

City of Erlangen – Cultural Office
Department Festivals and
Programmes

Annika Gloystein
Gebbertstraße 1
91052 Erlangen – Germany
Tel. +49 (0)9131 86-1031
Fax: +49 (0)9131 86-1411

annika.gloystein@stadt.erlangen.de
www.comic-salon.de

Press Release

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18th Erlangen International Comic Salon – 31 May to 3 June 2018 “Max und Moritz” Award 2018

25 titles nominated for the 2018 „Max und Moritz” Award Lifetime Achievement Award goes to Jean-Claude Mézières

The 18th “Max and Moritz” Award ceremony will take place at the 2018 Erlangen International Comic Salon. The award is the most important accolade for graphic literature and comic art in German-speaking countries. Twenty-five titles have been nominated, and eight of the nine winners will be announced on 1 June 2018 during the “Max und Moritz” Gala. Jean-Claude Mézières, the artist behind the science-fiction series *Valérian and Laureline* (known to German readers as *Valerian und Veronique*), will receive the “Max und Moritz” Lifetime Achievement Award. The jury chose to honour the influential French comic artist for his outstanding work, which has reached far beyond France and the boundaries of traditional comic book audiences.

The jury also drew up a list of 22 nominations, which were supplemented by three other titles that audiences voted for online. The winners, chosen from the 25 nominated titles, will be announced at the “Max und Moritz” Gala, which will be held on Friday, 1 June at 8:30 p.m. in Erlangen’s Markgrafentheater. Awards will be given in the following categories: Best German-language Comic, Best International Comic in German, Best German-language Comic Strip, and Best Comic for Children and Teenagers. No nominations were made for the categories Best German-Speaking Comic Artist (€5,000) and Best Student Comic Publication (€1,000). The winners of these two categories, along with the winners of the Audience Award and the Special Jury Award, will also be announced at the gala. The award ceremony, which will be presented by Hella von Sinnen and Christian Gasser, is considered the highlight of the Erlangen International Comic Salon.

The „Max und Moritz” Award is the most important accolade for graphic literature and comic art in the German-speaking world. Winners are chosen by an independent jury of experts appointed by Erlangen city council. The award has been instrumental in securing artistic and social recognition for comics for more than 30 years. It honours outstanding artists, strengthens the commendable work of publishers, directs attention to up-and-coming talent, and promotes high-quality appraisals of graphic literature. This year’s Max and Moritz jury members are Christian Gasser (author, lecturer in art and design at Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts), Andreas C. Knigge (journalist and commentator, Hamburg),

Katinka Kornacker (managing director of COMIX Comicbuchhandlung, Hannover), Isabel Kreitz (comic book artist, Hamburg), Lars von Törne (journalist, Berlin), Christine Vogt (director of Ludwiggalerie Schloss Oberhausen) and Bodo Birk (director of the Erlangen International Comic Salon).

The 25 titles nominated for the 2018 „Max und Moritz“ Award

in alphabetical order:

Ambient Comics by Nadine Redlich. Rotopol

A Silent Voice by Yoshitoki Ōima (Translation: Christine Steinle). Egmont Manga
(nominated by the audience)

Black Hammer by Jeff Lemire and Dean Ormston (Translation: Katrin Aust). Splitter Verlag

Brodecks Bericht by Manu Larcenet (Translation: Ulrich Pröfrock). Based on the novel by Philippe Claudel. Reprodukt

Chiisakobee – Die kleine Nachbarschaft by Minetarō Mochizuki (Translation: Cordelia Suzuki).
Based on the novel by Shūgorō Yamamoto. Carlsen Manga

Das Leben ist kein Ponyhof by Sarah Burrini. www.sarahburrini.com / Panini Books

Dead Dead Demon's Dededede Destruction by Inio Asano (Translation: Hana Rude). Tokyopop

Der große böse Fuchs by Benjamin Renner (Translation: Benjamin Mildner). avant-verlag

Der Ursprung der Welt by Liv Strömquist (Translation: Katharina Erben). avant-verlag

Die drei ??? – Das Dorf der Teufel by Ivar Leon Menger, John Beckmann and Christopher Tauber.
Kosmos Verlag

Die Welt der Söhne by Gipi (Translation: Myriam Alfano). avant-verlag
(Date of Publication: 7 May 2018)

Esthers Tagebücher by Riad Sattouf (Translation: Ulrich Pröfrock). Reprodukt

Geisel by Guy Delisle (Translation: Heike Drescher). Reprodukt

German Calendar No December by Birgit Weyhe and Sylvia Ofili. avant-verlag
(Date of Publication: 22 May 2018)

Gung Ho by Thomas von Kummant and Benjamin von Eckartsberg. Cross Cult

Herbst in der Hose by Ralf König. Rowohlt Verlag

Maggy Garrisson by Lewis Trondheim and Stéphane Oiry (Translation: Resel Rebiersch).
Verlag Schreiber&Leser

