

# ARIEL

In the world of the Ottoman Sultans, a poor Jewish boy from Jerusalem makes an unimaginable desert journey to Cairo, outsmarting a rapacious caravan leader, to save his mother and siblings from disaster.

He has nine days.....

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## Contact

C. A. MacFinn

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*“Ariel is an artistic masterpiece...”*

*- Kids First / Coalition for Quality Children's Media*





*“...fantastic animation, this film is a true masterpiece!*

*...I credit the director, C.A. MacFinn for his success in handling the execution of this film so well. The timing of the actions, well-designed characters, and culturally artistic backdrops add to the film's visual effects and bring the story to life”\**

## THE FILM

**Genre:** Animation

**Running Time:** 22 min

**Languages:** English

**Format:** 2K & 4K

**Production Company:**  
CGMuse

**Writer Director:**  
C. A. MacFinn

**Producers:**  
Clare Kohavi,  
C.A.MacFinn

**Starring:**  
Daniel Sean Smith,  
Clare Kohavi,  
Conor MacFinn,  
Mike Duckworth

**Original Score:**  
Josh Kaye



# Awards & Honors





# ARIEL

*A family adventure from a Middle Eastern Jewish folktale*

When ARI's father, a respected rug merchant, dies unexpectedly, his mother, YASMINA, struggles to protect their trade routes and family. Just as their hopes fail, a messenger arrives with astounding news. A wealthy relative in Egypt has left them a fortune if someone can swiftly claim it in faraway Cairo!

Ari, the oldest, decides he will undertake the perilous and urgent journey. On the advice of their friend ISMAIL, he hires MUSTAFA, a caravan driver notorious for speed and ruthlessness. Boldly, Ari approaches him and offers to pay him double – if he will stop the caravan for Ari's Sabbath observance and still get him to Cairo in time.

But at the oasis, Mustafa finds the tracks of a monstrous beast, breaks his promise, and abandons Ari in the desolate waste on the eve of the Sabbath. Despairing, Ari lights the Shabbat candles and hears -- a huge ROAR. Framed in unearthly fog and light, an immense lion emerges! Horrified, Ari prepares to be attacked. But the lion tumbles to the ground, starving and thirsty.

Ari pities the lion. Summoning his courage, he shares his meager food and water with the lion throughout the Sabbath. As sunset comes, he helps the lion to his feet and down to the oasis to drink his fill.

To his astonishment, the lion drinks, looks Ari in the eye, and kneels like a camel for a rider. Ari mounts and they leap into the sky! Hunting down the caravan, the lion knocks Mustafa down and menaces him until he promises to bring Ari to Cairo speedily. At that, the lion bows and miraculously vanishes back into the vast desert.

As Yasmina and her children sit despondently on the steps of their home in Jerusalem, a merchant in fine clothes rides down their street. Looking up they see – Ari! That Shabbat the family celebrates richly, and Yasmina adds to Ari's name to commemorate his adventure. They reunite with wise Ismail, reclaim their trade routes, and launch the family endeavors into a brilliant, courageous future.



# The Inspiration

***Ariel*** draws its inspiration from two sources: the richness and history of the Sephardi / Mizrachi (MENA Jewish) world, and the delight this folktale's doughty teen hero brought me when I was young enough for bedtime stories. Shabbat and family are central to the story, very tangible things that a young child can identify with. And, as a student of mine said, "***Ariel*** is about never losing hope," something I felt as a child, and a message that is especially important today. Writing the film, I also opened up the story to portray the important role of women in a society so often perceived of as solely patriarchal.

