Ilmar and Prancer were boys, they were best friends. However, both competed for a place on the Flying Forces. Prancer won, but only because he chose victory over friendship. Niko is shocked, he has always thought his father was a hero but now he sees that he was anything but.

Just then, Prancer and the Flying Forces arrive. The two former friends, Ilmar and Prancer, now enemies, face off to each other. Niko and Stella manage to escape with the sleigh but after a nail-biting chase Morten, on Ilmar's orders, seizes the sleigh and flies it high above the

atmosphere, where he sets it adrift into the infinity of space. Niko and Stella are tested to the limit in their efforts to foil his plans. On the ground below, Ilmar and Prancer are suddenly faced with a pack of attacking wolverines. Ilmar is shocked when Prancer saves him from the claws of a fierce wolverine. Prancer now regrets his mistakes of the past. Working together to fend off the predators, the old friendship is rekindled and Ilmar's bitterness starts to fade.

Up in space, Niko and Stella fail to rescue the sleigh and are about to drift off into space when Prancer and Ilmar, arrive just in time to save the kids. All four of them, working together, manage to save the sleigh, but on the way down, Morton loosens the ropes on the Christmas gifts and they scatter over a huge area. It's coming up to midnight on Christmas Eve, they will never be able to find them all in time for Santa to deliver them around the world. Just as all seems lost, Niko spots the lemmings, who have finally caught up with Julius, he gets an idea. Always ready to follow a leader, the lemmings are easily convinced by Julius to track down every single present. After an heroic effort, Niko and Stella are able to proudly return the full sleigh to Santa. As a final gesture of goodwill, Prancer offers his old friend, Ilmar, the chance to fulfil his lifelong dream and take his place steering Santa's sleigh.

Niko, Stella, Prancer, Julius and Wilma all celebrate Christmas together with Niko's family and the Flying Forces agree to change the ancient rules so that both Niko and Stella can join the Flying Forces.



NIKO – Beyond the Northern Lights – CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

NIKO

Niko is 13 in human years. He is a lively and curious reindeer on the cusp of becoming a moody teenager. Niko is like any other reindeer boy - except for one thing: he can fly.

This ability puts Niko in a difficult position in Home Valley. He enjoys being an ordinary reindeer boy and playing with his siblings Jonni and Lili. He also knows his obligation, as a flying reindeer, is to follow his father's example and join Santa's Flying Forces. According to the Ancient Rules of Santa's pilots, Niko's life will change completely once he becomes a Junior Cadet. He will be away from home for a whole year, and he will never be able to spend Christmas with his family again.



Niko is hesitant; it's a big decision to make. But he believes he must use his unique skill of flying to achieve something spectacular. Just when he is about to get his own cadet harness, another flying reindeer kid, Stella, arrives to claim the same position. Now Niko has to compete for his place in Flying Forces. This race challenges his own ideas about right and wrong and makes him recognize his blind admiration of the Flying Forces - and his biggest hero, his own father. Niko grows to question his idols and role models and starts making his own decisions - Niko finds out who he really is.

STELLA

is the daughter of Ilmar, the leader of the Storm Forces, who has dedicated his life to getting justice for an old betrayal. Stella has been taught to hate the Flying Forces, especially Prancer and she has come to Santa's Fell to steal Santa's Sleigh. Stella knows all the tricks needed to win any flying competition. Second place is not an option for her. Ever.

But when Stella meets Niko and the Flying Forces, she notices they don't seem all that arrogant or malevolent - they're more goofy and friendly. Stella is impressed with Niko's flying talent - she even loses one race against him. Incredibly Niko even helps her out when she is in trouble. Niko is not at all what Stella's father had always told her.



Stella finds out her father has not told her all the details of his evil plan; Ilmar wants to cancel Christmas by hiding the sleigh and turning Santa against the Flying Forces. She always thought the Storm Forces wanted to serve Santa, so hearing this plan puts her in a difficult position. Bravely, she decides to go against her father and do what she thinks is right. She tries to return the sleigh to Santa, even though she now needs to go against her own dad and brother.

Stella learns to let go of her anger. When Ilmar realizes his mistakes, Stella's love for her father helps her to forgive him.

JULIUS

Julius is a flying squirrel, a senior citizen with a warm heart. Julius is kind of an immigrant; he is the only flying squirrel in Lapland. He is very aware of all the dangers in the wilderness and constantly worried about Niko.

Julius lost a son and a family of his own a long time ago. Now Niko is like a son to him, and he is transferring all his love and fatherly feelings into taking care of Niko. But Niko also has his biological father, a famous flyer Prancer, and his mother's new partner Lenni, so it is not that easy for Julius to find his place in Niko's life. During the story, Julius learns to let Niko find his own path.



PRANCER

Prancer is Niko's biological father and a proud pilot in Santa's Flying Forces. Prancer holds on to his reputation of being the best flyer in Lapland. He is a self-confident, handsome alpha male, always well-groomed with his harness always shiny and polished.

Prancer was not around when Niko was a small kid and he got to know his son quite late. Prancer likes that his son is his biggest fan. He wants what he thinks is best for his only son: to become one of Santa's pilots. He imagines flying around the world together with his son will make him so proud – it is something none of the other guys in the Forces can boast about! Prancer tells Niko that he will also become a hero and a famous pilot – just like his dad.



But Niko finds out that Prancer left his best friend in trouble in order to become one of Santa's pilots. Now Prancer has to admit he was never the perfect hero after all. Prancer sees how this affects Niko. Now Niko does not want to become like him but something different - and now it is Prancer's turn to live up to his son's expectations.

ILMAR

Ilmar is an athletic and scruffy male reindeer. Unlike Prancer who looks like a rock star, Ilmar seems like a guy who is strong enough to carry all of Santa's Fell on his back. He doesn't like expressing positive emotions, maybe because he doesn't actually even like to acknowledge them.