Mühsam – Anarchist in Anführungsstrichen by Jan Bachmann. Edition Moderne

Nick Cave – Mercy on me by Reinhard Kleist. Carlsen Verlag

NiGuNeGu by Oliver Mielke and Hannes Radke. www.nigunegu.de / Pyramond Verlag
(nominated by the audience)

Schläfst du? by Dorothée de Monfreid (Translation: Ulrich Pröfrock). Reprodukt

The Artist by Anna Haifisch. www.vice.com / Reprodukt

Tracht Man by Christopher Kloiber. Plem Plem Productions (nominated by the audience)

Tüti by Dominik Wendland. Jaja Verlag

Wie ich versuchte, ein guter Mensch zu sein by Ulli Lust. Suhrkamp Verlag

To read extracts of the nominated titles (in German), visit: www.comic-salon.de/de/nominierungen.

The 2018 “Max und Moritz” Audience Award

This year will be the fifth outing for the “Max und Moritz” Audience Award. It will go to one of the 25 titles nominated for a „Max und Moritz” Award. Audiences can vote online – via the Comic Salon Forum, for instance (www.comic-salon.de). Each person can vote once. Voting opens on 16 April and closes at 7 p.m. on 31 May (first day of the 18th International Comic Salon). The winner of the Audience Award will be announced at the “Max und Moritz” Gala. For more information, visit www.comic-salon.de/de/max-und-moritz-publikumspreis.

The “Max und Moritz” Gala

Presented by Hella von Sinnen and Christian Gasser
Friday, 1 June 2018 at 8:30 p.m.
Markgrafentheater, Theaterplatz 2, 91054 Erlangen
Pre-sale begins on 27 April 2018

This is the second time that DATEV eG has been the main sponsor of the Erlangen International Comic Salon. DATEV is an IT service provider for tax advisers, auditors, lawyers and their clients (such as SMEs and municipal administrations). The cooperative, which represents 40,500 members, is one of the largest private-sector employees in the Nuremberg Metropolitan Region and one of Europe’s leading software providers.

Organiser

City of Erlangen – Cultural Office
Department Festivals and Programmes
Gebbertstraße 1, 91052 Erlangen – Germany
Tel. +49 (0)9131 86-1408, Fax: +49 (0)9131 86-1411
E-Mail: info@comic-salon.de
Website: www.comic-salon.de

Below you will find more information about Jean-Claude Mézières, winner of the Lifetime Achievement Award, and texts by the jury about each of the nominated works.

The 2018 „Max und Moritz” Award

Lifetime Achievement Award Jean-Claude Mézières

Dive into the cosmos created by Jean-Claude Mézières, and you will encounter images that seem very familiar – as if his drawings were inspired by cinema’s biggest science-fiction and space adventures. In fact, it’s sort of the other way around. Countless designers and directors have drawn on Mézières’ work, and numerous films bear his official touch – including Peter Fleischmann’s adaptation of the Strugatskys’ novel *Es ist nicht leicht, ein Gott zu sein* (*Hard to be a God*, 1990). Mézières’ influence is especially recognisable in Luc Besson’s film *The Fifth Element* (1997).

The never-ending story of the man behind a multifaceted comic universe began 80 years ago. Jean-Claude Mézières was born in Paris on 23 September 1938, just a few weeks after Pierre Christin, the literary scholar, writer and comic author who received the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Erlangen International Comic Salon in 2010. The jury’s decision to salute Mézières this year means that the lives of two men who have had a lasting impact on comic history have intersected again. The pair first met as youngsters. Then Christin pursued writing and literature, and Mézières attended the École des Arts Appliqués in Paris. After graduating, Mézières worked as an illustrator for the publisher Hachette, and in advertising. While traveling across the United States, he met Christin again, who was teaching at the

University of Utah in Salt Lake City. They decided to get together and try their luck in the medium of the graphic narrative.

With the help of Jean Giraud (also known as Moebius, and winner of the 2000 Lifetime Achievement Award), they published their first short stories in the renowned French comic magazine *Pilote*. Mézières drew short stories for some of the *Pilote* writers – among them Reiser, Lob and its editor-in-chief René Goscinny – until the first instalment of *Valérian and Laureline* appeared in 1967. At that stage, there were no plans to take the story any further. It was the sequel, *The City of Shifting Waters*, that gave rise to the series about two humanist, anti-colonialist agents working for the diplomatic Spatio-Temporal Service.