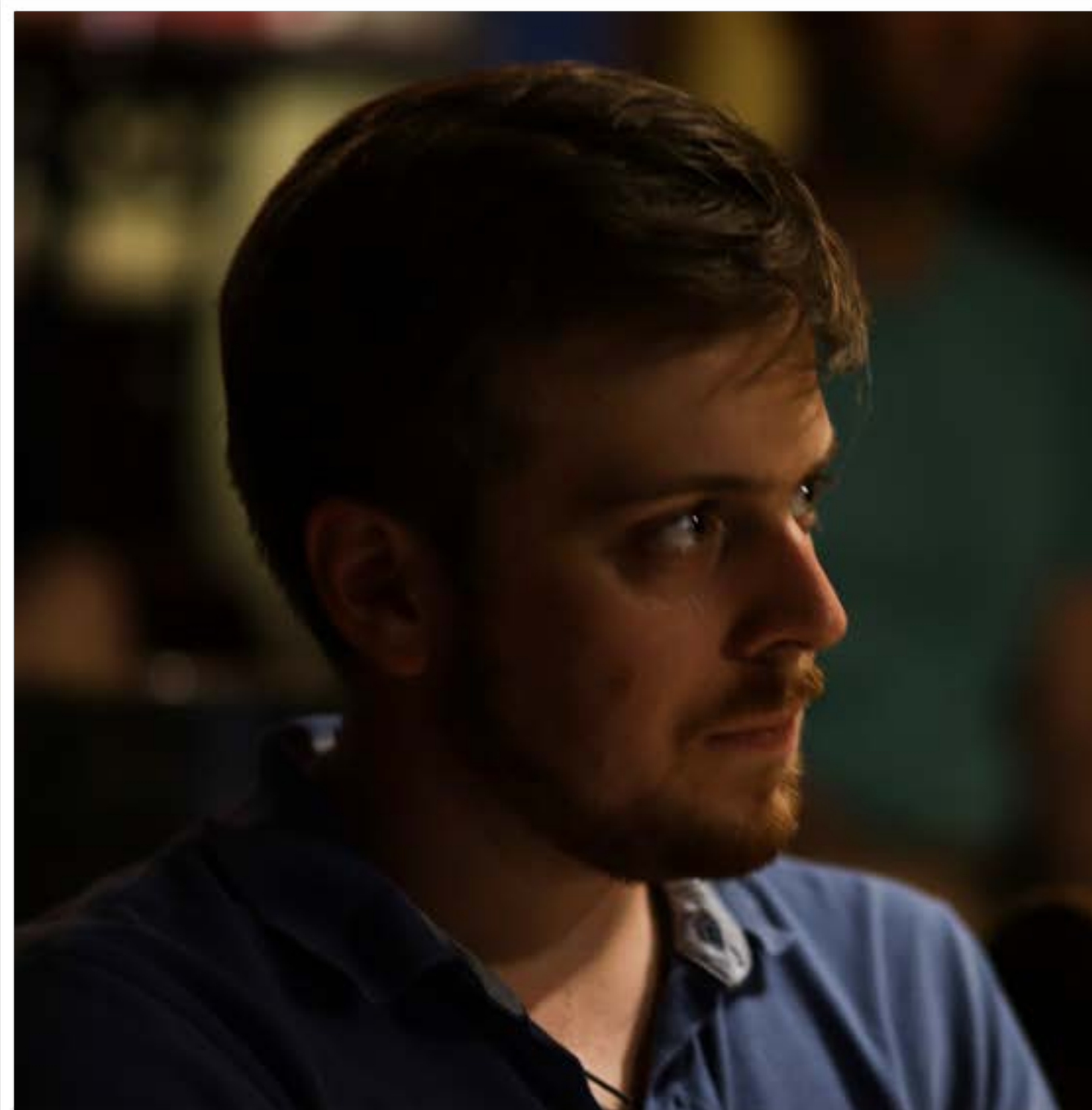
***Ariel*** was created by an international team as diverse as the 19th Century Ottoman Empire in which it is set. Most production work took place during pandemic shutdowns; We used Discord, SyncSketch and Dropbox to communicate synchronously and asynchronously across big time differences. It was challenging - and, in a weird way, fun - we shared the excitement of telling an inspiring story during pretty dark times! I was blown away by everyone's generosity and commitment. Each team member, both acting and technical, brought their own wizardry and grit to this magical story, and together we breathed life into this ancient tale of a Middle Eastern Jewish boy's quest to save his family and preserve their inheritance. ~ C. A. MacFinn





# C. A. MacFinn

*writer, producer, director,  
animator & Mustafa*



Conor is a Canadian / American filmmaker and is the Senior Creative Partner at CGMuse: he oversees all projects from conception through development to launch. His roles are varied: Project Conception, Director, Screenwriter, Animator, Animation Lead, Editor, and Chief Cook and Bottle Washer, as needed. Work on **ARIEL** began shortly before the pandemic, and Conor recruited and led a multinational team, working remotely across continents and time zones, to create the film. He's grateful for and proud of the work they did together under challenging circumstances! Since the 2024 premiere, Ariel has won awards for Best Animation, Outstanding Achievement in Animated Film, Best Sound Design, Best Original Score, for a Jewish Filmmaker and Jewish themes, Awards of Excellence and Official Selections at festivals on five continents, including in New York, London, L.A., Vancouver, Tokyo, Vienna, Israel, and Dubai. Ariel is also a selection of the Kid's First / Coalition for Quality Children's Media.

