



Report

Programme

PROMOTING THE BEST FILMS FOR CHILDREN ALL OVER EUROPE

Focus on Children's Film Festivals in Europe - Report: The Professional Idealists

The 3rd Conference of International Children's Film Festivals in Europe in June was organised by the Ale Kino Festival in Poznan/Poland, by ECFA and in conjunction with the European Co-ordination of Film Festivals (ECFF). The conference's subtitle was „Promoting quality films for children in Europe“. This is clearly an objective of the highest priority. Festivals - and notably those represented in Poznan - are the principal players in the spreading of high quality films for children and young people in Europe, as the traditional theatrical circuit is generally swamped by American productions, which are not always exemplary. The festivals often offer the only opportunities to see these films.

Twenty festivals from eleven different European countries came together in Poznan to discuss the particular difficulties involved in the organisation of a children's film festival. We were surprised by the great variety of ideas and opinions that were expressed during the meeting. The programme was supplemented by film screenings („The Children of Leningrad“ by Hanna Polak and Andrzej Celinski, and the new „Europe in Shorts“- programme).

Greater pride

One of the conference's most honoured guests was undoubtedly Dagmar Forelle, head of private sponsorship at the Berlin International Film Festival. Even if many of the aspects she mentioned apply primarily to a certain relatively limited category of events, she demonstrated how festivals are an integral link in an industrial chain. Films for children and the younger audience are generally little known outside of the countries where they are produced, and festivals are places where they can be discovered. They provide a service for both producers and sales agents, as long as they

invite potential buyers (distributors, television networks) and work effectively on advertising and promotion (catalogues, brochures, websites ...). Festivals therefore have an important role, of which they can be proud, and which they should firmly defend with regard to these producers and sales people.

The festivals thus have their daily duty to perform: collecting data and figures to demonstrate their importance, and paying attention to the quality of their publications as proof of their professionalism. This is not always the most pleasant of tasks, but it is also useful in regard to contacts with private businesses and even with public bodies who support the festivals.

A well-organised and respected festival can become, if not the driving-force, then at least the inspiration for a wide range of actions in the children's film field in a region or a country.

Improving identity, improving diversity

There are almost as many reasons for organising a children's film festival, as there are festivals: political, educational, artistic and personal reasons. All these reasons are valid, but must be communicated clearly and well integrated into the event's philosophy and actions. A festival has to impose its own „brand image“. Experience shows that this is indispensable for reaching and maintaining the target audience. This audience is obviously, to start with, made up of children. But there is big a difference between children who come through scholastic activities and those who have to be convinced during their free time, for example during their holidays. In the first case, the teachers have to be persuaded whereas in the second, it is the parents who must be addressed. It goes without saying that in both cases the choices are made depending on the programme as much as the activities and accompanying context.

Then there are „children“ and „young people“ - a whole range of age groups not always easy to categorise. Each group requires a specific approach, not only with the choice of films, but also with the type of inspiration and activity that can come with them.

Another audience that should not be underestimated involves the industry's professionals: journalists, distributors, TV buyers or media teachers etc. They first of all have to know clearly what the festival has to offer: a market, conferences, work groups ... Do the children's film festivals provide the services required for them to feel good about the festival? Professionals do not like the idea that they are wasting their time, and so the festivals look for that something extra they can offer. The festivals have to emphasise and highlight what is unique about each particular event, both in terms of the programming and the various fringe activities. With this in mind, a specialised press service may well appear to be an expensive investment for many festivals working within the younger audience field, but it is always valuable in the long run, especially concerning the image and the identity of the festival.

More Co-ordination

One of the reasons to organise this conference was the recent enlargement of the European Union to countries from Central and Eastern Europe. Unfortunately there

were not so many representatives from festivals in these countries. Nevertheless, interventions from events in Poland and Lithuania demonstrated that their situation meanwhile became quite similar to that of other festivals. Obviously, they hope that membership of the European Union will open the doors to European support, but at the same time they are prepared to work on exchanges with other festivals, even without any community support.