In terms of form, Mézières initially drew the comic in what German-speakers refer to as the *semi-funny* tradition of Franquin, Uderzo and the *MAD Magazine* artists he admired so much. The heads were overemphasised – both in terms of the proportions that gave them a certain cuteness, and their cartoonishly overdrawn personalities. Over time, Valérian and Laureline became more grown-up – but Mézières retained the *funny* formal elements for the characters in his galactic zoo, which he ran with the most exuberant of imaginations. The complexity with which Mézières imbued his galaxy-dwellers – rather than being simply “good” or “evil”, they are always headstrong, coherent characters – is one of the many qualities that make his art so special. Hieronymus Bosch’s beasts seem to have been a rich source of inspiration for him.

These beasts run wild in pictorial spaces whose roots lie in the comics of Gillon and Forest. Yet Mézières transformed the angularity of his role models’ work into playful decoration. Using a largely traditional page layout, he gave the individual panels great depth and a sense of the boundlessness of space with its immeasurable possibilities for astronomical, physiological and cultural experiments. He regularly smuggled new creative techniques between the illustrated passages. He bewildered his readers with painted-over screentone, blended his drawings with macrophotography and computer animations, and in doing so captured effects that are nothing short of magic. None of these experiments were ends in themselves; they serve the narrative, accentuate the mood or lend irony to proceedings.

Mézières always had fun with variety. An extremely sober, highly realistic Mézières can be found in *Lady Polaris*, a comic novel for which Christin again supplied the text. Mézières used painted-over photographs and imitation photographs, and merged images with ideals. In this work, the commercial style of comic art flirts heavily with the possibilities of a free discipline.

Mézières concluded *Valérian and Laureline* in 2010 with Volume 21, *The Time Opener*. In 2014, though, he caved to the pressure to continue – time, after all, is a never-ending affair that offers up infinite adventures and images to explore. And so Mézières drew a few more pictures – some in the especially luxurious format of double-page spreads – for a few more adventures that his friend, partner and writer Christin had penned. The result was a new volume dedicated to the heroes of the Spatio-Temporal Service. It contains nine short stories and is entitled *Memories from the Futures*. In 2017, self-confessed Mézières fan Luc Besson made a film adaptation of *Valérian and Laureline*, which fuses computer animation with live-action. The endless expanse of the universe will never lose its appeal – and no one can portray it quite as well as Jean-Claude Mézières.

Books by Jean-Claude Mézières published in German (selection):

Valerian und Veronique, the complete works, published as collections by Carlsen Verlag, all in collaboration with Pierre Christin:

– Volume 1: *Schlechte Träume, Die Stadt der tausenden Wasser, Im Reich der tausend Planeten*. Hamburg, 2010

– Volume 2: *Das Land ohne Sterne, Willkommen auf Alflolol, Die Vögel des Tyrannen*. Hamburg, 2011

- Volume 3: *Botschafter der Schatten, Trügerische Welten, Die Insel der Kinder*. Hamburg, 2011
- Volume 4: *Das Monster in der Metro, Endstation Brooklyn, Die Geister von Inverloch, Die Blitze von Hysis*. Hamburg, 2012
- Volume 5: *Die große Grenze, Lebende Waffen, Die Kreise der Macht*. Hamburg, 2012
- Volume 6: *Im Bann von Ultralum, Die Sternenweise, In unsicheren Zeiten*. Hamburg, 2013
- Volume 7: *Am Rande des großen Nichts, Das Gesetz der Steine, Der Zeitöffner*. Hamburg, 2014

- *Lady Polaris*. Carlsen Verlag, Hamburg, 1992
- *Valerian und Veronique: Jenseits von Raum und Zeit – Die Kurzgeschichten*. Carlsen Verlag. Hamburg, 2017
- *Valerian – Filmausgabe: Im Reich der tausend Planeten, Botschafter der Schatten*. Carlsen Verlag. Hamburg, 2017

„Max und Moritz“ Award 2018

The 25 works nominated for the 2018 „Max und Moritz“ Award

in alphabetical order:

Ambient Comics

by Nadine Redlich

Rotopol

If you are you looking for one of the most modern and innovative comic strips around, look no further. With her *Ambient Comics*, Nadine Redlich has drawn the beginning and end of all possibilities, the universal comic. Honouring the attention span of Generation Smartphone, she tells 74 six-image stories in which – as you would expect from a comic – time passes between the pictures. The one-page stories range from highly dramatic themes such as the end of the world, melting polar ice caps and collapsing buildings, to everyday dramas like a growing pimple. Redlich tells all her tales without a single word; her comics are silent. She draws sparingly but with precision. The story emerges through small details that change from picture to picture. Often, the drama is concealed behind the images: a tiny plant, for instance, grows slowly out of the plughole as dishes stack up next to the sink. We sense the kind of conflict that arises in shared flats everywhere – a story of shirked responsibility and procrastination. Or perhaps someone died before they got around to doing the washing up? Ultimately, we the readers tell ourselves the story.