Conor's film, *Glooscap and Noogami*, was a Best Animated Short nominee at Red Nation International Film Festival, Los Angeles, the largest international Indigenous Film Festival, and he was honored that his animated shorts were invited to show at Mní Wičhóni Nakícižij Owáyawa (Defenders of the Sacred Water School) at The Water Protector's Camp in Standing Rock, North Dakota. His award-winning works have screened at international festivals and streamed on AOL On, Roku, Amazon, and Tribal TV/Hulu.

Conor's work was recognized by The New York State Arts Council with an "Arts Alive" grant for the initial storyboarding of Ariel, and another grant for artists during the pandemic. An invited presenter at SIGGRAPH for his animated iTunes apps, Conor's also done AR animation for The Museum of the Dog, and animation for other films and children's media. An enthusiastic dog dad, he loves playing and singing bluegrass and Appalachian folk tunes.



Clare Kohavi is a Creative Partner at CGMuse. Her soup-to-nuts commitment to Ariel has ranged from script development, writing, historical and visual research through participation in visual development, budgeting and scheduling, team building/communication and collaborating in and helping to lead feedback during dailies. She's incredibly gratified that the extraordinary work of ARIEL'S cast and crew during a worldwide pandemic has been recognized with awards for Best Animation, Outstanding Achievement in Animated Film, Best Sound Design, Best Original Score, for a Jewish Filmmaker and Jewish themes, Awards of Excellence and Official Selections at festivals on five continents, including in New York, London, L.A. and the Middle East, and that Ariel is also a selection of the Kid's First / Coalition for Quality Children's Media.

Clare's varied responsibilities in CGMuse's previous five 3D animated shorts, two PSAs and two story-telling animated mobile iTunes apps contributed to Best Animation awards, nominations, and screenings in 40-plus international festivals, and two selections for SIGGRAPH's international showcase for innovative mobile apps as well as selections by Kid's First / Coalition for Quality Children's Media. Those films also streamed on AOL On, Roku, Amazon, and Tribal TV/Hulu, and received a special invitation to screen at Mní Wičhóni Nakíčižin Owáyawa (Defenders of the Sacred Water School) at The Water Protector's Camp in Standing Rock, North Dakota.

Clare was delighted to return to acting through Ariel, voicing Yasmina, in a story that highlights the beauty of integrity, imagination, resilience and hope.

# Clare Kohavi

*writer, creative producer &  
Yasmina*





## Daniel Sean Smith *Ari*

Daniel started his acting career on camera working in commercials, student films and short films. He branched out into voice acting several years ago and fell in love! From a young age he had wanted to work in video games and animation, and voice acting fit like a glove. His credits include work for the CDC, AT&T, Ford Motor and numerous game and animation companies.



## Mike Duckworth *Ishmael*

Mike Duckworth brings extensive experience as a voice actor and live narrator in English and French to his warm portrayal of Ishmael the Scribe. In addition to his acting work in commercials, and orchestral and education narration, Mike is an accomplished classical/jazz musician and educator who works with music students providing private lessons in preparation for ABRSM Practical and Theory examinations.



## Lee Corey *2D Animation*

Lee was born in a small town in Minnesota, where his larger-than-life dreams landed him in the hustle of New York City where he works as an animation director, character designer, animator, and illustrator. Lee's film career began animating short films at McGraw-Hill. After a stint at Young and Rubicam Advertising, Lee shifted to animation at Nickelodeon animating everything from bumper titles and network promos to directing the mini-series "Max and his Alphabet Adventures". After that, he worked as story-board revision artist on "Doug" for Jumbo Pictures. While teaching Flash animation at Pratt Institute, Lee developed he first CBTC training program for NYC Transit through Siemens Transportation. Currently Lee produces art / animation and manages production at Corey Toons LLC.