A long time ago, Ilmar had to compete against his best friend, Prancer for his place in the Flying Forces. Becoming one of Santa's pilots was the biggest dream for both of them. During the race, Ilmar found out that Prancer wanted to win so badly that he left his friend in trouble in the middle of the race.

Ever since Ilmar has been bent on revenge. He found other flying reindeers who never made it into the Flying Forces and started his own team of flyers called the Storm Forces. But there is no real meaning in being a flying reindeer if you



cannot work for Santa. The Flying Forces have an easy life at Santa's Fell and they are treated like superstars wherever they go. The Storm Forces want what the Flying Forces have. Finally, Ilmar devises a cunning plan that will make up for all the injustice they have suffered.

Ilmar is confident he has raised a daughter who can out-fly every other reindeer kid in Lapland. He has no doubt about Stella's motivation to steal Santa's sleigh. He has taught her everything he knows about being a pilot – and all about hating the Flying Forces, especially Prancer!

But Ilmar finds out Prancer never forgot what happened in the race either. When Stella tries to foil Ilmar's evil plan and is about to risk her life in the process, Ilmar starts to realize how he has filled his children's heads with hate, anger and tales of revenge. But it is never too late to change!

MORTEN

Morten is the teenage son of Ilmar. He worships his father; he thinks Ilmar is the strongest, bravest, and most devious of all the reindeers in Lapland. Morten is older and taller than Stella and physically stronger, but Ilmar chose Stella to go to Santa's Fell for the big mission. This makes Morten even more jealous than ever – he does his best to please his dad but never quite gets the attention he wants.

So, when Ilmar sends him out on a special mission, Morten thinks he can finally make his father proud. But dad has one more change of plan reserved for his loyal servant.

When in the end, Ilmar tells Morten he is sorry about the way he has brought up his kids, it is hard for Morten to see his father feeling weak and discouraged. But it also frees Morten to start growing, even when it is not easy as nothing has prepared him for taking this step.



WILMA

Wilma is a wild female weasel, 20-something in human years. She is a street-wise performing artist who left her home early to see the world.

Wilma does not seem to be afraid of anything. She fights wolves, eagles and wolverines; she never gives in to fear and accepts every challenge. She has been around – she even used to work at Santa's Fell and knows all the Flying Forces well.

Wilma thinks fast and is very quick witted. She always speaks her mind, even when she knows her honesty will get her into trouble. Wilma also feels deeply for others and can be kind and caring, but often she chooses to act tough to hide her softer side.

She has found a true home in Home Valley and has become friends with Niko and the other reindeer. But her special friend is Julius, and their unlikely dynamic duo is often needed to keep Niko out of trouble.



DASHER AND THE FLYING FORCES

Dasher has a passion for his work as the leader of the Flying Forces. He is an officer and a gentleman, the oldest of the team, with the military rank of colonel. With any unruly pilot, Dasher applies army-style

leadership with varying results. Dasher believes in teamwork; in the air, all pilots depend on each other and everything that the team does together serves the purpose of flying the sleigh. Dasher believes in strong team-work, each pilot depends on the other's commitment and together their mission is to successfully fly Santa's sleigh.

Dasher believes in tradition. He sees no reason to change anything about the Flying Forces – their mission stays the same, so there is no need to change the rules or the conduct of the Flying Forces either. But when Niko and Stella challenge the old way of thinking, Dasher realizes he should not take anything for granted – maybe the Flying Forces will get stronger if they change with the times. The Flying Forces are a bunch of flying reindeers trained for one purpose only; The Christmas Mission. They fly Santa's sleigh around the world in one night and deliver all the presents. All the pilots take great pride in their obligation. For the rest of the year, they are happy to party and hang out in their cozy mess hall at Santa's Fell, high above the mundane lives of ordinary reindeers.

LEMMINGS

Lemmings are brave little creatures; you always meet them in a big gang in Lapland. They love to search for moss, every day and everywhere, but what they really love is eating it.

Lemmings stick together, come what may. And when they make you one of their own, you are stuck with them for life.

LALA LEMMING

Lala is a sort of leader unbeknownst to herself; she is open minded but can only deal with one idea at a time, yet she still manages to get a little confused.

LAPPI LEMMING

Lappi is temperamental without being bad, he is snappy and gutsy, if a little naive.

LEO LEMMING

Leo is a bit more slow-witted than all of the slow-witted lemmings, a true follower of... anybody and anything



NIKO – Beyond the Northern Lights – DIRECTOR ´S NOTE by Kari Juusonen

Niko 3 is a story about a young superhero who finds his own way of living with his talent. Taking this step comes at a price – Niko has to defy the old rules of his community and put aside the expectations of his father.

This story offers all the visuals and action needed to make a compelling animated adventure. We have made two films with Niko already, and this time, we really challenged ourselves as designers and storytellers. The story takes Niko inside an iceberg, charging through the Northern Lights, and floating in space. The designs look fantastic, and I know already that fans of animated adventure films will not be disappointed.

But to me, the most essential ingredient of any good movie is emotion. I want to be emotionally exhausted but rewarded when the story ends, and the hero finally becomes what he deserves to be. I'm excited to tell the story of Niko, who grows from a hero's son to a hero of his own story.

Niko has always been the special one; a one of a kind. But when he meets Stella, another young flying reindeer, everything changes. Stella turns out to be every bit as skillful, brave, and talented as Niko. Niko has to compete with Stella for his greatest dream: a pilot position in Santa's Flying Forces.