If you invest the time that *Ambient Comics* needs, you will be richly rewarded. Like a good whisky, it takes one or two sips for the taste to develop, but then the full flavour really comes through.

A Silent Voice (nominated by the audience)

by Yoshitoki Ōima (German translation by Christine Steinle)

Egmont Manga

When comics address social problems, and do so explicitly with the support of an interest group, they can all too often be filed under the unfortunate category of “well-meaning”. *A Silent Voice*, however, is a very different case. For evidence, you need only look to the fact that artist Yoshitoki Ōima had to expand her manga twice because of its immense success. Eventually, her original 48-page story became a series that filled seven large paperbacks. The comic explores the problems that a deaf girl, Shoko, faces at her state school. One of her classmates in particular, Shoya, makes her life a living hell. The bullying gets so bad that Shoko has to leave the school. When the incidents become public, however, Shoya also has to switch schools. The pair meet again in secondary school, and Shoya seizes the chance to patch things up with Shoko and get to know her properly. The touching story addresses and dismantles prejudices and misunderstandings about people with disabilities, without ever waving a pedagogical finger – making Yoshitoki Ōima’s manga an exceptional piece of work.

Black Hammer

by Jeff Lemire and Dean Ormston (German translation by Katrin Aust)

Splitter Verlag

A group of superheroes from the metropolis are living incognito on a farm somewhere in the American Midwest. It quickly becomes clear that these once radiant defenders of justice are dragging a whole lot of personal baggage around with them – and that dark secrets are lurking behind the seemingly idyllic small-town setting. In *Black Hammer*, Jeff Lemire skilfully and entertainingly combines elements from highly realistic independent comics with aspects of superhero adventures. Equally, Dean Ormston's drawings combine the superhero aesthetic of the Golden Age with the nuanced style of characters in auteur comics. Dave Stewart's finely graded colouring completes the picture. As is often the case with Lemire, the superpowers here are simply metaphors for the individual strengths and weaknesses of his very human characters. The battles of the past only appear as memories. The real focus is on the dynamics of this group brought together by fate, on personal conflicts and on the heroes' quest to solve the riddle of why they are where they are. And as serious as the captivating dialogue is overall, its regular forays into irony and humour are superb.

Brodecks Bericht

by Manu Larcenet (German translation by Ulrich Pröfrock)

based on the novel by Philippe Claudel

Reprodukt

In impressively dark, dense images, Manu Larcenet tells the story of Brodeck, a man forced to justify the murder of a stranger at the hands of villagers who live in extreme poverty and freezing conditions. Gradually, all the horrors and misdeeds that befell the villagers or in which they participated come to light. With an intensity that never lets up for its 300-plus pages, the work tells of guilt and shared guilt, of fear and torment, and of people's inability to own up to their actions. Often going for pages without using a single word, the characters allow us to read every emotion and every interaction from their powerfully haunting faces. We look into the abyss of the human soul, into a gloom as deep and as dark as the black of Larcenet's drawings.

Brodecks Bericht is a great, sombre masterpiece that uses striking images to tell an unimaginably brutal tale about the human species – one that weighs heavily on you long after you have put the book down.

Chiisakobee – Die kleine Nachbarschaft

by Minetarō Mochizuki (German translation by Cordelia Suzuki)

based on the novel by Shūgorō Yamamoto

Carlsen Manga

Everything seems so contemplative, so composed – but behind the calm images, disasters lurk. The parents of carpenter Shigeji have died in a fire. His company and therefore his livelihood have been almost completely destroyed. He must deal with social expectations that he has no desire to fulfil, and has to take responsibility for a group of orphaned children who insist on acting out their hostile feelings. Minetarō Mochizuki (born 1964) has been working as a successful manga artist since 1985. *Chiisakobee* is his comic-book adaptation of a 1957 novel by Shūgorō Yamamoto. Minetarō moved the old tale of craftsmanship, emotions and empathy into the present and tells of the immutability of values and conflicts. In doing so, he focuses on the details of communal life, regularly highlighting postures, facial expressions, and the ways food is presented in Japanese kitchen culture. The result is an unconventional work that received the award for Best Series in 2017 at the comics festival in Angoulême, France.

Das Leben ist kein Ponyhof (Life ain't no Ponyfarm)

by Sarah Burrini

www.sarahburrini.com / Panini Books

For almost ten years, Sarah Burrini has been using her extremely entertaining comic strip *Das Leben ist kein Ponyhof* to combine the absurd with the everyday – often weighing in on current debates as she goes. Three collections have now been published as books, and new strips appear every Monday. Burrini combines happenings from her own life and observations on current political and social events with fantastical elements. Her illustrated alter ego shares a flat with various talking animals, and she makes regular ironic forays into the male-dominated world of superheroes as Nerd Girl. In the past few years, the comics have increasingly featured critical comments on right-wing populism, fake-news controversies, and recent cases of sexism and discrimination. The charm of this cartoonish, classic comic-strip lies in the interplay between youthful imagination and a mature ability to reflect on the world, and in Burrini's playful exploration of the possibilities presented by comic art.

