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ANIMAE CARIBE 2009 CLOSURES AND INSIDERS DECLARE: COLLABORATION IS KEY TO ANIMATION INDUSTRY'S SUCCESS

October 5, 2009: The 8th annual AnimaE Caribe Animation and New Media Festival drew to a close last Saturday night with industry executives vowing to expand partnerships with Government and business that are key not only to the Festival's success, but also to the expansion of the animation industry in Trinidad and Tobago. At an Awards Gala at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, executives of film, theatre and private enterprise mingled with artists and students of animation to celebrate the end of another successful event and to present trophies and other prizes to the best animators from the region and around the world. AnimaE Caribe continues to grow in size and scope and attracts some of the best and brightest animators from around the globe to Trinidad in a forum to share knowledge and ideas. The advent of the Festival has contributed tremendously to the growth of the animation industry in Trinidad and Tobago.

In a brief address to guests, CEO of the Trinidad and Tobago Film Company (TTFC), Carla Foderingham saluted the founders for taking the AnimaE Caribe Festival, "to new and ever expanding horizons." She urged Government and private sector organizations to continue supporting the industry which is already earning high level support from the international community. Ms. Foderingham renewed the commitment of the TTFC to supporting the animation industry, which she believes has the potential to provide new opportunities for Trinidad and Tobago, for employment and for young people in terms of career opportunities and a chance to champion the creative resources of the youth of Trinidad and Tobago.

Ms. Foderingham's sentiments about the importance of collaboration were echoed by another speaker - Professor Michael Smith, VP Digital Media Studies at UTT - who spoke about the success of UTT's digital media programme as being derived from a truly interdisciplinary approach. "There is no better fusion of Art and Technology than that of animation," he stated. "Animation is truly one of the most fertile interdisciplinary programmes that a university can have - combining art, dance, acting, engineering, ICT, music technology, sound and of course business." He spoke about the need to create an industry for youth by developing entrepreneurship and business and of his hope that, through this Festival as well as collaborations with international companies such as Toon Boom Animations, Government and private enterprise that the animation industry in Trinidad and Tobago can truly become a viable one.

The night's festivities saw the premiere of a trailer for a new series for television and screen entitled, *The Anansi Chronicles*. AnimaE Founder and Creative Director, who is also head of this country's first animation studio, Full Circle Productions, Camille Selvon Abrahams, was emotional as she pointed out that the achievement was only possible because of the hard work, commitment and dedication of many people both inside and outside of the country who gave of their time, talent and creativity. "The development of this country's first-ever fully animated series is only possible because of many moving parts working together - from the young people we received through the MSTTE's retraining programme who are now students



of animation and whose creative abilities responsible for the successful development of *The Anansi Chronicles*, to those experts we met through AnimaE Caribe and whose knowledge we have been able to apply to this project. We are truly grateful for all the support from the Ministry, our sponsors and fellow artists," she stated

Indeed, AnimaE Caribe would not be possible without sponsors giving generously of their capital and resources, such as Toon Boom, the UTT and the TTFC. This year new sponsors such as Bmobile, First Citizens Bank, The Trinidad Guardian Newspaper and GIE Network Magazine, the Hyatt Regency Hotel, NIHERST, TEMPO, the Royal College of Art and NALIS have ensured that the Festival was able to expand its reach to touch an even larger group of young artists. Bmobile even encouraged the formation of the *Bmobile -AnimaE Caribe Animation Challenge*, which pitted the best animator groups from the University of Trinidad and Tobago and the University of the West Indies against independent animators to produce 10-15 second stop motion animations using a phone and the Bmobile logo.

At the culmination of the closing ceremony was the distribution of awards for excellence in animation in six categories. As in years gone by, entries were received from all over the world and the winners picked by a panel of international judges. The categories and winners for this year are as follows:

- **Most Promising Newcomer:** DREAMS UNFOLD, Blue Phoenix Group, Trinidad and Tobago
- **Best Student Animation:** LUI, LUI IN AMERICA, Vera Wing Lui, USA
- **Most Outstanding Animation:** THE TINY FISH, Sergei Ryabov, Russian Federation
- **Best Caribbean Animation:** VENDOR RIVALRY, Ansar Sattar, Trinidad and Tobago
- **Best Commercial Animation:** FLOW CAMPAIGN, Publicis, Trinidad and Tobago
- **Best Use of Animation in a Music Video:** PROSPER (with 12 the Band), Wendell McShine, Trinidad and Tobago.

This year's Festival saw significant strides being made for the animation industry; there was announcement of a new co-production initiative that will see Trinidad and Tobago partner with Canada to expand the animation industry locally; there is a renewed focus on training and education through collaborations with the Ministry of Science Technology and Tertiary Education, the Ministry of Education, and UTT, and the introduction of a new awards programme for younger artists, the *Octy Award*.

Two well known studios - Disney Animation Studios and the Sesame Workshop were featured in workshops. Sesame Street which has been on the cutting-edge of both animation and puppetry for the past 40 years was represented by Odin Dupeyron, a long standing puppeteer and performer with the studio. Bringing with him the character he portrays on Plaza Sésamo - Sesame Street in Latin America - Pancho Contreras, Mr. Dupeyron thrilled participants at the puppetry workshop as well as at the School's Day at UTT's O'Meara Campus. Peter Deluca who has worked for many years with Disney Animation Studios presented a workshop on animation in which he shared in greater detail his experiences working in one of the most popular animation studios in the world. Mr. Deluca has 15 film credits to his name including work on the highly anticipated Disney animation, 'The Princess and the Frog,' due for release



in December. His work also includes 'Pocahontas,' 'The Hunchback of Notre Dame,' 'Mulan,' 'Lilo and Stitch' and 'Brother Bear.'

Other workshops featured the art of traditional hand-drawn animation, airbrushing and stop-motion animation, given by professionals from Cuba, North America and Caribbean.

Animae Caribe activities specially geared toward youth saw hundreds of students descend on the O'Meara campus of UTT for the Schools Day and Chalk Art Expo. The celebration continued at the Corner Bar where the Festival hosted a *Salute to Young Pioneers in Art* where up and coming artists and animators were presented with the Octopus Awards - the alternative to the AnimaE Caribe Awards. The *Octy*, as the award is fondly called, was presented to young, creative and dynamic designers, storytellers and artists from the region

Finally, the highlight of each day of the Festival was screenings from animators from across the globe including Latin America, North America, Europe, Asia and of course the Caribbean. Screenings were held all over Trinidad - in Port of Spain - at NALIS, at the Fernandes Compound in Laventille and outdoors on the Brian Lara Promenade. Screenings were also held in UWI, St Augustine, Movie Towne in Westmoorings, and the UTT Campus, O'Meara, Arima.

Camille Selvon Abrahams, AnimaE Caribe's founder and Creative Director stated: "2009 will be remembered as a significant year for AnimaE Caribe. At the opening of the Festival last Wednesday we were encouraged by the support and commitment we received from Government to invest in our young people through advanced training opportunities and the development of international standards. We also look forward, through our collaboration with Toon Boom Animation as well as others in the private sector here in Trinidad and Tobago, to the development of more business opportunities for our local animators."

For further information on the Festival, visit the AnimaE Caribe website at www.animaecaribe.com.

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