Competition and being compared to others are a big part of every child's life. It happens at school, in the playground, in hobbies and sport. Personally, I see no harm in that: I have been competing in sport all my life. My experience is that you can live with both wins and losses when the game is fair. But every game needs a set of rules. When these rules are broken, a game or competition can turn into a battlefield - and stop being didactic or fun

Niko starts to see the dark side of the competition. Niko has always idolized his father, but now he finds out he chose winning over friendship when competing for his position in Flying Forces. The merciless method of racing used for finding new pilots divides all the flyers into winners and losers – and not everyone can handle their defeat. Niko meets Storm Forces, a group of flying reindeers who were rejected from the Flying Forces. Stella is the daughter of their leader and has inherited her father's grudge towards Flying Forces.

Niko starts to question both the tradition and his biggest authorities: his father and Flying Forces. In the end, Niko turns down the offer to join the Flying Forces – his childhood dream. This surprising decision makes Flying Forces question their ancient rules - and then change them.

This is the message of the story for our young audience: ask questions, comment, and criticize. The world built by previous generations is not done and dusted. Change the rules of the game, change the world to match your own ideal – you have every right to do so!

Yours sincerely,



Kari Juusonen

Director and writer

NIKO – Beyond the Northern Lights – DIRECTORS´ CVs

Director KARI JUUSONEN

Kari Juusonen is Finland’s most successful animation director, having directed international feature successes *Niko & The Way to Stars* (2008) and *Niko 2 – Little Brother, Big Trouble* (2012) and now the new Niko-movie, *Niko – Beyond the Northern Lights* (2024).

Aside from the box office feature hits, Kari has directed several animated short films as well as TV-series like *Angry Birds – Stella* and *Angry Birds Toons* for Rovio and *Momolu* for Ferly Animation.

Kari’s films have been screened in over 150 festivals: *Hong Kong, Edinburgh, Sundance, Rio de Janeiro, Hiroshima, Pusan, Seoul, Annecy, Sydney, Jerusalem, São Paulo, Amsterdam, Paris, London, Tokyo, Giffoni, Stuttgart...* In 2001 Kari won the prestigious *Prix du Jury, Selection Officiel, Court Métrage*, in Cannes for his short film *Pizza Passionata*.



Co-director JØRGEN LERDAM

Jørgen Lerdam started working as an animator in 1979. In 1988, together with four other partners he founded A. Film in Denmark.

He is currently working as a co-director of the animated feature *NIKO – Beyond the Northern Lights* and developing projects for his recently started company, Datterselskabet.

Jørgen is one of Denmark’s most successful box office directors of this millennium and in 2005 he received the prestigious Hans Christian Andersen Award for his work on the TV-series “*The Fairytaler*”.



Jørgen’s extensive animation directing filmography includes *Niko2 – Little Brother, Big Trouble, The Incredible Story of the Giant Pear*, several Olsen Gang, Pettson & Findus and Jungo -movies.

NIKO – Beyond the Northern Lights – PRODUCERS ´ NOTES

ANTTI HAIKALA / Producer / Anima Vitae (Finland)

After finalizing *Niko - Little Brother, Big trouble* in 2012 we were keen to continue Niko's saga into a third film. I had an initial idea of Niko being challenged by a reindeer girl whose father was seeking revenge from Santa's flying reindeer formed very early on somewhere around 2014. The idea was a bit more epic than the previous films and the villains of the film were already by then called 'The Storm Forces'.

But making animation films is not a job for hasty people and as it seemed that the film was not possible to produce back then, the idea was left in a drawer for quite a while. Around the year 2019 the stars seemed to be in the right alignment and I approached all the key collaborators of the film. I was very happy to see that all the key creatives responded well to my initiative and also there seemed to be a big demand in the market for our film.

Now ten years later after having the first thoughts of this film I'm immensely grateful to see it on the screen. Done by artists and producers who made it much better than I ever dreamed it to be.

HANNU TUOMAINEN / Producer & Scriptwriter / Cinemaker (Finland)

NIKO – Beyond the Northern Lights completes the coming-of-age story of flying reindeer boy Niko. It is a fully independent movie but in the big picture also the final part of our Niko-trilogy.

Niko ´s journey started in the first movie, *Niko & The Way to the Stars* (released in 2008), when he wanted to find his biological father whom he had never met. His dad was a reindeer in Santa ´s Flying Forces, among biggest heroes he could think of. Niko left home to find his father only to understand that his mentor and caretaker at home, the flying squirrel Julius, was his “real father” due to Julius’ unselfish love. In the second Niko-movie, *Niko2 – Little Brother, Big Trouble* (2012), Niko faced the situation where he was dreaming of his mom and dad getting back together. But instead, he had to cope with a new family, including a gentle stepfather and even worse, a cute kid brother Jonni whom Niko first hated but then saved – and in the end accepted and loved him as well as his new extended family.

Now in the final part of his full personal arc, Niko believes he has to follow the steps of his flying hero father and become a top pilot in Santa’s Flying Forces. During the story he finds out father is not the pure hero he had believed; he has made unpleasant mistakes in his past. After a painful (and adventurous!) process Niko realizes he has to ignore all parental expectations and find his own path. Now Niko will be ready to grow up.

We are also proud to introduce a new co-main character Stella, a skillful flying reindeer girl who is the same age as Niko and also has a similar development arc as Niko. Stella ´s father has tricked her to steal Santa's sleigh. However, during the movie Stella has to face her Dad ´s false authority and find her own path. Our target audience, children and parents all over the world, have loved Niko as a character. Now I believe the girls in the audience will identify with our female hero Stella and have a deeper connection with the story. When the two reindeer kids come out as winners from their adventure, they both are ready to face a better future – together.