Within this co-operative context, it was noted that the number of festivals devoted to cinema for children and the younger audience continues to grow. As we know, many films already appear on the programmes at several different events, and so it will be important to control this in a way that is satisfactory to everyone. We must take into account the volume of what is on offer, which is not enormous, and harmonise the demands made to distributors and sales companies in order to facilitate their work and reduce operating costs.

Festivals from the North, South, East and West, be they large or small, all have to face up to the same challenges. Even if the scale and the budget of festivals are often on very different levels, it is certain that greater co-operation and improved co-ordination will be of benefit to everyone.

Idealists

There was a great deal of discussion in Poznan about relationships within the profession, and the industrial contexts that festivals are involved in. Behind this very practical approach, it is worth noting that many international festivals for children and young people depend on the passion and the idealism of the people who organise them. Nobody has the aim of setting the films commercially up. The young spectators themselves are the principal motivation for the organisers. And even if this meeting made it quite clear that we have to adapt to an increasingly commercial environment in a number of areas, we hope that idealists everywhere will be able to continue their vital work with the same conviction and enthusiasm.

Felix Vanginderhuysen

This festival is organised by :

ECFA (European Children's Film Association)



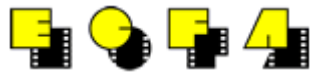
ECFF (European Coordination of Film Festivals)



European Coordination of Film Festivals

International Young Audience Film Festival Ale Kino!





European Coordination of Film Festivals

Conference of International Children's Film Festivals in Europe

June 10 - 12. 2005
Poznan/Poland

Report

Programme



Promoting the best Films for Children all over Europe

Programme :

Friday, June 10th

3 p.m. to 6 p.m. **Arrival and registration** of participants
7 p.m. **Opening reception**

Saturday, June 11th

9.30 a.m. **Welcome** by mrs. Mia Lindrup, president of ECFA, mrs. Marie-José Carta, directeur exécutif ECFF and mr. Jerzy Moszkowicz, director International Young Audience Film Festival Ale Kino!

10 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. **Presentations of participants**
Short Statements of representatives of the different domains which accomplish a festival: festival direction, film direction, production, distribution, journalism by mr. Lennart Ström, manager of BUFF -Malmö - mr. Bernd Sahling, director of "Blindflyers" - mrs. Nina Crone, producer - mr. Reinhard Kleber, journalist - mrs. Dagmar Forelle, Filmfestival Berlin - mrs. Lina Uzkuraityte, Filmfestival Vilnius - mr. Andrzej Jasiewicz, Polish Filmmakers Association

1 p.m. **Lunch**

2.15 p.m. to 4.15 p.m. **Working groups, Part 1**
1 - **general organisation**
moderated by mrs. Mia Lindrup

2 - professional context / co-operation
moderated by mr. Lennart Ström
3 - promotion and finances / press and promotion
moderated by mr. Reinhold Schöffel

4.45 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.

Working groups, Part 2
1 - the new EU-countries
moderated by mr. Jerzy Moszkowicz
2 - professional context / the visitors
moderated by mr. Felix Vanginderhuysen
3 - promotion and finances / public and private sponsors
moderated by mr. Günther Kinstler

7 p.m.

Dinner

8 p.m.

Evening program

Sunday, June 12th

9.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

Presentation of results of the working groups
Statements and discussions

1 p.m.

Lunch

2.30 p.m.

Presentation of new projects:
News and initiatives from the ECFF, with the presentation of
"Europe
in Shorts for Children", by Marie José Carta

Brazilian Kids Film Festival, by Carla Esmeralda

Exchange of different experiences

5. p.m.

General conclusions of results and farewell drink

7 p.m.

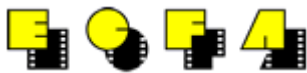
Dinner

Monday, June 13th

Breakfast, departure

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Changes in the programme are not intended, but sometimes cannot be avoided.