## Brian Maffit *Color & Finishing*

Brian is the Visual Effects Supervisor and Technical Director at Late Night Cartoons, the NY-based animation studio that produced *Our Cartoon President*, *Tooning Out the News* and many animated specials for *The Late Show* with Stephen Colbert. Films include *In and Of Itself*, *The Blind Date* and *Family of the Sun*. He was founder and Creative Director of Total Training from 1997 through 2014, producing and presenting thousands of hours of educational content. He also designed the Evolution plugins for Adobe After Effects, which were acquired by Adobe and have been part of AE since 2000.



# Josh Kaye *Composer & Musician*

Originally from London, England, Josh Kaye is a NYC based guitarist, oud player, and composer. Josh currently performs across the U.S. as a member of the Stephane Wrembel band and leads his own original Middle Eastern fusion project, Baklava Express. Josh has performed at such legendary venues as The Town Hall, Dizzy's Club, The Blue Note, Smalls Jazz Club, and Lincoln Center's Rose Theater. Josh's playing can also be heard in the films, *Rifkin's Festival*, *Adieu Lacan*, and *Ariel*, as well as the video game, *Call of Duty - Wild Dogs*.



# Bob Pomann *Sound Producer*

Bob fell in love with sound doing the sound effects for the original *Saturday Night Live*. He moved on to Michael O'Donoghue's NBC special *Mr. Mike's Mondo Video* and the National Lampoon Comedy Album.

As CEO and Creative Director of Pomann Sound, a leading post-production house in New York City, Bob and his engineers have thirty-five years of telling stories through sound for projects as diverse as Disney's long form animated series, *Doug*, other animated series including *Little Einsteins* and 800 episodes of *Kids Next Door*, and one of Russia's largest grossing films *No Love in the City*. Their specializations include commercials, radio, VO casting, video games, reality series, scripted TV, films, ADR, animation, and web content.

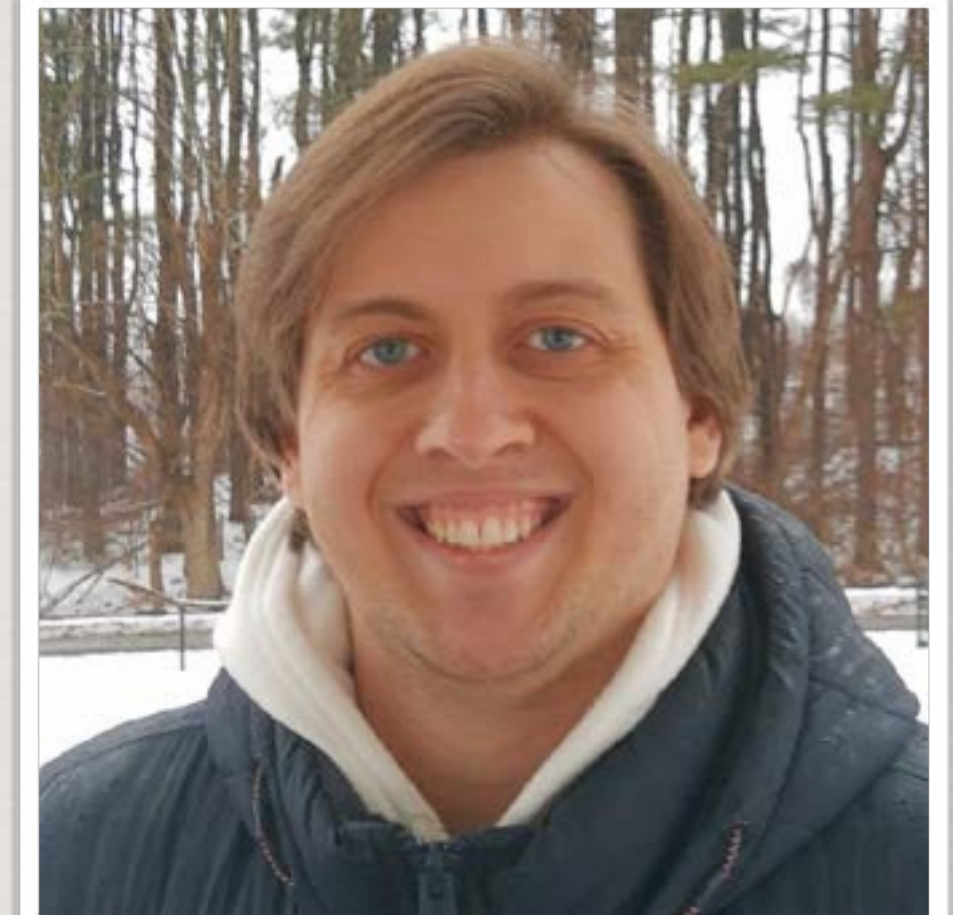
Pomann Sound was a Gold Winner in the Cannes Lions International Advertising Festival and The One Show – Dos Equis radio, Euro RSCG for their sound design for the radio advertising campaign “The Most Interesting Man in the World”. Their audio prowess continues today with the recently Emmy-nominated hit Disney series *KIFF*.