We have been very sincere in telling our third Niko-story. All Niko stories, his whole development and character arc, are so intimate to me as the creator of the original concept and universe, I hardly dare to

discuss these personal issues with anybody in everyday life. But instead, I am happy to share my own experiences of growing up as a child with the children around the world. The main theme in the previous films and the new one is: growing up is a complex emotional process. Plotwise our hero's arc will again be told in genre of an adventure, with humour giving the relief before a new hard setback must be overcome. I see childhood as the biggest adventure ever - to grow up and to find oneself. And for our family audience our aim is not to teach – but to share.

The two previous Niko-movies have been extremely well received. Both sold over 3 million tickets worldwide in cinemas. The distribution rights for both were sold over 120 countries and they were among the most successful European animations of their time. And they still are - in broadcasting and platforms they continue to reach millions of kids, being modern European animated Christmas classics from original landscape of Santa. With *NIKO – Beyond the Northern Lights* we have the same goal: successful global distribution and a happy audience.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of our talented team realizing the movie. And I dare to call our team a family. Not because we are dealing with family matters but because of the same companies and the same international creative teams has been working now for over 15 years together, actually some over 20 years since the very beginning of the development of the first Niko movie, when I partnered with Finnish animation studio Anima Vitae and my fellow producer, animation expert Antti Haikala. It has been hard work for all of us – but at the same time making challenging movies has offered a lot of exiting experiences. Everybody has been delighted to get together again.

This applies also to directors too. The main director Kari Juusonen is the most awarded Finnish animation director. He has been in charge of both previous Niko-movies so far, so he knows how deal with the reindeer kids in trouble. We are thrilled that Jørgen Lerdam the most successful animation director at the Nordic box office has joined again, our new adventure as a co-director. And my personal special mention goes to our production designer Mikko Pitkänen, Mikko is responsible for all the visual designs, characters, locations, props... everything we see.

Before the Niko-movies my background was in producing live action for young viewers. Now after seeing how big the audience is for animated stories and what a creative pleasure it is to work with talented animation teams, involving hundreds of people in different countries, I am simply amazed. Everything, literally, looks and feels better than I could have imagined when I started developing Niko-project long ago!

EMELY CHRISTIANS & SONJA MATTHES / Producer / Ulysses Films (Germany)

Niko - Beyond the Northern Lights is a movie primarily made for the big screen, aiming to captivate our audience in 2024. The good thing about this production and its release is that we can build on the success of the first two films of the trilogy.

We began producing *Niko & The Way to the Stars* in 2006. At that time, we were processing the film in Hamburg using 35mm, but today, everything in cinema production is almost entirely digital. Despite these technical advances and the passage of time, our Niko movies are still proving their enduring quality with audiences all over the world, so we are delighted that we decided to create this third movie for older and new Niko audiences everywhere.

He has become our friend, especially on Christmas Eve. Since the first broadcast on ZDF in Germany in 2010, the two reindeer films have been aired every year at Christmas primetime, giving parents a moment to breathe while the children are safely in front of the TV. In this slot, *Niko* has become a classic!

We are proud of this and want to build on it, offering a new generation of children another exciting and touching story from the far north of Europe. *Niko* has grown older, needs to make decisions, and take a stand. *Stella*, a confident and strong reindeer girl, challenges *Niko* in many ways. Our film's target audience is clear: children aged 6-11 and their parents, friends, uncles, aunts, and grandparents. *Niko - Beyond the Northern Lights* is a family film!

In the first film, *Niko* was searching for his father, a member of Santa's flying squad who only appeared once a year, enjoying his special reindeer life without his son. In the second film, *Niko* hoped to have a traditional family and tried life in the Home Valley with his mother, stepfather, stepbrother, and newborn half-sister. But the desire for his "real" father overshadowed this as well. In our new endeavour, *Niko* recognizes himself and can let go of his idealized version of his father, realizing he is just an ordinary reindeer. *Niko* accepts this and finally becomes who he wants to be.

We at Ulysses and Studio Rakete are thrilled to release our new work!

MOE HONAN / Producer & Casting Voice Director / Moetion Films (Ireland)

The prospect of producing another *Niko* animated feature film was one we were delighted to embrace. Having known this world and this little character so well since 2006, it was both a reassuring and exciting project to dive into. We have all grown up with *Niko* and as with the two previous films, we wanted to deliver another heart-warming, family audience film to all *Niko* fans across the world, and we also had a big desire to share the magic of *Niko* with a new generation of children using all the benefits of new improved technologies to convey our art and our story.

This latest adventure *Niko - Beyond the Northern Lights* (selling title)/aka *The Magic Reindeer - Saving Santa's Sleigh* (UK/Ireland/North America), echoes the central themes of the entire trilogy, values which are anchored in family and friendship, but this film also reflects the dilemmas and challenges of the young teen as he ventures forth to find his own way in the world. The film sees the introduction of *Stella* who acts as a competing and emotional challenge to *Niko*, who finds himself torn between childhood certainties and unknown truths about his universe. A roller coaster of an adventure with a core emotional heartwarming journey at its heart, this third *Niko* film will, we hope, become another family favourite, every Christmas!

Working on an independent European co-production such as *Niko*, requires a truly multi-skilled and trusted creative and financial partnership, and this one has stood the test of time. In Ireland from our work on the script development, voices, animation work and sound design, including Éimear Noone's incredible score, we have been closely involved with this film from the start to the finish and now, as we deliver it in a rather cool summer so far, we look forward with child-like excitement to finally sharing this film with our national and international family audiences in the warm and special atmosphere of Christmas 2024.

We hope you like it too!

ANDERS MASTRUP / Producer / A.Film Production (Denmark)

Niko - Beyond the Northern Lights is the final film in a trilogy spanning over 18 years. It's been a collaboration between 4 like-minded studios in northern Europe with a burning desire to create adventurous animated films for kids ages 6-11 and their parents. This we believe succeeded extremely well with the first two films and with the third film we are looking forward to seeing *Niko - Beyond the Northern Lights* reeling in the next generation of kids.