Dead Dead Demon's Dededede Destruction

by Inio Asano (German translation by Hana Rude)

Tokyopop

This is a story about the complexity of the world, about how bad-tempered people can be, about the confusion between facts and fake news, and about all the existential threats that we suppress so that we can live, love, party, cry and laugh. The title of this manga series alone – *Dead Dead Demon's Dededede Destruction* – points to the chaos of our everyday perceptions. Inio Asano (who was born in 1980 in the Japanese prefecture of Ibaraki) has been a successful mangaka since 2000. His works include *Das Ende der Welt vor Sonnenaufgang (Before Dawn and the End of the World)* *Das Feld des Regenbogens (Nijigahara Holograph)* and *Gute Nacht, Punpun (Goodnight Punpun)*. The density of his drawings creates a hermetic, claustrophobic world in which familiar manga characters – high-school pupils and university students – try to get a handle on their feelings while a deadly spaceship casts its shadow over Tokyo and the arms industry exploits the situation for some deadly dealings. In this world, philosophy and social criticism join forces under the genre cloak of science fiction.

Der große böse Fuchs (The Big Bad Fox)

by Benjamin Renner (German translation by Benjamin Mildner)

avant-verlag

Using minimalistic lines and colour washes, French artist Benjamin Renner tells the fable of the big bad fox. The protagonist's efforts to terrorise the chicken farm are doomed to failure because of the hens' courageousness and his own incompetence. Even the big bad wolf can't turn the fox into a frightening assistant. He encourages the fox to steal eggs one night so that he can eat something other than just turnips. The robbery is a success, but then the fox has to incubate the eggs until they hatch. When the chicks arrive, they see the fox as their mother, and a sense of loving affection (which the fox initially refuses to admit to) grows between them. The fox defends his chicks against all outside attacks – from the big bad wolf, for instance – and against all political decisions made on the chicken farm. He even ends up allowing the feminist hens to use him as a punching bag for their training, just so he can be with his brood.

This is a story about a father's love for his children and vice versa, and Renner tells it with superb wit. Though pared-down, his drawings perfectly express his characters' emotions and allow us to experience them as well. An immense, profound delight for all parents and their chicks.

Der Ursprung der Welt (Fruit of Knowledge)

by Liv Strömquist (German translation by Katharina Erben)

avant-verlag

The problem is not men who are *not* interested in the female sex organ, but those who have developed *too great* an interest in it, Liv Strömquist proclaims somewhat startlingly in the opening of

Der Ursprung der Welt. She goes on to list a top ten of notable figures guilty of misunderstanding women. Men ranging from the doctor and inventor of the cornflake John Harvey Kellogg to the theologian Augustine of Hippo are charged with complicity in the stigmatisation of the vulva as unclean and the source of numerous illnesses, a notion that has so often resulted in its being mutilated, circumcised or even “treated” with acid.

After this introduction, Strömquist – born in Sweden in 1979 – launches an exhaustively researched cultural history of the vulva, presented with feminist verve and caustic sarcasm, devoted not least to discussing how, for centuries, female sexuality has been repressed, pathologised and disparaged. There is never a dry moment in this analysis of the female nether regions: *Der Ursprung der Welt* is a pamphlet oozing in-your-face humour and frank indignation, as entertaining as it is informative.

Die drei ??? – Das Dorf der Teufel

by Ivar Leon Menger, John Beckmann and Christopher Tauber

Kosmos Verlag

The graphic novelisation of *Die drei ???* reinvents one of the most popular crime series for children and young adults in the comic-strip format. Whereas the “old” stories featured a cover compellingly illustrated by Aiga Rasch, it is now the entire story that is translated into a sequence of images drawn by Christopher Tauber. Writing duties are shared between Ivar Leon Menger and John Beckmann, completing a trio that recounts exciting new adventures featuring a foreword and afterword by none other than Alfred Hitchcock.

In *Das Dorf der Teufel*, Justus Jonas (first detective), Peter Shaw (second detective) and Bob Andrews (research and archives) help the chauffeur Morton look for a missing friend. The search leads the four of them to a village in Redwood Falls, seemingly straight out of the 19th century, with echoes of the Amish communities in the US where time has stood still.

The story, which takes countless twists as the young investigators dig deeper into the case, is told in a variety of panel layouts frequently depicting single or double spread scenes. The drawings and text complement each other perfectly, immersing the reader in the world of the three canny detectives as they pursue their enquiries while sometimes also navigating complications of a more personal nature. An exciting romp for kids and teens, as well as adults who grew up on the original series.

