

Gaussian Scout, Pixentinel Take Prizes at San Sebastián's Zinemaldia Startup Challenge

CALLUM MCLENNAN

Finland's Gaussian Scout (formerly Virtual Location Scouting) and Spain's Pixentinel claimed Thursday the top prizes at the 2026 Zinemaldia Startup Challenge, the San Sebastián Festival's flagship tech competition.

Gaussian Scout, a browser-based virtual location scouting platform from Finnish cinematographer Antti Ahokoivu, won Best European Project and €10,000 (\$11,6009, plus the €3,000 (\$3,480) entrepreneurship mention. Spanish streaming startup Pixentinel took the €30,000 (\$34,800) Best Spanish Project award. Rather than merely flagging a broken live stream, it aims to identify the failure's origin, supply diagnostic evidence and, where possible, trigger a response automatically. It targets operators for whom interruptions mean lost viewers and revenue.

Ahokoivu admitted the double win was a surprise for a pre-commercial project still somewhat secondary to his cinematography work. More important was seeing people engage with it. "People come to talk and are interested about it," he told *Variety*. "You get more confident that there is something interesting."

The technology grew from the difficulty of getting departments to understand a location the same way. "Having some tools that you can visualise things with, that you talk about the same things, what we're going to do, helps so much," he said.

The Zinemaldia & Technology centerpiece is organized by San Sebastián Festival with TecNALIA, ALÍA and Vicomtech. It also forms part of Spanish Screenings: Financing & Tech, backed by ICAA, the Ministry for Digital Transformation and Civil Service, ICEX, Málaga Festival and San Sebastián. 10 finalists, five Spanish and

five European, each had ten minutes to pitch and take questions. Here are the companies:

EUROPEAN FINALISTS

GaussianScout (Virtual Location Scouting, Finland)

Ahokoivu's browser-based tool aims to make remote scouting more spatially informative than photography. GaussianScout combines Gaussian splats, XGrids scans, photogrammetry and related 3D capture for exploring spaces, framing shots and measuring accurately. Script-import tools are planned. A subscription launch is targeted for autumn 2027.

Graphrs (Germany)

Berlin-based Graphrs wants to become the "operating system for video production," combining scheduling, staffing, shoots and AI-assisted creation. CEO Thomas Brömme pitched it as repeat-production infrastructure, backed by 20 camera teams. He cited TikTok, UNIQLO and the WHO among its clients.

SuperScout (United Kingdom)

SuperScout, founded by Gabriel Isserlis, turns filmmakers' accumulated location research into private, searchable, map-based databases. Isserlis gave the example of working alongside a Disney location scout and seeing how painful it was to retrieve alternatives when a booked location suddenly became unavailable and showing how this scout was able to find an alternative location scouted six years prior quickly and getting the production day back on track. The platform stores previous scouts, imagery and location data so teams can find options instead of starting again.



PABLO CIFUENTES

TheGreenShot (Belgium)

TheGreenShot automates sustainability measurement and carbon reporting for productions. Co-founder Max Hermans described software that turns accounting, supplier, expense and on-set data into customised reporting, replacing scattered spreadsheets. Its pitch is entertainment-industry specificity versus Greenly or Watershed. Customers include HBO, Chanel and Banijay; Fremantle was announced at Zinemaldia.

Thelma (Finland)

Thelma is building identity protection for public figures whose image, voice or likeness may be reused online without permission. Founder Aleksi Hyvärinen described finding misuse, preserving evidence, helping initiate action and reporting outcomes. It is testing subscriptions at roughly €350 (\$406) per month for individuals and €499 (\$578) for agencies.

SPANISH FINALISTS

Volum (Spain)

Barcelona's Volum Technologies is commercialising i2CAT research in realtime volumetric communication. HoloMIT captures, compresses, streams and renders people allowing remote participants to appear "there," as long as you don a headset of course. Spun out of i2CAT in 2025 after €3.7 million (\$4.2 million) of research investment, Volum is developing an SDK, HoloBooth and a HoloTotem, aiming to make holographic presence as accessible as videoconferencing with standard cameras.

Pixentinel (Spain)

Pixentinel is building a live-streaming intelligence layer that diagnoses likely outage causes and can trigger responses automatically. Its system analyses video signals, adds evidence and confidence scores and can activate

webhooks when intervention is needed. It targets broadcasters, streaming platforms and telecom operators, aiming to shorten the time from failure to diagnosis and fix.

intoreality.tv (Spain)

Barcelona-based Into Reality offers a white-label streaming platform combining 2D feeds with VR180 and VR360 video. Viewers can switch cameras, audio and perspectives across phones, computers, tablets and VR headsets. It can be embedded or deployed standalone, with AVOD, subscription and pay-per-view models. i2CAT's Sync-X adds synchronised multicamera and multiscreen delivery for entertainment, culture, sport and events.

HaMo Real-Time Animation System (Spain)

HaMo Animation is building patented hardware and software for live digital-character animation, combining puppetry with real-time virtual production. It works with 2D, 3D, realistic and stylised characters and has been used promoting animation hit "Tad and the Magic Lamp" before Spanish distributors. It aims to productise the hardware, with consumer uses possible later. José Luis Fariás argued speed and production cost distinguish it from emerging AI-generated animation workflows.

Dymensium (Spain)

Valencia-based Dymensium is developing a Gaussian Splatting volumetric-capture pipeline, particularly 4DGS for moving subjects. Founder Jacinto Nicolás described a workflow spanning capture, Gaussian generation, cleaning and integration. Its 120-camera studio targets film, VFX, games and immersive media, letting directors reposition the virtual camera after capture. Dymensium cited Gaussian Splatting use in James Gunn's *Superman* as evidence the technology is entering major commercial film workflows.

20 Years of Supporting Independent Film Distribution at SSIFF

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Europa Distribution, the international association of independent film publishers and distributors, with 130 leading independent distributors representing 31 countries in Europe and beyond, acts as a network, think tank and the voice of the sector. Its Board of Administration, chaired by Sabine Hofmann (Polyfilm, Austria) and Eduardo Escudero (A ContraCorriente, Spain), is composed of 13 independent film distributors. Spanish director Rodrigo Sorogoyen is the President of Honour.

The association builds bridges for its members to share knowledge, experience and ideas. Through brains-

forming and training sessions, panels, round tables and networking events, it aims to enhance the circulation of information and ideas to improve the curation, promotion and distribution of independent films.

The partnership with SSIFF began just after the association's founding 20 years ago, including many open panels and closed workshops. This year, 26 distributors attended an exclusive workshop on Audience Design, and a working session between distributors and sales agents members of Europa International, the European network for sales agents.

Information on EU Distribution: <https://www.europa-distribution.org>

THESE ARE THE AWARDED PROJECTS OF THE XXII SAN SEBASTIAN LAU HAIZETARA FORUM.

EPE-IBAIA AWARD:
Hamaka (Alfonso García)

MUSIC LIBRARY&SFX AWARD:
Pajarracos (Zaira Zanguitu)

DOCSBARCELONA AWARD:
Cosmobility (Mika Mattila)

EPE-IBAIA - BILIBIN CIRCULAR AWARD:
El Progreso (Alba María Sueiro)

DOGWOOF AWARD:
Different Colors of Sabir (Safaa Khatib)

PRECIOSA MEDIA AWARD:
Pajarracos (Zaira Zanguitu)

SHEFFIELD DOCFEST AWARD:
Amar (Victor Forniés)

Industria

Donostia Zinemaldia Festival de San Sebastián International Film Festival