# Donald Hebel *3D Artist*

Donald hails from Queens, NY. He creates 3D art and animations for CGMuse and Goodnight Games and teaches animation classes. Donald loves dogs, hanging out with friends, playing video games, and watching Dragon Ball Z and Godzilla movies.



# Marcello Ruvolo *Lookdev & Lighting Artist*

To Marcello the most satisfying project is one where he's part of a team! He loves that everyone has a specific role, and that when you put together the efforts of people that work in harmony, the result is amazing!

Marcello trained in all aspects of CG work at the Academy of Fine Arts in Catania, and the Rome University of Fine Arts (Animation and VFX). Pursuing lookdev and lighting lets him make his impact on productions by using colors and lights to convey emotion and mood.

Marcello takes inspiration from live action and animated films and some video games, all visual fields that require the talents of a team working in harmony. To light the shots of Ariel he's taken references and inspirations from TV and movie lighting and 19th Century artwork that was researched for Ariel's period details.





# Matthew Morigeau *Character Animator*

Throughout making *Ariel*, Matthew was still new-ish to the animation industry and, especially as a father of two and stepdad of three more, getting to be part of stories like *Ariel* inspired him in his work. Motion pictures, interactive entertainment and the technologies that brought us from fire, drums and stories painted on cave walls to the immersive VR experiences of today all spark his imagination. Being a part of *Ariel* connected him to mythology he didn't get to experience growing up. He sends a big thanks to Conor and the team for letting him craft moments of meaningful movement for this story.



# Rabbi Ely Allen *Cultural Advisor*



Rabbi Allen has roots deep in the Middle Eastern/North African Jewish Community. Both of his parents are from Cairo, Egypt, a Jewish community which dates back a thousand years before the Common Era, and his family also traces to Iraq, Syria and Tunisia. Rav Allen's parents were forced to flee Egypt in the 1960's, escaping government antisemitism, arrest of Jews and seizure of Jewish assets. They met in the United States. Rav Ely grew up steeped in Sephardi / Mizrachi culture, with a father who spoke many different Arabic dialects, while also learning the dominant European Jewish culture of his American surroundings. After earning a BA in Psychology at Fairleigh Dickinson University, he received Smicha (Rabbinic ordination) from Yeshiva University.

Rav Ely was Director of Northern Jersey Hillels and a faculty member at Yeshiva University focusing on Sephardic studies. He is the Founder of the Jewish Outreach Network, which has hosted thousands of people, and served as the Rabbi of Sharei Orah, the Sephardic Congregation of Teaneck, NJ. Rav Allen currently lives with his wife and family and teaches at three different institutions where his work includes educating people about Sephardic culture and tradition.



## *Gallery I*





## *Gallery II*





# ARIEL

*"Ariel is about never losing hope."\*\**



## Trailer & Social Media

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*"creative, full of adventure, and extremely enjoyable..."*

*"This is a great family film"\**

**trailer**

**website:** [arielthemovie.com](http://arielthemovie.com)

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**facebook:** [facebook.com/arielthemovie](https://facebook.com/arielthemovie)

**instagram:** @arielthefilm

**twitter:** @movieariel

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*\*\*Audience Member*