

Iranian animation industry takes off

'Woolina and the No Birds': An Iranian animation for all ages

From the small screen to the big screen, 'Woolina and the No Birds', co-directed by Hossein Saffarzadegan and Meysam Hosseini, is making a splash in Iranian cinemas, proving that homegrown animation can compete with international productions and entertaining audiences of all ages.

For some adults, the name of the animation may not be familiar, but for children, it is a beloved character. 'Woolina and the No Birds' is, in fact, a 3D version of a TV series, which has been a favorite among children for years. As a result, young audiences are thrilled to see their favorite character on the big screen. The film's script is based on a three-act structure, with clear references to the original TV series. The film's story is not a direct continuation of the TV series, but rather a new story that builds upon the characters and world created in the series.

The animation is designed and made with 3D technique aims to inspire viewers with the age-old adage, "Where there's a will, there's a way." The film has assembled a talented team of animation professionals, with Hossein Saffarzadegan at the helm, who has spent years bringing the series to life for young audiences. Meysam Hosseini and Mehdi Mashekouri are also on board, lending their expertise to the project and helping to drive it forward.

One of the standout strengths of this animation is its broad appeal, drawing in both fans of the TV series and newcom-



ers alike. The film sets the scene by introducing the characters and spinning a new yarn, making it accessible to everyone from the get-go. The story unfolds in a quaint village where pumpkin farming is the mainstay, and a group of plucky small animals, led by a spirited young sheep, dream of taking to the skies.

The film's vibrant visuals, impressive graphics, catchy music, and engaging storyline all come together to create an entertaining experience that will captivate kids. But what's more, the film is also geared towards adults, making it a great choice for a fun family outing. The world of animation has undergone a significant shift in recent years, with a growing trend towards creating films that cater to both children and adults. This approach has proven successful in get-

ting parents to tag along with their kids to the cinema, and 'Woolina and the No Birds' is no exception. The film's soundtrack is also catchy, blending old and new tunes in a way that's hard to get out of your head. One of the standout moments is the use of the classic Iranian song 'Jan-e Maryam' by the late Mohammad Nouri, which has become an iconic part of Iranian music heritage. The song is featured in a pivotal scene where the characters come together to sing and dance, leaving the audience in a state of wonder.

The production team made a deliberate effort to weave in Iranian cultural elements and symbols throughout the film. For example, during a thrilling flying competition scene, the airplanes proudly display the Iranian flag. While the film is a triumph



in many ways, there are some areas that could be improved upon. For instance, the voice acting for some characters, such as the rabbit, can be a bit muffled due to the actor's distinct voice. Additionally, some characters' animal species can be tricky to distinguish, which might confuse both kids and adults. It's also essential for the film to have a clear sense of its target audience. For example, some young viewers in the cinema might not fully understand certain words or concepts, such as "destroy" or "evil", or might wonder why the cow characters wear clothes to the bathroom scene. These are

points that the animation creators should consider. Despite these minor flaws, 'Woolina and the No Birds' is a landmark achievement in Iranian animation. The film's success is a testament to the power of building a strong brand and creating a beloved character that resonates with audiences. According to Meysam Hosseini, one of the film's directors, the success of the film can be attributed in large part to the brand recognition of the characters 'Babaee and Babaou', which have been built up over the years through the TV series. In an interview, Hosseini emphasized the impor-

ance of "branding" in animation, highlighting the challenges of creating a film that appeals to both kids and adults. He noted that it's crucial to "strike the right balance between simplicity and complexity". Hosseini also praised the tireless efforts of the production team, including the director, producer, and production manager, who all worked hard to bring this project to life. The production manager, Samira Pishanidar, spoke about the challenges of managing a team and ensuring the film was completed on schedule.

She credited the film's success to its "engaging sto-

ryline, memorable characters, and catchy music". Hosseini also stressed the importance of supporting animation studios and encouraging the production of more films.

He believes that the success of 'Woolina and the No Birds' has shown that Iranian animation can hold its own against international productions, and that with more support, the industry can reach new heights.

Pishanidar also expressed her hopes for the future of Iranian animation industry, noting that with more productions, the industry can attract more talent and create a "thriving animation community".



International screening

The Iranian animated film 'Romashka, the Pilot' (also known as 'Woolina and the No Birds' and 'Kuzugiller' in Turkey) has taken off in Kazakhstan and Turkey, captivating audiences in both countries.

The film made its debut at IMAX Esentai Mall in Almaty, Kazakhstan,

with Iran's Consul General Mohsen Faghani and Cultural Attaché Hossein Aghazadeh in presence. The Kazakh audience was blown away by the film's quality, showering it with praise. Faghani was thrilled to see the first Iranian animation hit the big screen in Kazakhstan, saying it was a great opportunity to showcase Iranian arts

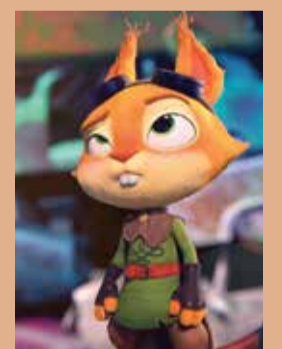
and culture, and to build bridges between the two nations.

Aghazadeh chimed in, emphasizing that Iran is keen to beef up its historical and cultural ties with Kazakhstan and give a boost to the cultural economy between the two countries.

The animation ran in Kazakh cinemas from August 29 to September 12, mark-

ing a major milestone in Iranian-Kazakh cinematic collaboration.

Later, it made its way to Turkish cinemas on September 27, dubbed into Turkish under the title 'Kuzugiller', which translates to "lambs". The film is currently being screened in 45 cities across Turkey, and it's proving to be a huge hit.



Future of Iranian animation

The triumph of 'Woolina and the No Birds' has set off a wave of optimism about the future of Iranian animation. With a pool of talented animators and producers on the rise, the industry is primed for expansion. Nevertheless, obstacles still linger, including the pressing need for more government backing and financial support.

Meysam Hosseini stressed the significance of creating a "dedicated platform" for Iranian animation, where films can be

showcased and admired. He emphasized that animation production studios should receive support to ramp up production numbers, which would, in turn, enable them to tap into a broader market. The production costs and timelines for animation are "notoriously high", with a film like 'Woolina and the No Birds' taking a minimum of three years to complete, making government support all the more crucial.

Over the past two years, the animated films 'Dolphin Boy' and 'Smart Kid' have con-

sistently ranked among the top five best-selling films in Iranian cinema, demonstrating that animation has become a force to be reckoned with in the country. This success suggests that economic support for this sector could yield "positive financial returns".

Pishanidar echoed Hosseini's sentiments, highlighting the vital role government support and funding play in nurturing the industry's growth. With sufficient backing, Iranian animation can hold its own against international productions and give rise to a

thriving animation community. The success of 'Woolina and the No Birds' has already proven that Iranian animation can compete on the global stage, and with continued support, the industry is poised to reach new heights. As the Iranian animation industry continues to gain momentum, it's exciting to think about what the future holds. With great filmmakers and experts like Hosseini and Pishanidar at the helm, the industry is sure to produce more high-quality films that will interest audiences worldwide.