Die Welt der Söhne (Land of the Sons)

by Gipi (German translation by Myriam Alfano)

avant-verlag (Publication date: 7 May 2018)

Civilisation has collapsed. Those who survived are left to fend for themselves. This increasingly familiar premise has served as the backdrop for countless comics, novels and television series in recent years. Nevertheless, Gipi succeeds in delivering a fresh take on the idea.

In *Die Welt der Söhne*, a father and his two sons fight for survival in a post-apocalyptic world. Gipi’s focus is firmly on the relationship between the rough and callous father and his two defiant boys, who ultimately only want one thing: their father’s love. When he dies, the two sons set off through a barbaric world filled with unexpected dangers in search of someone who can tell them who their father really was.

Italian comic author Gipi uses simple, raw but dynamic ink drawings to tell an intense and highly emotional story.

Esthers Tagebücher

by Riad Sattouf (German translation by Ulrich Pröfrock)

Reprodukt

Esther, aged ten, is a perfectly normal girl. That said, she is also the protagonist of a highly unusual comic series: in *Esthers Tagebücher*, French-Syrian comic author Riad Sattouf – born in 1978 – has taken it upon himself to observe his friends’ daughter Esther until her 18th birthday, chronicling his conversations with her year in, year out.

The first volume revolves around Esther’s school, her best friends and selected enemies, her difficult older brother and other “stupid” boys, clothes, the dream of owning an iPhone, pop and reality TV stars – but also schoolyard bullying, racism, envy and jealousy... In other words, Esther relates the madness and constant overload that are part and parcel the everyday life of a teenager. Steering clear of sugar-coating or cuteness, in this little girl’s universe Riad Sattouf remains the same razor-sharp satirical observer we know from comics such as the autobiographical *The Arab of the future*.

Nevertheless, he remains firmly rooted in Esther's perspective – an outlook as naïve as it is critical, exposing a profusion of inconsistencies, contradictions and absurdities that yield abundant potential for outlandish comedy.

Geisel (Hostage)

by Guy Delisle (German translation by Heike Drescher)

Reprodukt

In July 1997, Christophe André, an aid worker for Doctors Without Borders, was abducted in the Caucasus and imprisoned for 111 days, most of them spent handcuffed to a radiator in a bare room. In *Geisel*, French-Canadian cartoonist Guy Delisle – whose reports from cities such as Jerusalem and Pyongyang became international bestsellers – tells the story of Christophe André's ordeal. *Geisel* is 432 pages long; the style is simple and sparse, the page layout is uniform, and the blue tone has a cool, almost discomfiting effect. Delisle refrains from portraying the abduction as an action spectacle; instead, he depicts the oppressive boredom, the soul-destroying waiting and the endless repetition of daily routines. More than that, he makes them palpable to the reader. Despite his economical style, the author succeeds in creating an exciting narrative and atmospheric pull that inexorably draws in the reader until they experience André's imprisonment from his own perspective. *Geisel* is an impressive achievement: never before has boredom been so exciting and dramatic.

German Calendar No December

by Birgit Weyhe and Sylvia Ofili

avant-verlag (Publication date: 22 May 2018)

This is the story of Olivia, a young woman from the oil city of Warri in southern Nigeria, who can barely wait to go to boarding school. The daughter of a white German mother, she is reluctantly incongruous both in Warri and at the boarding school. School turns out to be a nightmare; Olivia is infuriated by the unjust punishments administered.

She goes on to attend university in Hamburg, where she learns German (her mother never spoke to her children in her native tongue) and meets a group of immigrants working in Hamburg train station, witnessing first-hand how they help refugees and "illegals". A new supervisor makes life difficult for them, but a solution is found. The open ending leaves Olivia as she embarks on fresh travels.

Birgit Weyhe employs a varied assortment of images to tell this coming-of-age story of a young woman navigating her way between different cultures and dreams. The panel sequence is regularly interrupted to accommodate full-page asides or interspersed elements; masks and inserts resembling wood carvings evoke a sense of Africa. A central theme running through the book is Olivia's love of music, inherited from her father. A profoundly insightful work about life.

Gung Ho

by Thomas von Kummant and Benjamin von Eckartsberg

Cross Cult

Benjamin von Eckartsberg and Thomas von Kummant's *Gung Ho* is a remarkable achievement, even by international standards. The end-of-days action series tells the story of a village under siege. A heavily guarded wall is all that separates the inhabitants from the "white plague": murderous predators known as rippers that have put Europe in a state of emergency. When the rebellious orphan brothers Zack and Archer arrive at the village, the fragile social order is thrown into disarray. The post-apocalyptic story, set in the near future, has a striking visual aesthetic: Thomas von Kummant's digitally assembled drawings with their bright colours and sophisticated lighting effects provide a plastic look reminiscent of animated films. Rarely has the post-apocalypse ever looked so good. The story itself is entertaining genre fare: action, tension and teen romance are combined with themes including corruption, abuse of power, conflicts of authority, competition and jealousy, woven together by Benjamin von Eckartsberg into a gripping yarn built around skilfully crafted cliffhangers.