The film is a coming-of-age story of daring to take the first steps towards adulthood into the future but still in need of the comfort and advice of grown-ups. We have a new strong character in this film, Stella our reindeer girl that gives Niko both friendship and competition as his peer. She gives us a look into the need to be included, accepted and at the same time standing alone, as well as the challenges of finding the boundaries between what's expected and what is right in life...

Enjoy the film!

NIKO – Beyond the Northern Lights - PRODUCTION COMPANIES

ANIMA VITAE

Anima Vitae is an award-winning animation studio with over 10,000 minutes of aired animation ranging from Anima's own IP projects to work for high-end clients. Anima is one of the most technically advanced CGI animation studios in Europe, with expertise in producing high-end screen titles comparable to any European animation, like the two previous Niko-movies and several TV-series - including four seasons of the new Moomin Valley TV series.

Anima has another feature, *Fleak*, in production to be delivered in 2025 and several projects in development. Passion for character animation and telling stories through animation together with artistic ambition are the driving forces behind the studio's success.

anima.fi

CINEMA MAKER

Cinemaker is a Finnish independent film production company, established in 1990 by producer-director-writer Hannu Tuomainen.

During the early 90s Cinemaker produced a dozen short films and documentaries; four of them were international co-productions, which became later one of the company's area of expertise. Cinemaker has focused on feature film productions since 1998, when first, the hugely successful feature *Tommy and the Wilcat* was released. The other focus of the company is a mission for quality entertainment films for young audiences. More than half of 18 of Cinemaker's productions so far are targeted for children or youth.

Cinemaker's productions have been sold world-wide, the latest two Niko movies being the two most internationally successful Finnish Films ever, both were sold to over 120 countries. Aside from box office successes, our movies have won numerous national and international awards over the decades.

Animaker is a Finnish-based special purpose animation production company for Niko movies, founded in 2004. It is jointly owned by the animation studio Anima Vitae and producer Hannu Tuomainen from Cinemaker.

ULYSSES FILMS

Ulysses Filmproduktion, one of the most active European production companies of high-quality and commercially successful animation films, is based in Hamburg, Germany. Since 2004 Ulysses has financed and produced animated feature films and series for the international market - Family Entertainment at the highest level!

The company developed and produced world-wide best-selling 3D animated movies such as "Oops! Noah is gone..." (aka "Two by Two"), "Luis & The Aliens" and "The Amazing Maurice", an adaptation of the late Terry Pratchett's fantasy novel. The American screenwriter Terry Rossio ("Shrek" and "Pirates of the Caribbean") provided the script for the movie. It was released in 2023 in the UK, Germany, France,

the US (Sundance Festival), Australia/New Zealand, Scandinavia and many more regions. Shown in over 2,000 theatres in the US & Canada alone, the movie has grossed a box office of \$21 million worldwide and has been nominated for the European Film Award.

Currently in early production “Pirate Mo”, is a co-production with Austria and Spain. “Harold & Mimi - Out of Frame”, “Skip” and more movies and a tv series with global exploitation potential are in the development pipeline.

ulyssesfilms.de

MOETION FILMS

Moetion Films is an award-winning animation company based in Galway on the west coast of Ireland. The company develops and produces animated feature films and TV series for international distribution. Producer of the Year 2016 at Cartoon Movie in Lyon, their debut feature *Two by Two Oops! The Ark Has Gone (aka Oops! Noah Is Gone)* was distributed in the UK/Ireland by eOne and screened in 500 cinemas across the territory and sold in over 140 territories worldwide.

The sequel *Two by Two: Overboard! (aka Oops! The Adventures Continues)* topped the box office charts in the UK/ ROI and in Norway in 2020/21 and has sold to several territories worldwide with top ten slots in Germany and Spain.

Owner/Producer, Moe Honan, is a long-time co-producer with partners across Europe and Canada and has co-produced several animated feature films such as the award- winning *Niko and the Way to the Stars*, *Niko 2 Little Brother*, *Big Trouble*, and *Legends of Valhalla-THOR*. She also co-produced *The Ugly Duckling and Me*, (feature and TV series), *Lilly the Witch*, *Zombie Hotel*, *The Fairytaler*, *The World of Tosh*, and *Norman Normal*.

Moetion Films current production *The Magic Reindeer - Saving Santa's Sleigh* (UK/Ireland and North America / aka *Niko: Beyond the Northern Lights*) is due for release in the UK and Ireland in Late November 2024 and is part of the company's strategic development slate which is aimed at international audiences of kids and young adults. Moetion Films is selected for the upcoming Cartoon Forum in Toulouse in September 2024 with a TV series developed from the Oops! IP in co-production with Ulysses Films called *Oops! The Ark Is Stranded*. Moetion Films also provides production, scripting, voice casting and voice directing services for international distribution.

moetionfilms.com

A.FILM PRODUCTION

A.Film Production is one of Scandinavian's most prolific animation companies, located in central Copenhagen. The original company, A.Film A/S, was founded in 1988. Today A.Film Production is owned and run by Karsten Kiilerich and Anders Mastrup and produces classical 2D and CGI animation for feature films and TV series offering an extensive range of styles.

A. Film has produced well-known animated feature films such as "Help - I'm a Fish!", "Asterix and the Vikings", "Terkel in Trouble", "The Ugly Duckling and Me", "Niko and the Way to the Stars", "Niko 2 - Little Brother, Big trouble", "Luis and the Aliens", "The Little Vampire", "Panda Bear in Africa", "The Incredible Story of the Giant Pear", "Checkered Ninja" 1 and 2, "The Journey to Saturn", "The Olsen

Gang” 1 & 2, “Hocus Pocus Alfie Atkins! “Albert “, “Jungle Jack” (aka “Jungo I”), “Amazon Jack” (aka “Jungo II”).