Herbst in der Hose

by Ralf König

Rowohlt Verlag

A book about the dark side of male and human ageing that is also a joy to read? Not an achievement that many authors or illustrators can lay claim to. In *Herbst in der Hose*, Ralf König once again demonstrates just how well he knows people and their weaknesses. The dialogue is strikingly true to

life, while König's drawings convey the full range of human emotions with only slight variations in the facial expressions of his protagonist. A cleverly assembled cast of characters of different ages, genders and sexual orientations enables a variety of approaches to the topic. With his impeccable narrative timing, König is able to conjure up punch-lines as if from thin air. Visits to his parents' nursing home that are anything but amusing are recounted with such wit and empathy as to be a source not just of joy, but of solace as well.

Maggy Garrison

by Lewis Trondheim and Stéphane Oiry (German translation by Resel Rebiersch)

Verlag Schreiber&Leser

Maggy Garrison is brash, snarky and devoid of scruples; she lives on junk food and beer, and drifts into a career as a streetwise private detective more by chance than by design. When she's not taking on corrupt cops, ruthless gangsters or petty criminals, she's looking for answers to her moral quandaries in the bottom of a glass. Maggy Garrison trudges from one squalid case to the next through a Great Britain of lowlifes, whose pitiful circumstances appear depressingly cold, wet and grey in spite of Stéphane Oiry's bold colours, and are made bearable only by a heavy dose of wit. Especially noteworthy is Lewis Trondheim's narrative style: the individual albums each recount a self-contained episode, but are connected by a longer storyline in which the characters and their relationships develop and evolve. In an era when the classic French *Bandes Dessinées* seem to depend largely on repeating and rehashing familiar themes, old recipes and dead heroes, *Maggy Garrison* offers a refreshing and highly entertaining change.

Mühsam – Anarchist in Anführungsstrichen

by Jan Bachmann

Edition Moderne

A delightful comic page: Erich Mühsam, penniless poet, socialist agitator, timid bohemian (1878–1934) vainly in search of himself, or rather, in search of his works in the bookshops of Munich: six panels coloured blue, yellow, black and finally grey. Mühsam is a caricature with a long nose and a pointy beard, reminiscent of the figures of French comic artist Joann Sfar. But Mühsam is drawn by Jan Bachmann, a native of Basel born in 1986, who discovered the art of drawing while studying at the German Film and Television Academy in Berlin. Bachmann's album *Mühsam – Anarchist in Anführungsstrichen* is a vital study of life down to the last penny, with faces like landscapes and landscapes like expressive explosions. The poet murdered by the Nazis is rediscovered as the comic hero that, in Mühsam's own drawings, he always was.

Nick Cave – Mercy on me

by Reinhard Kleist

Carlsen Verlag

What do you do if you're growing up in a dreary one-horse town in Australia called Warracknabeal, and find out one day that you have the unruly heart of an outlaw? There is only one thing you can do: pack up and leave. In the company of a high school friend with whom he had formed a punk band, Nick Cave washes up in London, where no one has ever heard of the *Boys Next Door* despite their album down under. Life becomes one big blowout of noise blues and drugs. Cave moves on to West Berlin, where he forms The Bad Seeds, whose sombre ballads such as *Mercy Seat* are covered by the likes of Johnny Cash – tying in with Reinhard Kleist's successful and widely translated comic biography "Cash". Here, though, Kleist goes for rougher, more impulsive strokes to get closer to Cave. The resulting striking images, which are also devoted to the themes of his ballads, are in equal measure artful and unsettling.

NiGuNeGu (nominated by the audience)

by Oliver Mielke und Hannes Radke

www.nigunegu.de / Pyramond Verlag

At first sight, this web comic seems to require some explanation – beginning with the title itself, which is formed from the names of its three main characters: Nice Guy, Nerd and Guru, cut up and reassembled to yield Ni(ce)Gu(y)Ne(rd)Gu(ru). The three characters are united in a "bromantic comedy", a genre that can perhaps be described as an approximate counterpart to shows like *Sex and the City*. The struggles of these three very different friends, whose lives are intertwined in much the same way as their names in the title, to cope with the trials and tribulations inherent to the battle

of the sexes is portrayed in a highly entertaining manner by Oliver Mielke and Hannes Radke. Unlike the many readers who have had to make do with small weekly doses delivered online over the course of almost five years, newcomers will soon have the luxury of a print anthology for unrestricted reading pleasure.