A. Film has produced animated TV series such as "Troll Tales", “MumbleBumble”, "Benjamin Blümchen", “Bibi Blocksberg”, “Bibi and Tina”, “Jungo – the Adventurer” and “The Fairytaler” (based on Hans Christian Andersen’s world-famous fairy tales).

Apart from working on its own productions, A Film has subcontracted for companies such as Warner Bros. Feature Animation, Don Bluth Studios, MGM Animation, Hanna Barbera, Columbia Pictures, Rovio, Nordisk Film as well as Kiddinx and M6 Studios.

A. Film has won several prizes during its history – one of them being a nomination for an Oscar® by the Academy Awards for Best Animated Short in 1999.

afilm.com

NIKO – Beyond the Northern Lights – PRODUCERS ´ CVs

ANTTI HAIKALA / Anima Vitae

Antti Haikala is one of the most important pioneers of the Finnish 3D animation scene. He co-founded his animation studio Anima Vitae in 2000 and since then has been taking part in numerous animation projects in varying roles, lately as producer, head of development and managing director of the studio.

The best-known works that he is credited for are the internationally successful feature films *Niko - The Way to the Stars* (production supervisor, 2008) and *Niko 2 - Little Brother, Big Trouble* (producer, editor, 2012). In 2001 Antti also directed his first feature animation *Santa's Magic Crystal*.

Antti also has extensive experience on TV-series production, including *Moominvalley* (1.-4. seasons, 2018-2024), *Lego Star Wars* (1.-2. seasons, 2016-2017) and *Angry Birds Stella* (1. season, 2014).

Aside from the third Niko-movie, *Niko – Beyond the Northern Lights* (2024), Antti is currently in production with a feature movie *Fleak* (delivery 2025) and in development with *Trashmonsters*, among other future projects.

Antti ´s work has been recognized with several international awards, including the British Animation Award for Best Animation, the Golden Panda for Best Animation Series, the Cinekid Jury and Audience awards for Best Feature Film and Emma Kids Award nomination, to name just a few.

HANNU TUOMAINEN / Cinemaker

Hannu Tuomainen is a Finnish producer-scriptwriter, with 35 years' experience in the business. Hannu runs his own production company Cinemaker, established in 1990, along with producing the Niko films via Animaker, a joint venture with the Anima Vitae animation studio since 2004.

Hannu has produced several features and short films, mainly targeted to young and family audiences. He concentrates on making high budget, high quality projects aimed at wide international distribution – movies which touch the hearts of the audience.

Hannu ´s first feature was *Tommy and the Wildcat* (1998 was a major box office hit in Finland and sold to over 40 countries. Hannu ´s successful producer-writing credits include Finland's most awarded youth film, *One-way Ticket to Mombasa* (2002, also director) and the animated features *Niko & the Way to the Stars* (2008) and *Niko 2 – Little Brother, Big Trouble* (2012), which together have racked up over 6 million admissions in box office. Niko ´s third adventure, *Niko – Beyond the Northern Lights* will be released in fall 2024.

Hannu has received multiple national awards, including two Jussi-awards (Finnish national Oscar) for first *Niko*-movie; Best Screenplay and Best Picture. He has twice been honoured as Producer of the Year and received several State Quality Awards. His numerous international awards include Jury and Audience awards for Best Picture in Cinekid Amsterdam, for first *Niko* and Best European Youth Film award for *One Way Ticket to Mombasa* by European Cinema Association.

EMELY CHRISTIANS / Ulysses Films

Emely is a Producer and CEO of Ulysses Films, known for award-winning films and worldwide successes like “Ooops! The Adventure Continues...”, “Luis and the Aliens”, “Niko & The Way to the Stars”, “Niko – Little Brother, Big Trouble” and Terry Pratchett’s “The Amazing Maurice”. The latter was released theatrically worldwide in 2022/2023 and had an invitation to the Sundance Festival, was nominated for “The Golden Sparrow” shortlisted for the “BAFTA” and the “German Film Prize”.

In 2016, she received the European Producer of the Year Award from the Cartoon Media Association for “Ooops! Noah is Gone...”. Among other honours, she received the Bavarian Film Prize in the category „Best Youth Film for ‘Richard the Stork‘. Emely is on the board of directors of the German Film Academy for the animation film section and is a member and treasurer of the European Film Academy.

With the adaptation of Kirsten Boie’s novel “Pirate Mo” she has just started production on her 15th theatrical feature film and her last film “Butterfly Tale ” is currently in distribution. The latter is a Canadian-German co-production that will be released worldwide in the coming months.

To date, her films have taken over \$ 100 million at the international box office.

MOE HONAN / Moetion Films

Moetion Films CEO Moe Honan lives in Galway in the West of Ireland. She is an independent Producer and a Voice Director for several award-winning animation feature films and TV series. She has developed, co-produced and voice directed many international series and five feature films including Moetion Films’ 2015 debut - the global hit *Two by Two Ooops! The Ark has Gone* earned the company the Producer of the Year Award at Cartoon Movie 2016.

The sequel *Two by Two -Overboard!* was released internationally in 2020/21 topping the box office in the UK, Spain, Germany and Norway. She is currently in production with *Niko - Beyond the Northern Lights*, the third film in the international hit franchise – *Niko*.

Previous screen credits include:(2012) *Niko 2 – Little Brother, Big Trouble* Producer & Voice Director (2010) *Thor – Legends of Valhalla* – Producer & Voice Director; (2009) *Simsala Grimm II* (animated tv series) NDR - Producer & Voice Director, (2008) *Niko and The Way to the Stars* (feature film) - Producer & Voice Director; (2006) *Lilly the Witch* (animated series) BBC - Producer & Voice Director (2005) *The Ugly Duckling & Me* - feature film and animated series), among others.

Moe is the Industry Chair for Animation Ireland, the trade association for animation production companies in Ireland, and is also on the board of Animation In Europe, an umbrella organisation for producer associations across Europe which now has 20 country members from across eastern and western Europe.

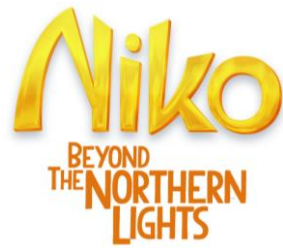
ANDERS MASTRUP / A.Film Production

Anders Mastrup co-founded A. Film in 1988. Since that time, he has produced some of the best loved and highest grossing Danish and European animation features like ‘Help! I’m a Fish’ (2000), ‘Terkel in Trouble’ (2004), ‘Asterix and the Vikings’ (2005), ‘Niko and the Way to the Stars’ (2008), ‘Olsen Gang gets Polished’ (2010), ‘The Incredible Story of the Giant Pear’ (2017) and ‘Checkered Ninja 1’ (2018) and ‘Checkered Ninja 2’ (2021).

He has been a board member of several Danish and international animation organizations and been the producer of several prizewinning features and tv-series.

In 1999 he was nominated for an Oscar for the animated short, “When Life Departs.”

NIKO – BEYOND the NORTHERN LIGHTS – FULL CREDITS



Rolling End Credits

INTERNATIONAL

Cast

NIKO Matthew Whelan

STELLA Emma Jenkins

JULIUS Dermot Magennis

PRANCER Paul Tylak

DASHER Roger Gregg

ILMAR Dermot Magennis

WILMA Aileen Mythen

LILI Lucy Smith

JONNI Harry Weld Moore

MORTEN Justin Anene

COMET, DANCER, GUSTO, VIXEN Luke Griffin

BLITZEN, DONNER, NIILÁ Brendan McDonald

CUPID, SIIGGUR Paul Tylak

OLGA Aileen Mythen

EINAR Rodger Gregg

IIDA Mary Murray

OONA Susan Slott

LENNI Michael Sheehan

YOUNG PRANCER Cameron Simpson

YOUNG ILMAR Evan O'Connor

LEO LEMMING Paul Tylak

LALA LEMMING Mary Murray

LAPPI & LEMMY LEMMING Luke Griffin

LEIF & LILLY LEMMING Michelle Read

LALLI LEMMING Olivia Caffrey

LASSE LEMMING Paul Tylak

LEMMINGS Doireann Ní Chorragáin

Olivia Caffrey

Paul Tylak

Mary Murray

Luke Griffin

Aileen Mythen

Michelle Read

Maggie Cadwell

WOLVERINE 01 Luke Griffin

WOLVERINE 02 Mary Murray

WOLVERINES Aileen Mythen

Dermot Magennis

Luke Griffin

Mary Murray

SANTA CLAUS Garry Mountaine

Recording Studio Gorilla Post Production

Casting & Voice Director Moe Honan

Head of Legal & Business Affairs Anne Kokbøl Jørgensen

A Finnish, German, Irish, Danish Co-Production

under the European Convention on Cinematographic Co-Production

PRODUCTION TEAM FINLAND

ANIMA VITAE

Director Kari Juusonen

Producer Antti Haikala

Production Designer Mikko Pitkänen

Associate Producer Timo Suomi

Line Producer Noora Kuronen

Production Supervisor Jamie Dower

Production Assistant Jemina Pölkki

Technical Director Olli Rajala

Pipeline Development Olli Rajala

Aki Rissanen

Software Engineer Jani Kuronen

Asset Artists Sina Aho

Oskar Riekko

Erkki Rämets

Ossi Soverila

Atte Uusitalo

Grooming Artists Jussi Dittmer

Olli Rajala

Junior Grooming Artist Teo Lundberg

Rigging Artist Erkki Rämets

Layout Artists Jussi Castellanos

Unja Hassinen

Heidi Hellsten

Carita Kapanen

Anna Laukkanen

Antti Lempinen

Erkki Rämets

Sabha Yusuf

Additional Layout Ville Nevalainen

Nguyen Thi Truck Vien

Animation Supervisor Luca Bruno

Assistant Production Manager Kimberly Ling Li Sin

Animation Coordinators Mariana Ahmad

Liyana Chan Kamal

Animators Xenia Chernikova

Lea-Linnea Körkkö

Nguyen Thi Truc Vien

Erkki Rämets

Daniel Saputra

Sabha Yusuf

Junior Animators Gan Xiao En

Aleksandra Juoperi

Ong Zhi Ying

VFX Supervisor Ville Nevalainen

VFX Artists Motaz Al-Rayyes

Jussi Dittmer

Juan Carlos Gilabert

Janne Kontio

Eemeli Loukola

Assistant Lighting Supervisor Janne Mäkinen

Digital Matte Painting Artist Thor Zheng Yi

Digital Matte Painting Coordinator Siow Yin Heng

Director's Assistant Markus Lahtinen

Sound Editor Mika Niinimaa

Making of Jussi Castellanos

Accounting Tilitoimisto Tilitenhdas:

Mira Sakara

Auditor Tiliextra:

Juho Paavola

Otto Luoma

CINEMA

Producer Hannu Tuomainen

Accounting Helsingin Tilikeskus:

Tarja Höijer

Auditor Timo Kervinen

ANIMAKER

Screenplay Kari Juusonen

Hannu Tuomainen

Editor Benjamin Mercer F.C.E.