Schläfst du?

by Dorothee de Monfreid (German translation by Ulrich Pröfrock)

Reprodukt

An extreme portrait format, perfectly suited to the bunk beds featured inside, sets the scene for Dorothee de Monfreid's take on the timeless "I can't sleep" story. Eight dogs share two bunks in a room, and Popow – possibly the oldest of the bunch – is snoring!

Kept awake by the noise, Nono asks the age-old question "Micha, are you asleep?" and demands that Micha "read something out loud". Nono climbs down the ladder, and this is where the book's format comes into its own.

The next voice to be heard is Pedro's, who wants to borrow a cuddly toy; then Zaza wants to switch beds, and Kaki wants a drink from Zaza's glass. One by one, they all leave their beds, climbing up or down the ladder to end up in bed with Micha, who is reading a story. The fairy tale, beginning with "Once upon a time," seems to have the desired effect: at the turn of the next page, seven little dogs are snoring contentedly in Micha's bed. Read-aloud fun for young and old alike.

The Artist

by Anna Haifisch

www.vice.com / Reprodukt

An ailing avian being, in conflict with itself and the world – at first glance, the protagonist of Anna Haifisch's *The Artist* does not seem especially likeable. Nevertheless, the creature, which oscillates between self-pity and overconfidence, has attained remarkable popularity in Germany and abroad – with good reason. After all, this is a story about fundamental human questions: the autobiographically inspired hero is constantly wrestling with the virtually unsolvable discrepancies between expectation and reality. Haifisch's character experiences all of this in a heightened form, resulting in highly amusing and often absurd episodes. The effect is magnified by Haifisch's fitful, nervous strokes, which give the fragile figure a shimmering, insubstantial quality. In implied rooms, the sad-faced artist often seems to be fighting a losing battle in a visual sense too.

This contrasts with the quiet colour scheme with its warm pastel tones, giving the drawings a pleasant feel, while simultaneously reinforcing the impact of the main character and its tragicomic misadventures.

Tracht Man (nominated by the audience)

by Christopher Kloiber

Plem Plem Productions

The good thing about *Tracht Man* is that you don't have to spend long wondering whether the whole thing is actually intended seriously, while merely giving the impression of irony. For many German superhero comics, this is a fundamental question that generally seems to elude an entirely satisfactory answer. In the case of *Tracht Man*, however, the parody is unmistakable, precluding the need for any musings that would in any case only spoil the fun of this monumental farce. Christopher Kloiber's creation is great fun for Old Bavarians and Prussians alike, leaving barely a cliché untouched – right down to superpowers brought on by drinking beer whenever a Saupreiß (northerner) is in need of a pounding. In an additional twist, the creator of the series and his publishing house Plem Plem Productions are, ironically, based in Franconia – a detail perhaps best not probed too deeply.

Tüti

by Dominik Wendland

Jaja Verlag

Plastic bags have had a bad rep for some time, primarily for environmental reasons. However, the central character in Dominik Wendland's comic grotesque *Tüti* is such a heinous villain that all the environmental sins of its kind appear harmless by comparison. Blown to and fro by the wind, the white plastic being with the smiley face bobs through one of the most original German comic narratives of recent times, becoming entangled with a rebellious band of gangsters, engaging in

amorous encounters, taking the lives of several people in bizarre fashion, and briefly being venerated as an absolutist ruler. Throughout all of this, it remains a mystery to the end which of Tüti's actions are pure chance, and which are human projections – and to what extent this plastic bag really does have the personality that people ascribe to it. Wendland tells the story in concise images that successfully exploit the absurdity of the premise on a visual level too.

Wie ich versuchte, ein guter Mensch zu sein (How I tried to be a good person)

by Ulli Lust

Suhrkamp Verlag

Ulli Lust, a budding artist in her mid-twenties in Vienna, is in love with two men: twenty-year-old Georg, with whom things have fizzled out in bed, and Nigerian refugee Kimata, with whom she embarks on a passionate sexual affair. Then there is also a third man in the background – Ulli's five-year-old son Philipp, growing up with his grandparents in the countryside. This tangle of relationships is the subject of Lust's second autobiographical graphic novel, *Wie ich versuchte, ein guter Mensch zu sein*, an uninhibited and unrelenting story that blends personal experience with broad themes such as love and sex across age and cultural barriers, female empowerment, alternative family arrangements, refugee policy...

And it is a convincing one, as Lust presents herself neither as a victim or a perpetrator, but as a young, sometimes naïve, egotistical and sexually demanding woman overwhelmed by her situation and her various roles as partner, lover and mother. Lust recounts this troubled chapter of her youth in a direct, sketch-like style, with an urgency that is all but impossible to resist.