Translations Teemu Auersalo

Aline Vannier

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Auditor Tiliextra:

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Otto Luoma

Banking & Cash Flow OP Uusimaa:

Kimmo Turunen

Book Publishing Otava Publishing Company:

Kaisu-Maria Toiskallio

Mia Lindgren

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ULYSSES FILMPRODUKTION

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Associate Producer Sonja Matthes

Production Assistant Denise Tie

Technical Supervisor Wolfgang Christians

Student Trainee Valentin Stark

STUDIO RAKETE

Co-Director Jørgen Lerdam

Studio Manager Jana Bohl

Line Producer Viola Lütten

Production Managers Carrie Schilz

Marcel Tie

Student Trainee Linas Mahncke

Head of IT & Systems Administrator Timo Ballin

Lead Technical Director Friedolin Dreesen

CG Supervisor & Pipeline Development Nico Rehberg

Texturing & Shading Supervisor Gerrit Wemmer

Texturing & Shading Artist Gilles Flammang

Animation Supervisor Samuel Rozier

Animators Peter Bohl

Stefan Herrmann

Geoffrey Köhler

Birte Niedermeyer

Matthias Parchettka

Sondre Sorby

Nat Kayasit Spitzentränker

Jessica Tegethoff

Technical Check Animation Nat Kayasit Spitzentränker

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Lighting & Rendering Artists Husam Al-Hakim

Martin Rahmlow

Gerrit Wemmer

Philipp Wibisono

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Compositing Artists Husam Al-Hakim

Jo Bub

Simon Isenberg

Babette Kahn

Heiko Lueg

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Digital Post Production Optical Art Digital & Film

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Project Coordinator Sabine Schäfer

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Ralph Homuth

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Dr. Ralph Oliver Graef

Film Financing Triodos Bank:

Björn Schümann

Making Of John Christians

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MOETION FILMS

Producer Moe Honan

Executive Producer Siún Ní Raghallaigh

Screenplay Marteinn Thorisson

Additional Dialogue Richie Conroy

Mark Hodkinson

Moe Honan

Script Editor Ann Brehony

Casting and Voice Director Moe Honan

Dialogue Recording Engineer Keith Alexander

Business Affairs Anne Jones

Line Producer Fiona Healy

Production Assistant Phoebe Carey

Production Accountant Anne Jones

Assistant Production Accountant Mackinley Raftery

Animation Supervisor Seraphina "Maylee" Meiliana

Animators Dries Naudé

Gary Ronaldson

Petru Goia

Seraphina "Maylee" Meiliana

Systems Administration Smooth Sailing:

Igor Podgorski

Assistant Systems Administrator Piaras Williams

Technical Director Fiona Healy

Sound Post Production

Post Production Supervisor Moe Honan

Post Production Assistant Fiona Healy

Re-Recording Engineer Keith Alexander

Sound Post Production Studios Egg Post Production

Gorilla Post Production

Post Production Executive Gary Shortall

Post Production Coordinator Aisling Gilsenan

Post Production Coordinator Trainee Irena Williams

Supervising Sound Editor & Designer Aza Hand

Dialogue Editor Katie O'Mahony

Effects Editor Eoin Coughlan

Foley Artists Paula Boram

Niklas Matthaei

Foley Recordist Trevor Transcott

Foley Editors Billy Mahoney

Arran Mahoney

Foley Assistant William Robertson

Dubbing Mixer Aza Hand

Post Production Trainee Graham Davy

Making Of Martin Danneels

Charlie Danneels

Composed & Orchestrated by Eímear Noone

Craig Stuart Garfinkle

Orchestra Studio Orchestra of Ireland

Conducted by Eímear Noone

Recorded at Windmill Lane Recording Studios, Dublin

Orchestra Contracted by Lioba Petrie

Niall O'Sullivan

Orchestra Recorded by Allan Kelly

Assistant Audio Engineers AnZhe Koh

Ellen Beamish

Eoghan Breathnach

Additional Recording by Craig Stuart Garfinkle

Edited & Mixed by Craig Stuart Garfinkle

Tommy Vicari

Music Production Assistant Emma Flynn

Lead Copyist Nathaniel Tronerude

Additional Music Support Kara Ford

Concert Master Elaine Clark

Principal Viola Adele Johnson

Principal Cello Miriam Roycroft

Principal Bass Dominic Dudley

Principal Flute Caitriona Ryan

Principal Clarinet Matthew Billing

Principal Oboe Rebecca Halliday

Principal Bassoon Sinead Frost

Principal Trumpet Niall O'Sullivan

Colm Byrne

Principal Trombone Jason Sinclair

Bass Trombone Josiah Walters

Tuba Francis Magee

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Hannah Grace

Luke Potashnik

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Line Producer Lise Ann Mangino

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Anders Brogaard

Margo Busch

Sebastian Hannibal

Frederik Nielsen

Ludovic Savonniere

Kristina Silkjaer

Technical Animator Frederik Nielsen

Head of Pipeline Development Jakob Steffensen

Head of IT & Systems Administrator Hans Perk

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Junior Producer Emma Drost Jensen

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A.Film Estonia Kristel Töldsepp

Meelis Arulepp

* * *

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World Sales Agent Global Screen - a Telepool Brand

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Henri Jasper Tie

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(German Films) Ina Sommer

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(HarrisonParrott) Moema Parrott

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Karsten Kiilerich

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Julia Weber

(ZDF) Nicole Keeb

Beta (the office dog)

Presented at Cartoon Movie 2022 & 2024

Finnish Film Affair 2022

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Global Screen

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RTÉ

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FFA

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In Association with Fís Éireann / Screen Ireland

Produced by

Anima Vitae, Cinemaker, Ulysses Films, Moetion Films, A. Film Production

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LOGO BLOCK

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PRODUCTION

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